

# **Men and Masculinity – A Comparative Study of Forms and Meanings**

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# Abstract

Recent social research has challenged the idea of there being a unitary model of hegemonic masculinity. Rather, there exist varieties of masculinity – some dominant, others subordinate, some alternative and yet others oppositional in nature. Different kinds of masculinity have their origins in factors as diverse as class, age, culture, ethnicity and sexuality, among other variables, and reflect the intersections between these factors.

While there has been some progress in illustrating how social class may structure differing masculinities, relatively little is known about how other social variables and, in particular, race and ethnicity affect the formation of masculinities. The aim of this study, therefore, was, in a preliminary way at least, to generate new knowledge about how the experiences and perspectives of two groups of men who differed in terms of ethno-cultural background, influenced their sense of self and their masculinity.

A group of men of Indian descent and a comparable group of men of white British descent, aged between 18-23 years, residing in Greater London and having (or had had) a university education, were selected. The men of Indian descent were further chosen on the basis of having a Hindu background. Individual interviews exploring elements of life history and, in particular, the role of the family, religion and peer relations, took place in private. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and data were analysed thematically.

The men's accounts reveal something of the role of race and ethnicity in structuring forms of masculinity. Findings suggest that religious, familial and peer relations (and the interaction between these) play a powerful role in influencing the formation of racialized masculinities. Findings are discussed in relation to existing theoretical frameworks so as to progress understanding of the multifaceted influences on the formation of masculinities.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

My interest in conducting a study of understanding men, masculinity and sexuality began to take shape whilst working as a clinical receptionist within the field of Genito-Urinary Medicine. Here, I was struck by the complex relationship that existed between masculinity and sexuality, and this formed the basis of a small scale research project undertaken while completing my first degree. I decided to continue researching this topic academically and combine it with a desire to achieve a higher educational qualification, albeit self-financed, as my curiosity deepened regarding the ways in which different social variables interact to shape the sexuality of different groups of men.

I had had direct experience, myself, of living and working alongside a large number of people of Indian descent whilst completing my undergraduate degree at Thames Valley University. This had given me a personal interest in aspects of South Asian culture and meant I regularly socialised with friends at Club Kali – a London nightclub run by and for South Asians and their friends. This interest, in turn, gave me the idea to contrast the experiences and perspectives of two groups of men – a group of men of South Asian descent and a comparable group of men of white British descent – who differed in terms of cultural background.

### **Aims**

There is a wealth of academic research and literature that has attempted to understand the social constitution of sexuality. This literature offered a springboard for the present study and is reviewed in chapter 2. In particular, it highlights the importance of focusing on the manner in which sexuality comes to be socially constructed in different settings and at different points in history. It points, too, to the importance of understanding the intimate links between gender and sexuality, between age and sexuality, between class and sexuality, and between ethnicity and sexuality.

While early work within these fields was little concerned with issues of masculinity, a more recent literature has focused on these issues and, in particular, the intersections between sexuality and what it means to be a man. Aspects of this literature are

examined within chapter 2 of this thesis. Recent research has also highlighted how factors such as gender, class, and religion intersect to produce different kinds of masculinity. Since relatively little work has, to date, been undertaken on how race and ethnicity, in particular, affect the formation of masculinities, and given my interest in exploring the experiences of men of South Asian descent as well as their white British counterparts, this question formed the eventual narrower focus of this research.

Of special interest as research questions were the influence of factors such as religion and the family in determining how men grow up and come to understand their roles and responsibilities; the impact of modernisation on what might be described as traditional patterns of socialization; and the extent to which newer forms of masculinity, different from those in the past, might be emerging nowadays.

## **Overall Approach**

In planning the investigation, two groups of men from different ethnic groups were chosen to help illuminate how cultural factors among other influences influence the formation of masculine selves and practices. Given the exploratory nature of the investigation, individuals were selected so as to be relatively homogeneous with respect to geographical location and educational and class background – men in both groups were either students at a central London university or were visiting a student venue on one of the same university's campuses. Their ages were broadly similar (18-23) as was the fact that most were still in university education.

The methodological approach used needed to capture lived experiences in rich detail whilst being alert to the fact that potentially sensitive issues would need to be discussed. Critiques of earlier research in related fields have, importantly, stressed the need for in-depth and systematic qualitative data collection and analysis to help advance, as yet, somewhat limited understandings of men, masculinity and sexuality. A final factor influencing research design had to do with wanting the research to remain faithful to the issues raised, while enabling the identification of common themes and underlying perspectives. This encouraged the adoption of an in-depth interpretative and to some extent life history approach. Data were collected from men by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Findings were analysed thematically in relation both to foreshadowed problems from the literature and to the issues men talked about in the interviews.

## **Structure**

Following this brief introduction, chapter two of the thesis examines and reviews the literature relating to understanding men, masculinity and sexuality. It concludes by outlining a number of research questions which guided the study. Following this, chapter three presents the overall methodology that guides the research and methods used for gathering and analyzing the data. The findings are then outlined in chapters four, five and six, with chapter four focusing particularly on the family matters. In chapter five, issues related to religion are analysed and then, in chapter six, the themes associated with peer relations are examined. A final chapter summarises the key findings of the study and discusses these in relation to the pivotal themes identified during the literature review. After highlighting through this research a particular picture of contemporary masculinity, I conclude by pointing to some possible implications for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Understanding Men, Masculinity and Sexuality**

The academic literature presented here attempts to chart much of how our understanding of sexuality has developed from its more humble beginnings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since the outset of academic interest in the field, there has been much disagreement over the nature and origins of sexuality. Much early twentieth century work on the subject was based on essentialist ideas suggesting that sexuality was determined through instinct, genes, hormones and/or the fundamental workings of the unconscious. However, later perspectives that will be described here, questioned such essentialist notions concerning the origins of sexuality and its effects.

My interest in this field instigated the present study's broad aim to elicit a better understanding of the formation of sexuality in different groups of men. The latter stages of the literature review therefore focus on men and male sexuality. Of key concern are issues of 'manliness' and what it means to be a man. In recent years, there has been a growth of work on men and masculinities. This has led to masculinity being analysed as a set of forces organising the construction of male sexuality. Recent research, for example, has examined how gender, class and sexuality (among other variables) interact to form different kinds of masculinity, and findings from such work has helped substantially recast this study's focus.

What follows then is a review of the most relevant literature informing present understandings of maleness, masculinity and sexuality. Of special interest are how race and ethnicity, in particular, influence the construction of different forms of masculinity.

#### **Sexuality as a Field of Study**

Central to contemporary understanding of the development of sexuality as an academic field of study is the pioneering work of Foucault (1979). His work illustrated how historic events influenced how we have come to understand and 'know' sexuality. A broadly genealogical perspective on recent interpretations and understandings is therefore offered here.

### *The Contribution of 'First-Wave' Sexology*

Growing interest in matters sexual arose throughout the nineteenth century by administrative and legal authorities. Medicine partly pioneered attention to sexual behaviour, aided by an overall change within medical practice that was at the time becoming more scientific and specialised. Attention to sexuality, however, mostly focused on the human body, especially in terms of pathological manifestations.

A group of pioneers including Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Henry Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud later established what might be described as the 'first-wave' of scientific sexology at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Both Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis were heavily influenced by moves earlier that same century by biologists and botanists to classify all known animals and plants in order to define their essential characteristics. Such concerns received impetus from the work of Charles Darwin, who had observed and catalogued the many different species of animals and plants he had seen in his travel around the world.

Darwin was also influential because of his unique perspective about the evolution of species. He claimed that the development of the human species and societies relied on the survival of the fittest via processes of natural selection (see *On The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1874)). Moreover, Darwin (1874) also established the widely held view in science that sex is an instinct and that it is part of the 'natural' law to reproduce. Such understandings of sex have been widely influential because of strength in belief about the necessity to propagate the human species.

The notion of there being a natural sexual instinct was widely accepted by early sexologists, and these dominant beliefs created a new discourse of sexuality for scientific enquiry and classification. The early scientific literature generally sought to concentrate on investigating all manner of 'deviant' forms of sexuality, without paying much attention or interest to what was considered the 'normal' and now naturalised form of sexuality. In the editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis* published between 1886 and 1903, for example, Krafft-Ebing catalogued many forms of sexual perversion through the examination of case histories. Krafft-Ebing (1932 [1902]) associated sexual perversions with degeneracy, but subsequently revised his explanation of homosexuality to see it as a congenital condition.



Such shifts in thinking and opinion on sexual perversions, and most notably on homosexuality, were influenced by the publication of the first volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1936a [1897]) by Havelock Ellis. This work challenged the hitherto assumed pathological nature of homosexuality and drew attention instead to cultural attitudes that instigated the stigmatisation and oppression of same-sex attractions. Havelock Ellis (1936a [1897]) proposed that a diverse range of naturally occurring ‘sexual drives’ produce different forms of sexuality that, he argued, are reflected in the diversity of sexual behaviour observed throughout the animal kingdom.

There was to be an even more revolutionary transformation in prevailing thinking on sexual perversions and sexuality with the publication of Freud’s (1905) *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Freud (1962 [1905]) contested the notions of a pre-determined nature of sexuality and suggested the need to better understand conflict within the unconscious mind, which, he claimed, organised sexual development. A new method of enquiry called psychoanalysis was conceived, which via a focus on life history, offered a new way of understanding sex and sexuality. Such an approach documented sexual development, especially with relation to sexual perversions, which Freud (1962 [1905]) believed, contrary to conventional sexologists, were common to us all, rather than seeing them as degenerate and abnormal.

However, while Freud (1962 [1905]) radically contended that ‘perversions’ were a more or less ordinary aspect of human development, he also believed that human sexual development ended at a ‘mature’ stage, equated to heterosexuality and reproduction. Therefore, sexual perversions were problematic in that their persistence reflected a premature arrest in sexual development. Subsequently, supporters of psychoanalysis all too often equated the ‘mature stage’ in sexual development with the norm and consigned, once again, homosexuality and other non-adult heterosexual forms to the abnormal.

### *The Contribution of Early Anthropology*

Alongside the developing enquiry into sexuality within science was another emerging perspective about sexuality within the fledgling field of anthropology. Nineteenth century adventurers such as Sir Richard Burton published a vast array of ‘anthropological’ literature. For example, between 1886 and 1888, he wrote six volumes entitled *Supplemental nights to The book of the thousand nights and a night*,

illustrating the customs and behaviours observed on expeditions and explorations of societies hitherto unscrutinised by the West. Burton's recordings of what he acutely observed courted controversy and censorship, since he explicitly detailed a vast array of sexual customs and practices found in these societies.

Since Burton was fascinated by erotic and sexual mores, the more esoteric practices received his greatest interest and attention (see Burton, 1888). The publication of Burton's work (much of it, however, of restricted circulation) provided the public with revelations into the existence of practices such as incest, sodomy, pederasty, group sex, lesbianism and masturbation. Criticisms rained upon publication from many alarmed at the mere mention of such 'unspeakable' topics. Such details of sexual perversions encouraged universal support in the 'civilised' West for an understanding of sexuality as a *primaeval* and animal-like instinct that had to be morally castigated. Such understandings united with prevailing sexual mores in the West, which located sexual behaviour solely within the confines of marriage, family and reproduction.

The development of anthropology in the twentieth century as a field of study was consolidated by the scholarly works of Bronislaw Malinowski (1927; 1932), Margaret Mead (1929; 1931; 1935) and Ruth Benedict (1935; 1938) through their observations of 'primitive' societies. Such work opened up more general debate about sexuality since it described the diversity of sexual behaviours and sexual systems that existed in different cultural settings. Such differences often contrasted implicitly with those of the supposedly more civilised Euro-American reader.

These early anthropological works instigated the beginnings of a questioning of essentialist assumptions concerning an absolute universal sexuality. Early anthropologists outlined the social construction of sexuality equated especially to sexual mores and the validity of different sexual systems. However, scholars such as Malinowski (1927), along with others, remained attached to the conventional notion of sex as a basic human instinct linked to marriage and mating.

Such assumptions contrasted with those of Mead (1935) and Benedict (1935), who radically proposed the near limitless shaping of sexual patterns, without unfortunately offering any explanation as to why these differing patterns existed. Such inadvertence, Giddens (1993) later suggested, arose because early anthropologists favoured studying a

society or culture as a whole, in order to understand the customs and behaviours of its members, rather than examining what sexuality meant to the individuals involved.

The entrenchment of structural-functionalist positions in anthropology, especially in the UK and the USA in the second quarter of the twentieth century, consolidated notions around the infinite moulding of sexuality in relation to the claims of society as a whole. Such a stance gave little credence to the determinants of social structures other than in accordance with their function, which predictably accommodated the notion of there being a natural heterosexual underpinning to all forms of sexual life.

The failure of much of prevailing anthropology to address individual subjectivity meant that personal accounts in areas like sexuality were not forthcoming. Consequentially, as Caplan (1987) has observed, British anthropologists came to regard the realm of sexuality as best examined by psychologists and psychoanalysts. Inertia within anthropology to understand human sexuality would have to await the impact of feminist and lesbian and gay movements in the 1960s, described below, before anthropologists would be able once again to facilitate in the understanding of sexuality and its interaction with other social variables.

### *'Second-Wave' Sexology*

Preceding the civil rights movements of the 1960s, there was renewed effort in scientific circles to investigate the 'true' meaning of sexuality. The 'first wave' of sexologists had cautiously approached examining sexuality in a Euro-American context because of worries and anxieties about infringing the law and courting public censure. Such a climate had made it particularly difficult to obtain the agreement and co-operation of the authorities, and to find potentially willing participants to talk openly about topics commonly regarded as personal and private.

The champions of a 'second wave' of sexology were Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues who coordinated the first ever large-scale study about sexual behaviour of US men (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948) and subsequently US women (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953). Mass Observation (1949) attempted to replicate Kinsey's large-scale survey on sexual attitudes and behaviours in Britain, but the work, entitled *Little Kinsey*, was never published (Stanley, 1995).

The large-scale studies by Kinsey et al (1948; 1953) were intended to quantify and classify sexual behaviours as hard data, to strengthen Havelock Ellis's (1936b [1903]) assertion of the normality of a diverse range of 'sexual drives'. Subsequent work by Hooker (1957) shared such sentiments, although this viewpoint tended to be the exception in sexology, as the vast majority of other scholars persisted in promulgating the notion of a pathological nature of 'deviant' sexual behaviour.

The publication and dissemination of Kinsey et al's (1948; 1953) findings in regard to the far higher incidence of 'deviant' sexual behaviours ran contrary to what the public was expecting. There was a wave of widespread public anxiety, unease and controversy over Kinsey et al's (1948; 1953) results. The greatest public revelations of all were over the prevalence of female masturbation, premarital sexual experience in women and lesbian sex, all of which provided evidence of an active female sexuality in sharp contrast to long accepted notions of their passivity or asexuality.

Prevailing thinking was also revolutionised by Kinsey et al's (1948) work on the reported prevalence of same-sex practices amongst men. Such findings disputed prevailing notions of discrete and unitary categories such as heterosexuality and homosexuality, as sexual activity could now be seen to fluctuate and change within the human lifespan. Kinsey et al (1948) questioned the naturalistic belief held by most sexologists that sexuality was fixed by radically proposing that:

only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. (p. 639)

However, naturalistic explanations of sex continued to remain entrenched in the literature (except perhaps within psychoanalysis), until the 1960s. Then, new questions began to be raised as to why particularly 'deviant' forms of sexual patterns existed. An alternative perspective began to emerge that sought to examine the idea of sexuality being a product constructed by society in relation to prevailing social relations.

Sexology was also increasingly criticised in the 1960s and 1970s for an over reliance on the uses of surveys and questionnaires in which sexuality was isolated and reduced to a behavioural codes in a technical inventory. Such methodology culminated in the work of Masters and Johnson (1966; 1970), who set out to observe sexual functioning within a laboratory setting. It contrasted sharply with developing new perspectives focusing on the broader societal and cultural contexts that fashion sexuality. The development of

such an alternative approach prompted a shift of focus in examining sexuality from:

the sexual actions of specific bodies to the cultural and social contexts in which sexuality occurs. (Gagnon & Parker, 1995, p. 12)

The work of Simon and Gagnon (1967) and Gagnon and Simon (1968; 1974) examined structures that sanction and control 'different' forms of sexual activity in society. They challenged the idea of sexuality being a natural and uniform phenomenon since it was considered:

subject to the sociocultural molding to a degree surpassed by few other forms of human behaviour. (Gagnon & Simon, 1974, p. 261)

Their work contended that all forms of sexual behaviour are socially scripted in accordance with dominant socio-cultural definitions.

The effects of culturally learned sexual scripts are that they structure and define what is desirable and pleasurable within a given society. Indeed, Gagnon and Simon (1974) explained that as socio-cultural definitions underpin the appropriateness of sex in any given situation it is:

the social aspects that generate the arousal and organize the action. (p. 262)

The potential for sexual activity relies on the situation being deemed appropriate, as well as others present being sexually available. Scholars would later come to examine how actions in regard to sex are given their meanings and significance through social interaction within a given context, rather than focusing more generally on society as a whole.

## **Radical Perspectives on the Sexual**

The growing civil rights movement and burgeoning counter-culture of the 1960s created a favourable climate to challenge much of what had, up until then, generally been accepted without question. The formation of a number of radical movements and social groups, which directly opposed oppression, subordination and exploitation on the grounds of colour, gender and sexual preference, resulted in an explosion of interested scholars looking for explanations via more social forms of analysis. The emergence of 'second wave' feminism, the lesbian and gay movements and the development of a historical analysis of sexuality laid the foundations for new understandings of sex,

sexuality and the sexual.

### *The Contribution of Feminism*

Feminist struggle had initially commenced in the late eighteenth century to defend and expand the rights of women, but a clear focus on sex and sexuality was largely absent until the emergence of a 'second wave' of feminism in the form of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s. Most early second wave feminists were inspired to examine gender relations and gender inequalities in order to challenge female oppression, subordination and exploitation from an economic, social and sexual perspective. Much acclaim was given to Simone de Beauvoir's (1953) pivotal work on female equality, and feminist thinking advanced through three broad approaches, containing a variety of views and considerable overlap to explain female oppression.

Liberal feminists identified the cause of women's inequality in both culture and the attitudes of the individual, whereas both Radical and Marxist/Socialist feminists viewed the traditional family unit as the key institution of modern oppression for women. A range of early writers such as Shulamith Firestone (1971), Kathleen Gough (1975) and Kate Millett (1971) argued that women have been exploited in the family through unpaid domestication of women's labour in doing housework and childcare. Such cultural ideology about a women's role in society consequentially institutionalised women's economic dependence on men, by excluding women from the public sphere.

Marxist/Socialist feminists saw the need of capitalism to produce wealth as the fundamental source responsible for the exploitation of women. In contrast, Radical feminists argued that patriarchy was to be blamed for institutionalising women's subordination to men, as it operates as a powerful tool for men to oppress women, both within the household and beyond. Such ideologies about a women's role have been continually supported and regulated by the law, church and medicine.

The emergence of the women's movement offered some refuge from oppression, subordination and exploitation and encouraged within second wave feminism consciousness raising, disclosure and the sharing of personal experiences arising from institutional oppression. The emergence of the slogan 'the personal is political' reflected a proposed solution to the oppression of women via a political stance within the public sphere.

Second wave feminism's focus on oppression and exploitation meant that in the realm of the 'sexual', scholars tended to concentrate on the more coercive elements of sexual experience (see Brownmiller, 1975), and on the unsatisfactory aspects of heterosexual sex (see Koedt, 1973). Such a focus was later criticised by scholars such as Rubin (1984) and Weeks (1986), since it concentrated largely on female oppression and male power at the expense of progress in the prevailing understanding of sexuality. Advances within part of the feminist movement a decade later finally helped identify the importance of sexual as well as gender oppression (Seidler, 1991 [1990]).

### *Early Lesbian and Gay Analyses*

Coinciding with the emergence of second wave feminism was that of another radical movement comprising lesbians, gay men and their sympathisers. Named the Gay Liberation Movement, this sought to challenge and resist oppression and inequalities in relation to prevailing ideas of sexual 'preference' and 'choice'. The use of 'the personal is political' approach helped to identify sexual preference as a phenomenon that required political activism to demand equality in sexuality via the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Such radical activism and confrontation over sexuality also offered a new approach whereby to analyse and contribute to a better understanding of sexuality. A new multi-faceted intellectual field of lesbian and gay studies formed, which helped strengthen the case:

to self-definition and self-determination on all issues concerning the body and its pleasures. (Weeks, 1986, p. 105)

Lesbian and gay scholars were encouraged to question and challenge traditional notions concerned with sex and 'normality'. Early lesbian and gay analyses began to question 'heterosexuality' as much as 'homosexuality' in order that prevailing understandings of sexuality could be overhauled and transformed.

There had been little attention paid previously to examining heterosexuality and its privileged and often taken for granted status. Simon and Gagnon (1967) argued that any adequate explanation of homosexuality would have to offer an account of how people become heterosexual. Such suggestions inspired many sociologists, historians and anthropologists to take new interest in the cultural construction of sexuality as a

result of prevailing attitudes, beliefs, regulations and ideologies present in society.

Such effects as the regulating of individual lives via the dichotomous positioning of sexuality in Western societies not only deters people from drifting into deviancy in the first place, but also aims to prevent those who deviate from returning to normality if they so wish, since they are effectively socially marginalized (McIntosh, 1968). The effectiveness of often harsh and condemnatory societal reactions to homosexuality in Western societies was examined by Plummer (1975) amongst others. He highlighted how the origins for such beliefs often stemmed from Judaism and Christianity, since sex in these religions is associated with procreation and marriage, and any deviation is relegated to censure. Such social meanings:

determine and affect our sexuality. (Plummer, 1975, p32)

This was illustrated with ostracism and discrimination producing, in some 'homosexuals', problems of guilt, loneliness and identity formation.

Alongside the examination of the effects of attitudes and beliefs on sexuality, Plummer (1975) questioned the very definition of what is sexual, since he argued that the sexual is particularly interpreted through the learning of sexual meanings via personal interactions and impersonal influences such as the mass media. Plummer (1975) highlighted that the forms and contents of sexual meanings vary cross-culturally, and pointed to the need to understand their different social origins.

Indeed, definitions of what is seen as sexual in terms of objects and activities can be seen, in different photographic and indeed pornographic pictures, as shifting both historically and cross-culturally. Plummer (1975) concluded that the fundamental nature of sexual experience is emergent, situated and negotiated, making a vast array of sexual variations possible. The challenge for lesbian and gay analyses, in pursuit of a better overall understanding of sexuality and the sexual, was to include a greater examination of what heterosexuality *is*, rather than concentrating only on the study of homosexuality so as to suggest what heterosexuality is not.

### *The Importance of History*

The discovery that sexuality and the sexual are social constructs triggered the development of a new field of historical analysis, which sought to examine and



understand the origins of such processes and the meanings to which they gave rise. Michel Foucault's (1976) work *La Volonté de savoir*, translated and published in Britain three years later, had a profound impact on contemporary academic thinking and understanding of sexuality. He argued that sexuality is a historical construct, highlighting the significance of events in the West from the seventeenth century onwards that have culminated in present understandings of sexuality, by directing exactly how and what has been asked about sexuality.

Foucault's (1979) analysis suggested that the modern State's interest in the regulation of sexuality paralleled industrialisation and resulting urbanisation. The population was now regarded primarily in terms of economic value as a result of the requirements of the intensive work ethic, and presented the State with a concern to attempt to regulate sexuality. Such concerns over the sanctioning of permissible sexual behaviour up until the nineteenth century had traditionally been left to religion.

The State intervened in the nineteenth century to privilege and legitimise procreation as a utilitarian form of sexual behaviour within marriage, and as the only justifiable outlet for sex. All other forms of sexual conduct became condemned as 'unnatural' and 'perverted', and in need of regulation and control. Sexual conduct had now become a comprehensive concern for the State, which implemented social controls to limit sexual behaviour. Such tactics were described by Foucault (1979) as the:

encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures. (p. 48)

In addition, it initiated the State's entry into the uncharted realm of sex.

In advance of this, there had been growing institutional fervour gathering momentum from the eighteenth century to make people speak about sex. This generated a burgeoning array of discourses about sex, so as to enable proficient control and repression of sexual behaviours, normally via silence and secrecy, that were unapproved by the State. However, Foucault (1979) argued that rather than harnessing sexuality, the converse occurred resulting in the:

dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities. (p. 12)

The eighteenth century also heralded, according to Foucault (1979), the beginning of

four 'strategic unities' which re-centred power and knowledge within sexuality in:

the sexualization of children, the hysterization of women, the specification of the perverted and the regulation of populations. (p. 114)

Such strategies, by anchoring the most active and privileged forms of sexual conduct within the contemporary family, generated:

the very production of sexuality. (p. 105)

Subsequently, and by the nineteenth century, sexuality became identified and objectified within a fixed hierarchy of normality and pathology. The State's privileging of sex within the sanctity of marriage also strengthened the links between such conduct and heterosexual identity, since heterosexuality was also regarded as normal, natural and virtuous.

In parallel, Western medicine became interested in the drive to discover:

the truth of sex. (Foucault, 1979, p. 57)

A new area of study was formulated to attempt to explain every malady or physical disturbance in terms of sexual aetiology, and therein:

wove an entire network of sexual causality. (ibid., p. 65)

Each category of sexual perversion could therefore be examined as:

a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology. (Foucault, 1979, p. 43)

Biomedicine began to organise sexuality in the nineteenth century, so as:

to group together in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle. (ibid., p.154)

Shadowing the historical analysis of Foucault (1979) was that of Weeks (1977), although his early work was more directly concerned with examining the development of homosexual consciousness from the nineteenth century onwards. According to Weeks (1977), the locating of certain roles assigned to men and women within the capitalist family directed a scrutinisation of all forms of sexual behaviour and

formulated modern notions about sexual behaviour. Behaviours such as homosexuality and other perversions were to be banished as a threat to the stability of the family, whilst at the same time, they acquired recognition within the public domain. Weeks (1977) argued that the climate in the nineteenth century laid the oppressive conditions for a later response, which began with the emergence of the male homosexual as a specific type of person, and instigating a homosexual subculture.

Such a subculture enabled same sex attracted individuals to socialise and meet each other, as well as facilitating sexual relations amongst like-minded people. Other scholars such as Bullough (1980 [1976]) and Greenberg (1988) have provided evidence that urban homosexual subcultures, within which same-sex practices could take place, existed still earlier in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The nineteenth century also witnessed the beginnings of a reform movement in the U.K, concerned with discrimination against certain 'lifestyles', which directed the subsequent campaign challenging the discriminatory laws on homosexuality. The more liberal climate of the 1960s, with the breakdown in traditional attitudes towards both sex and gender, facilitated the eventual decriminalisation of particular male homosexual acts. Whilst the legal reforms were limited, the prevailing mood in the 1960s bolstered the reform movement concerned with the oppression of gay people leading to the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in 1970. According to Weeks (1977), homosexuality had become a political issue to demand equal rights and transform public attitudes.

As already stated, members of the GLF promoted the idea of 'coming out', being open and proud about one's sexual orientation, and rejected the enshrined notions of shame, guilt and secrecy associated with homosexuality. The growth of alternative or oppositional sexualised identities since the 1960s threatened boundaries in disrupting and opposing social order (Weeks, 1995).

However, many in the gay movement have concurrently wanted to promote 'acceptable' forms of homosexuality in order to integrate homosexuality into mainstream culture. Such thinking (for awhile anyway) deemed transvestism, transexuality and paedophilia as problematic in their historical associations with homosexuality. According to Weeks (1977), there was a concerted effort by many gay activists to distance homosexuality from such social taboos as a:

## **More Contemporary Analyses**

The growing confidence of radical scholars in trying to answer emerging questions about sexuality throughout the 1980s and 1990s was facilitated by preliminary social analysis on the sexual utilising feminist, and lesbian and gay perspectives. Moreover, the legacy of Foucault's (1979) historical analysis of sexuality propelled many writers to revise their understandings of sexual practice and sexual relations as more complex than hitherto assumed.

### *Power and Pleasure*

In the field of feminism, scholars such as Rich (1980) targeted the institution of heterosexuality as a site for female subordination, repression and compulsory social control. For her (ibid.), heterosexuality was an oppressive institution permitting unrestricted sexual access to women's bodies, restrictions on women's sexual behaviour and the creation of oppressive divisions in labour, power and resources.

Stringent critique followed of women's involvement in heterosexual intercourse and relations, both of which were seen as colluding in women's oppression (Dworkin, 1981; Mackinnon, 1987; Jeffreys, 1990). Such thinking about heterosexuality reflects the way many feminists consider it is institutionalised and practised under patriarchy. According to Jeffreys (1990), heterosexuality is systematically male dominated and pivotal in women's oppression. Moreover, the act of sexual penetration has been scathingly attacked by Dworkin (1987) and Jeffreys (1990), since they argue that it signifies and underpins male dominance.

Prevailing feminist thinking in relation to sex with men and the oppression of women came to be questioned in Foucault's (1979) work. Although he has been criticised for failing sufficiently to address issues of gender and the regulation of women's sexuality, Foucault's ideas challenged feminism to examine the complex and often contradictory ways that sexuality can be socially constructed.

Black feminist writers such as hooks (1982) and Hill Collins (1990) stimulated a whole new raft of post-modernist work in feminism to examine the life histories and

experiences of diverse types of women. Factors such as ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability and regional difference became understood as being involved in explaining the different lived experiences of women. Furthermore, an analysis of the different life experiences and relations of women served as a trigger for the more recent work on relations between men that is outlined later.

A focus on examining personal experiences, including the sexual, directed many feminists to question whether all forms of heterosexuality necessarily oppress women. Vance (1984) advocated the documentation of lived experiences to critique the notion that female sexuality is always successfully repressed, as female sexuality can often equate to exploration, pleasure and agency, since power relations between men and women are more varied and inconsistent than is often supposed.

A new feminist perspective evolved from Vance's (1984) work, with scholars such as Segal (1997) and Vanwesenbeeck (1997), amongst others, arguing that there are many 'heterosexualities' as opposed to a uniform heterosexuality. Such thinking insisted that not all heterosexual sexual relations equate to male dominance and female subordination. Indeed, Segal (1997) has argued that some forms of 'heterosex' may threaten normative gender relations, with women assuming an aggressive and sexually dominating role. Moreover, not all lesbian and gay relations threaten gender polarity, as promoted by some radical feminists, as they can just as easily endorse normative gender positions via the stereotyped 'effeminate' gay male and the 'butch' lesbian.

A fierce debate ensued within feminism about the simplicity of models which understood gender and sexuality as part of a single cultural system. Most early second-wave feminists had accepted that much of the oppression of women was attributed to sexuality and had proposed that a theory of sexuality might be derived directly from a theory of gender. However, Rubin (1984) accused such a strain of 'anti-sex' feminist thought of viewing sexuality as a mere derivation of gender (Mackinnon, 1982; 1983) and instigated a strain of 'pro-sex' feminist thought to defend sexual pleasure from being systematically equated to women's oppression. For Rubin (1984), gender and sexuality should be carefully distinguished conceptually and politically in order to reflect two distinct arenas of social practice.

Having highlighted many examples of sexual stratification, Rubin (1984) argued that

the realm of sexuality is more suitably explained through an autonomous theory specific to sexuality rather than gender as it:

has its own internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression. (p. 267)

Prevailing feminist analysis cannot examine or assess crucial power relations that are more related to the social organisation of sexuality than gender-based hierarchies overlapping with erotic stratifications because it lacks:

the criteria of relevance. (Rubin, 1984, p.309)

Prevailing feminist theory had until then tended to explain the oppression of lesbians, for instance, in terms of gender oppression rather than a sexual stratification that equally oppresses gay men.

The notion of oppressive gender roles within heterosexuality resurfaced with the emergence of Queer theory, which sought also to challenge lesbian and gay identities located in the binary system with the heterosexual norm. Butler (1991), in particular, has suggested that lesbians and gay men act to destabilise heterosexual straightness via transgressive gender role-playing. A parody of heterosexual roles by lesbians and gay men provokes a destabilisation and fracturing of the symbolisation of oppressive gender roles within heterosexuality (Butler, 1991). Such thinking instigated a blurring and rupturing of normative gender roles and sexual identities, along with 'contravening' sexual experiences in 'queer' lives, as depicted by Queen and Schimel (1997).

However, Queer theory has, in turn, been criticized because it failed, along with much radical thought, to contemplate the dissolution of gender hierarchy or institutionalised heterosexuality (Jackson, 1999). Queer theory simply triggered a multiplying of genders and sexualities, rather than tackling the oppressive structures themselves (Jackson, 1999). Moreover, from a feminist stance, sexual oppression is but one of many sites of women's oppression that need to be challenged and overcome (Jackson, 1995).

Subsequently, Jackson (1999) has urged lesbian feminists to return to an analysis of male domination in the normative status of heterosexuality, as opposed to attending to the agendas of gay men and queer theorists. Moreover, she (ibid.) has also called on feminist scholars to distinguish more clearly between heterosexuality as an institution,

identity, practice and an experience, rather than treating it as a monolithic and unitary entity, in order to better understand the complexity and diversity it inspires.

### *The Reassertion of the Cultural*

In recent years, cultural analyses of the organisation of sexuality have re-emerged triggering new thinking about the interaction between the sexual and gender. The focus of numerous contemporary social studies has been on scrutinising the social organisation of sexual interaction in different cultural settings in an attempt to uncover the structuring of 'local histories of desire'. This transformation in anthropological analyses has, according to Gagnon and Parker (1995), meant that:

rather than asking what internal forces create desire, the questions are, how is desire elicited, organized and interpreted as a social activity? (p. 13)

The 1990s has seen such work paralleling social analyses of the production of 'sexual lifestyles' in the West by lesbian and gay scholars, to examine the social organisation of sexuality in the developing world, which had hitherto been neglected.

### *Sexual Identities and Sexual 'Selves'*

Social analyses of the social organisation of sexuality in different settings revealed a sharp disparity between First World industrialized countries and the developing world in terms of the social rules organizing sexuality (Herdt (1987 [1981]; 1982). Work to chart sexual identities in the West stimulated new concern with the construction of sexual 'selves'. Scholars such as Weeks (1995) have argued that a sense of self gives order and meaning to personal needs and desires, as well as providing a footing for actions.

Much contemporary research on Western sexuality has been preoccupied with examining homosexuality and 'gay' identities although, according to Caplan (1987), such a focus has also contributed substantially to a greater understanding of heterosexuality. The 'norm' of heterosexuality has, up until recently, rarely been questioned or made 'visible' (Gagnon, 1990; Rutherford, 1988; Weeks, 1986), although feminists and lesbian and gay scholars have been at the forefront of questioning the 'natural', privileged and inevitable status of heterosexuality in order to problematise and challenge it as a practice.

The social function of sexual identities in the West has been subsequently analysed, with Weeks (1995), for example, suggesting that concepts of appropriate gendered or sexualised behaviour are structured by sexual identities to anchor people securely within dominant Western ideologies of sexuality. Images and dominant ideologies of sexuality in the West most usually also incorporate Western ideologies about individualism so that sexual behaviour, feelings and desires become part of personal development as the sexual self.

Part of the work on sexual identities and sexual 'selves' has recently involved analyses of the ways sexuality is personally experienced. Sexual interactions have been examined both in their specificity and in relation to more general social processes. Scholars such as Duyves (1995) and Davis (1995) have highlighted the construction and structuring of sexual desire within local histories and in contextual studies. Such works have shown, for example, that the growth of towns and city living has produced urban gay lifestyles and subcultures, along with 'cruising' grounds to find sex (Duyves, 1995).

Similar work on the specificity of sexual interaction via personal accounts has augmented our understanding of the contingent nature of sexual desire. Such accounts have detailed the fluidity and uncertainty of how sexuality is lived, rather than what the ideology of clearly demarcated sexual identities might seem to indicate. The personal accounts of sexuality offered by Tuller (1997), for example, show how the experience of particular sexual practices can defy the parameters of 'standardised' sexual identities. Such disparity between the ideology of sexual identities and sexuality as it is lived, have triggered enquiry both in the West and in cultural settings beyond Western Europe and North America.

In the UK, dominant models of gay identity have been criticised by Sinfield (1997), among others, for being too closely linked to white, middle-class norms. The notions of 'gayness' have been biased since little consideration has been given to variations in other parts of the world in the social organisation of sexuality and (crucially) its interaction with gender. By examining the different lived experiences of groups such as ethnic minorities, possibly having to negotiate sexuality within the context of family and neighbourhood, it may be possible to question whether the prevailing sexual identities in the West constitute:



## The Cultural Intersection of Sexuality and Gender

Recent social analyses of the intersection between sexuality and gender have to some extent been triggered by the rediscovery of Herdt's (1987 [1981]; 1982) earlier descriptions of the sexed and gendered lives of the Sambia in Papua New Guinea. Lancaster (1995) has suggested that Herdt's research was influential in highlighting the association between sexuality and the production of appropriate gender roles. Moreover, the sexual histories of Sambian males indicated a sequential cycle, and therein extremely malleable characteristic of sexual behaviour (Herdt, 1990).

Anthropological studies have since moved to look more closely at the specific, shared cultural rules that organise sexuality. Such developments have instigated a multitude of studies to explore the effects of power relations, social inequality and cultural systems in defining and structuring the meanings linked to sexual behaviours. There has also been a move towards contemporary studies examining cultural settings beyond Western Europe and North America. This, according to Gagnon and Parker (1995), has highlighted how the categories of 'homosexuality', 'masculinity' or 'femininity' used as a classification system in the West cannot be universally applied.

Since many non-Western societies do not have local terminology to differentiate sexual orientation, discourses of homosexuality are not infrequently characterised with the subversion of dominant masculinities via effeminate behaviour in men (Tan, 1995). Such ideologies of homosexuality further equate effeminacy to receptivity in oral and anal sex since gender ideology specifies the male role as the penetrator and the female role as the penetrated. These stereotyped gender roles in sex inform both the choice of sexual partners and patterns of sexual interaction. In cultures throughout Asia, 'straight' acting men who have sex with other men are expected to sexually penetrate effeminately acting males, and thereby avoid negative cultural stigmatisation labelling or disclosure of their sexual preference, even though such sexual roles can be privately transgressed (Tan, 1995). Such patterns of sexual behaviour are perceived quite differently in the West, where sexual orientation categories mean that, irrespective of the penetrator or penetrated role, same-sex behaviour is normally equated with

‘homosexuality’.

Further different configurations of the interaction between sexuality and gender have been highlighted in studies of *machismo* and its forms. Lancaster’s (1995) work in Nicaragua, for example, has shown how a ‘culture of machismo’ structures highly resilient patterns of gender and sexuality. The power of *machismo* is underpinned by the pervading fear and stigma of homosexuality, which censures all male behaviour and relations equally. Men need to competitively struggle for masculinity against the stigma and shame of homosexuality and passivity (Lancaster, 1995). Indeed, homosexual stigma threatens all men causing them to maintain a ‘proper’ public face, thereby celebrating majority status and the prevailing culture (Lancaster, 1995).

The ‘political economy of the body’ in a culture of machismo assigns concrete social, cultural and economic values to the body, with the masculinised male body being pivotal in stature (Lancaster, 1995). Such a climate instils core values of *machismo* in successive generations of boys via families and peers, and censures any signs of failure in displays of sensitivity and weakness. Boys are taught that displaying aggressive behaviour, irresponsibility and dominating women will enhance their standing amongst men. Such behaviour has wider repercussions for structures of family life in Nicaragua, triggering widespread patterns of male abandonment and brittle and violent conjugal relations, therein economically disadvantaging women and children (Lancaster, 1995). For Lancaster (1995), homosexual stigma and male-male interaction is therefore critical in structuring male sexuality, gender norms and gender relations.

### **Men, Masculinity and Sexuality**

As suggested above, recent research has begun to analyse masculinity as a set of forces linked to the construction and organisation of male sexuality. Insight into different lived masculinities can be found in a variety of sources, including those of Foote Whyte (1955 [1943]) and Clarke (1973), illustrating how social structures and processes can organise gender at both an individual and cultural level. While these earlier studies had taken place, the majority of investigations were content to accept the notion that the ‘differences’ between men and women occurred as a result of differential male and female sex roles. By the 1970s, such a consensus overrode all other academic explanations and informed research into how boys and men were socialised into what was then perceived as a unitary male sex role.

A lone voice highlighting the existence of power relations between men was Pleck's (1989 [1974]) cross-cultural analysis of masculinity in which the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy was seen as pivotal in apportioning power and rank between men. Gay Liberationists reinforced such understanding in the writings of the Men's Free Press Collective (1991 [1978]), and subsequent scholars, such as Weeks (1981), drew attention to institutional oppression and exclusion as fundamental in organising hierarchy between men.

However, prevailing understandings of masculinity and its links to 'heterosex' (see Dworkin, 1981; MacKinnon, 1987; Jeffreys, 1990) tended to oversimplify (or marginalise) the relevance of sexuality to an understanding of masculinity and associated power relations. Subsequent feminist research on institutionalised patriarchy and gay theoretical work on homophobia offers a more complex understanding of masculinity that engages with plurality, hierarchy and collectivity.

Scholars such as Connell (1987) have been at the forefront of examining the social structures that organise gender and sexuality, as well as power relations between both men and women and men and other men. He has highlighted conceptually how there is a hierarchy of different forms of contemporary masculinity with hegemonic and complicit masculinities being affiliated to heterosexuality, and subordinate masculinities being affiliated to homosexuality (ibid.). The eminence given to prevailing forms of hegemonic masculinity that are institutionally tied to the family and State have not always held sway, according to Connell (1987), as ideologies and relations to do with gender and sexuality are historically specific.

Connell (1987) has also highlighted how dominant ideologies of masculinity and femininity do not always correspond with masculinities and femininities as they are lived. The use of life history interviewing in his work has revealed how masculinity can be differentially organised at individual, cultural and societal levels. Such work has contributed to a whole new generation of social research examining the construction and enactment of masculinities in particular social milieux so as to challenge the notion of there being a unitary model of hegemonic masculinity.

In his more recent work, Connell (1998; 2000; 2002; 2005) has emphasised that the research agenda on masculinity must look beyond the individual, cultural and societal

levels. He has suggested that:

To understand local masculinities, we must think in global terms. (Connell, 1998, p. 7)

Connell (2002) has argued that ethnicity itself has partly arisen through gender relations with notions of extended kinship networks being central to the rhetoric of ethnic membership and boundaries. He has (1998; 2000; 2002; 2005) questioned the role of the family and State, as opposed to more global processes, being tied to emergent forms of hegemonic masculinity. This has raised new questions about the effects on masculinity of large-scale social processes such as commodification, neo-liberalism and market society (Connell, 1998; 2000; 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Those who control the dominant global institutions, for example, may be depicted as displaying *transnational business masculinity* (Connell, 1998; Connell & Wood, 2005).

Work to analyse hegemonic models of masculinity in the West has emphasised the importance of notions of femininity (Hearn, 1987) and the homosexual 'Other' (Rutherford, 1988) as factors influencing how men come to understand themselves. A 'homosexual' category that links closely to effeminacy is, for Sedgwick (1990), possibly more beneficial to those who define themselves against it, than to those it defines.

Other work has sought to explore cultural traits of manhood within hegemonic models of masculinity. Early on, Oakley (1972) observed that masculinity:

is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality. (p. 158).

Subsequent work by Mort (1988), Glassner (1989) and Kimmel (1996) among others has developed such ideas, and extended analysis of contemporary displays of manhood to the male body and its adornment.

Prevailing interest in notions of manhood has influenced scholars such as Segal (1990) to examine differences in the cultural meanings and forms of validating manhood. She has suggested that whilst there is a collective rite of passage to manhood in some cultures, the West forces men to affirm manhood individually and competitively via displays of (hetero)sexual prowess. Such an interaction between masculinity and sexuality confirms Brittan's (1989) earlier suggestion that contemporary Western

ideology equates masculinity with the display of an autonomous and adventurous hegemonic sexuality. Men in the West are encouraged, via dominant masculinities, to tell stories and dirty jokes about sexual exploits and sexual prowess in order to validate their sense of manhood and self (Brittan, 1989).

The validation of masculinity in the West in terms of sexual 'performance' has, according to Segal (1990), sustained normative gender roles within both heterosexual and homosexual relations. An emphasis on sexual prowess has also heightened male insecurities about being feminised (Kimmel, 1996). Interestingly, the association of homosexuality with femininity has become increasingly challenged in parts of the contemporary gay subculture via a 'masculinization' of a gay identity in order to combat oppression and, according to Segal (1990), enabled a whole new raft of men to identify as gay.

Connell's (1995) later work on the interaction between different forms of masculinity, and the relationship between masculinity and sexuality, has questioned the narrowness of original understandings of masculinity as a homogenous structure equated to patriarchy. It seems clear that there are in fact multiple masculinities, which are constantly interacting and changing the conditions for each other's existence, and transforming themselves as they do so.

Subsequently, Connell (2005) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have revaluated concepts of 'hegemonic masculinity' in light of advances in the framework of understanding provided by wider gender theories (particularly related to the agency of women). They argue that such a conceptual framework (as discussed in the most recent detail in Connell, 2002):

is a means of grasping a certain dynamic within the social process. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 841)

In addition, the concept of hegemonic masculinity, albeit reformulated in contemporary terms, is:

a way of theorizing gendered power relations among men, and understanding the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order. (Connell, 2005, p. xviii)

This understanding reiterates the interplay of power relations that exist between

masculinity and wider gender relations.

The interplay of masculinities sees the hegemony of heterosexuality not only impacting on heterosexual men's lives, but also on those of homosexual men. Heterosexuality reinforces its domination within masculinity by persistently equating homosexuality with effeminacy, being effete (Connell, 1995), and via deeply held homophobia (Seidler, 1997). In such an environment, there is constant fear and anxiety about being labelled homosexual in the transition from boyhood to manhood, and 'exclusive heterosexuality' has to be constantly reaffirmed to avoid any doubts about sexuality (Seidler, 1997). Even displays of tenderness and sensitivity among men have to be restrained for fear of being interpreted as homosexual.

The domination of heterosexuality and how it is imposed collectively from adolescence has been widely documented through observation (Nava, 1984) and life-history (Connell, 1995) studies. Such work has depicted heterosexuality as being enforced and supported through peers, family, work and the State as a shared set of cultural practices (Connell, 1995). Via the complicity of most men within hegemonic masculinities, the subordination of non-hegemonic forms of masculinities is maintained (Seidler, 1997).

Recent progress in understanding the interaction between sexuality and masculinity has subsequently raised questions about the interaction of other social factors in organising and structuring forms of masculinity. In Dowsett's (1996) examination of 'fractured' sexual communities, he, like Connell (1995), has identified albeit in a different context, the impact of social background and class as potential determinants shaping lives and structuring power between men.

Social and economic inequalities linked to class facilitate or impede earnings and mobility in men's lives. Such disadvantages have meant that many working-class gay men remain somewhat marginalized from dominant sexual cultures due to restricted participation and attachment, thereby prompting the defining of alternative sexual communities (Dowsett, 1996).

Complementing interest in the links between class and masculinity has been an emerging academic engagement with other social divisions and differences in the gendering of men (Hearn & Kimmel, 2006). This is because, as Epstein (1998) has

argued:

masculinity is not isolated from other social differences, but is imbricated in a range of social inequalities. (p. 53)

Recognition of the multifaceted organising and structuring of masculinity has meant that scholars have begun to take a closer look at the more complex combined intersection of class, race and ethnicity interacting to form different kinds of masculinity (Epstein, 1998; Newton, 1998; O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000; McDowell, 2002; 2003) and, similarly, at the interplay of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality within masculine forms (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

Recent interest in the existence of different forms of masculinity has resulted in a sharp increase in highly descriptive studies being undertaken which, whilst providing a much welcomed burst of realism on masculinity (Connell, 2000), have, according to Connell (2005), failed to produce a corresponding growth of general ideas regarding men and masculinities. Connell (2000) has importantly suggested that much of this work must begin to be thought through conceptually.

Greater knowledge is needed about how different masculinities are dispersed across different social groups. This, Connell (2000; 2005) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have suggested, will illustrate how the effects of class, race, generational and regional differences distribute the dividends and losses of gender relations unevenly between men, and therein shape different forms of masculinity.

Parallel studies, such as Brah's (1996) work on Diaspora among minority ethnic communities in the West, have recently revealed that social divisions produced by race and the negotiation between community values and norms and the wider social environment, contribute to identity formation. This is further complicated both by generational factors between first generation migrants and their offspring, and being physically more recognisable as an ethnic group (Giddens, 1993). Khan (1994) had, hitherto, argued that community dynamics and cultural specificity were directly transferable from the ancestral homeland in shaping the lives of minority ethnic communities living in the West.

Brah (1996) and Modood et al (1998), amongst others, have rejected the weakness of such understanding, arguing that this disregards not only the effects of the cultural,

political and economic divisions within Britain on the identities of minority ethnic communities but also takes no account of the heterogeneity of these groups. Having a multicultural identity, as Modood (1998) has highlighted, is perfectly compatible with also wanting to preserve a culture and way of life. Such work has helped provide fresh understanding of the influence of race and ethnicity, along with intricate power relations that position one set of meanings over another, in structuring forms of masculinity. For scholars such as Brah (1992):

both black and white people experience their gender, class and sexuality through 'race'. (p. 133-134)

However, Brah (1992) has questioned whether white people may be so acutely aware of the racialisation process, since they belong to the dominant group.

Academic interest in identity formation among men of minority ethnic communities in the UK has more recently assisted in helping to unpack the social organisation of masculinity. Somewhat surprisingly, and with reference to the focus of this thesis, there has been little work done to date on the largest minority ethnic group in the UK (men of Indian descent / of Hindu family heritage) despite a number of empirical studies examining masculine identities in other South Asian contexts.<sup>1</sup>

These studies, predominantly of Muslim youth, may help provide some indication, albeit focused on masculine identities, of wider cultural and ethnic factors shaping racialized masculinities, since work on Hindu masculinities in Britain has not been undertaken. Some relevant issues have, however, been highlighted in work conducted in India itself, that may contribute to a broader understanding of the factors shaping masculinity among men of Indian descent living in the West.

Bhattacharya and Senapati (1994) have written about the need for social explanations to be responsive to underpinning social values and social organisation. Anthropological work by Dumont (1970) among others, has highlighted the need to understand Indian society through interdependence rather than the independence of people. With reference to the focus of this thesis, Khan (1996) has highlighted how hegemonic masculinity in

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Alexander (2000a; 2000b) on young Bengali men; Archer (2001) on young British Asian Muslim men; Ramji (2005) on young British Pakistani Muslim men; Hopkins (2006) on youthful Muslim men; Malkani (2006) on young British Asian men; Ramji (2007) on young British Muslim identities.



India is intimately tied to the institution of marriage and procreation. Dumont (1970) and others have shown how marriage acts to maintain gender relations. Dominant ideologies concerning the role of marriage in the Indian subcontinent consequently set limits on acceptable sexual conduct, with premarital and extramarital sex, as highlighted by Nag (1994), being condemned both by Hindu teachings and the wrath of the family. George (2006) has shown how religious instruction, particularly from Hindu religious scriptures, helps establish a masculine ideal that has a bearing on the formation of masculinities as they are lived in a working-class community of Mumbai.

UK studies on the formation of minority ethnic masculinities are needed in their own right since Alexander (2000a) and Archer (2001), in particular, have criticised academics for both focusing almost exclusively on women and subsuming issues around racialized masculinities within a wider movement to examine race and ethnicity. In light of the latter criticism and in explaining young British Asian masculine identities in Hounslow, Malkani (2006) has contentiously suggested that:

the assertion of ethnic identities is sometimes better viewed as a proxy for the reassertion of masculinity. (online)

Any shift in focus away from women should not reflect women's unimportance in processes related to the formation of masculinities. Connell and Messerschmitt (2005) have argued that women's role is central here, in the relationships they have with men, and Dwyer (2000) has highlighted how, in particular, British South Asian Muslim women:

occupy a symbolic place as the guardian of family honour and integrity. (p. 478)

Being defined as the guardians of religious and cultural integrity means that women play an important role in transmitting religious values (Dwyer, 2000), constraining, in some cases, the sexual activities of young men (Alexander, 2000a) and, with the community policing of young women, enabling ethnic masculinities to be maintained (Dwyer, 2000). There are also, according to Connell and Messerschmitt (2005), new patterns of identity and practice, particularly among younger women, that are becoming increasingly accepted by younger men, which need to be understood in terms of the interplay between femininities and masculinities.

Recent research by Nayak (1999), Alexander (2000a), Frosh et al (2002) and Malkani

(2006) on ethnic masculinities has observed a hierarchy of masculinities existing to do with race that positions one ethnic masculinity over another. This has to do with dominant characteristics that have often more traditionally denoted men of different races. Nayak (1999) has suggested that men of South Asian descent have been stereotypically deemed passive and weak, and are therein positioned at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy. This alignment further challenges masculinity in these men by disputing heterosexuality as it is:

condensed into an effeminate masculinity that flirts with the homoerotic.  
(Nayak, 1999, p. 91)

However, the work of Alexander (2000a), Archer (2001) and Malkani (2006) has indicated how particularly urban subcultures and peer group formations have begun to challenge dominant divisions in ethnic masculinities, with British Asian men adopting elements of hyper-masculine style – more usually equated with Afro-Caribbean men – to refute emasculation.

Alexander's (2000a; 2000b) study on the public performance of masculinity among young Bengali men on a socially deprived London housing estate depicts how race and masculinity interact through the articulation of discourses of community, kinship and authority. Such observations have supported Mac An Ghail's (1994) earlier findings focusing on different groups of male students. He identified an interplay of discourses about family and kinship relations (amongst other things) that culturally produced and reproduced different versions of masculinity. He has also importantly suggested:

relations with their families were identified as critical in the cultural production of masculinity. (p. 52)

Little other work in the UK has established how the family and community itself may shape racialized masculinities, but Connell (2000) has suggested that the childhood family is one of the key influences in the formation of masculinity for most men. Correspondingly, calls have been made by Hearn and Kimmel (2006) for scholars to better understand a long-standing under-researched theme in the development of masculinities – namely the experience of growing up.

The work of Archer (2001), Hopkins (2006) and Ramji (2007) has revealed, albeit more

within the context of structuring group identity formation, the importance of religion as a potential influence on understanding masculinity. The influence of religious commitment has also been touched on in Frosh et al's (2002) work on the shaping of Asian teenage boys' masculinities in London schools. Lastly, Malkani (2006) has highlighted how religious symbolism may be used to bolster both ethnic identity and, in turn, masculine identity among young British Asian males.

Hopkins (2007) has argued that it is now imperative for scholars to examine the experiences of men whose lives are negotiated by and through their religious beliefs. Answers are needed concerning the impact of interpretations of religious doctrine on masculinity given that young Muslim men interviewed by Hopkins (2006) and Ramji (2007) felt, amongst other things, that it was their duty as men to provide for dependants. A closer focus on religion, amongst other things, has also been called for by both Brod and Kaufman (1994) and Seidler (2006) since it would help highlight the plurality and diversity of men's experiences at a time of academic enquiry about masculinity.

It seems clear, therefore, that an examination of how race, ethnicity and religion intersect with both masculinity and sexuality will shed further light on the production and social organisation of forms of masculinity, and the structures of power between men. Archer (2001) has recognized that issues around ethnic masculinities, to date, remain largely under theorized and need to be addressed.

## **Conclusions**

The perspectives outlined here contribute in varying ways to our understanding of gender, class, race and sexuality and their links to masculinity. Recent theoretical and empirical enquiry has questioned earlier assumptions of a natural sexual instinct remote from the influences of society and culture, and has promoted a more contingent and complex understanding both of sexuality and of gender.

Recent research on sexual practices and meanings has highlighted cultural diversity linked to different sexual mores. Cultural attitudes and beliefs have an important role to play in constructing sexual scripts that determine what is seen as proper conduct and what is desirable. Sexuality is intimately linked to the multiple narratives encompassing gendered life.

An examination of dominant and subordinate discourses of sexuality has highlighted the multidimensional structures of power that position one or more sets of meanings as hegemonic. More subtle forms of power placed within and upon the body make people both subject to, and the subjects of, sex.

Differentiating between the hierarchies of gender and sexuality has augmented our understanding of two distinct (but related) arenas of social practice and organisation, and their interactions. Subsequent in-depth cultural analyses have begun to make better sense of the structuring and social organisation of sexuality and gender, as well as the interaction between gender and sexuality.

Recent social analyses of masculinity have highlighted the role of sexuality in ordering forms of masculinity. The cultural equating of hegemonic models of masculinity with heterosexuality and subordinate models of masculinity with homosexuality has shown how masculinity and sexuality interact. Notions of femininity and homosexuality crucially underpin hierarchical forms of masculinity in the West, although personal experiences point to considerable variability in the enactment of masculinities in different milieux.

Other social factors too, interact with the organisation and structuring of masculinity and sexuality. Factors such as class, ethnicity and religion have been highlighted as influencing masculinity and masculine forms. These factors interplay in shaping lives, sometimes creating ‘fractured’ rather than singular communities, and further apportioning power between men.

New work concerned with examining, in particular, the impact of race, ethnicity, cultural background and religion among different groups of men, will help strengthen, alongside existing theoretical frameworks, understanding of how different kinds of masculinity are formed. This, taken with findings from other recent work that have highlighted how gender, class and sexuality (among other factors) help shape forms of masculinity, will contribute to challenging the original narrowness of understanding masculinity as a hegemonic structure. Recent work has revealed the existence of multiple masculinities, which is not only valuable in itself, but will contribute to developing some propositions about the complex intersection of factors interacting to form different kinds of masculinity. It should also help in advancing a broader

understanding of masculinity's part, as a set of forces, in organising the construction of male sexuality. These and related issues will be explored in this study. The next chapter will describe the overall methodology employed in this study that guides the research and methods used for gathering and analyzing the data.

# Chapter 3

## Methods

### Focus of this Study

What started out as the study's broad intended aim – namely, to elicit a better understanding of aspects of male sexuality – began to be recast in light of the literature reviewed in the previous chapter which highlighted how gender, class and sexuality (among other factors) interact to form masculinities. An initial set of researchable topics and affiliated questions were composed exploring how race and ethnicity, in particular, may influence the formation of sexuality or, as the focus of this thesis developed, the production of different forms of masculinity. Ultimately, religion was also included as an additional factor to help understand the organisation and structuring of masculinity. This whole realm was selected as an issue of special interest, particularly as relatively little work has been undertaken in this field.

In planning the investigation, as indicated earlier, it was decided to focus on the experiences and perspectives of two groups of men who differed in terms of cultural background. The rationale behind the choice of the two different ethnic groups was based on a number of factors, not least of all ease of access. A group of white British men was selected, as they constitute the largest and most dominant group in the UK. Since people of Indian descent both at the outset of the study<sup>2</sup> and still today constitute the largest minority ethnic group living in the UK (1.8% of the total population and 22.7% of the minority ethnic population in the 2001 Census, ONS 2003), the other group of men was chosen on the basis of Indian ethnicity to explore, as the emphasis within the thesis shifted, how different cultural influences interact in the formation of masculine 'selves' and practices.

Prior to the study, I, myself, had had direct experience of learning from and living with people of Indian descent while completing my undergraduate studies at Thames Valley University, and still hold a personal interest in aspects of South Asian culture, along with an interest in masculinity and its relationship to sexuality which emerged from my

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<sup>2</sup> People of Indian descent constituted 1.5% of the total population and 28% of the ethnic minority population in Great Britain at the 1991 Census, OPCS 1995. Ethnic group data were not collected on the Northern Ireland census in 1991.

earlier work within the field of Genito-Urinary Medicine. It also helped that there exists an emerging literature on the socio-cultural factors influencing masculinity and sexuality in a South Asian (and in particular Indian) context, as well as within the South Asian Diaspora in the UK. Such work helped identify community dynamics and cultural specificities that may be unique to India and Indians/South Asians living in the UK.

The focus of the study as it advanced took into account the need to distinguish analytically between gender, sexuality and race as potential determinants of ‘masculine’ subjectivities and practices in a UK context. The contrast between two groups of men incorporated in the study aimed to allow for a detailed examination of gender norms and expectations, cultural beliefs and perspectives, systems of social control, home life and peer groups to help more fully understand the role that ethnicity may play in the production of different forms of masculinity.

## **Research Design**

### *General Considerations*

The choice of methodological approach was influenced by critiques of earlier research on sex, sexuality, and gender (see Vance, 1991; Parker, 1994, 1996; Dowsett, 1996). As a result, there is as yet somewhat limited understanding of the role of these factors in influencing masculinity (Bolton, 1999), and a need for a more in-depth appreciation of the issues at play (see Aggleton, 1996; Parker, 1994, 1996; Gagnon & Parker, 1995; Dowsett, 1996). An examination of the social, cultural, economic and political factors influencing sexuality and masculinity fundamentally requires an in-depth and systematic qualitative investigation (Parker & Aggleton, 1999; 2007).

It was felt that an interpretative research approach would be particularly appropriate in an investigation like this which was concerned with exploring how men’s sense(s) of self are formed in a ‘natural’ setting. Since the focus of this study was on understanding social processes, close focus in-depth enquiry was felt to be most appropriate with its ability to generate new ideas which could subsequently be tested by empirical research guided by relevant theoretical frameworks (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

By using a Grounded Theory approach, it was hoped that the interaction between factors such as race/ethnicity, sexuality and masculinity could be explored via relatively ‘thick

descriptions' of human experience generated in respondents' own words and frames of reference. The most frequently used forms of interpretative inquiry, famed for capturing lived experiences in detail, are participant observation and in-depth interviewing. Here, though, I felt it would prove particularly effective to contextualize personal accounts via the historical and sociological framework associated with life history methodology.

Dowsett (1996) has claimed that life-history technique offers:

a method of interviewing that allows maximum flexibility. (p. 53)

Such an approach facilitates a mutual exploration of issues, without stipulating timing, sequence or depth within the interview, thereby encouraging communication to flow in a natural way. This kind of approach, as advocated by Connell (1995) among others, was felt well fitted to exploring personal experiences, ideologies and subjectivities, alongside relevant social structures, social movements and institutions. Furthermore, since the present research focused on potentially delicate issues, a life-history approach utilising one-to-one in-depth interviewing offered a suitably sensitive approach.

### *Sampling*

In any study, the choice of sampling is influenced by the goals of the investigation. When the aim is to generalise about findings, methods such as representative or random sampling are commonly used. Representative sampling is less appropriate when a more in-depth and contextualised account of a topic or issue is sought (Davies, 1990; Epstein & Johnson, 1998). As a result, a more theoretically informed sampling strategy was adopted here to help illuminate the issues of analytic importance.

A small pilot sample of men of Indian descent, similar to those who might be involved in the main study, was initially accessed using snowball technique (see Warren, 1974), in order that a preliminary exploration of the issues could be conducted, whilst keeping an eye on the literature. Since snowballing has been criticized for recruiting overly homogenous samples (Lee, 1993) and relies on social relations with people critically perceived as similar to oneself (Hey, 1997), it was possible to address both these criticisms in pilot work.



Although it had been initially hoped that the Naz Project, London would act as a suitable gatekeeper to men of Indian descent from their service users, this proved unfeasible after a constructive meeting was held with the then Director, Krishna Maharaj. He explained that another study was already underway involving many of the men the project had access to, and there were limits to the extent to which Naz service users could be involved in research. However, it was suggested that a London nightclub run for South Asians of all sexualities (Club Kali), where the Naz Project, London operated a sexual health and education stand, might offer a means of successfully recruiting a varied sample of men of Indian descent.<sup>3</sup>

Consent was first obtained from the organisers of Club Kali to display a poster in the reception area of the nightclub, to hand out leaflets and to talk to people about the study upon departure from the club. Eight potentially suitable men of Indian descent aged between 18-35 were subsequently recruited and four of them were interviewed. An additional two 'heterosexual' men of Indian descent were enlisted through snowballing, with the assistance of a close Indian friend. The overall strategy implemented for recruitment of six men at this stage meant there was not an over reliance on snowballing with only one third of the sample being accessed in this way. The two additional men who were recruited via snowballing, far from making the sample overly homogenous, ensured the aimed for 'high contrast' of there being a (sexually) diverse sample, at least at this pilot stage of the work.

The pilot work provided an indication of how effective the preliminary interview schedule developed might be in collecting data relevant to the research questions. It also highlighted how the line of questioning trialled could be improved making sure that issues that emerged were pursued further in a revised schedule. In addition, interview questions were revised from the feedback obtained from the pilot interviews to ensure that they were asked in 'plain' and everyday language.

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<sup>3</sup> A secondary consideration was that service users at the Naz Project London were reported to be mainly homosexually active men. Given the project's focus on developing understanding of the diversity of masculinities in South Asian communities, such a group would have been too skewed for inclusion in the present study.

Subsequent to the pilot work, whose main purpose was to develop and refine the life-history and other interview schedules, theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was used to identify two groups of men of particular interest. Since the focus of the study was on exploring the relevance of race and ethnicity in the organization of masculinity, the adoption of a comparative approach, whereby two groups of men were contrasted in terms of race and ethnicity with a number of other variables held reasonably constant, was felt to have a sound basis. A sexually diverse group of university educated white British men aged between 18-23 and a similarly diverse group of men aged between 18-23, born in the UK but of Indian heritage, ultimately represented the two theoretically selected samples.

The sampling criteria for the men of Indian descent further involved selection by shared religious affiliation, as India represents a diversity of religions that may, in turn, influence social values and social organisation. Hinduism was chosen because it is the predominant religion in India and people of Indian descent in Britain. The 2001 census recorded that 45% of Indians in Great Britain stated they were Hindu, with the next largest group being Sikh at 29%, ONS 2005<sup>4</sup>. Men of Indian descent were selected in terms of their religious background by being initially asked about their parents' religion. Religious homogeneity was less important in the group of white British men as, given the influence of secularisation (Brown, 2001; Voas & Crockett, 2005), few might be expected to identify strongly with any religion.

Concerns over the effects of the differences in age, generation and geographical location meant that each factor was loosely 'controlled for' in this study. For reasons of homogeneity, it was originally intended to select men in terms of being aged between the eighteen and thirty-five years, as such an age range would include men who had grown up relatively recently and would not further eliminate too many potential respondents.

It was also hoped that a relatively youthful sample would be more willing to discuss, among other things, issues of masculinity and sexuality, possibly by having greater interaction with, and understanding of, a more diverse range of men than their older

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<sup>4</sup> The 1991 census did not include a question about religion.

counterparts (Seidler, 1997). Once recruitment had got underway, however, it became clear that the sample only contained men aged between eighteen and twenty-three at the time of interviewing, and so subsequent selection criteria were refined to include only those aged between eighteen and twenty-five years, that is men who had grown up in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The selection of men living in London was convenient not only because I live here, but also to control for the possible effects of geographical location on individual biographies, as observed by White (1980), Davis (1995) and Duyves (1995) among others, across both urban and rural environments. Further consideration was given to there being comparability of educational and socio-economic background amongst respondents in both sample categories. All the men who participated in the main study were university educated. Most (twenty of the twenty-four) were at the time of interviewing still at university.

The process of selection would have been greatly helped if one or more ‘gatekeepers’, particularly related to the Indian community, could have been found at this point. This would have helped facilitate access to, and the participation of, potential respondents as I was aware that success in the field is infinitely harder when the researcher is an ‘outsider’ (Flick, 1998) and not closely involved in the ‘life world’ of respondents (Stanfield, 1994). A gatekeeper can also be invaluable in building trust between respondents and the researchers, as Sieber (1992) had shown.

Having no success in finding a suitable gatekeeper posed problems in trying to access suitable respondents but, conversely, avoided a number of potentially serious issues highlighted by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995). The undue influence of gatekeepers, and the need to sustain good quality field relations during data collection, can pose risks not only to respondent selection and the type of data gathered, but can even adversely affect the course of the study.

An alternate approach had to be adopted to recruit suitable men of Indian descent. Initially, it was hoped that an advertisement placed in the notice board section of *Asian Times* might successfully lead to the recruitment of a varied sample of men. Unfortunately, this proved ineffectual and so a wide array of organisations and groups were identified as possible alternative leads for recruitment. The feasibility of using

two London drama groups (including an Indian group) or social spaces such as pubs, clubs or restaurants was next considered, as it was hoped either would provide access to a suitable group of respondents.

Two different Asian Theatre Companies<sup>5</sup> and a London nightclub/bar for South Asians<sup>6</sup> were approached first by a preliminary email and then by telephone, but again this proved unproductive. Specialist help was then sought, through a meeting with Jagdish Gundara<sup>7</sup>, hoping to identify alternate ways to recruit the sample, along with any refining of the questioning in the interview schedule. It was suggested that the idea of using Asian Theatre Companies should be pursued, which ultimately led to a breakthrough in speaking to Tara Arts<sup>8</sup> founder, Jatinder Verma, who also administers an archive of life histories. The feasibility of finding enough actors to fit the selection criteria proved problematic but the suggestion that I contact a couple of student bodies at University College London and Imperial College was acted upon.

Contact was subsequently made with the UCL Hindu Society and despite an initial offer that someone would act as an informal 'gatekeeper' this proved disappointing. An introductory email was then sent to a further eight student organisations and groups at higher education institutions in London, as this was felt to be one of the only realistic ways (without having a gatekeeper) to locate the sample of men needed. This ultimately resulted in a link being established with the Hindu Student Forum at Imperial College and, having contacted its President, I was invited to an event to celebrate Diwali, where it was agreed I could talk to people and hand out leaflets about the study, particularly at the finale when people were leaving the hall. This proved to be a good strategy as it enabled twenty-one suitable men to be recruited, with twelve of them subsequently being interviewed.

To mirror in some ways how the young men of Indian descent had been recruited, a student venue was also chosen in which to recruit men of white British descent. Permission was granted by the General Manager of the Bloomsbury Theatre to hand out leaflets and talk to people about the research when they were arriving and departing

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<sup>5</sup> Man Mela & Tara Arts Group.

<sup>6</sup> Kuch Kuch at Bar Bollywood, Piccadilly, which is run by an organiser of Club Kali.

<sup>7</sup> Professor Gundara was then Head of the International Centre for Intercultural Studies at the Institute of Education.

<sup>8</sup> Tara Arts was founded in 1977 as the first Asian Theatre Company to be set up in Britain.

both from the theatre and the building in which this is housed, which is part of University College London. Twenty-three potentially suitable men of white British descent were subsequently recruited and twelve of these were interviewed.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Pilot Work*

My initial consultation with the Director of the Naz Project, London enabled me to orientate myself to some of the issues it might be helpful to explore in examining the links between Indian heritage, sexuality and masculinity. A preliminary life history interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was developed, both to guide the interviews and pursue a range of topics, utilising existing theory and research. Questions were designed, with a particular focus on the interactions of background and cultural perspective on sexuality and masculinity. Questions were initially organised into the following categories:

- Childhood
- Early sexual experiences
- History of sexual experiences and sexual relationships
- Sexual practices and fantasies
- Sexual interests and preferences
- Sexual self.

The preliminary interview schedule was trialled in the pilot study and modified following an evaluation of the range of issues that had emerged after completing two interviews. All six pilot interviews were conducted by myself after oral informed consent had been given, and took place on a one-to-one basis at the home of the respondents, the researcher or an intermediate. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed ready for analysis.

Further revisions to the schedule were made in light of feedback from the pilot interviews to make sure questions were asked in accessible, everyday language. Additional more focused questions on masculinity and ‘manliness’ were also added as the review of contemporary literature progressed (see Chapter 1). It was hoped that this would help distinguish between cultural stereotypes about being a man and what

respondents personally felt themselves. These alterations reflected the study's evolving focus which had now begun to place, more centrally, issues of masculinity and its intersection with race and ethnicity.

## Main Study

Following the receipt of specialist advice, and in the light of feedback from pilot work, a further set of questions were added to the interview schedule principally for men of Indian descent concerning religion and background to help understand, in particular, Hindu ideology and beliefs, and their potential impact on masculinity and sexuality. A revised interview schedule (see Appendix 2) was prepared in readiness to interview twenty-four respondents (12 men of Indian descent, 12 men of white British descent) for the main study. Questions were organized around a number of relevant themes:

- Introduction
- Personal and background information
- Family upbringing and relationships
- Issues around masculinity, maleness and peer relations
- Religious affiliation and practice
- Issues around sex – meanings, interests, experiences and its development
- Influence of religion and background on masculinity, manhood and personal relationships.

Ethical considerations, including the importance of informed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation, were discussed with my supervisor during the development of the research design. They informed the implementation of the research techniques used in the study.<sup>9</sup>

All of the interviews for the main study were conducted by myself on a one-to-one basis after oral informed consent had first been obtained. At the outset of the interview, respondents were briefed on what the study was about, the reasons for it and how the findings would be disseminated and used. It was indicated that I was a self-financing student who was undertaking this research because of a personal interest in this field.

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<sup>9</sup> This was standard procedure within the Institute of Education, University of London when the study commenced.

Decisions over where to conduct the interviews were taken in conjunction with the respondents, giving due consideration to questions of safety and convenience. All interviews took place in private. Some were conducted at the home of the respondent, whilst others either took place in a vacant seminar room at their university, a vacant room at their workplace or in a suitably private room at the Thomas Coram Research Unit.

Efforts were made from the outset of the interviews to try to ensure respondents felt comfortable and at ease to help build productive rapport. This included some casual conversation at the start but I was mindful that, as Segal (1990) had remarked, great care is needed in interviewing men about such sensitive matters as their sexual feelings, identities and relationships, since they may be less used to talking publicly about them, particularly in such an intimate way. Mort (1988) had observed that many of these difficulties may stem from men having little opportunity to talk about their personal concerns. This made it imperative that the ethics of the study, based on a rationale of trust, empathy and non-exploitation (Oakley, 1981), were conveyed clearly to the respondents.

Maintaining a non-hierarchical and more personal interview relationship was felt to be essential, contrary to more formal interview styles, in helping to build 'rapport' and dispel any notions of exploitation or seniority. Indeed, it was I who felt indebted to the interviewees for sparing their time to take part in the research and was pleased to learn from their post-interview comments that most men felt they gained something through the beneficial effects of talking about these issues.

It was sometimes difficult to remain detached in the interview process, not wanting to answer any questions interviewees asked me. As it happened, respondents did not tend to ask me much until the taped interview had ended. This was usually when feedback was anticipated and we began talking more casually about the expressed interest of these men in the research, its goals and what had led me to do it. De-briefing of this kind also helped me gauge whether the research experience had adversely affected the well-being of any of the respondents. Respondents though, showed no signs of unnecessary anxiety, distress or uncalled-for self knowledge as a result of participating in the research.

My personal involvement in the interview relationship essentially mirrored what Oakley (1981) has recommended since, crucially:

it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives. (p. 58)

Adopting this whole approach in interviewing is particularly needed, as Sieber (1992) has remarked, when dealing with different ethnic or stigmatised groups. Sieber (1992) recommends that attention to matters of respect and effective communication are essential, both to convey cultural sensitivity and to facilitate respondents' participation.

It was also important that respondents were assured of confidentiality, having given their consent to my audio-recording the interview. The data, when transcribed and analysed, used informants' own suggested pseudonyms, with the editing out of personal information to protect identities. Recording the interview enabled a clearer focus on interaction and content (Dowsett, 1996), and, as explained to respondents, facilitated a more complete and detailed record ready for analysis. A post-interview commentary was prepared after each interview to describe and reflect on the event. Such accounts can enhance recall, help contextualise responses and offer insight into emphasis and non-verbal communication such as length of spacing, silences, body gestures, looks and glances. A short pen portrait of each of the twenty-four men interviewed for the main study was compiled (see Appendix 3) to provide the reader with a clearer sense of each participant's background.

### *Data Analysis*

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, in line with Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) recommendation that:

speech should be rendered in a manner that approximates to a verbatim report and represents nonverbal behaviour in relatively concrete terms. (p. 181)

The analytical importance of actual words, pauses and intonations in testimonies meant that these too, were noted in the transcripts and helped me to understand better during the analytical process what was being said. Lützen (1995) has stressed how within sex research, gender, class and regional differences need to be taken into account when analysing what is being said. In a similar vein, in research on masculinity, Seidler (1997) has highlighted the significance of voice and relation (what is being said and not said) in making sense of masculine subjectivities and practices. Elsewhere, Dowsett



(1996) has suggested keeping:

a keen ear for the revelatory slip of tongue, the disclaimer, the prioritizing of events, and the subjective importance of avowal. (p. 55)

Dowsett (1996) also advises in the analysis of paradoxes, contradictions or inconsistencies that:

There should be no “papering over the cracks”. (p. 55)

A grounded approach was used to analyse the data, driven by the foreshadowed problems highlighted in the existing literature (see Chapter 1). In relation to these issues, the pilot interview transcripts were first examined for patterns, inconsistencies, contradictions and surprises. Once a clear focus on masculinity became evident, and further questions were developed, the remaining pilot data were interrogated for what they might reveal about the links between sexuality and masculinity within an Indian/South Asian or white British context, and therein highlighted potentially useful analytic categories.

A preliminary analysis took place alongside the rest of the data collection being completed in the main study, searching for recurrent themes and issues, interesting patterns and relationships, inconsistencies, contradictions and surprises. A wide range of issues emerged from the data that were of theoretical and substantive interest. This process helped to develop some tentative categories and themes that were later used to organise data collection for each of the two groups of men.

It was important to ensure that the analysis was ‘grounded’ in the experiences and topical categories used by the respondents, without also losing sight of key concepts and issues relating to race and ethnicity, sexuality and masculinity, as signalled by the literature review. Further progress was made with the initial thematic analysis once all the interviews had been completed and transcribed. Four main themes were then consolidated to help inform a more comprehensive subsequent analysis of the formation of masculine ‘selves’. These themes concerned:

- the rituals of manhood
- the family and its effects
- the influence of religion

- the silencing of sex/private aspects of the sexual.

The data were then analysed thematically. Dowsett (1996) has described this stage of work as entailing a:

thematic interrogation of the case material in order to pursue the theoretical and inductively derived issues. (p. 54)

This involved an in-depth interrogation of the data through immersion in the transcripts. Each was carefully read and re-read so that every piece of potentially pertinent data could be assigned to a category via a colour coding system. (An example of part of an interview transcript with the system of colour coding used to highlight extracts relating to the four main themes is included as Appendix 4.)

The analysis of each of these conceptual categories uncovered both differences and similarities within each category, as well as enabled the development of further subcategories, via a process of constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The principal themes were next reviewed to see whether they needed to be amended to correspond with the data and illuminate (where possible) constructions of masculinity. Strauss and Corbin (1994) stress the importance of developing 'rich' concepts wherever possible.

Next, quotations referring to a similar type of issue were brought together under a number of relevant sub-headings. This provided a sound basis to delineate more clearly each over-arching generic theme (now reduced to three) and the range of issues it addressed:

- the family and its effects
- the impact of religion
- the significance of peer relations (tentatively entitled, originally, the making of masculine selves).

A more detailed analysis was subsequently developed, with each category being examined for what it said about the relationship between race and ethnicity and masculinity.

Data relating to the family and its effects, and three sub-themes within this overall

category – upbringing vs. ‘just growing up’; extended family vs. the unstructured family; the development of sexuality<sup>10</sup> – were systematically worked through in the first instance. A picture began to emerge of patterns and relationships highlighted in the data. This revealed common issues and areas of difference between men of Indian and white British descent. Glaser and Strauss (1967) characterised this stage of grounded theorising as involving the articulation of a reasonably well-codified set of propositions relating to the principal features and relations of the major conceptual categories.

The analysis was then developed into a clear ‘story line’ that tried to remain faithful to the issues young men had talked about in the interviews, while bringing together related quotations and underlying perspectives. The same procedure was used on the second identified theme which focused on the role and place of religion. Its sub-themes originally focused on: systems of thought; the place of sexuality; the role of celebration. Together, they helped build a more consolidated picture of religion and its effects. In time, and with the addition of new data, these sub-themes regarding the role of religion were further developed to become: living one’s life; communal relations; becoming a man.

A third and final area of analysis<sup>11</sup> examined themes and categories that had not yet been explored. These were reviewed to try to see what coherent over-arching theme might underpin them, building on the previously completed analysis around family and religion. Once four sub-themes had then been developed focusing on the value of men; the nature of women; when men and women meet; the forming of relationships the data were worked through systematically with the process of coding being expanded to extend each sub-theme’s full analytic potential. As a result, the sub-themes were finally reduced to three<sup>12</sup> and the core theme – the significance of peer relations – was eventually ‘teased out’.

## **Reliability and Validity**

Concepts of reliability and validity are employed in social enquiry in order to reduce the ‘gap’ between the object of study and its representation. Potential threats to reliability and validity are always a concern in qualitative studies such as this, and need to be

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<sup>10</sup> Originally tentatively entitled discourse of sex in the family.

<sup>11</sup> Tentatively around the making of masculine selves.

<sup>12</sup> The sub-theme – when men and women meet – became part of the section ‘the value of men’.

addressed explicitly.

In closely focused qualitative investigations, reliability corresponds to the degree of dependability one can have on the data. Dependability is usually addressed, as it was here in this research, by offering a well-documented and systematic account of how data were collected and analysed. Explicit details are provided of decisions taken and the research processes undertaken so that the reader is more easily able to assess dependability. It was also important, as Johnson (1999) has suggested, to provide sufficient information regarding particular instances and the theoretical framework, so that others can assess how the data link with a body of theory, and judge the findings' wider applicability.

Concerns linked to the credibility and wider transferability of findings from the study were addressed in a number of different ways. The credibility of this research was enhanced by using 'triangulation' to validate the findings against other relevant research and theory. Problems of inconcludability were addressed by giving particular prominence to, as Johnson (1999) has highlighted, the detail and importance of each interviewee's response. This allowed for an in-depth examination of the meanings involved. Inconcludability was also lessened here, as Johnson (1999) has further suggested, by tracing and recording my understandings of processes involved as they developed through the course of the study, particularly when the data and analysis become richer.

It was also important to offer a reflexive analysis of the research process and my efforts, as the researcher, to make these main features explicit as well as to reveal their potential influence. Concern to reduce personal and procedural reactivity encouraged me to track the potential effects of the research process itself on the data being collected and on their analysis. In terms of the interview process and with respect to the threats to reliability and validity posed by personal and procedural reactivity, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have highlighted how the researcher must be mindful of being an active listener to determine what is being said and how this may shape the subsequent course of the interview. Here, this required me to reflect on what *I* said and did, and how *that* may have shaped the subsequent course of the interview.

The interview process used in this study was strongly framed by the interview schedule.

This partially helped influence, along with utilising a life-history approach, what was spoken about and meant there was less chance of things that had been said and done earlier on by the interviewee or myself having much of a bearing on the subsequent course of the interview. I found the life-history approach enabled me to pursue a line of inquiry in some depth, being able to listen to what was being said and assess how it related to the research questions being explored. I would intervene when I needed more detail or clarification was required. This interview technique placed the spotlight firmly on the interviewee.

However, I still had to interpret and assess what was being said in the interview and it is more difficult to gauge how this might have influenced the data collected. Fortunately, the audio-recording of the interviews provided a detailed record of the interactions and content. Also, by examining the consistency of data relating to the same phenomenon at different phases of the interview, as part of the in-depth interrogation of the transcripts, it was possible to search for discrepancies. On the whole, few of these were detected, and where they were this is highlighted in the chapters which follow.

Reflexivity also requires reflection on how the data in the study were analysed. The interrogation and organisation of the data was both selective and interpreted. However, by offering a systematic and as transparent an account as possible of how data analysis proceeded, it is possible to form a judgement of the study's adequacy and wider applicability. The study's analytic credibility was further strengthened, as indicated earlier, by using triangulation with other relevant research and theory. That said, it was vital to tell the stories of the men interviewed in a way that remained faithful to the issues spoken about using their own words and frames of reference.

A major threat to reliability and validity relates to contextual reactivity. Accounts and explanations are always relative to a particular time and setting. Such concerns were addressed in this study by providing explicit references to the situation in which data were elicited so the reader can judge for him/herself the findings' contextual relevance and wider applicability. While the interviews were conducted in four different settings, they all took place in a self-contained room, with no one else present or able to listen in.<sup>13</sup> There were occasions when the interview was interrupted either by the

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<sup>13</sup> The home of the respondent, a vacant seminar room at respondent's university, a vacant room at respondent's workplace or in a private room at the Thomas Coram Research Unit.

interviewee's mobile phone or a telephone in the room ringing, or by noise escalating from outside (sirens, alarms, shouting, etc) or coming from an adjoining room. Such instances did seem to distract, though only briefly, the attention of both the interviewee and myself.

However, the settings used for interviewing generally offered conditions that were conducive to enhancing the trust needed for discussing and disclosing personal perspectives in a responsive way. Whether the interviews were distorted by being taped was difficult to gauge, but none of the men interviewed asked for the tape recorder to be switched off.<sup>14</sup> Taping may have had some impact initially, when respondents seemed most conscious of it, by slightly hampering conversations, but that may have also been due to initial nerves and before good rapport had been built. Later on, when the tape needed turning over or changing, whilst this caused some interruption to the interview itself, it did not seem to dampen the discussion at this stage which had become generally much more free-flowing.

A final consideration with respect to validity concerns the possible effects of the researcher on the research. Even though I am likely, as the researcher, to have had an effect on the interviewees, this does not mean, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have argued, that the findings are rendered invalid. Rather, by adopting a reflexive approach the effects of personal reactivity can be minimised and monitored. The researcher's agendas, background and interpretative processes are thereby offered to the reader as part of a critical analysis of the level of 'objectivity' achieved. Such analysis included considering the potential impact of the ascribed characteristics and background of the researcher being a white male of British descent in his then mid-thirties, along with any assumptions that might have been made by respondents about his class, religion and sexuality.

I felt that by being male, by emphasising I was a fellow student, and by appearing both slightly older and dressing appropriately<sup>15</sup> proved useful and advantageous in the recruitment and interviewing process, as did exhibiting a warm and friendly manner. Good field relations also had to be built and I relied on emphasising sound ethics and

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<sup>14</sup> This did, however, happen in one of the pilot interviews when we were discussing intimate details concerning his sexuality.

<sup>15</sup> A casual dress code was adopted in the interviews with men of white British descent and a slightly more formal attire with men of Indian descent to be befitting their own different styles.

‘impression management’ during both recruitment and again when in the interview process. This was particularly important when talking with the men of Indian descent. The potential consequences of me, as the researcher, being an ‘outsider’ were best alleviated by developing good field relations (Punch, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

My relations with men of Indian descent were considerably strengthened after accepting an invitation to a large social event to celebrate Diwali at Imperial College. Whilst this was all rather daunting for me, being almost the only non-Asian in attendance, I was at least able to draw comfort from my earlier experiences of learning from and socialising with South Asian friends at university, as well as regularly frequenting Club Kali, which was run by and for South Asians and their friends.

Being myself a white British man also seemed to help build ‘rapport’ in recruiting and interviewing the group of men of white British descent. It seemed important that they were able to relate to me as a person, which undoubtedly helped most of them speak more openly about their experiences. Initial conversations prior to the interview often included talking about sport, particularly football. In addition, the combination of being male, appearing then still fairly youthful and having a broad perspective on class issues<sup>16</sup> seemed to weigh heavily in my favour in the recruitment and interview process.

The favourable manner demonstrated by all the young men interviewed possibly reflected their wider interest in the subject area. The enthusiasm shown particularly by men of Indian descent seemed to relate in part to them feeling somewhat ‘invisible’ in Britain and wanting to portray their community and culture in a positive light. They seemed pleased to get the chance finally to make their voices heard and a life-history approach, utilising in-depth interviewing, helped to offer more than an abridged version of their experiences. Moreover, since I was *not* part of the local Indian community, some respondents of Indian descent may have actually been encouraged to talk more openly in this investigation, with the help of sound interview techniques.

Issues of reliability and validity, credence, plausibility and dependability will be returned to in the final discussion chapter. Certainly, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996)

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<sup>16</sup> My upbringing would probably be classed as fairly middle-class but for the last sixteen years I have lived on an inner London social housing estate.

have argued, the empirical details of the local cannot be directly extrapolated to a given population. After all, qualitative research captures but one version of what are essentially multiple realities. This means, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have suggested, that theorised accounts of a phenomenon themselves are, on the one hand, selective and interpretative (even though they are 'grounded' in the data) but, on the other hand, they do still essentially offer an explicit understanding of why social processes occur in particular ways.



# Chapter 4

## The Family and its Effects

### Preamble

The analysis of findings from the fieldwork has been organised in three chapters and focuses on three key sets of issues that emerged from men's accounts about how background and cultural factors shaped self-understanding in general, and notions of sexuality and masculinity in particular.

The exploration of each of these three sets of issues in this and the following two chapters – *the family and its effects*, *the impact of religion* and *the significance of peer relations* – provides an illustration of how race/ethnicity and sexuality intersect in the production of forms of masculinity among both men of white British descent and men of Indian descent.

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The data collected from the main study were initially reviewed and then systematically coded to trace the interaction between cultural background and the production of masculinity. The nature of the family and its effects emerged as the first of three 'rich' themes within the data analysis. Three sub-themes were evident within this overall theme: *upbringing versus 'just growing up'*, *extended family versus unstructured family* and *the development of sexuality*. Interviews revealed that perceptions of the impact of the family were more homogeneous among men of Indian descent than among the men of white British descent.

### Upbringing versus 'Just Growing Up'

It was apparent from the interviews that the parents of men of Indian descent had made strenuous efforts to familiarise their children with their cultural and religious heritage. These men reported that that they had been encouraged to maintain their 'parents' culture and religion', and many had also been taught their mother tongue. Such efforts had provided them with a sense of identity that was broadly regarded as Asian, and more distinctly as Indian, Hindu and/or Gujarati.

The fact that the men of Indian descent were brought up in a background in which ‘cultural difference’ and religion were stressed, meant this influenced ‘who they are’ and ‘what they did’:

Everything I am (pause) they’ve basically taught me [...] <sup>17</sup> the way a man should act with like, as he grows up. How should he act with his parents, or how you should bring their own children up. Or how they, should he act with their wives, or just in general life, in work, in other things like that. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

My parents gave me a really good upbringing about my culture. They taught me my moral values, my ethics, what it means as a Hindu, what does it mean to, uhm, you know, love God, to love, to love others, to look after others, to care for others and you know, not to do wrong things. And I think if anything, that’s made me what I am today. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Upbringing was generally felt to represent a rich part of personal life, which encouraged men of Indian descent not to forget their roots and enhanced their wider sense of communal belonging, especially when attending community events or festivals.

There was less agreement among men of Indian descent about whether as a community living in the UK, they had been entirely successful in retaining their culture and religion. Some argued that not all Indian families were encouraging their children to learn about their culture and religion, and so a lot of the ‘older traditions’ were being diluted. Others felt that there remained a strong conservative element within British Hindu Society, which helped perpetuate the teaching of culture and religion to younger generations. Certainly, many of these men illustrated through their own lives how social systems from the East can be integrated with a way of life of the West.

These men, too, discussed how being taught about culture and religion early on had provided them with a strong moral guide. These values encouraged a sense of duty and respect for one’s family and elders. They also promoted a more ‘disciplined’ approach to life so as to avoid the possible ‘distractions’ so often encountered by other members of their generation.

Many men felt that their own adherence to these values was the least they could do to repay their parents for their hard work, determination and sacrifice to make something of themselves in the UK. They wanted to work hard to make their parents proud of them, because they felt they “owed it” to them:

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<sup>17</sup> [...] – signifies omitted text.

Our family have worked hard to get to this country. We feel a bit more that we should appreciate and maybe achieve a bit more and make that conscious effort to achieve a lot more. So, we've, well we feel a duty first of all to our parents that we got to a certain place we should study hard. We must work hard. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Some parents rewarded their sons' good academic grades through adolescence and beyond by softening their opposition to them socialising outside the family and the home. However, many men acknowledged that they had felt tested in being disciplined, when they had gone out to such places as nightclubs:

We often, we go out clubbing and things, and she [my mother]<sup>18</sup>, uhm, over time, she's [my Mum] learned that yeah, it is, ah, it's okay you know, as long as you do keep in control and stuff *et cetera* and stay disciplined. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., student)

In contrast, few men of white British descent reported being taught much about their culture and religion by their parents. Most suggested that their parents had preferred to distance themselves from their own religious beliefs and 'typical English upbringing', and had not, therefore, felt it necessary to instil, encourage or perpetuate in their own children a strong religious and/or cultural identity.

These men's accounts of their early experiences revealed that culture and religion featured less directly in influencing 'who they were' and 'what they did'. Men of white British descent talked more about how the more secular views and values of their parents had helped influence their own beliefs and outlook:

I think, like, religion, uhm, there's not, my Mum's not really religious, and, you know, I was never encouraged to like go to church or pray, or anything like that. Uhm, so I don't think there's that element there. Uhm (pause) uhm, I think maybe like the Christian perspective of uhm, you know, trying to be a good person maybe. My Mum was, you know, kind of that ballpark [...] doing good things and good people, and all that. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

Others recalled how they had been more influenced by their parents' political (than religious) beliefs that had arisen from the burgeoning counter-culture of the 1960s onwards:

I think my Mum's had pretty much the biggest influence. [...] She kind of

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<sup>18</sup> [ ] – denotes notes and words not present on the tape and added to the transcript.

rejected like, what my grandmother thought was right and proper for her. Uhm, like she was a hippie and a punk, and all that sort of stuff. Uhm, (pause) I think like her politics influenced me. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

It seemed, on the whole, problematic for men of white British descent to pinpoint exactly what they had been taught by their parents, because the context and process of such teaching seemed less obvious:

Things that you wouldn't even (pause) probably be aware of uhm, (pause) values. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

For a few men, parents' influence was partially recognised, but only in a more generalised manner:

I think they [my family] had just a stabilising influence. [...] They have been something to compare other sort of experiences against them [...] as a 'normal' or whatever. [...] What I would consider acceptable or not acceptable. That helped. Uhm, in terms of, sort of, moral choices. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

According to men of white British descent, few parents used religious precepts to prevent their children from participating in certain activities. The primary concern of parents appeared to be that their children obtained a decent education and 'stayed out of trouble'. There was less evidence of parents encouraging their children to maintain a sense of discipline over the more 'moral' aspects of their lives.

As children, men of white British descent were largely permitted the freedom to go out provided they worked hard at school. It appeared that some parents relied on school to help instil and maintain a conventional and disciplined approach to most aspects of life, while others appeared to allow their children the freedom of discovering things for themselves:

There was also a sim(...) <sup>19</sup> a sense of the community of young people. Because people had to come together and they did. And they, they, they, could do it away from sort of other people's homes. They could meet up somewhere like a, a small venue to watch music, or whatever, or you know, stuff, or just away from the home, away from other people's homes. [...] You're organising your own lives, and you had the space to do it. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

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<sup>19</sup> (...) – denotes an unfinished word.

### *The Impact of Gender*

Among men of Indian descent, frequent reference was made to how men were usually expected to work and support the family, while women were the carers in the home. The perceived role of Indian men means that sons have traditionally been relied upon, by Indian families, to look after their parents in old age.

It was reported by the men of Indian descent that differing expectations about boys and girls still existed. Boys were expected to take a more assertive role, whereas girls were more accustomed to being looked after within the family.

From some of the accounts of men of Indian descent, standards of appropriate gender behaviour were preserved within, and by, the family. Most of the men recalled that when growing up they had been given greater freedom and independence than their female counterparts. It seemed that girls of Indian descent had more restrictions placed on them as to what they could do, or where they could go:

Because I'm a guy, I had that much more freedom, and I think my freedom would be that much more restricted. My Dad would be that much more protective of me if ever I had, or was, in a relationship. Uhm, and I would watch a lot more what I say and do 'cause I know that as a, as a, Indian girl, what you say and do even among your own peers is a, is a, massive deal. It's just a big thing. [...] Indian girls, on the other hand, have to really manage their relationships that much better. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

It appeared from the men interviewed that gender roles continue to remain more defined, whether it be through boys being directed into the appropriate roles they are expected to undertake as men, or being acquainted with these roles through male figures in the family. Importantly, fathers and older brothers were often referred to as gender role models, since they displayed the culturally and religiously accepted ways of behaving 'as a man'.

Men of Indian descent mostly reported that being a male in the family had increased the level of responsibility bestowed upon them as they became older. Fathers often expected their sons to help and support them in the family business in their spare time, and to cover for them in their parents' absence. The business was also often a source of conversation and consultation between father and son(s).

Some of these men experienced a sense of over-reliance being placed upon them to accept a greater responsibility, as a male in the family. This was illustrated in examples showing how they had to consider their siblings and/or other family members:

[My father] consulting me [...] uhm, on issues regarding, you know, my brothers and sisters. Their school work, uhm, choice to universities and things like that. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

How these men were treated helped prepare them more for the expectations of what could be seen as traditional gender roles, whereby certain duties and responsibilities remained essentially defined by gender. However, the continuation of these male roles into adulthood and within a partnership appeared to be influenced by whether their partners were willing to accept such distinct gender roles:

We certainly like, have been through situations, where we really, really have learnt that I have to be a man in the relationship. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

I mean again now like changing times, I mean, uhm, I mean my girlfriend's Punjabi, so she, she has like a different, I mean their religion treats all men and women equal. I mean, so, uhm (smiles) I mean just being a gentleman, trying to pay for things and what not, (laughs) like it tends to upset her, so. Yeah, I mean that sort of thing, it makes life a bit difficult as well. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

A similar exploration of the possible impact of gender socialization within the family, and on the upbringing of the men of white British descent revealed how the production of forms of masculinity here involved adapting to more egalitarian and 'contemporary' ideologies and lifestyles. Reference was still made, however, to the notion of a man's more traditional role as the breadwinner in the family, and the power equated with it:

My father spent a lot of time away from home and from an early age, I had to be the man of the house, so to speak. [...] I suppose I had a sense of belief or confidence and that's helped in, in me taking a, I suppose, traditional role of a male and taking control of situations. [...] I'm very much uhm, stereotypically, a middle-class (laughs) male. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Men of white British descent found it more difficult to quantify the effects of the family and their upbringing on becoming a man. This was most likely due to the fact that their experiences had been to some extent normalised by dominant culture:

It hasn't been like any pressure to, or not from my parents, or anything, like, to have a girlfriend or to not be gay, or do anything like that. It's more like to find

myself rather than just be this kind of man. It's like not "you should, oh you should be out playing football, you should be out uhm, ah, clubbing and shagging girls". [...] They haven't like forced me into the kind of stereotype [...] I don't have to do that. (James, 19, of W.B.D., student)

There was also evidence of how modern feminist ideologies with respect to sexual equality had seemingly weakened what might be seen as 'traditional' gender role expectations within, and by particularly the middle-class family<sup>20</sup>. Men of white British descent did not report any special distinctions within their families, between expectations for boys and for girls:

I don't think there would have been any other real effect [other than interests] 'cause I think, you know, I think he's treated the three of us very, very much in the same way. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Some men had become acquainted with less clearly defined gender roles, and had developed an empathy for sexual equality under the influence of feminist ideologies within the family:

My Mum was always a feminist. It kind of rubbed off on me, like, I do have, sort of, like, some respect for women and stuff like that. [...] I just regard women as like, sort of, equals. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

Men of white British descent reported that the impact of ideologies of sexual equality had weakened the custom of distinct gender roles in their own partnerships. These men felt slightly awkward when encountering more clearly gender defined duties and responsibilities, which were now seen as part of a bygone age:

[My] Russian girlfriend. She was uhm, (pause) simply because of the different cultural, sort of, norms. I think, that was, that was quite, you know, her idea of manhood was certainly more economically divid(...) it was more, it was more like a, kind of, like, late Victorian, early Edwardian, kind of, like, (laughs) figure of, of a man. And so it was, you know, provider, protector or whatever. [...] I don't like defined, really strictly defined gender differences and I don't think they mean or should mean much uhm, roles, social roles. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The weakening of clearly defined gender patterns of socialization within the family meant many of men of white British descent struggled to comprehend the actual concept

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<sup>20</sup> The sample of men interviewed for the main study was university educated and predominantly from a middle-class background.

of 'being a man'. Many appeared frankly bemused when asked when they had attained manhood, or indeed whether they had actually reached it yet. There seemed little these men had experienced within the family that had alerted them to a sense of transition into manhood:

I guess I struggle very much with the concept of being a man. [...] I really don't think that transition was that (smiles) uhm, defined. When did I become a man? I don't phew, have I? I don't know. (Daniel, 23, of W.B.D., graduate)

There seemed to be more difference in the upbringing between the sexes, with respect to parental concern over safety outside the home. Most men of white British descent reported having been given, when younger, comparatively more freedom and independence, whilst girls had to contend with being more protected and sheltered by their parents.

Since there appeared less expectation of clearly segregated gender roles within these families, differences in treatment between boys and girls were felt to be minimal by the men of white British descent. This might help to explain why few of the men of white British descent had taken on any special responsibility for being a 'male' within this context.

If there was any designation of special responsibilities among siblings in white British families, this was more linked to seniority or maturity, rather than gender. There were no accounts of fathers relying on their sons for support or encouraging them to assume special responsibility for their siblings, in contrast with men of Indian descent.

On the other hand, several men of white British descent described how their fathers had tried to encourage a mutual interest in sport and/or drinking in order to try and assert some form of mutual masculinity. One even revealed how he smoked the occasional joint with his father. These fathers perhaps imagined that such a sharing of interests or pursuits would help instigate a sense of bonding.

However, not all the men of white British descent felt that participating in these more typical masculine pursuits and forms of asserting manhood with their fathers, had resulted in a closer relationship:



Encouraging me to go out drinking with him at thirteen, and stuff like that, which wasn't really my thing. But, in a way, I, sort of, went along with it, just to please him. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

Overall, it seemed that men of white British descent had been left to develop a seemingly more 'informal' form of masculinity both through their family upbringing and from factors outside the home:

What I fall in is probably the new category of, well (tuts), shouldn't categorise yourself, but like the 'new' man. Uhm, very in touch with his feminine side. Uhm, emotional, caring. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

### **Extended Family versus the Unstructured Family**

The preceding illustrations of how aspects of family upbringing helped shape men's lives and practices are revealing when considered alongside the structure and nature of the family that they grew up in. Interviews with both groups of men revealed a somewhat different composition to the 'family' and, importantly, its effects.

Men of Indian descent were much more likely to have come from a type of household in which their parents remained married. Reports of parents separating, divorcing or remarrying were virtually absent in these men's accounts, as was any reference to step-families.

In conversation, men of Indian descent emphasised the importance of close ties with their family. This was not only because they had been taught a sense of duty, loyalty and respect to one's family, as discussed previously, but also because of their own personal experiences of the benefits of being in a close family:

Family's been very influential in the sense that uhm, ah being a, very close, you can go to anyone in the family you need for help, or for advice. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

As a close-knit family and that, you know, we support each other. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Close family ties appeared to provide an infrastructure typically of help and support, which further strengthened a sense of close intimacy, and enhanced greater reliance on family relationships:

Family means everything to me. [...] Everything I do is in one shape or another based around my, my heritage. Uhm, the idea and the ideals of family, which are key. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

The special importance of the immediate family was shown by men of Indian descent, when discussing their closeness with their siblings:

Since I've come to college more than anything else now, it's made me realise what it means to have a sister. It's the most, one of the most precious things I have in the world. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Several men discussed how being a male member of the family had meant they were expected to take a more responsible role, especially in terms of helping and supporting their siblings. There were many accounts to this effect, with boys providing help to other siblings in practical ways, such as with school homework:

Always, you know help, helping each other out and stuff. Because my brother is a dentist as well, and he lends me all his books and stuff. [...] And I help my little brother out, it's like whatever it is. [...] Since like GCSE and onwards. (Joe 18, of I.D., student)

Mutual support among siblings was often just an extension of a deeper set of family relationships:

[My brother] He's always been there to support me, at, from a very young age he use to teach me a lot, and that's why I, my education, I, I owe a lot to him. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Other accounts illustrated the highly intimate nature of the relationships that existed among brothers and/or sisters, and which sometimes appeared to supplant other very close friendships. These relationships provided someone to turn to for advice and support, as well as someone to confide in and rely upon:

Relationships with men, obviously would be with my, as in family-wise, would be my brother. (Swallows) So I look to him towards advice in, in certain things. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

Beyond close ties within the immediate family, some men of Indian descent explained that their concepts of 'family' encompassed larger kinship networks of extended family members, as well as family friends. Roles among these kinship networks were often

shared and formal family titles became rather more fluid. Being raised in this kind of environment meant that these men were effectively supervised and protected:

My cousin A. uhm, I would on the most part introduce him as my brother, and I don't see him as anything else but my brother. [...] My aunt is pretty much my second Mum. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

When I say family, there's also this sub-group, sub-family, who are, actually they're not related to you by blood, but they are very, very close to you. To your parents. You know your, my parents' friends and their kids. And they're so close that you can almost call them family, you can almost, you know, treat their house as your own house. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

The close extended family ties reported by many men of Indian descent were instrumental in, and strengthened by, extended family members living either in the same household or nearby in the same street or neighbourhood:

Most of us live in the same sort of area, we've got on our street, we've got six houses which all belong to our family. You know, in the same street, and so that's like all my Dad's brothers and we all live pretty close, and so we see each other all the time. And so in a way it's not like you know my one family, with me, my Mum, Dad, sister, or my uncle's one family, it's like everyone together. And everyone's uhm, always around everyone's houses and everyone's door is always open to everyone else. Everyone has keys to everyone else's houses, and that's how close we are, that trust, that friendship, uhm, you know, that family bond. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Having extended family members living within the same household or in close proximity ensured for many men of Indian descent that their lives were inseparably connected. There were illustrations given of how relatives contributed to the welfare of the offspring, whether it be through taking care of them or supplementing what they were taught about their religion and culture during their upbringing:

My grandparents, my father's parents are very significant, as I lived with them for a lot of my childhood [until ten years old]. We lived in, in the same house as the whole family. And only as myself and my brother, as we grew up, then my parents moved into their own flat. But up till then they'd lived with us. So they played a very big (emphasised) part of, of our upbringing and especially learning about the language, learning about the food and the culture, and the religion, and especially in that sense. Uhm, also, when you live with your grandparents you do form a very special bond with them, and that bond is still there today. You know uhm, they're almost like a second set of parents. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Close ties within the extended family were further demonstrated by the occurrence of

frequent 'family' get-togethers, along with the propensity to convene and participate in shared religious and community events:

With the family in this country, we tend to get together as a whole, I'd say at least five or six times a year. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Whenever there's like all the festivals that takes place every year, we're always encouraged to actively participate in the rituals as a family. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

It was reported as quite common for family members to go into joint business ventures together:

With my uncle opposite [our house], it's very close like, you know, obviously in the business together, we regularly go to the house for dinner. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Strong family alliances also seemed responsible for bolstering a sense of family allegiance among the younger generation:

[Our family] We all support each other and back each other up, and that's I believe, an important issue and a very positive issue. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Other accounts illustrated the integral role played by members of the larger kinship networks which included friends, in the lives of men of Indian descent. This involved them being offered constant guidance, as well as practical forms of support:

Cousins my own age and uhm, like second cousins and third cousins, you know, close, friends of the family and so uhm, they're the ones that know me better, and uhm, they're the ones which I have a better relationship with them, I'll look to them for advice and so forth. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

And the good thing is as well uhm, is that, you know, when you've got family friends around you as well who are, they, they, they, a lot, a few of them do teach you very good things. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

The acceptance by many men of Indian descent of 'mentoring' by senior family members and friends was indicative of a more fundamental concern to respect elders in the family and community for their wisdom and advice. There were accounts of how decisions by members of kinship networks and community elders had made a strong impression on these men's lives and practice:

The elders in the family are always most important. I don't have any brothers and sisters from my immediate family, just Mum and Dad. But beyond that my, ah, grandparents, ah, Dad's elder brothers, uhm, are significant, ah, within, within our community elders are always respected very much, you know. Ah, what they say normally goes (pause) uhm, so any big family decisions to be made will be made by them. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

Among the families of men of white British descent, on the other hand, many parents had separated, divorced, remarried or never married. A plurality of family structures existed and some of these included elaborate step-families:

It's quite a complicated family structure actually. Uhm, I've got no actual brothers and sisters. I've got one half-sister. Who is from my mother's uhm, side. And one stepbrother, who, ah, who is from my d(...) my stepdad's side. So my Mum divorced, remarried [...] when I was three. [...] And in, in that regard, I pretty much consider my stepdad as my Dad. (Daniel, 23, of W.B.D., graduate)

The experience of family breakdown was often traumatic for men of white British descent. There were reports of how such conflict and tensions in the family had had a devastating cumulative effect on their relationships with one or both parent, and often severed close family ties:

I guess my relationship with my father is probably like, not quite so positive. [...] I don't really see him (my father) that often. [...] My mother wanted a child, so she was going out with my Dad and she just stopped taking the pill. [...] He was quite unreliable when I was a kid. [...] I only ever see him nowadays, like once every three months or six months. [...] I never really bonded with my father in any major sense of the word. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

The more 'unorthodox' family structures often created some distress for those growing-up in them, because they did not appear to be like 'other' families. These children often had to 'make do' with a single-parent or had to adjust to the tensions that arose in step-families:

My Mum not being with my Dad, like I mean, being brought up by my Mum, uhm, I mean at times like, I did, I do think when I was younger I was like "why don't, why does everybody else have a family and I don't?" [...] I guess like (pause) because I never really had a father figure, like I had to work out a lot of stuff on my own. [...] I had to do that myself. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

Family life for some men of white British descent had suffered as a result of absentee

parents and care by childminders. These men reported feeling neglected by their parents and had increasingly become more self-sufficient and detached:

I'm not really close with my parents so much. [...] It could be a bit to do with their careers, actually because, yeah, they both work. So, and I use to go to like a child-minder instead of just coming home, so. [...] For the whole of primary school I think yeah. [...] [Then] I looked after myself. (James, 19, of W.B.D., student)

The tangible erosion of family life and close family ties even with immediate family members was illustrated by some very stark accounts from men of British descent:

I talk to them [my family] very rarely now. I don't see them very often. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The disconnection with families among so many men of white British descent amplified an already fragile alliance that had eroded the provision of help and support from other family members. Neither had there been much encouragement of a sense of duty, loyalty and respect for one's family in these men's upbringing. This meant the value and importance of having close family ties was not strongly valued, given the shortcomings in their own experiences of family life.

The few men of white British descent who had grown up in what might be termed a nuclear family had a more intimate relationship with their immediate family and were more positive about their families:

My parents uhm, both (pause) love each other very much, and have never been afraid to sh(...) to, ah, show caring towards me and my brother. [...] Basically, they, you know, they do everything with a view for, for, for the family. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Given that there were no special expectations or responsibilities associated with being a male member of the family, white British men's relationships with siblings were often ones of jealousy and rivalry, rather than help and support:

When I was younger and my older brother P. was uhm, (pause) it's kind of like, this kind of younger brother competitive kind of thing. I always wanted to, if you're playing sport, or if whatever you're doing, you always thought, kind of, that's the goal to aim for. [...] Typical kind of brothers competitiveness. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Some relations between siblings were more likely to improve along with maturity, whilst others were virtually irreconcilable:

I'd describe it as quite bad actually. [...] We just became the antithesis (mispronounced) of each other really. [...] We just didn't have anything in common in, in anything really. [...] She [my sister] was just always quite abusive to me. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Lack of close family ties among men of white British descent had repercussions for the extent of their involvement with other extended family members. Some close ties persisted with other relatives when they remained living nearby:

My grandmother uhm, who on my Mother's Mother, uhm, she's always, 'cause she's always lived close by. [...] Uhm, (swallows) she's, ah, very much the matriarch in the family. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Few families lived with extended family members in the same household or nearby in the same street, but those who did so reported being much closer:

My Dad's sister, my auntie [...] lives in one half of the house, and has done for probably four years, maybe three. [...] And she's kind of like, well she is a member of the family really (laughs). [...] You know she's lives there and you see her everyday. [...] We always saw her a lot before that. [...] But she wasn't (exhales) a really close relative before she moved down. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

There were other exceptions, especially with some grandparents, who were reported to be still part of the family by a few men of white British descent. Such men reported having been looked after by them, and given guidance and support:

My gran who has always been sort of someone I felt comfortable talking to. And I'd often go to her before I'd go to my Mum. [...] Even now quite often, you know, if I'm gonna phone home, I'll phone my gran first and tell her how I'm doing, before I'll phone my Mum. [...] She financially supports, supports me now and she supported me through college. And she's always, I mean she's always financially supported the family. [...] And she has so much time on her hands, that I suppose, you know, it's much easier to speak to someone when they're in all the time. You can just go and call round. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

Overall, however, there was much less involvement with wider kin majority by men of white British descent. Few reported meeting up for family 'get-togethers'. This contributed to an already weakened sense of family connection and allegiance:

Family-wise, I'm not, I don't feel a, a total connection with, with having to see people. [...] At birthdays I, I go away for my birthdays. So I'm by myself. Uhm, so I have no family connections for that. [...] All family 'dos', I hate, and try to avoid. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

## **The Development of Sexuality**

A final theme of relevance concerned the manner in which the family influenced the development of sexuality and sexual expression among men.

### *Discourses of Sex within the Family*

Men of Indian descent reported their parents' and families' aversion to discussing sex openly:

Any Indian parent will not talk about sex (laughs) in front of their kids. They're very sort of "shh". [...] They seem to be a lot more conservative about sex and stuff in general. Uhm, (pause) they don't tend to sort of, how can I say, they don't tell their kids about it. They don't educate their kids that much about it. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Even outside the family, overt discussions of sex were not generally seen as both culturally and religiously appropriate, partly due to sex being widely characterised as sinful, shameful and overly distracting:

In India, even today, I don't think uhm, people will generally discuss it within the family. [...] What I reckon is, it's to do with uhm, ah, the way sex is made out to be like, a form of the devil, kind of thing. So this could really influence someone, and uhm, they can be sidetracked by it. And it's something that people would (pause) they accept that it should be something, as I said, for reproduction purposes. [...] No need to discuss. It shouldn't be discussed. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

Sex was typically viewed as a private matter. So silenced was talk of sex within family life, that its absence was never knowingly questioned by men as they were growing up, despite a more overt discourse of sex surfacing both in the playground and among some peers:

I couldn't really comment 'cause I haven't really talked to them in much detail about that so. [...] It wasn't really paid much attention to, we just sort of accepted that and uhm, with parents you wouldn't really talk about that. It wasn't really known that you talk about that. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)



Part of the awkwardness concerning discussion of sex within the family appeared to relate to cultural and religious beliefs that defined all women as mothers and sisters, and encouraged all women to be viewed with respect. Even conversations about girlfriends with women within the family presented some men of Indian descent with feelings of embarrassment and uneasiness:

I think women's views are very well respected. Very well held as far as we're concerned, all women are our mothers or our sisters, and so we should respect them. [...] [There's] certain issues sometimes you might not wanna discuss with Mum [...] things like girlfriends and stuff, you can feel a bit uncomfortable, not that the fact it's Mum, but just cause she's a female and close to you. Uhm, you can feel a little bit uncomfortable at times. (Vijay 19, of I.D., student)

On the rare occasions when sex was more freely broached, it had first to be established that there were no women in the vicinity to overhear and take offence, or to cause embarrassment:

The thing is, I don't really exactly know what my parents views are (laughs) and their attitudes are on, on sex and that, because I mean they, they don't really ever talk about it, and that, I mean. Wha(...) (swallows) I mean, when the only time I ever hear anything about it is if like, all my uncles come round and that, and all the g(...) uncles and that are sitting down and they, and every so often like, you're walking about and you hear the odd dirty joke or something. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

Restrictions on overt discussion of sex within the family meant reference to it remained relatively implicit in conversations around marriage and family life:

My parents probably have never talked about it [sex] between family or friends, or anyone. [...] We've discussed marriage and family life like that, but not sex directly. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

The silencing of candid talk of sex in the home cumulatively meant few parents of men of Indian descent had felt comfortable teaching their children the basics about sex:

It's not really been a case where my parents have taught me that much, like, you know, sat down and had a discussion about sex (laughs) or anything. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Parents were reportedly keen not to dwell on matters of sex, even when they knew sex education classes were taking place at school:

My parents, in passing, knew that I was having sex education, but they, I've never really (emphasised) discussed it at length with them. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Constraint on the discussion of sex within the family made even the viewing of television difficult. Scenes of a sexual nature were generally switched off by parents to avoid embarrassment:

If you are sitting in a living room with your family and watching a programme, and after nine-thirty there happens to be a programme where there is something like that, straight away the channel will be changed. (Raj, 23, of I.D., student)

Being brought up in an environment where sex was considered unequivocally private provided men of Indian descent with a particular outlook on sex that was difficult to put to one side:

You're always brought up thinking that it's (pause), you're actually brought up not thinking that it's wrong, I shouldn't say that, you're brought up thinking that it's disrespectful to talk about it or, or watch it, or whatever. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

There was evidence of a greater heterogeneity in discourse about sex in the families of the men of white British descent. Some reported a similar unwillingness of parents to discuss sex and such matters:

I don't talk about sex with my mother put it that way. And certainly not with my father (laughs). (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Those few families of white British descent who were overtly religious were only likely to speak of sex when endorsing the moral principle that linked sex to married life:

I was brought up not to talk about sex. [...] We [my parents and I] have a consensus over, over what we think is right and wrong. [...] My parent's belief that I shouldn't have sex, has become a personal belief that I shouldn't have sex. [...] I think probably part of it [being conventionally minded sexually] was my upbringing and religion and stuff like that. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

In other white British families, discussion of sex was subsumed within that of relationships. Here, concealment was often accompanied by a certain prudishness and meant viewing scenes of a sexual nature on television with parents often caused

embarrassment:

I felt prudish, probably more than most people, actually with my parents. Uhm, (pause) and discussing sex, maybe I mean discussing sex with them, would have been easier in the context of discussing it in the context of a bonding. Or in terms of a relationship. [...] I'm probably quite a prude at heart. (Laughs) I think that's from sort of upbringing level. [...] I would always feel very prudish talking about sex with my parents and, and God, I'd still blush if, you know, something came on the TV that, you know, with them there. (Daniel, 23, of W.B.D., graduate)

These same respondents reported less discomfort discussing sex with siblings as well as with peers:

Having older brother, an older brother and sister, was definitely quite important, because I never actually got, I never got talked, my parents never talked to me about it [sex]. And I think it was because they knew they didn't have to because I had an older brother and sister. And I just picked things up from them. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The remainder of parents of men of white British descent had been willing to discuss sex and had felt more responsible in educating their children about the basics:

I remember the, you know, the, the talk from my Mum about uhm, you know, where babies come from and things like that [...] [at] ten or eleven. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

These same parents were also reported to be more likely to attest to the enjoyable aspects of sex from their own experiences:

It's mostly on my Mum [...] 'a woman's take on sex'. [...] My Mum was, I mean, she's a self proclaimed as a promiscuous, that she was promiscuous in her youth, and I guess I always just took that as an alright thing to be. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

The stance on sex taken by parents sometimes went as far as urging their sons to approach sex primarily for gratification:

My Dad believes that you should go and have a good time. That you should shag around. That you should (pause) have affairs (laughs), you know. I mean, I, I think I differ from him. You know, for him having sex is just an activity. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

There were other instances reported by men of white British descent of more liberal parents being a type of ‘best friend’ with which to discuss personal matters such as sex. This seemed to transform these men’s attitudes and approach to sex as they became older:

I’m very, very close to my Mum, always have been. [...] If I’m upset or I need really someone to talk to, I will ring her in A. You know, and, and (pause) she, she’s, she’s of my ah, ah confidant (mispronounced), like, uhm, the one I speak to [...] talking to my mum [about sex]. By rather than going down the pub and bragging about things, I openly spoke to my Mum, asking advice, and yo(...) things that you probably wouldn’t imagine, but I, I asked because I felt comfortable enough to ask my Mum. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

### *The Salience of Marriage and Assumptions of Heterosexuality*

For men of Indian descent, the cultural and religious standing of marriage and family life added to restrictions placed on overt references to sex. Marriage and having a family were strongly portrayed by parents and the wider family as an intrinsic and sacred part of life. This had a strong bearing on attitudes towards marriage itself among these men. Men believed there were compelling benefits to be gained from them entering into a lasting marriage:

Marriage is everything. [...] It’s important in religion, it’s important spiritually and it’s important for family and family means everything to me. And marriage is the birth of family as far as I’m concerned. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

From a very early age, men remembered having been taught to conform to the set ideal of getting married, along with the implicit assumptions this carried concerning their heterosexuality:

The pressure, there’s always, yeah, I’d say the family always expects me to get married. The normal way is you get educated, you get married, you have children, you get a family. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

The salience of marriage in the lives of men of Indian descent helped to guide their later attitudes towards sexual conduct and relationships. Forging a relationship was taken very seriously by these men because it normally signified the beginning of a special and lifelong commitment. Such a relationship was seen as providing a unique sense of intimacy and devotion, similar to a soulmate:

I’ve been brought up (pause) in (pause) a culture, in a society, you know, in an

ethnic group, where you are conditioned to start thinking of marriage at a very early age. You, you know, you start thinking of settling down pretty early. And having a partner for life. So when you are twenty-one, twenty-two, and when you are dating somebody, you are really, in your, at, at the back of your mind, you are thinking 'would this person be a suitable partner?' That's what you're always thinking. You're not just there for fun, temporarily. Uhm, so, I guess that, compared to perhaps some of the non-Asian, or the non-ethnic groups, (pause) you know, our, sort of what we, how we look at sex and how we look at marriage, and how we look at relationships is, is different. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Some men interviewed held strong opinions about marriage being the only legitimate setting for a (*hetero*)sexual relationship and procreation:

Marriage is very important if there is going to be, ah, (pause) uhm, any sex, and children are involved in. It can only happen after marriage, so marriage is very important. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

Entering into marriage or more specifically undertaking the responsibilities associated with a regular relationship had a symbolic significance that epitomised the attainment of maturity and transition into adulthood for men of Indian descent:

I mean, you have a lot of uhm, different lifestyles. I mean, so obviously some people would be like at my age, nineteen, I feel as though it's still a young age. But at my age, there's certain people that are obviously married, have children and things like that. Uhm, so in that way, I probably feel less to an extent, of, like an adult, probably because those people have got more responsibilities and more things like that. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

Involvement in a serious relationship or marriage was also responsible for enhancing masculinity among men of Indian descent. Marriage among these men also symbolically represented not only the union of a man and woman, but two families as well. This aspect of marriage underlined just how serious this event was in the lives of these men:

Well within like my culture, marriage is like uhm, ah, very significant because uhm, when two people get married, it's not only those two people that get married, it's the two families of those two people that get married. And so it's very important that uhm, you know, when you get married, that the person you meet, they're from a, you know, good background, good culture, uhm, not necessarily the same background, the same culture. But a good, you know, a good family in a, because at the end of the day, those families are going to be interacting, and spending a lot of time together. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Future marriage plans were seen by men of Indian descent as being as important to their families as themselves, and this helped to justify family involvement and approval in choosing a suitable spouse. Most still considered this method to be beneficial, unlike the system involved in the more conventional arranged marriage, which had become curtailed since it was now increasingly perceived as inappropriate for today's society:

What we find in the community is like our culture, it changes with time. [...] Nowadays, what you find with uhm, marriages, it's more of a, just a forum to meet people. Uhm, for example, if I was a prospective wanting to get married, my Dad might get into contact with some girls, ah, some people he knew who had daughters. And you'd meet up, you'd go out, have a few drinks, whatever, you'd get to know each other. Uhm, it's that, in that respect. Uhm, so choosing your partner, I, I, if (pause) if, if it's an individual basis, it's always the individual choice no matter what. But I think that our parents can, can always help us out a bit and find us, put us in contact with the right kind of people, yes. Uhm, that's if you don't find anyone in particular at university or work, or anything like that. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Lastly, having the assurance that family would be involved in finding them a partner not only reinforced assumptions of heterosexuality but importantly meant, for some men of Indian descent at least, that peer pressure to seek a suitable spouse themselves was effectively defused:

A lot of uhm, male friends that I've got and maybe, maybe certain people living in Great Britain, probably feel as though like the relationship they'll have with women, will probably be the most important ones, will probably be starting off at uni, and basically having a girlfriend, and then obviously moving on in certain ways like that and getting married, *et cetera*. Whereas, for me, it's more of a clash between those, that, that way of life, and also probably the way that my parent, as in my mother and my brother and that look, 'cause my, when my, my brother got married, well he, his was an arranged marriage. So his was more or less set-up, and basically he didn't have, he didn't have the worry of having to go out and look for a person, getting, getting to know someone. So in that aspect I don't feel as though there's pressure to maybe go out and have a girlfriend, and may, maybe do certain things like that. Whereas, some other people might feel there's loads of pressure maybe if they're not, if they haven't got a girlfriend, or if they're not going out, or they're not doing certain things with people. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

There was little reporting of those parents of men of white British descent promoting marriage in their upbringing as either culturally or religiously important, or encouraging their sons to think seriously about marriage. The standing of marriage among some such men may have been weakened by their parents' own marital experiences. The extent of marital breakdown, extramarital affairs and single parenthood encountered in these men's lives provided them with a more critical appraisal of what marriage would

personally offer them:

I don't believe in marriage. I probably will get married (laughs), who doesn't really believe in it! The reason being is because, after seeing my mother being able to lie for so many years whilst being married (pause), I probably don't think I could trust myself. [...] I've seen how easy it is to be able to do that. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

Scepticism about marriage, exhibited in feelings of disillusionment about modern marriage, were further reinforced by the effects of the current high divorce rate:

I think it's important if it means that it, it really does mean that two people are, are getting together for until death do us part [...] and not this, the way it's becoming in the modern day context, which is with sort of one in three marriages ending in divorce. I don't think it is as important and I think, ah, uhm, a committed non-marital relationship can be just as important. [...] But I still think that the whole, that marriage as an institution, is important, and I think if we could get it back to how it use to be, when people were staying within their marriage then, then I think it is an important thing. [...] That it actually means something, which does mean that, that, ah, uhm, a very, very long-term or forever. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Opinions about marriage were also influenced by the declining 'impact' of religion in the lives of men of white British descent, and the ascendancy of counter-cultural views, which promoted marriage as outdated and irrelevant in current secular society:

I don't place much importance on marriage uhm, because I'm not religious, and I mean, I know marriage doesn't have to be religious, (swallows) but uhm, (pause) I (pause) I don't really, if, if I was with a woman in a long-term relationship, and she really wanted to get married, I wouldn't have objections to it, I don't think. So I'm not really anti-marriage, just quite apathetic towards it really. I wouldn't, I certainly wouldn't be keen, really keen myself. I wouldn't be the one initiating it, or saying "let's get married, let's get married", I don't think. Uhm, I see it as a bit, personally, as a kind of institutional thing [...] I see it as slightly hypocritical if you're gonna have a big church wedding, and stuff, for people who aren't even religious. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The decline in the standing of marriage meant there was very little support among men of white British descent for it remaining exclusively the only legitimate outlet for a (*hetero*)sexual relationship and procreation. Some men of white British descent did, however, reminisce about the former status bestowed on marriage. Some drew some solace from the kind of marriage which was synonymous with what was considered as the 'norm', an undoubted heterosexuality and the underpinning of a certain sexual morality. Others were also more ready to appreciate some of its instrumental benefits:

Marriage is important I think, ah, for stability within the family. If it's, if you truly love the person, I think it's important, uhm, to show that there is a commitment or a bond between two people, uhm, who then might raise a family. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

But overall for men of white British descent, getting married was not really seen as a necessity anymore. Even the confirmation that marriage, with its responsibilities and commitment, denoted maturity and comfort had become offset by these perceived benefits being now generally extended to other serious non-marital relationships:

Relationships with women, as well [...] having a long-term relationship and, and uhm, spending a lot of time, is a basic, it makes you (pause) yeah, it makes me feel more, certainly adult in a way. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The actual forging of a significant relationship now seemed to replicate, more or less, what marriage had historically done to help authenticate a sense of masculinity in men. Some men of white British descent interviewed felt that heterosexual relationships *per se* continued to provide a sense of what was considered the 'norm' and, more intrinsically, 'a reason for being':

Being someone in, in a, in a partnership, because I'm, I'm straight [...] the male/female partnership [...] [gives you] a sense of being more, more masculine or more male, like, because you're in a, the, the, sort of, heterosexual relationship. Uhm, and, and, I suppose, for me, in a, in a way, it does, kind of, I, I feel more manly or have felt more male, when I'm with somebody, than when I'm by myself. Uhm, I feel like, I have more of a purpose with a female. [...] [Whilst] The longer I went through a, a single patch, the more I did question [my sexuality]. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

However, it felt inconceivable among men of white British descent that choosing a partner would involve other family members:

If you're not making a decision for yourself, and if it's someone else who is making your decision for you, then how do you know whether it's right for you? You can't. The only person who can judge that, is you. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Such a view was seen as reflecting customs pertaining to a bygone era which had little relevance and justification in today's society. It was 'their' life that mattered, and white British respondents regarded their own needs and happiness as paramount.



# Chapter 5

## The Impact of Religion

A second over-arching theme that emerged from the data was the impact of religion on men's lives. There were substantial differences between the two groups of men in the role religion was perceived as playing in the construction of their masculine selves. Men of Indian descent seemed to be a much more homogeneous group in terms of the overall impact that religion had on their lives and personal development. Their accounts illustrated the existing and personal influence of religion, in contrast to most of the men of white British descent, whose comments and actions appeared largely to imply that religious affiliation and its influence on subjectivity and behaviour belonged almost to a bygone age.

### Living One's Life

The contribution of religion to the lives of the men of Indian descent seemed to involve more than simply partaking in forms of worship, and obeying a set rules and customs. It corresponded instead to a more systematic way of thinking about and choosing how to live one's life. Hinduism, in particular, was seen as offering a set of codes and precepts in this respect, especially with regard to one's actions:

It's [religion], not in the necessary facts of worship and doing that, but more on belief of actions, which is the same as what our culture, you know, our religion believes more in living your life in the right way. Uhm, and that's definitely quite influential in what I believe. And that you could class, as basically the religion. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Our religion, it's more about like actual actions, like really. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Being involved with religion provided men of Indian descent with a set of ethical guidelines which could be incorporated, albeit only those that *personally* seemed fitting and right, into the way they lived. There was an appreciation among the men of Indian descent, that being a Hindu meant something beyond simply holding some religious beliefs. Hinduism sanctioned the individual to make personal decisions regarding life behaviours. This possibly helps to explain why being religious was regarded by these men as an intrinsic and organic experience:

The faith and religion says a lot about what's right and wrong. But the faith at the same time doesn't, it gives you the choice. That's the, the, I would say, what my understanding of my religion is, and what I love (emphasised) about my faith and my whole (pause) (swallows) thing, is that, it tells you, it prescribes, what is, what one should do, what one shouldn't do. Uhm, it tells you what's right and wrong, at the same time it, it gives you a whole spiel about why it's right and wrong, the reasons behind it. And then at, at the end of it all, it gives you the choice of making your decision. Uhm, and that puts you in control, and you don't feel restricted, and you don't feel in anyway pushed into it. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

From it being a Hindu background, and not being generally any set down rules on what you should be doing. You know, it's quite relaxed in that respect. It's more of a personal thing. Thinking and living your life in the right way. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Religion's capacity to allow personal freedom to decide and apply only the ways of life which seem acceptable to the individual called into question for many men the logic of the Western thinking that defines Hinduism as a 'religion':

It's only classed as a religion for the sake of Western argument, I mean most, most Hindus wouldn't say this is a religion. If you actually look at it, 'cause it's so much more open. It's just a bit like a treaty on certain ways in which you could live your life, and what's best for you. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Being armed with a practical guide on how to live one's life resulted in men of Indian descent feeling there was more stability, security and moral strength underpinning their lives:

I think it's [religion] probably like (laughs) a sort of, like it's shown you a path, but if you're going to like stumble away from the path, you're always going to go back to the path. So like, you know, like, you, you're bound to make a few mis(...) obviously everyone's gonna make mistakes, but I think as long as they know, like, the level that they have to, like, try and be at, I think they can try and, I mean, no one's going to be perfect, but at least they know the, the kind of level that they should be on. The way they should act overall, I think. [...] I think it's just like, a guide. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

It's [religion] something to fall back on, and I always fall back on it. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Having such beliefs could be translated for some into having a particular ethos towards life. This enabled them to remain focused, control their urges and refrain from indulging in what might be seen as 'bad habits':

I feel I'm not excessively religious, but I am (pause) I do have my own (pause)

as in I believe in God and that, but like uhm, as being a, maybe not, not more so religious, but as in being a good person, sort of thing. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

I mean, one good thing is that uhm, I mean, Hindu life in general has just uhm, perhaps given me the right moral guidance. [...] If I do want some help in life, if I wanna say, do well in an exam, or something, I might, I might look upon God and religion in helping me to achieve that. And just uhm, I mean, helping, to help myself to er, uhm, (swallows) be disciplined. [...] The Hindu philosophy that just believes that uhm, you should just uhm, say control urges, and what not. [...] Being focused, not getting sidetracked. And falling into bad habits. That sort of thing. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

Religious and spiritual influence on the lives of the men of Indian descent meant that for some, belief became a committed way of life. Being a Hindu appeared to determine a whole perspective on life:

My whole perspective of life really is ah, different to, is ah, all men. Uhm, (pause) my, my views are based on ah, religion and spirituality, uhm, which gives me, although I'd often carry out the same activities as most people, the reason that I'd be doing them, and my aims, would probably be different to most men. [...] Often you get people who, who follow the religion, who'll carry out the rituals, probably won't have as deeper understanding or, you know, they take it as a, something they should be doing and they do it. Me, I take it one step further. It's something, you know, I make it my way of life. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

The influence of religion on the lives of most of this group of men was undercut by anxiety over the challenges faced within the Indian diasporic community, to uphold these beliefs and values for future generations, in the face of the secular nature of wider British society:

[Other Indian kids] think themselves as being a totally sort of, a Westernised person, and I just keep trying to tell them, don't try and be something that you're not. You should be proud of who, be proud of your roots. Be proud of what you, of what your upbringing is. Be proud of what it means to be a Hindu. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

The contribution of religion to the lives of men of white British descent paralleled that of wider contemporary British society. Men of white British descent did not on the whole consider themselves to be religious, or personally affiliated to any religion:

I'm an atheist. [...] I'd never really subscribe to a religion. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

No. I'm nothing (whispers). (Daniel, 23, of W.B.D., graduate)

Religious practice in Britain was considered now to be largely confined to engaging in ceremonial practices. Some men of white British descent, however, recalled having had some involvement with the church when they were younger:

A large part of my life, uhm, I use to go to church. [...] My birth religion, ah, Church of England. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

I'd have to say Christian, Christianity. But I'm not, I'm not religious, like. I don't follow Christianity [...] when I was younger, uhm, I use to (pause) I use to, kind of, uhm, (swallows) I was in the scouts, and I, so I went to church once every month then. And I don't know, I can't, I suppose I use to, I suppose I use to feel like, be a bit religious, maybe. Uhm, like I use to pray and things like that. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

For one man, however, Christianity had provided a 'right' way of living one's life in line with Christian beliefs and values:

I read the Bible [...] as much as I can, I, and I pray a lot. Uhm, and, ah, it does affect my identity. I, I mean my Christianity is part of my, sort of, core identity. [...] And, uhm, I try and live by the [Christian] values I talk about as well. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Overall, however, the influence of formal religion on lifestyle was less powerful among men of white British descent. The seeming irrelevance or abstract nature of religion undercut any remaining demands of adherence to a formal religious morality:

My belief in religion is that, it's just a belief. It's not about a pact. [...] Perhaps I've been able to separate myself [...] religion [...] has massive, massive flaws. Ah, and for me, religion is about a belief, a, a reasoning of being here, and, kind of, what we do in life. I don't think it really should influence your life to the extent that, you start having to change certain things in it. Especially in this modern day, you know. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

I think I'd say, Christianity. Uhm, but only probably, only because it's just what I've been brought up with. [...] Something that was always there [in my education]. I mean (inhales) we had to go to chapel, and (inhales) uhm, I don't, I'm not entirely sure whether if I hadn't had that religion through my sort of formative years, or through my school years, whether I would have picked it, you know, of my own choice. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The diminished effect of religion coincided however with growing engagement with a broader spirituality, which fulfilled a somewhat similar function. Contemporary expressions of spirituality encouraged a strength of faith and commitment towards leading a 'good' life:

I do believe that people need faith. Uhm, whether they find that in themselves, or whether they find that in religion, or what have you. And, uhm, recently, 'cause I've been through, it's been a very difficult year, in my second year at university. I, uhm, (pause) I actually, ah, went and, ah, prayed for the first time, in a long time. Uhm, which during what was a very hard period for myself. Uhm, although I'm not saying I am a very religious person, but it's nice to think that there's something you can go to, or turn to. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

When my Mum started getting involved with spiritual healing and she'd, she'd give me books to read and stuff. You know, sort of, spiritual, sort of, you know, ah, I don't know if you've heard of 'The Celestine Prophecy'? [...] Stuff like that. So I, I, I certainly developed a mentality, which was more, which was closer to my mum's, sort of, mentality. (Dave, 21, of W.B.D., student)

That said, having an ethical approach to living one's life was not restricted to those with a religious or spiritual affiliation:

But then again, you can also say like, uhm, some of the things I just, like the religion, doesn't, doesn't have to teach you. You, sort of, know it yourself like, for moral, like, you know, that even if you're not religious, you, sort of, know that you shouldn't like abuse people (laughs) like. So you don't know how big an influence it's had on you. You might already know it as well, kind of. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

## Communal Relations

Part of the power of religion among men of Indian descent stemmed from, and culminated in, a sense of belonging to a wider Hindu community. There were several respondents who had joined community organisations like *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*<sup>21</sup> when they were younger. Here, they had been taught explicitly about Hindu beliefs, ways to live one's life and the value of having close community relations:

Uhm, a youth organisation [known as *Shaka*] [...] has ah, from a very young age, taken me on, trained me up into youth leadership, and working in the community as a social, ah, social thing. It educated me in my culture [...] *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* is the organisation. Uhm, it's, you know, from a very, very young age, it's trained me up very well, and I find that that's one of the main things that's helped me in my education. It's helped me have discipline to what I'm doing, uhm, helped me in team leadership. [...] It's given me a lot of direction in what I should, how I should be living my life. [...] Well basically it's from the Hindu philosophy of how we should be living our life. Uhm, that you shouldn't have any problem with other people. [...] We should believe in Dharma. You know righteousness above all. What is right. What we're doing in our life is right, and our duties at that possible time. For example, now my duties are first to my parents, to my studies, to my family. And those are my main duties at the moment, especially to, you know, my family and studies at the moment. So it outlines those certain Hindu

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<sup>21</sup> *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* is a cultural organisation whose aim is to Protect, Practice and Promote Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture.

philosophy, ideals and ideas that we've always been brought up with, and what we believe in. And it's just, you know, it helped educate and understand, and we have a discussion forum on it as well. You know, so you, when you're young, you can always discuss these things if you don't understand. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Other groups such as the *Hindu Society* or *National Hindu Student Council* at university had offered men of Indian descent a way of becoming inspired and learning about Hinduism. This armed them with sufficient knowledge and the incentive to teach and promote Hinduism to other young people in their community:

I'm part of the *National Hindu Students Forum*, that's like an umbrella body for the Hindu Societies around the country. Uhm, and we do lectures and things. (Pause) So it's learning for us, and trying to get, you know, teach more to others as well. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

I'm part of the *National Hindu Student Council*. [...] Trying to promote Hinduism. And if you see the poster behind me, there's four things we do, pledge, practise, preach and promote our Hindu Dharma. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Involvement in these community groups and organisations provided many of these men with a special opportunity to bond and form meaningful and long-lasting relationships with other Hindu male peers:

I've had a, a very strong circle of friends from the organization [*Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*]. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

If you wanna look at a different side of it, just, uhm, male friends within like the *Hindu Society*, and uhm, within uhm, other societies, which I'm involved in, and at the youth clubs as well, so one prime example would be uhm, a Hindu youth group, which I'm involved in called *Shaka*, which in this country it's known as *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

The strength of community relations in the neighbourhoods where men had grown up, also had a bearing on their association with Hinduism and the wider Hindu community:

The community that I come from in Leicester, they're quite religiously orientated, and keep their culture. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

I suppose living in Cardiff, I think there's one thing I, I lack a lot. Uhm, here in London, you have a very big cultural centre, and a very (emphasised) big cultural influence, you know, uhm, there's a lot of temples, a lot of community centres. Cardiff doesn't have that. Cardiff has one minor community centre and [...] at the end of the day, our youth are not being educated. [...] There are communities there, but they're very sort of, they keep to themselves a lot. So I

think that if maybe I would have been in a very big sort of cultural area, like in London, for example, I could have, had learnt a lot more about my culture, about my, my religion and what it means to be a Hindu. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Being part of a strong local community meant that men were able to participate in a variety of festivals, celebrations, ceremonies and acts of worship. This was seen as enhancing community relations and maintained the religious orientation of the community and those within it:

I believe more in, sort of, bringing the community together. [...] As long as you bring the community together, the community's still there, and the, you know, the uhm, community's growing, the religion, the culture is growing, and so I like to get myself involved with things, where you're helping bring people together uhm, and do events like, uhm, you know, for religious festivals we have, and so forth. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

I will take part in community prayer (burps), pardon me, uhm, family prayer, whatever the case may be. If there's a Havan, which is the, the fire worship, you know, if we're having one of those, I'll contribute and participate. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

This communal aspect of Hinduism was also evident in religious ceremonies that required boys to participate in a collective rites of passage linked to becoming a man. Manhood was perceived to be validated in these ceremonies:

I've done a fire-walk as well. Uhm, it's called the Art of Fire-Walking, walking on hot coals. [...] It was a sort of, a, a seminar, days of events, where uhm, you learn to control your mind, and you learn to develop your confidence, and you learn to think that you can, you know, if you put your mind to it, you can do anything. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Among men of white British descent, there was a much weaker sense of belonging to any religious community, or a community held together by religious affiliation. Only a minority of the men reported personal experiences of how for them the strength of religion linked to broader communal relations:

I like the idea of going to church on a Sunday, and ah, I suppose the community coming together, 'cause that's, with a, I lived in a village. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

An individual sense of identity to a collective sense of identity in, in worship, is a wonderful feeling. Uhm, you suddenly become part of a whole, that's looked after by a greater being. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

While some recalled having received religious instruction, in Sunday school or school assemblies, the effect of such teaching seemed to have been largely lost:

I mean, we had to go to Sunday school when I was younger. I did go to church but, you know, it certainly didn't have any effect on me, I don't think. Apart from, I didn't believe it. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Continuity of involvement with a religious body into early adulthood, such as the Christian Union at university, was largely absent among the men of white British descent. Few meaningful friendships, or lasting relationships, had been built in this way.

Few of these men had experienced much value being placed on religion by their families, and so had received little encouragement to take religion seriously, and have religion act as the 'glue' holding together broader communal relations. Religious festivals and celebrations in the local community had significantly decreased in number, alongside a decline in the largely kinship-based religious ceremonies such as marriage, christenings and so forth.

Men of white British descent, furthermore, reported having no customary collective rites of passage to manhood, connected with religion and the wider community. Instead, Western manhood was circumscribed individually and competitively, via not only typical male pursuits but ultimately through displays of sexual prowess for the benefit of male peers. The only possible equivalent to a religious upbringing evident among the majority of men of white British descent occurred in the context of the 'pseudo-religious' movement of the Scouts. Here, manhood was collectively achieved, through the acquisition of traditional masculine qualities such as physical strength and endurance:

I think the Boy Scouts had more influence on me [...] in discussing about, what I (laughs) I needed to be doing as a man, and what my role should be, to be honest. [...] You play football, you put up tents, ah, you, you burn things. You can be a bit naughty, ah, and ah, you can build sort of, ah, vaguely sort of, ah, interesting contraptions involving rope, and that is manly. As is independence. [...] You know, absolutely straight Baden Powell stuff (laughs). (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)



## Becoming a Man

The effect of religion on becoming and being a man was particularly evident among men of Indian descent. According to respondents, Hinduism equated manhood with certain special obligations that they were expected to fulfil. These involved the performance of certain set duties and responsibilities, which religion specified as the preserve of being male. Many of these men continued to accept this role in forging who they were, with religion personifying part of their lives today:

I mean, Hinduism much like some other religions, tends to uhm, see men in a leading role. Perhaps being more responsible, and taking care of, of females (grins) and the family, and what not. And I mean, that has uhm, made me follow it through. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

There's, in the sense of a, from religious beliefs, there's a sense of du(...) uhm, fulfilling one's duty. And that, and sort of, and man should fulfil his duties to, in, in that instance of, for example, there's, there's lots uhm, and there's like a ma(...) man has lots of duties, like a duty to his family, a duty to his (gulps) his wife, and so on. And duty to other people and things, you know, to the community, and things like that. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

In the sense of my duties and responsibilities, yes. Uhm, (pause) we believe specifically of what we should be doing at certain times in our life. [...] Religion's taught me, to studies, family and other activities like that are, you know, it's good things to be partaking with. [...] It's, it's guided me, and often when I had a question about something, it was there to support and help, and help answer. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

The Hindu Dharma in its laws exalts a number of ultimate qualities, deemed to be of immense personal worth, that should be striven for in one's own development. Paramount in pursuing these qualities is the attempt to achieve a sense of righteousness, through devoutly living one's life in the most fulfilling and favourable way:

We should believe in Dharma. You know, righteousness above all. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

One of the principal qualities Hindu beliefs advocate is developing a more altruistic perspective to life. Great credence is placed on conducting one's life for the greater good of the community, as opposed to just for oneself. The adoption of such an outlook seemed to correspond to the more collective, rather than individualistic, identity that commonly prevails across much of Indian society. There were many accounts among the men of Indian descent indicating how through religious influences their lives had become more altruistic:

Generally, you know, we've got a very systematic way of life, outlined in the scriptures, which explains to you, how, as a man, you should be performing your duty to society. Uhm, (pause) which is what I follow, what I believe in. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

The ideas of mutual respect, of loyalty, of (pause) of doing something not for just the sake of doing it, but for the greater good, and to help people. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Among men of Indian descent, notions of respect figured prominently. These included being respectful to others in order to help facilitate and foster greater mutual regard:

I was taught that you respect people for who they are. You know, you treat them right. If you treat them right, they will treat you right in return. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

The importance of having and showing respect was particularly prominent in dealings with parents, elders and teachers:

In Hinduism, you always say one thing, that there's three people you should respect, teachers, mothers and fathers, and elders. They're seniors to you. Give them the respect, you should treat them like God. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Religious perspectives emphasising the value of respect were reinforced by encouragement for boys to exhibit greater empathy and sensitivity.

The religion and the culture I come from, does encourage sensitivity and empathy for all. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Never wish any bad intentions for anybody. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Much of the cultural emphasis placed on the value of respect, empathy and sensitivity, corresponds directly to the trait of non-violence (*Ahimsa*), that is strongly advocated within Hinduism. The impact of the teaching of non-violence on many men of Indian descent was evident in their outlook:

My religion, sort of, doesn't tell you, but it advises you, that [...] you should respect others, and *Ahimsa*, which I've mentioned before, non-violence. And so, you know, not, not going round looking for a fight. And, you know, just wanna try and uhm, try to use uhm, if you've got a problem, trying to just talk it out, instead of fighting. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

The influence of this belief, encompassing non-violence towards all other living things, commonly meant that the consumption of meat was perceived as less acceptable. The incidence of vegetarianism, as a result, was high among these men:

My religion sort of, doesn't tell you, but it advises you that, you know, that you shouldn't do certain things, like you shouldn't, shouldn't eat meat. [...] So that, sort of, influenced, uhm, my upbringing and what I do, so. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

[*Ahimsa*] Non-violence towards other living things. [...] It's, it is part of my religion actually, being a vegetarian. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Hinduism has also traditionally discouraged the consumption of alcohol because of its intoxicating properties. Compliance with this advice was, however, more mixed, with only a few men abstaining from alcohol on religious grounds:

Hinduism says that, ah, "no man should intake intoxicating fluids" and alcohol is an, is an intoxicating fluid. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

I don't drink, and I don't smoke, and I don't indulge in anything I'm not suppose to. I try and follow my faith as best as possible. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Other men seemed much more relaxed in their attitudes towards alcohol:

There is guides like [...] well, I'm not suppose to drink, but I do. And intoxicate your body. Things like that. (Joe, 18, of I.D., student)

I mean I can, I can drink, but I don't tend to smoke and what not [...] I mean that hasn't really had an effect on (pause) on much else. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

There are some similarities, however, in the way both Christianity and Hinduism equate certain roles and responsibilities as the preserve of men:

Stories from the Bible, you know, are always (pause) (sighs) uhm, you know, show men to be in charge, and uhm, making decisions, and all the rest of it. Uhm, (pause) I suppose, ah, to some extent, this idea of courage and a courageous side to masculinity, comes from, from, from the, the Bible and church. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

However, the significance of religion on the development of becoming and being a man was much less obvious among men of white British descent, perhaps as a result of their

weakened involvement with formal religion.

Christian teachings were seen by one respondent as promoting certain qualities and characteristics as exemplary behaviour:

Charity, ah, love, genuine love, not kind of self-centred love. Uhm, being humble [...] a trust in God. I feel that's important. [...] Supporting other people, I mean I feel part of my sensitivity and care for other people is because I have, I feel that it's right for me to go and look after other people. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

While remnants of the influence of such teaching remained among other men of white British descent, they coexisted with more hegemonic ideologies, largely uninformed by traditional forms of religion:

I suppose in an un(...) indirect way, yes, because the religious attitudes shape my behaviour, and my sha(...) behaviour then shapes how you feel about yourself, as a man. Uhm, so I wouldn't do certain things because I'm a Christian, and so the rest of the world would see me less or more a man, because of those things. I think nowadays people, I think respect, uhm, uhm, strong values, more than they, than they did when I was a kid, uhm, because you get older and people appreciate, uhm, you know, that you're dependable and, and, and a reliable person. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Being happy in life about who you are, is more important than a religious belief about being a man. [...] It is who I am, but it, I don't think it's, it's played any major influence. No. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

Overall, the nature of masculinity among men of white British descent embodied few of the attributes familiar to men of Indian descent. There was less emphasis given to showing respect to parents, elders and teachers, and lower levels of empathy or sensitivity in their outlook. Nor did many men of white British descent in this study explicitly subscribe to an altruistic or non-violent approach to life.

### *Morality and Moral Guidance*

Among men of Indian descent, acting in accordance with moral precepts and guidance linked closely to becoming a man:

I don't indulge in anything I'm not suppose to. I try and follow my faith as best as possible. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

It was widely perceived that being virtuous made one a 'good' person who leads a

‘good’ life:

If you wanna be a man, you like, you know, you have to like, obviously you don’t lie, you know, various like things about being a good person. So I think in that way, it [religion] has taught me the qualities I have to be as a man, like. You know, like treat all people with respect, you know, don’t lie, you know, those various qual(...) qualities that all religions preach, yeah. So I think in that way, yeah, it has sort of, influenced, also it has taught me about things to do as, the right thing to do, in being a man. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

I believe my religious beliefs empower me to be a man. And certain, if you like, biblical stories, but say Hindu ah, epic stories, have contributed to that. [...] Ah, certainly, the moral aspect I believe, to be a man, I must be a moral man to a great degree. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Religious beliefs and values concerning sex and sexual behaviour linked closely to morality. The accounts of men of Indian descent indicated that these men were steered by the ethic that marriage should be the only legitimate outlet for sex, because it was widely construed as being part of their Hindu philosophy:

Ideally, people shouldn't [...] uhm, you know, not have sex before marriage, that sort of thing. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

No sex before marriage, obviously. (Joe, 18, of I.D., student)

Waiting until marriage before engaging in sexual relations was felt by some men to link to the spiritual belief that sex should remain an inseparable gift between husband and wife:

[Sex] It comes down to the whole, you know, gift for your wife to your husband and that kind of spiritual aspect. The jury’s out on that one. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

To go further than this, to suggest that sexual behaviour should be confined solely to procreation, was, however, an ideal to be striven for, since it was acknowledged that adherence to such a precept required an incredibly disciplined mind:

On issues like that [sex] uhm, I’m very difficult to influence. I’m fairly set in my views, ah, which are based on, as I’ve said already, the religion and the spirituality. Uhm, you know, the scriptures say certain things about sex, which I accept, uhm [...] sex before marriage is not permitted [hear loud motorbike outside and closes the window] [...] generally religion teaches that you shouldn’t be doing anything for, to, a sense pleasure, for fun, so. And sex normally is the most pleasurable thing that people find. Uhm, although, I haven’t reached a standard where I could, I could honestly say that I could

discipline myself enough to do that. Uhm, it's something that I go for, I understand it, and it's something that I go for, that sex should only be used after marriage for uhm, reproduction purposes [...] and like I say, 'cause I trust the scriptures, uhm, it would be difficult for someone to influence my views on it. [...] It's something that I will be striving towards. [...] It's on my mind, uhm, but I wouldn't say it's influencing me as such now, because I haven't, I wouldn't have to face, uhm, the situation at least, until I get married, which won't be for some time from now. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

Among men of Indian descent it was perceived that a sense of righteousness could be attained through moral restraint. Any transgression of what these men regarded as the ethics of their religion, such as having premarital sex, consequently impaired their own route to righteousness:

In Hinduism, we say that, you know, that, okay, look if you have sex before marriage, that's your own fault. That's something you have to look at inside you, and why did you do it? It doesn't necessarily mean you've done the cardinal sin. It just obs(...) it acts as an obstacle between your way of thinking and your path to righteousness, to see God. It acts as an obstacle. Uhm, I feel that, you know, if you (pause) that if you, you know, you should be, you should have enough, sort of, strength inside you, to control your activities. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Strength of religious disapproval over engaging in premarital sex acted as a powerful restraint on the behaviour of both sexually experienced and inexperienced men of Indian descent alike. Moral guidance concerning premarital sex underpinned most of these men's views, and assisted in preventing or delaying any sexual intercourse outside of marriage:

One of the reasons, also, is like, is maybe, [sex] it's not acceptable like, premarital sort of thing. That was a major, that was probably like a, one that was probably, one of the uhm, the reasons before obviously the first time, is that (pause) that was probably, that was quite a major influence as well. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

Portrayals of marriage in Hinduism as the only legitimate setting for sex reinforced its erstwhile importance among all the men of Indian descent. It also had far-reaching implications for their views and behaviour concerning what might be termed as different types of 'illicit' sex. In conversation, all the men of Indian descent seemed adamantly to disapprove of the 'fashionable' practice of just having casual sex, or one-night stands, because it seemed there was no love or security involved:

You call a one-night fling (pause) uhm, make, as, as love? It's, it's very wrong.

[...] You don't just do a one-night fling. Love, true love and sex are related by, over, over many years and generations, you know, over many years, when you look after your pa(...) your spouse or partner. That's what love is all about. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Some of these men of Indian descent were, however, less judgemental about having premarital sex provided it occurred in a context of a loving relationship, so that in this way, sex could still be perceived a 'sacred' act:

In the normal healthy state, pleasure from sex, and the pleasure that you can get from the love that is generated from a loving relationship through sex, I think all of those. Sex for me is a spiritual thing as well. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

In my opinion, it is a very sacred thing, in the sense that it's something you only share with someone who you really do care about. Uhm, it's not something that I generally partake with just randomly. Uhm, it will be something for someone I'd care for, and only that (pause). [...] I think that's from culture, uhm, it's, you know, in our culture, it's not ever brushed aside. [...] It's a sacred thing that shouldn't be just taken as a joke. Uhm, and that's the same beliefs that I hold, yeah. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Adherence to the principle of 'no sex before marriage' appeared to be weakening in some men of Indian descent, because they accepted it was reasonable to have sex now in a serious and loving relationship. This sentiment had resulted in some men having sexual intercourse within their current relationship, or at least being prepared to consider the possibility as their relationship progressed:

In my current, and pretty much gonna be my future relationship, with, with my girlfriend there, there have been times when even now, we, we've actually been actively discussing it [to have sex], especially in the last few months. You know, when should we actually do it now, 'cause the more you learn about religion and God, and spirituality, the more you realise that actually, it is up to you, and we're, it's not like we're kids. It's not like we're gonna break up [...] so it is a point of discussion a lot, ah, but at the moment, I'm not sure (pause) even. [...] It comes down to the whole, you know, gift for your wife to your husband, and that kind of spiritual aspect. The jury's out on that one. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

I think previously, I was a bit more uhm, that it [having sex] was a lot later down the line for me. Uhm, I, I was gonna, it was something that was gonna happen, a lot later in my view. [...] But now, looking at it from this perspective, that I could say it's a bit more of, more par(...) you know, it might happened a bit more, ah, you know, sooner than that. [...] It, it seems that it could go to that kind of level, yeah, yeah. But previously, this is my first serious relationship in that respect, so uhm, previously it hasn't even been, in that, you know, I haven't, I have never even thought about it then, because I've, there's never been anyone. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Criticism of those men of Indian descent who had put aside their religious ideals and engaged in premarital sex seemed somewhat muted. This reflected a sense that Hindu philosophy was able to be more accommodating to those contemporary lifestyles, which though not ideal, were better than sex that involved exploitation or coercion:

Ideally people shouldn't [...] have sex before marriage, that sort of thing. But I mean, the religion has, is changing with time. So [...] it's okay to, to do that, but uhm, well you shouldn't do it forcefully. Or uhm, you know, you can just use a women because she's there or whatever. [...] I mean that, that's the way in which a religion's adapting to modern times. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

Sex simply for pleasure was largely frowned upon among men of Indian descent. This meant that all reported having refrained from casual sex or one-night stands, even if this meant having to restrain what was often referred to as a 'basic instinct'.

In the sense that, there's a re(...) the religious belief to do what's right, and I feel that what's right, is that there should be something more than just the, ah, physical aspect, and the pleasure of it, and that. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

I look at sex as a very, [has a drink] it's a very spiritual activity. Right, I don't look at it in, in any wrong way. It's a very spiritual activity, and, and therefore, it should be enjoyed. Yes, it has a function of procreation. [...] At the same time, sex is, it's, it's a basic instinct. And I think from what my understanding of my own spirituality, my own culture and religion, is that one should try and, shy away from basic instinct, instincts and try and, you know, even within a lifetime, evolve to a higher thing. [...] I'm not looking at it just from a pleasurable point of view, because I feel that is slightly wrong. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Men of Indian descent's public disavowal of casual sex paralleled shared views in the wider Hindu community, in which such behaviour remains largely unacceptable:

It's not really part of my culture [to sleep around] (laughs) really to, you know, I'm not obviously, it's no one from our culture, but I mean like, uhm, it's just that it's not really regular, sort of, like, I mean, I don't know anyone like, in our community, who does like, you know. [...] I mean, you never know, (laughs) there might be some people in there hidden, but I mean, they're just not really norm(...) usually accepted, like [...] 'cause like, you know, in Indian culture, it's sort of like, very sort of community wise. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Similarly, attitudes towards homosexual behaviour were often negative, if spoken about, because such sexual conduct was perceived to be associated with purely physical pleasure. Homosexuality, like any other form of 'illicit' sex, was considered something both sinful and wrong:



Just from a Hindu point of view that we believe, that uhm, being gay is wrong, it's not a good thing, it's not natural, it's not right so. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Uhm, what, what Hindu religion says, what Indian culture says about gay sex, (emphasised) and sex in general, any sex for, for (pause) any illicit sex for uhm, reasons of pure pleasure, is seen as a very bad (emphasised) thing, you know. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

Overall, sex was largely deemed, culturally and religiously, to be a personal and private matter. Indeed, among most men of Indian descent, sex still remained largely a taboo subject within their communities:

Often in the community, it's a bit more of a taboo. People don't generally talk about it. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Dating, sex (pause) uhm, now generally amongst Indians and Hindus, it's a very taboo subject. Ah, it's a very, sort of, shh, shh, hushed out in the air. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

This was even the case among the peer group. Men of Indian descent spoke of the embarrassment and awkwardness that stifled overt discourse about sex. Any discussions could also be deemed as being dishonourable, making sex an incredibly difficult subject to talk about:

But certainly that's something, which I haven't discussed with men, because it's a very personal point of view. [...] It's a very personal perspective. It also, I don't think many men would quite appreciate it. [...] In fact, that, you wouldn't talk about it at all [within your circle of friends]. It's something which you just would not talk about. It's seen as a very (emphasised) personal thing, a very private thing. (Long Pause) It's actually a taboo. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

The religious ideals promoted through Christianity were known about by men of white British descent. All were aware that Christianity decreed the only legitimate outlet for sex was within the sanctity of marriage, but few felt committed enough to comply with this ethic. Religious guidance regarding sexual behaviour was seen as largely irrelevant in a predominantly secular society:

[My views about sex] It's probably, probably a bit from like my parents [...] (although) they would be different 'cause [...] they had like, a bit of a religious background and I haven't really. (James, 19, of W.B.D., student)

The very few who held religious beliefs were likely to try and avoid engaging in

premarital sex, so as to circumvent being burdened by a sense of reproach:

I believe it's [sex] something that should be sha(...) that should be shared in a marriage relationship, even though I haven't, ah, I mean, I, I haven't stood by that myself [...] I regret, ah, losing sight of my values and giving into temptation, when I could have waited, uhm, and enjoyed it all the more, when I felt that I was in a secure relationship in marriage. [...] And I had no worries about getting my girlfriend, well my, it would be my wife, pregnant, and, and that, you know, it was all kosher. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Unlike men of Indian descent, moral guidance concerning premarital sex hardly impacted on the views and likely sexual behaviour of men of white British descent:

I don't really have religion to res(...) restrict my approach to sex. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

I don't really feel restricted [in my approach to sex] sort of, uhm, in terms of my beliefs or culturally. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Others saw adherence to moral guidance as simply impractical in the light of modern attitudes and norms:

Although I'm not particularly religious, I can see the, uhm, I can see the attraction of not having sex before marriage. And I can see how, I mean, I think in a, in a ideal world, I probably would like to marry someone and neither of us (laughs) having had sex. I think that would be, a sort of ideal situation, but it, in this modern day and age, it's unlikely to happen. Although, I do think that possibly because of my, that sort of, religious influence in my life, I don't think I would think that, if it weren't for that influence. I think in that, in that sense, uhm, because of that religious influence, I do think that, no sex before marriage, is a good thing. Although, I knew that it would probably never, never happen. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Premarital sex had become largely accepted as the norm among men of white British descent and the perceived 'merit' of marriage had correspondingly decreased. That said, and somewhat paradoxically, marriage remained seen as pivotal in preserving lasting relationships and family life:

That's the only advantage of going out with someone who's Polish or Russian, is that they're more, they would, they would, uhm, think twice about getting divorce. They'd rather try and work through it, because it would be, uhm, and that certainly is an influence on her, being Catholic. Uhm, (pause) which is good, which I like because [I see it as a very long-term commitment]. [...] And I think it's a positive thing that she's Catholic. [...] Although, I don't believe in it [religion], it seems to give her some kind of, uhm, (pause) although it's a bit conservative, some kind of quite good morality, that she seems to have got

directly from Catholicism. Uhm, plus a kind of idea that, that family is important. [...] You should have close personal relationships and things like that. And that seems to come from the Catholicism and sort of, the culture as well. [...] I, in a sense, yes, I'd be doing for her. [...] But, you know, I also would enjoy the stability that it would, that it would give. [...] So, and that's, I, I know that so many people are getting divorced, but I, I think it's, uhm, if I, I mean I believe in it and I think she does. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Personal detachment from religion and moral principles regulating sexual conduct seemed to have greatly transformed attitudes and behaviour with respect to the different types of 'illicit' sex. Significantly fewer men of white British descent seemed to disapprove of casual sex or one-night stands, just simply because there was no love or security involved.

Overall, the pursuit of sex for pleasure was much more accepted among men of white British descent. Many had participated in this type of sexual behaviour as part of growing up and having a 'healthy' sex life, with less fear of recrimination by the wider community:

Being able to have diff(...) you know, many, many partners and that was, kind of, that was useful and helpful, and gave me confidence of, you know. [...] That was, that was a he(...) a sort of a healthy development. [...] That you felt that you could and if you needed to, you could. And uhm, it wasn't in any way sordid or, you know, it just seemed more, quite a natural thing to do. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Liberalisation of many customary Christian beliefs about sex has also meant that minority sexual practices, such as homosexual behaviour, were less judged as sinful and wrong:

I just said like "what's wrong with it [being gay]?" (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

I've become more independent and I'm not really, kind of, judgemental at all. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

These responses among men of white British descent reflect the more liberal discourse of sex that is prevalent in the wider white educated middle class population. Sex has become more candidly discussed in conversations, rather than remaining merely inferred in conjunction with marriage. The tradition where sex should be kept private and not even mentioned has become increasingly regarded as antiquated. Men of white

British descent felt more able to share their intimate details regarding sex and sexual relations within their peer groups, as well as in being interviewed, without showing too much embarrassment or awkwardness.

## Chapter 6

### The Significance of Peer Relations

The preceding two chapters have shown how family and religion had an influence on the construction of masculinity among both men of Indian and white British descent. Each of these over-arching factors had a multifaceted impact on men's lives, as indeed did other issues that are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the work described here.

This chapter seeks to extend the analysis offered in the preceding two chapters by engaging with a third and final over-arching category which emerged from respondents' accounts – namely, the significance of peer relations. It is organised in three broad sub-themes – *the value of men*; *the nature of women* and *the forming of relationships* – to illustrate more fully the far-reaching effects of peer relations on the construction of respondents' selves and sense of masculine.

#### The Value of Men

Being perceived as a man was important to men of both Indian and white British descent. There was widespread acknowledgement among both groups of men of the pressure exerted by male peers to act and behave in particular ways. Both groups of men provided similar illustrations of the types of typical male pursuits they were expected to participate in and enjoy. Most indicated having a keen interest in sport:

I'm very keen on my sports, as most men are. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

Liking sport [...] football, things like that. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

This triggered an almost community-like spirit among male friends. Even the less enthusiastic respondents found themselves pressurised to show an interest in sport. Among men in both groups sport was played or watched communally within an all-male environment:

Sports, uhm, tend usually to do with male friends, than female friends. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

I'm giving away all my English traits now! Ah, watching football. Uhm, I suppose that's, that's probably one of the most, for me the most, sort of, manly occupation I do is, is watching football and shouting abuse at the television and stuff. And, and, you know, boys together. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

Active involvement in sport appeared to offer both men of Indian and white British descent the opportunity to display typical masculine traits and to enhance their social standing. Those men who were not particularly successful or interested in sport, and this usually included those who were not particularly fit, reported finding themselves taunted or even isolated from their peer group as a result:

At school, when I wasn't particularly keen on rugby. Uhm, things like that. And uhm, I mean, there were other sports at school, where I was never particularly big uhm, and I, you know, you, it was occ(...) occasionally, you'd just get slightly teased about the fact that you weren't particularly macho or you weren't (inhales) uhm, willing to participate in those sorts of things. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Wanting a well defined body, or at least being aware of its masculine connotations, was evident for both groups of men:

Like obviously, men in magazines, they probably picture like, the ideal person for like women, *et cetera*, and probably a lot of men, maybe including myself, probably feel that's maybe the way to look or, as in, that's the way to be. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

I suppose the uhm, the, the typical image of like a, a kind of, really chiselled pecs and, and abs uhm, does [...] there was a period in my life, when I thought that if I uhm, that if I got, if I got a really tough body, I, everything would be perfect. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

The pervasiveness of such an ideal caused a degree of angst for some respondents, both of Indian and of white British descent:

I've always had an issue about my height. So I've always felt that I was slightly shorter. If I had a couple of inches more, I would have been, you know, a lot happier. [...] Uhm, I don't really have a very big build or an athletic build, or anything like that, and you, but at the same time, I mean, you always see that in, in men's health magazines and on T.V. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

I think, I'm very small. I find that I, I worry that I, you know, I'm not muscular or, and that occasionally plays on my mind, that I would like to be bigger. Have a m(...) a, more of a, a, what I view as a more typical male look. [...] I see it [masculinity] as, by what television, film, it's a, you know. It's the media's image yeah. [...] With like the Brad Pitt's of the world and that kind of look. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

Having a muscular toned body developed through body-building was linked to 'being a man':

The whole idea, you know, that guys are a bit more brawn and things. Kind of, I mean influe(...) I try, I mean not, just try to become a bit more muscular and things, try and do exercises, and go gym and things. That to, I suppose maybe that would be a way I'd tried being, I've try to enhance, ah, the, the way I look as a man. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

I go to the gym and things like that. And for me, you know, sort of muscle (emphasised) in the right places is important. You know, I, I don't wanna have, you know, I don't want to look feminine, the way my body looks. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

Likewise, among both groups of men reference to physical endurance, courage or achievement in sport was seen as symbolic of manhood:

I've ran, uhm, half, a couple of half-marathons before. And things like that, after you've done that you feel proud of yourself. And you think, you know, I couldn't have done this before, ah, you thought you couldn't do it, and so that makes you feel proud, and you think, you know, "Ah, you know, I'm becoming a man". Becoming, you know, err, stronger and so forth. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

I went climbing, for example, last, over the summer and uhm, I suppose a, subconsciously I feel that that's quite a macho, machismic sport. My grandad did it and I get some, I suppose I got some identity from him, because I feel proud doing something that, that he did really well. Uhm, and I feel proud doing it because it's, because it's such a kind of, it's a difficult and, and scary sport. Uhm, so I feel, I think often I, I, I push myself into doing things that are frightening, to develop myself and develop my feeling of masculinity. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

A muscular physique and physical strength seemed to help foster a sense of greater self-confidence that in turn was associated with a more marked personal ambition and potential:

There was a period in my life when I thought that if I uhm, that if I got, if I got a really tough body, I, everything would be perfect. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

I train quite a lot, you know, fitness training and I haven't been doing that recently. So, I can feel when I'm really, in tip-top shape, you know, I can feel like I'm ready to go at anytime. Whereas, now, I'm more, feel more lethargic. And that's important to me. Uhm, I don't like to feel like this. You know. I want to always feel like I'm ready to go and can do anything. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

A well-defined male physique was also perceived by men in both groups as being more alluring to women. Many felt that having a good body would boost their magnetism and popularity, and therein strengthen their sense of masculinity:

When you look at like, these pictures in uhm, you know, men's health and so forth, with men with their busking muscles, muscles and oil all over their body, and it does influence, you know, you know, sometimes you think, "ah, you know, what if I had a body like that?" you know. Would I, would I be more confident? You know, would, would it be easier to approach women? Would women approach me more? (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Men going to the gym, not to get fit but just to "Oh, I've got to have that certain physique to, that's the male image". [...] Sometimes that, you know, you get a little pang of, sort of, 'Oh, you know, oh, I wish, I wish I had bigger ar(ms)'. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

The prestige assigned to having a male physique or look was further heightened by competition within the peer group. This seemed more pronounced among men of Indian descent:

I started going to the gym, I think, but that, I've always been thin and I'm thin again, 'cause I haven't been for a few weeks, 'cause of work. Uhm, but uhm, (pause) I think I pay a lot more attention to it, when the guys say it and then my girlfriend echoes it, say behind closed doors, like in the bedroom or something. Then, I'd pay a lot more attention. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

An added incentive for men of Indian descent was their capacity to better withstand physical assault, if strong and of a self-assured disposition:

Instead of just building muscle, I just wanna do something that will help me a lot. [...] I think mainly self-defence, just, mainly. And things like that, just to build your confidence up. In case you are, you know, when you walk down the street one day and someone comes up to you, you know. (Joe, 18, of I.D., student)

### *Male Friendships*

The bravado that is generally sanctioned among men influenced the nature of male friendships. Few men of Indian or white British descent seemed dependent on their male friends, particularly when it came to emotional support or confiding about personal matters. Men reported feeling more comfortable talking to women in these circumstances, since the latter were perceived as being more understanding and there was less chance of being humiliated:

You don't really go to them [male friends] for help and support. You don't really show them that often, that you need it. Uhm, (pause) I guess you get more of that out of your relationship. [...] As I am in a relationship, I am able to talk with my girlfriend, the way you do more intimately, which means I get the help and support I need from her, rather than seeking it from other men.



(Hagrid, 22, of I.D., graduate)

I wouldn't really say uhm, (pause) there's much in terms of help and support. That's something I don't really talk about with them. [...] The conversations are quite, in my experience, have been quite uhm, sort of, uhm, (pause) what's the word, not flippant but, you know, they don't really care particularly, it's just "oh, whatever, move on", you know, very, sort of, and if something really matters, that's not what you need to hear. So it would generally be with like, you know, two or three of my close female friends, that I'd actually talk about that sort of thing to. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

Both groups of men tended to characterise their male friendships in terms of providing practical help rather than emotional support:

If I call someone my friend, it's because I'll, if, if anything happens, I will back them up and that goes for them to me. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

A friend of mine, yeah, if I'm feeling down and he will say, he'll, in his own way, in his own, kind of, brusque, manly way (smiles) he'll say, "Oh, I'm sorry mate, you know, you know, you'll get over it" and that's, and I appreciate that, because we just go off and do something else. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Lack of intimacy between men, even in close male friendships, seemed to be the consequence of efforts to manage intricate anxieties and restrictions linked to dominant concepts of masculinity.

I think you can rule out support. And I mean, I don't really see them [male friends] from that role, so. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

The guys I live with in my house, I sometimes get a bit frustrated that (pause) that they don't really like to talk about uhm, kind of, especially when it comes to relationships with girls. [...] They seem to close up a bit. [...] [When] I split up with quite a long-term girlfriend. I was going through quite a difficult period and at one stage, I got quite upset because uhm, no one was, I didn't really feel like anyone was really uhm, I mean, I'm sure they were worried about me, but they never, no one ever came up to me and asked me how I was. [...] Uhm, and I didn't wanna go to them. I didn't really feel like I could (stutters) go (stutters) to them. And the other thing was, I didn't want to go to them and just, I'd feel like I'm just, kind of, trying, get the sympathy vote and just going, whingeing and stuff. In that kind of situation [...] you're talking about good friends of mine. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

There was concern in both groups of men that being overly intimate with other men could make them not only overly reliant on others, but also potentially compromised:

I guess, I find it hard to open up to, like, that many people. I mean, there's only a few people that I can really trust. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

In the past, I've probably opened all the way up to people ah, about, about emotional problems or what have you, and I've ah, (pause) I think uhm, that's always left me a bit vulnerable. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Men from both backgrounds were conscious that when male friends openly supported each other, this could be misconstrued as a sign of weakness. The commonly perceived notion that equated being more self-sufficient with displaying a more traditional and more highly valued masculinity seemed to limit male friendships:

I'm quite independent and I don't tend to turn to people for help at all, and I try and deal with it on my own. [...] I think that uhm, it's harder on a male to male level, probably to relate problems. [...] I definitely think it would be harder to, to, to sort of open up to (pause) male friends. I think it would make it quite awkward. [...] I guess, I mean, if, if you wanna, sort of, get to the, sort of, nitty gritty of it, I mean, maybe it, it transcends a few boundaries, to, to open up to, to a male friend. You know, the perceptions being, that we are quite independent and to open up would probably, maybe cross that or, or make someone perceive you differently. (Daniel, 23, of W.B.D., graduate)

It's a bloke thing, like, you know, like, as I said earlier, you're meant to be tough so, you know, you see sometimes you should feel like, I don't know, they might think you're like, not a wimp (shouts) but, you know (laughs). (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Both groups of men were concerned that any observed transgressions of conduct could compromise their virility. In particular, the display of sensitivity ran the risk of being perceived as feminine. Men who were too sensitive risked being construed as homosexual, even in the context of male friendship:

There's fewer people who are still, that you could turn to. [...] You've gotta know the person real(...) really well, 'cause it's a bit, it's a bit weird when you, between guys and that (swallows) 'cause you, to get that sort of, I don't know, if, no intimate's not the right word, I don't think. [...] I think it's kind of, that, that whole society thing about, you know, men are meant to be stronger and this and that, and they're not meant to, don't really show their emotions in public and this that. [...] I mean my personal view is that ah, if people ah, wanna, wanna be homosexual, that's, that's fine, but I mean in, with them, and ah, but for, for like, I suppose for, if, if you're not, then you don't, I suppose I wouldn't want to be branded that myself, so you don't wanna get too close to, sort of thing. [...] I think there's like, there's a limit before you, and then after that, sort of thing, it's kind of, it's, it's, can either go two ways, I think, and then there's, it can either go, either you, you, you look feminine or you can look ah, homosexual type thing. That's, that's kind of, the sort of the society, what sees of it and type of thing. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

There were exceptions, however, among men in each group who felt more comfortable

aligning themselves to a different ethos characterised as the 'new man'. These variant ideas about manhood served to weaken the hegemony of more traditional patterns of behaviour. This made it possible for some men to assert themselves as compassionate and to develop intimacy within their closest male friendships, without their manhood and (hetero)sexuality being diminished:

What I fall in, is probably the new category of, well (tuts) shouldn't categorise yourself, but like the 'new' man. Uhm, very in touch with his feminine side. Uhm, emotional, caring. I'm, I'm not, what I see a lot around me, the sort of, the, the hard men, who, who, who don't cry or don't do anything like that. [...] I'm very willing to say things to them [my really good friends] and tell them about certain stuff, whether it be embarrassing or upsetting, or, and, and they're there to give me advice. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

I'm quite open in the respect that if I feel that my friend's, you know, having a difficult time, I'll be straight-up and I'll say "Is anything bothering you? Is there anything you want to talk about?" Whatever. Uhm, not all mates are like that, but I will be quite blunt about it and if I have issues, I often, I will talk out rightly with a friend. Uhm, I, I find that we do, we do discuss things. It's not a man thing "oh we can't talk about things". If we've got issues, we'll discuss them. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

### *'Birds of a Feather'*

The disproportionate bearing that religion and cultural heritage had on masculinity, particularly for men of Indian descent, underpinned the camaraderie felt with others of a comparable background:

I mean, it's 'birds of a feather' flock together. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Bullying at school also triggered a sense of distinction and solidarity:

When I was probably about nine, ten-years old, I did have a few incidents of bullying. [...] They begin calling you names such as 'Paki' and so forth. [...] You have to, sort of, tell these uhm, these children that you're not, not gonna take it and, and, you know, that, that you are confident and, you know, you are proud of where you're coming from. [...] It was predominantly white, uhm, in, in the lower schools. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

Among men of Indian descent, there appeared to be a special affinity linked to having friends who shared a similar outlook and understanding:

In terms of having things in common, certainly with, uhm, Asian guys, I have a lot in common. (Pause) In terms of, uhm, just chatting to them, yeah, we, we all have a lot in common, I mean at, at uni my friends' circle is predominantly

Indian. Ah, Indian, Hindu Indian as well, on top of that. [...] You know, there's Indians and then there's just Gujarati Indians. Just sometimes talking to someone in the home mother tongue. I don't even speak it that well at all, ask anyone, I'm terrible, but it's that much more comforting in some of the jokes. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

A key consequence of men of Indian descent choosing their 'own kind' as close friends was that their religion and cultural heritage were preserved. Friends often talked in their 'mother tongue', watched 'Bollywood' movies, or attended religious or cultural festivals together:

I'm more likely to make friends with people of my own ah, culture and background because we have so many similarities. We share the same interests. [...] For example, ah, Hindi films, Bollywood. Ah, I mean, I'm a crazy fan of Bollywood. Uhm, so it's only most likely that Asians from my own region would be interested in Bollywood. Uhm, and going out to festivals like Navratras, like nine nights of dancing. That kind of thing, which I love doing. Again, would be mostly with people from my own background. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

The camaraderie among men of Indian descent made them less inhibited in volunteering emotional help and support to one another:

I think with my flatmates [all Gujarati] certainly we're all very supportive of each other. We look out for each other. Ah, we, you know, we'd always, we can normally tell if there's something wrong, even if we don't say anything. We can often tell. We know each other so well that we can tell that there might be something wrong. Uhm, and we'd approach the other person and try to find out and help them if we can. Because we've got a very strong relationship like that. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate)

A sense of affinity among men of Indian descent was further bolstered by shared cultural values and religious beliefs. Having a close-knit networks of friends encouraged greater participation in community groups but also provided a forum for men to become better acquainted with the teachings of Hinduism and the values exalted by their culture.

I've seen like er, one, one or two of my er, my friends be a bit more involved in other community things. Sort of that, and so, those sorts of things, and like, I felt that that was the right thing to do for me, kind of thing. After seeing them do that, sort of thing. Like, for example, uhm, (swallows) I'm in quite hi(...) do, do quite a lot of things in the *Hindu Society* and things. And like, (pause) I mean, that, and that's due to the uhm, the friends that I have and that sort of, has led me in that direction. And sort of, and then, due to that, I've joined. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

Among men of white British descent, there was much less sense of explicit concern with a distinct ethnicity, religion or cultural heritage, and few reported making friends on this basis. Close friendships among men of white British descent were instead influenced by shared perspectives or involvement in common pursuits:

I think uhm, sort of, shared interests. Uhm, possibly, uhm, I think possibly shared backgrounds, in the sense that it, it, sort of, makes it easier initially to, to strike some, sort of, chord. [...] It makes it easier to actually, to start a, sort of, conversation. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Among men of white British descent, the majority of whom in this study were middle-class in background, there was something of a reluctance to fraternize with men with more ‘macho’ tendencies. Selecting male friends carefully was important because any miscalculations could result in involvement with the ‘wrong crowd’:

Who my friends are I suppose [...] they’re like me, sort of, yeah. [...] “Not getting in with the ‘wrong crowd’ ” and things like that. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

Camaraderie among men of white British descent, albeit more subdued, seemed to be linked to simply having something in common. This included having a shared sense of humour and/or possibly a similar intellect or wit:

Male friends at university, who are quite intellectual but they’re witty. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

### *‘Lad Culture’*

There was widespread recognition among both men of Indian and white British descent of the emergence of ‘lad culture’ and an associated brand of machismo. Certain activities and characteristics were perceived as embodying ‘laddishness’ and these had become fashionable among many younger males, as part of a process that validated their manhood:

I guess, driving too fast and stuff like that. (Hagrid, 22, of I.D., graduate)

I use to, like, do, kind of, a bit of shoplifting or whatever. And just, kind of, steal CDs. (James, 19, of W.B.D., student)

Concepts of manhood associated with ‘lad culture’ were tied to notions of masculinity

that discouraged men from being overtly caring, supportive or understanding. The adoption of 'laddish' characteristics appeared to be more resisted by men of Indian descent. This put such men somewhat at odds with the traits of their white British counterparts:

I like to think of myself as being quite a kind and compassionate person towards other people. I think that's partly due to my family. [...] I'd possibly say that uhm, I'm probably like, more caring than most males, well not most males, (laughs) maybe I, but I mean, some males, they tend to be like, I don't know, if they're less sensitive or maybe. But I think I am quite sensitive for a male. So I think I'm different in that way anyway. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Another difference concerned attitudes expressed towards women. Men of Indian descent had to contend with the seemingly typical 'laddish' disregard and derision of their white British counterparts, and the associated sexual objectification of women. This sharply contrasted with the traditional respect shown for women embedded in Hinduism and family life:

Some men, I have nothing in common with, and I have, I don't really respect them as much as I should, mainly because of the way they talk about women. [...] So yeah, when it's, if guys are like "Ah look at the tits on that". I, I actually look at them like, "Okay, well I won't be talking to you in a couple of hours", you know. Ah, that kind of thing. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

There was greater heterogeneity of views and practice among men of white British descent. Modern feminist ideology with respect to sexual equality had reportedly helped to transform some of these men's views about women. But it remained difficult for them to avoid spending time with other men who denigrated women. Some tried to avoid such situations but found themselves inveigled into practices and behaviour with which they later disagreed:

I suppose when I was younger, I was more of, conforming to the kind of male uhm, you know, the kind of stereotype of crassness, talking about sex and stuff. Who's going to talk about it in macho terms. [...] But half the time, you don't know what you're talking about (laughs) anyway. It's a load of bollocks but (pause). [...] Certainly back then, there's a contrast between the way I actually feel about it, and the way you're suppose to talk about it, uhm. [...] You talk about it as if it's, kind of, a conquest and that you believe it's, kind of, (pause) the women is an object, rather than a person. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Both men of Indian and white British descent acknowledged the role of alcohol in the contemporary lifestyles of most men. Some form of drinking underpinned favoured

forms of socialising among the majority of young men in this study:

I suppose you get pressure to drink. And drink as much as you can (laughs). [...] I don't mind too much because I do drink anyway. And it's, I mean, I don't drink 'cause friends drink and they've kind of convinced me to drink. [...] I mean, I've been able to say "no" (emphasised), but then at the same time, I mean like, if, if my, if we're drinking and I'm like "ah, that's, that's being a bit too far" and they're like, "No, no like, keep going, keep going" and I was like, "Oh right then, come on then". It's that type of thing. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

If we're, sort of, doing drinking games, you know, sort of, the women will try and be included, but they won't do it properly and things like that. So, you know, we'll sort of 'take the piss' out of them. You know, whereas, you know, we'll do this drinking game or whatever flawlessly. And they just can't master it at all. They can't take the drink. (Richard, 20, of W.B.D., student)

The popularity of drinking made it difficult for men of Indian descent to abstain completely, even though they reported having been brought up to avoid alcohol. They often found themselves in pubs or bars where other friends met regularly:

When I go home, a lot of my old school friends, I meet at a pub, so, in the pub, in that respect, and just chat to them. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

There appeared less resistance to drinking among men of white British descent. Some reported how parents, schooling, or having a girlfriend or a job had restricted their freedom to drink. But most consumed alcohol, and spent their spare time socialising with other male friends in pubs and bars:

Whenever I get the opportunity to, to have a drink with, with male friends, you know, whenever that is, sort of, over lunch or, or go out, you know, go out in the evenings with them. (Dave, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Subscribing to a lifestyle that revolved around drinking and ending up intoxicated was rejected by most men of Indian descent, especially when these men felt a duty to show personal discipline:

Some men are like, really heavy drinkers and that. I'm not really. Like, I have it sometimes, but I'm not like, not heavy like alcoholic. (Laughs) [...] I don't think it just appeals to me. I mean like, I do like sometimes, have a like, an occasional beer or something, but like, I'm not like, you know, just out to get drunk or anything like (smiles). [...] I just managed to have self-control. I really haven't felt the need to have it. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

Recreational enjoyment provided an explicit rationale for alcohol consumption among men of white British descent. Moreover, peer pressure to drink more, as well as being able to handle the effects of alcohol, helped validate masculinity:

At fourteen, fifteen, I guess you start drinking alcohol. [...] A pressure (laughs) to, maybe a little bit older, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, a pressure to be able to drink alcohol and not, to drink large amounts (laughs) of alcohol, you know. [...] You certainly get ridiculed if say, you have a couple of pints and you throw up (laughs). (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Among men of white British descent, alcohol consumption was also linked to lowered inhibitions and occasionally to being enticed into situations and exploits they later regretted:

That night, I was drunk actually, which does, kind of, take down your ability to, kind of, control yourself [in deciding whether to have sex]. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Men of Indian descent on the other hand, mostly prided themselves on remaining self-controlled, so that alcohol would not cloud their judgement in potentially testing circumstances:

Uhm, and also things which lead from the drinking and stuff, which influence your mind and, you know, going out uhm, trying to, you know, uhm, pull a lady or whatever, you know, so I don't feel I have to do that. I feel happier without doing that. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

### *Becoming Sexual*

The display of sexual interest in women, a key feature of 'lad culture' (see Willis, 1977; Francis, 1999), informed enactments of masculinity among both men of Indian and white British descent. Displaying an interest in women appeared responsible for unifying most men within a 'heterosocial' community:

You know, the typical boys things, sort of, you know, ah, women (laughs) I mean, need I say more! (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Well, I suppose as I'm, I'm heterosexual. [...] I just fancy women, I suppose (laughs). (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

Having and asserting a heterosexual reputation was also collectively important, particularly during adolescence – a period characterised by a climate of intense



speculation regarding (homo)sexuality:

Certainly, when I was younger, the stereotype of a gay man, is something you'd probably wanna avoid. Uhm, I wouldn't say I was homophobic but, at school, it's certainly something you get a lot of stick for, so (clears throat) you maybe consciously wanna try and avoid those kind of stereotypes, I guess (laughs). (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

I suppose, kind of, again, to avoid that, being labelled with that lab(...) stig(...) as you said, stig(...), I don't know, I, I suppose it is a, yeah, being labelled like that, as gay, and I suppose, it's, kind of, put me into the (pause) and the stereotype, to try and avoid. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

Also, at school men from both groups reported participating in sexual banter and jokes, based heavily on innuendo and hearsay:

I think sex was just one very, very, one extended joke in itself at school, because we use to tell the funniest jokes. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

A lot of playground talk, most of which, is uhm, probably wide of the mark. Uhm, things you pick up from friends. There's always people in your year at school, who are, kind of, the more sexually advanced ones at an earlier age. You start hearing stories about people who have, are having experiences, and it spreads around or they, they brag about it, or whatever. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Male banter at school was exacerbated by the mounting impact of male bravado and rivalry which affected even men of Indian descent:

You exaggerate (laughs) certain things. Uhm, and I mean, I don't know, you're probably dirtier with your male friends than, (pause) than, you know, what, (pause) what you actually feel. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

Men of white British descent reported learning about sex more from discussions among their peers and by listening to those with allegedly more sexual experience. The scenarios they heard about prepared them for what to expect:

Just friends joking about it [sex]. Uhm, (pause) since then, I've, kind of, helped develop a, a feeling of what's right and what's wrong [...] what's acceptable. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

A shared interest in sex in both groups of men encouraged some to view pornographic movies together. These occasions equipped them with a grasp of the mechanics of sex, which helped elicit bonding between male peers:

[Watching pornography] I suppose there's this (pause) like ah, (pause) when the boys, boys get together and that, and just having jokes and things, I suppose, yeah, yeah, in, when it's just, it's the boys altogether and that, you know. So I mean, it's just, you know, we have some jokes and things (smiles). [...] You can kind of, even talk about it more freely amongst friends and things. [...] 'Cause it, it's you, you're, you're watching it together, you're seeing it together kind of, it's like sort of, you can talk about it together. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

I can remember being about fifteen at some friend's house and some uhm, some pornographic film being on. I can certainly remember that. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Whilst both groups of men shared a sexual interest in women, men of Indian descent appeared less preoccupied with the pursuit of heterosexual experience. As a result, most of these men considered themselves to be less sexually experienced and therefore, more at a disadvantage when it came to sharing details of personal encounters with others:

I'm not the right person to ask 'cause we don't actually have sex. We just, I don't know enough about it and I wouldn't like to talk about something, I don't feel (pause) it's not that I'm not comfortable about talking about it. It's that, I'm not comfortable with my own lack of knowledge about it so. [...] Maybe that's something that I don't necessarily discuss with your average person on the street, because it sounds weird that a twenty-one year old who's not sure about losing their virginity or whatever. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

On the whole, men of Indian descent were guarded in divulging details of sexual experiences, even among close friends. This silence in turn tempered calls on them to extend their heterosexual experience:

I think the pre(...) pres(...) 'cause there's less people talking about [sex], the pressure's less type thing. [...] There's less pressure, sort of, to go and (takes small breath in) do whatever. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

Few of these men reported being encouraged to have sex as part of a rite of passage or to improve their standing among peers:

I'd made a, a personal decision not to indulge in anything like that, where, for the sake of doing it or because everyone else had done it, or, it was never going to be a topic of conversation anyway. It was never going to be discussed with my friends "oh last night", you know. So it wasn't one of those things where I thought, I have to do it so I can talk about it. (Raj, 23, of I.D., graduate)

The accounts given by men of white British descent were different. They reported talking more openly among their peer groups about women and sex:

I don't think I've ever had any problem talking about sex with other guys. Uhm, I mean, yeah, it's often been in, in that, kind of, jokey, sort of, quite deprecating way about women. I don't think, I've ever encountered (pause) men who were unwilling to talk about sex in some form, you know, so. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Men of white British descent appeared to be subject to greater pressures to share their sexual experiences. Such conversations led to a degree of bragging:

We do it [talk about sex] quite openly. [...] There's always "oh go on, what happen? What happened? What happened?" but ah, I'll only tell if I want to. [...] Especially at my age [21], there's a, there is an element of, you know, ah, showing off, I suppose. You're a stud if you've done so many women. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

For these men, talk about sexual experience provided status, triggered rumours and offered overt evidence of sexual orientation. It also added to the pressure to initiate new sexual relations:

Loads of, of the like, sort of, cool people at school would be talking about sex and stuff like that [...] when I was thirteen. [...] And going out and kissing girls and stuff. [...] A few people had like lost their virginity like, at fourteen, so there's that. And there was, kind of, like, gener(...) like, just small pressures on people then. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

Sex seemed to be broadly regarded by men of white British descent as something that needed to be achieved as a 'rite of passage', in order to boost self-esteem, respond to peer pressure and display to peers the personal insight acquired:

I smiled for about three days non-stop [after my first sexual experience]. Uhm, (laughs) and that was probably more because I, as I was saying earlier about having, telling people about your conquest, was that, I was the first person in the group to have had sex. [...] That's probably how I felt afterwards, is, it wasn't really the actual [sexual] act itself. It's probably more just what it meant afterwards. [...] The pressure of actually having sex had been completely lifted and, and was gone. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

Having had (or being able to say one had had) a number of different sexual partners was central to the development of self confidence among men of white British descent, since it complimented the archetype of manhood as being virile:

Being able to have diff(...) you know, many, many partners, and that was, kind of, that was useful and helpful, and gave me confidence of, you know. [...] That was, that was a he(...) a sort of a healthy development. [...] That you felt, that you could and if you needed to, you could. And uhm, it wasn't in any way sordid or, you know, it just seemed more, quite a natural thing to do. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

It was also proof of the common belief that young men should 'sow their wild oats'. The potency of this ideology was such that even less experienced men of white British descent felt encouraged to have sex with multiple partners, so as not to feel left behind or have later regrets:

One of my friends, who I'm near to, "I ought to carry on uhm, I ought to, well, 'cause this is the only time in your life, when you can do all these kind of things" [sleep around]. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

### *When Men and Women Meet*

Among both groups of men, social relationships tended to have been broadly homosocial until the onset of adolescence. Then, a change seemed to occur among men of white British descent who had attended mixed sex schools:

It was introduced in a, kind of, ah, a new way of socialising and in a new way of, you know, there was school where you could talk to girls. And then there was this other place, where you could uhm, you could have sex with girls, or you could, you know, you could go out with girls or kiss them. I think it started with kissing really or, you know, whatever. [...] [It was] something that was, kind of, a little bit secret, a little bit, you know. [...] I suppose, it led, led on quite naturally because it was, you started off in quite a hom(...) homosocial uhm, environment, because you, you wouldn't be in pubs because you'd be slightly too young. [...] It would be in a uhm, with just guys. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Thereafter, men of both Indian and white British descent increasingly found themselves in situations where they encountered and socialised with women. This was coupled with burgeoning sexual attraction to women and typically resulted in group banter, antics and rivalry:

You like having a laugh. You know, joking around in like the company of the opposite sex. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

And, you know, with actually socialising in pubs or getting drink, or, and that would be a link to women. [...] It felt that that, life was speeding up somehow and this was quite, a kind of, ah, a risqué kind of, or the most, at that time, risqué thing to do. [...] Ahead of your peers, you did it. [...] It certainly would improve your social status, that's, I think, that's basically for sure. (Joe,

Prospects of meeting women were felt to improve, especially among men of Indian descent, when they attended university, a setting which offered them greater freedom:

A lot of uhm, male friends that I've got and maybe, maybe certain people living in Great Britain, probably feel as though like, the relationship they'll have with women will probably be, the most important ones will probably be starting off at uni and basically having a girlfriend, and then obviously, moving on in certain ways like that and getting married, *et cetera*. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

Zeal to interact with women in bars and nightclubs appeared to stem from the prestige awarded to those men who seemed to be popular, successful and sexually experienced. Exhibiting such attributes seemed broadly reminiscent of times at school, especially for the men of white British descent, when being able to 'pull', get 'dates' and keep a girlfriend had enhanced their reputation and sense of masculinity:

It was obviously something that I wanted uhm, to be able to do, was to, sort of, to pull women and, and what have you. And if I wasn't doing particularly well, then I'd think there was something wrong with me. [...] I suppose, you either wonder why, that you're not, sort of, good-looking enough or you're not, sort of, cool enough, or you don't just, just don't carry yourself in, in the way that you find, you think women would be attractive. [...] [If] certain girls were interested in certain guys and when you, sort of, felt that they weren't as interested in you [...] then, you know, there must be something wrong with me. (Dave, 21, of W.B.D., student)

However, being perceived as too accomplished with women could result in reprisal due to jealousy and male rivalry, as well as friends feeling sidelined when relationships became more serious:

I don't mind having a close relationship. Whereas, other people think it's just, you know, they couldn't stand it. [...] [Because of the] time it gives up spending it with friends or whatever, or, yeah. [...] I mean, yeah, I understand it's a bit of a trade-off between ah, losing a little bit of ah, social life, when I'm that young, university, in London, living in zone one. Excellent. I should be like, going out and partying. [...] [Before that] I had quite a few girlfriends when I was, sort of, sort of, seven(...) ah, sort of, sixteen, seventeen. [...] So I was, sort of, I was labelled quite positively. [...] [But] I had quite a few female friends as well and that, I think, (pause) made some other guys quite envious and so, I was labelled a little bit more negatively in their eyes [...] just sort of snide comments. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Men of Indian descent dealt with these kinds of situations differently. Their religion

and upbringing helped them to avoid conduct seen as unethical and to oppose pressure to 'pull', or acquire a girlfriend. Many felt able to deal with these demands because it was presumed they would in time have an 'arranged' marriage. However, some remained concerned that they should not be seen as different from their peers and become a target for gossip and ridicule:

People were just concerned that I wouldn't go out with certain girls, like from my year or I just, I just didn't find, see anything in them. People don't, they just looked at, they just wanted to judge on looks. I just said "No forget it, I'm not gonna go out with her" or uhm, and so basically, in school, I was, I wasn't labelled about my sexuality, but I was labelled about the fact that I didn't do certain things that they were doing, more than anything else. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

## **The Nature of Women**

Dominant ideologies of femininity and womanhood helped fashion an antithesis to hegemonic masculinity. Men of Indian descent in this study tended to hold women in high regard, in line with values in their religion, family life and among close peers. The central portrayal of woman as a mother or sister, helped to foster deep respect among most men of Indian descent. The almost idealistic perception of Indian women among men of Indian descent interviewed in this study, seemed to derive from the need to defend morals and ethics, especially those of Hinduism and family life. 'Asian' girls, more precisely 'Indian' ones, were revered for their alleged virtue. Men of Indian descent were nervous in broaching the subject of sex whilst in the company of many of their female counterparts:

Girls are there most of the time on the scene, so (pause) you can't talk about it as openly. (Sachin, 19, of I.D., student)

There were 'other' women though, whom men of Indian descent believed indulged in seemingly 'immoral' behaviour by 'sleeping around'. These women, it was stressed, did not include their own womenfolk, but rather were other 'Asian' girls, notably from other unaffiliated regions or groups:

A friend of mine she thought, she, she, from Harrow she tells me that the Asians there, you know, some of them are just totally (pause) according to her, always ah, they admit themselves, they're complete whores. Ah, I, I, for want of a better word, I'm sorry, I just shouldn't use that term, but (pause) uhm, (pause) and also, I know like in India, in like, my cousins in India tell me like in Bombay, all the girls are really easy and it's like a well known fact that Gujarati girls are really quite 'tight'. You know, they don't want to do that until they're

in a relationship, if at all. [...] [Although] My cousin, brother A., he's, he's had a few women and I personally do think that's wrong, but, but he's gonna do it, he's gonna do it and I can't stop him obviously. Uhm, so yeah, I mean I'm, and the women, all of the women he's had are Hindu Gujarati girls as well, which is even more shocking because he hasn't been in a relationship. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

The reported reluctance of women of Indian descent to engage in casual sex appeared not only pivotal in curbing the scope of possibilities open to their menfolk, but reinforced moral and ethical principles if men began to waver or be seduced by the notion of having sex:

My understanding of religion and who I am is a lot better. Spiritually, I'm a lot, lot better. Because I think almost d(...) entirely due to my girlfriend. [...] [Also] I mean, there have been situations where I've discussed with certain friends if they've begun to have sex in their relationship. Only because I tried to use it against my girlfriend (laughs), but I gave up on that a couple of months into the relationship. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

The threat of recrimination from flouting moral codes was disproportionately directed at women of Indian descent rather than their menfolk. Dissident behaviour by these women would incur not only the loss of reputation and respect, but also could bring shame upon their entire family, with far-reaching stigmatisation and even ostracism by the wider community:

And, you know, Indian girls especially, when they get taken out as well, once they've lost their virginity, my word, it is, it's like the most cardinal sin you can do to a family. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

Even having a boyfriend could be problematic for women of Indian descent. Their conduct would be intensely scrutinised and even the slightest incident was liable to be misconstrued, generating gossip and recrimination about the relationship within the wider community:

For Gujarati culture in this country, I think there's a lot of that. If you are with a boyfriend, people talk anyway. Uhm, if you're with them for over a year, I think most people just leave you to it because, you know, because then, it does come out with conversations and friends that, it's obvious you're gonna get married and, no, I don't think people care as much, I th(...) parents still care. That's they're prerogative. Ah, when you're first with someone, if you're staying around at their place and stuff, there's a real big issue ah, especially, if you then break-up, because I've seen that, firsthand, that's terrible. And that's a real fault of our culture but there we are - people gossip. I'm just as bad. (Long Pause). (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

There were examples of girlfriends, particularly among men of Indian descent, who were unwilling to disregard their upbringing and religion by becoming sexually active. These women were adamant in refusing premarital sex, with concomitant implications for their menfolk:

My girlfriend does not believe in sex before marriage. [...] Her religious belief is, you know, it's, it's something that she wants to give as a gift to her husband. [...] I think in, in the bedroom, I do think on the most part of the relationships, I know, of, the girl does control it that much more. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

[My girlfriend] She has restricted my approach to sex because she wanted to wait to have sex. (Hagrid, 22, of I.D., graduate)

Other girlfriends of men of Indian descent had reportedly agreed to have sex only after they were betrothed or at least involved in a committed long-term relationship. As a result, when premarital sex did take place, few men of Indian descent were willing to break this special confidence, even to their peers, demonstrating respect and the widely held belief that to talk about sexual experience was not acceptable:

That's perhaps one difference about some, some Asian girls, I mean, they, when they commit themselves to sex, they, they do want some sort of a commitment, long-term say. We're not talking about marriage, but, I mean, uhm, very few of the women I know, are the type to have say, one-night stands and what not. [...] That's probably down to their upbringing and what not. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

In contrast, few men of white British descent considered it reasonable not to have premarital sex with their girlfriends. However, they too reported that some girlfriends tried to exert control over their sexual behaviour until after a 'watershed' in the relationship had been reached:

One of those [relationships] was with a Christian girl, so we didn't actually have sex. [...] That was a problem because obviously, I wanted to and she didn't. Uhm, I, sort of, I said to her for a bit that, you know, you know, that's not why I'm going out with you, just to have sex, but at the end of the day, it was, you know, it was, it was an issue. (Dave, 21, of W.B.D., student)

But most girlfriends of men of white British descent were reportedly less constrained. This had parallel implications for both these men, as well as for some men of Indian descent, who engaged in premarital sex with female partners of white British background:



The first time I had sex [16], I basically met a girl at a club, on like a Wednesday during half-term. Uhm, we went to see a band on Friday and I went back to her halls, and we had sex. [...] I didn't see her again after that. Uhm, I mean, I thought it, it might lead to something else, but it didn't, like, she didn't want to, so I just, sort of, like, took it and carried on basically. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

## **The Forming of Relationships**

Men's attitudes to relationships were influenced not only by their peer groups, but also by society at large. Much of the broad consensus about how relationships are perceived within contemporary society seemed to be symptomatic of the prevailing importance assigned to sex and its standing within relationships. For both men of Indian and white British descent, there was little escaping the multifaceted effects of sex that permeate, both overtly and covertly, aspects of life in the West:

The way we've been brought up. In Western society it's an issue [sex] which we have to ah, face more often. Uhm, the way it's used commercially uhm, is very big here, in the West. (Rishi, 21, of I.D., graduate).

I suppose, uhm, my views on sex are probably more liberal than my mum's. [...] I think the only influence has probably been a result of popular culture and the media, and today's world, and uhm, the liberal attitude towards sex [...] because I've been a part of that culture [...] that it is, the way it is, kind of thing. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

The sexualisation of Western society manifested itself in what might be called the 'sexualization of peer society'. Both men of Indian and white British descent indicated they were aware of pervasive sexual imagery and depictions in television, advertising, newspapers, the internet and men's and women's magazines:

It [sex] would probably be (pause) onto maybe the outside world, or like films, TV, mov(...) uhm, movies, magazines and things like that. (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

Sex is uhm, very, very enticing. [...] It's something that, that, that you can't get away from and I do get aroused everyday watching TV, and, and, and seeing beautiful girls. [...] I'm labelled a complete uhm, sexual [maniac]. I can't stop thinking about it. (Steve, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Furthermore, men from both groups indicated that pornography, both soft core and hard core, had been freely available to them in their youth. This had aroused their curiosity and interest towards sex, as well as providing them with instruction. However, some men indicated that they felt their attitudes towards women and sex had been distorted as

a result:

[Have used] pornographic magazines but not recently, actually. [...] I think, it certainly establishes like, a, sort of, a, a visual set of images that can very easily, very easily arouse you. [...] I think, it probably has quite a bad influence really. Uhm, in, in a way, in the, sort of, desensitising you, you to uhm, to reality, really. Uhm, and your expectations. [...] I think it can have a [...] maybe, sort of, uhm, undermining effect, maybe. Something like that. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Portrayals of sex, both in the media and pornography, as well as through sex education, seemed to have influenced men of both Indian and white British descents' understandings about sex. They learned about its diversity and recommended techniques, as well as the generally accepted confines of sexual interests that were figuratively described as 'normal' or 'traditional':

[Asked about sexual interests] Just normal. (James, 19, of W.B.D., student)

It's like, a part of a relationship between a man and a woman. [...] [Sexual Interests] I suppose, just traditional, well not traditional, I mean, uhm, (pause) I'm not sure. (Guy, 18, of W.B.D., student)

Sex was reportedly portrayed in the media as immensely pleasurable and an integral part of validating a relationship. Sex had typically become the bedrock of modern relationships. Viewing dominant depictions of sex helped influence the understandings of sex, held by both men of Indian and white British descent:

Mm, I think in general, watching television programmes makes you, sort of, learn, understand more about what's going on and why people do it [have sex] [...] obviously, for the pleasure. (Mahesh, 21, of I.D., student)

[Watching TV] programmes about sex [...] [they] really shaped my be(...) you know, understanding of, sitting at home, you know, with a television in my room [...] all about pleasuring, rather than just the actual conquest of sex itself and sexual intercourse. Uhm, so that r(...) that's, kind of, what, what shaped my beliefs, sex and what I, I try and do in sex. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

In both groups of men, attitudes to sex were fuelled by its portrayal as recreational. This encouraged some men to pursue sexual relations without obligation and in the absence of affection. Such thinking had, however, been confined in men of Indian descent largely to their early adolescence:

(Tuts) Uhm, feelings, attitudes and beliefs have all changed drastically from a

fourteen year old guy that thought he would have at least a hundred sexual partners at any given time (laugh). Well in my lifetime. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

I guess still today like, pleasure is a lot to do with sex, because I don't really attached many feelings to sex. So me having like fun, like pleasure, and the girl having pleasure, like that for me, is what sex is about. (Nathan, 19, of W.B.D., student)

More latterly, men of Indian descent struggled to reconcile themselves to their newly found sexual freedoms outside of marriage or a long-term, loving relationship. Forming a relationship was generally accepted to be a prelude to marriage rather than an opportunity to have sex:

As long as people are in loving, deep meaning relationships, sex is fine. And other people, who are going to sleep around and perhaps go off doing whatever, ah, that's just not for me and I, I accept that, I respect that in myself and in other people. Uhm, but I'm still quite a traditionalist in many respects. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

I realised sex isn't all that important. Okay, when I was younger, I thought I would have sex when I was in a relationship, but as I've got older, I've realised it doesn't really matter. (Hagrid, 22, of I.D., graduate)

Some men of Indian descent could not help but be vehemently opposed, as well as disenchanted, with what was seen as casual sex:

You, so you call a one-night fling (pause) uhm, make, as, as love? It's, it's very wrong, it's a uhm, I think it's because of a lack of ethical and moral values that people have now in society. People just say "I want sex" or, you know, "I want sex, I want sex, I want sex" that's, that's the only subject that's being talked about by a lot of, a lot of guys. [...] People say "ah, you know", they say with such pride "oh, I had sex". What's the big deal, you're degrading your own self? Have some moral values. [...] So that's been a big sort of social aspect that I find, I found difficult. (Ram, 18, of I.D., student)

A quite different set of attitudes towards casual sex were evidenced among men of white British descent. Most were less troubled by the ethics of this type of sexual practice, partly because it had become increasingly common:

I don't have anything against uhm, a one-night stand, in that sense. And if I was out tonight in a bar or something, and I met some woman that I found really attractive, I'd be, you know, if I felt in the right mood, I'd be quite prepared to do that. (John, 22, of W.B.D., student)

This softening stance seemed fuelled by pressures to acquire heterosexual experience, favourable logistics and by meeting women who were prepared to engage in casual sex. Most men of white British descent admitted having one-night stands, or sex without any commitment, either simply as a means of losing their virginity or to help them become more practised at sex:

[First sexual experience] It was a one-night stand really. [...] I wanted to experience it. And I don't think it really, sort of, mattered, who it was with (laughs). (Dave, 21, of W.B.D., student)

It [losing my virginity] was like, one hurdle I'd, I'd overcome and it, it, I'd got it out the way. I mean, I never really felt like, I wanted to lose it to someone very special. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

The prominence accorded to sexual pleasure encouraged men to see sex principally as a technical performance. Many men of white British descent felt compelled to try to aspire to be adept lovers:

It's about enjoyment between two people. Uhm, (pause) for me, I'm very much about, sex is about actually pleasuring the other person. [...] Because I want it to be a pleasurable experience for her. I think it's very, it's quite easy for a man, sex. I think it's, it's more, easier. Because it's, it's just about a journey to an end point. [...] And I think for a woman, it's much more, because you, it's harder to reach that end. But it's not an end point for them, because they can keep going. [...] I know that I'll reach my end point whatever happens, to be honest. (Elliott, 23, of W.B.D., student)

The burden of having to demonstrate sexual prowess in the context of casual sex and one-night stands only heightened insecurities among some men. These anxieties were further compounded by peer pressure to become sexually experienced. This meant that some of these men delayed their first sex until conditions were more 'favourable':

[First sexual experience] I was actually nearly nineteen. [...] I was quite nervous about the whole thing, anyway. And I'd always been very, it had always been a, a bit of a hang-up, the fact that I hadn't had sex yet. And I was a bit nervous as to, you know, I, that I wasn't gonna know what I was doing or whatever. And I think I just felt comfortable with her, because f(...) because I knew her very well before we'd even started going out. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Dominant ideologies of masculinity also encouraged some men of white British descent to avoid engaging in sex as an overt expression of intimacy. Affection was seen as being a more feminine trait and men feared that displaying it would compromise their

purported masculinity:

I don't feel some, sort of, spiritual link through it [having sex]. I'd say that's, 'cause, a slightly more, a feminine approach to it. That you're doing it for closeness and I don't. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Despite men of white British descent engaging disproportionately in more casual sex, some, like men of Indian descent, equally drew a distinction between premarital sex in a stable and loving relationship (that was often classed as 'making love') and having sex in the context of a one-night stand:

If you're like, with somebody you don't like but think "ah, yes, just ah, sex is very good" yeah. I mean, maybe it's good, but is it like, the wrong thing, I mean, you're gonna be stuck with someone you don't like, but have a few (laughs) moments like of enjoyment. It's, you have to have it more balanced out really. (Rahul, 18, of I.D., student)

I think there's two types of sex. There's sex uhm, which is basically, just one up from masturbation. It's just relieving yourself, 'cause it's a one-night stand. And then, I think, there's making love to another person, which is different. [...] It would have been better (emphasised) I'm sure, if I'd done it, with somebody I loved. I think, it's a different experience. [...] It didn't quite live up to expectation. [...] That would make it in turn, more pleasurable, than just a physical pleasure. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

Men of white British descent, especially those who were older, and who had a regular partner, displayed some ambivalence about one-night stands:

Having [sexual] relations with women that I didn't necessarily ah, well, I didn't love, uhm, (pause) because of one-night stands, or what have you [...] [and feeling] a kind of a hollow feeling. [...] [And] I'd rather not have a reputation for going off with all kinds of different women, 'cause it make me feel a bit (inhales) dirty and (laughs) cheap. [...] [First sexual experience - It was] Ah, (pause) on hindsight, probably a mistake, but ah, (pause) [...] I just did it and then (pause) ah, kept doing it. I'd known [her] for two nights before. That was all! (Laughs). I'm ashamed to say (laughs). [...] I mean, ideally, I would have had a long-term relationship with someone, then had sex. But it didn't work out like that. (Brian, 21, of W.B.D., student)

This resulted in their feeling that for them sex was more dynamic in a loving relationship:

It's not an entirely hedonistic thing. [...] And I think, the intimacy within a relationship especially is important. And I think, it means more in that sort of context, I think, especially when you know the person really well. (Seb, 22, of W.B.D., student)

The more critical approach to casual sex taken by men of Indian descent discouraged their involvement in premarital sex until a serious relationship had begun:

I believe it's something you should share with someone very closely. So the fact of it wouldn't, it wasn't generally coming to mind, 'cause I wasn't going out with a(...) when I was single. That wouldn't generally come into my mind. Now it seems to. It is coming into my mind because I'm going out with someone. [...] The relationship's the core for me. Yeah, a must. (Vijay, 19, of I.D., student)

Definite reasons were required before men of Indian descent in this study would contemplate sexual relations with a woman before marriage:

I think as Hindus in general, a lot of couples are having sex in a relationship, after say about a year, year and a half. Ah, once they've discussed marriage, once they know that they're set to be together, that, a lot of them are a lot more likely to uhm, to actually do that and I, I do respect that. I think that is probably the best of both worlds, that to have sex in a loving relationship is a good thing, is my personal belief. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

This approach enabled some men of Indian descent to keep pace both with close friends who had hinted at the development of a sexual side to their relationship and counterparts in wider society, whom were typically perceived as being at the forefront in terms of acquiring sexual experience:

I felt very content and uhm, you know, very happy within myself that I, I achieved this thing that I know some friends had probably done at the age of sixteen and what not. Uhm, perhaps that made me feel more manly. Uhm, and that, you know, that uhm, just it's perhaps strengthened our relationship as well. [...] Bringing two people closer together. Uhm, I mean, they say men are most intimate when, when they actually have sex so. Yeah, I mean that, you know, applies to me as well (laughs) so. (Sanjay, 19, of I.D., student)

Some other men of Indian descent were able to realize a sexual intimacy before marriage without ostensibly breaching any moral code, by improvising with less proscribed forms of sexual activity:

We'd be together like and we would sleep together and stuff. It's not that we'd have intercourse, but we would uhm, otherwise, be together sexually. It's like everything except intercourse. (Kat, 21, of I.D., student)

Men of Indian descent who had had premarital sexual intercourse, even within the context of a serious relationship, often felt a level of regret afterwards about

contravening moral and ethical principles:

The first few experiences were probably, almost happened by, almost by accident, where afterwards in hindsight, we both looked towards it and said it wasn't, the time wasn't right really. [...] It was just a combination between like the time [we were alone], the place and also maybe drinking, but not to a major aspect. [...] In hindsight, you look at it and thought okay, maybe that wasn't the most, best, best thing to do, but obviously not regretting it, in certain aspects but. [...] After the first experience, there was definitely after(...) afterwards, there was definitely in hindsight, it was, it felt as if it was just, it, that it was wrong. [...] But since then like, both, both of our views have maybe changed slightly, probably after the first time, maybe then(...) got, after the first time was out of the way, sort of thing. [...] I feel that's an important barrier, the first time. [...] It's just another, it's another step in basically your development really, isn't it? (Arjun, 19, of I.D., student)

On the other hand, being in a relationship seemed to provide men of white British descent with an easy way both to have sex and become more practised. However, in contrast to men of Indian descent, the outset of even a questionable relationship typically served as the catalyst to begin having sex:

[First sexual experience] It was with someone I'd known, for a few years. [...] And we'd, kind of, decided(...) we had been, we were going with each other, although we hadn't been going out for very long. [...] I thought, it was high time [to have sex] (laughs) I think first of all. Uhm, I liked the girl. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

A final factor influencing men's views about sex was fear of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS:

Paranoia about, like, sexually transmitted disease. Definitely. I think, that's been (pause) uhm, a, definitely a restriction. Like, it made, made me not, not enjoy it as much. As I became more into, more and more aware of it, it just took a hell of a lot of enjoyment out of it. Uhm, (pause) uhm, to the point of me thinking, "well, what's the point?" you know. Uhm, and I think, that's probably influenced my uhm, you know, that I, I would prefer a longer-term relationships than casual. (Joe, 22, of W.B.D., student)

Individually or collectively, these factors influenced men, even those who reportedly had several partners. As a result, they were more likely to exercise restraint and reassess the benefits of having a longer-term sexual partner.

# Chapter 7

## Summary and Discussion

This study has explored the interactions of ethnicity, cultural background<sup>22</sup> and religion, in particular, as well as other factors, in the construction of masculinity in a contrasting group of young men – those born in the UK of Indian heritage<sup>23</sup> and Hindu background, and those of a white British descent – to extend the understanding of how different forms of masculinity are developed. A number of other pre-identified characteristics – such as being aged between 18-23, having a university education and residing in Greater London – were included as selection criteria to ensure participants were similar in these respects, and to help control for possible (confounding) variables.

In-depth accounts of these men's lived experiences were generated by a life history method of interviewing. Their experiences were, in turn, examined alongside existing theoretical frameworks to understand the formation of masculinities. Three overarching conceptual categories emerged throughout the analytic process:

- The significance of the family
- The place of religion
- The influence of peer relations.

From these major categories, it was possible to develop some ideas about the development of forms of masculinity in relation to race/ethnicity and sexuality.

### The Making of Masculine Selves

#### *The Significance of the Family*

The importance of the family in the formation of masculinity can perhaps be most readily understood by reference to two broad themes among the two groups of men studied. Firstly, there was family life itself which was reported to include three key areas linked to the structure of the family, characteristics of relationships and feelings with regard to family relationships. Secondly, there were the norms and values

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<sup>22</sup> The term cultural background in the study referred to issues around gender norms and expectations, cultural beliefs and perspectives, systems of social control, home life and peer groups.

<sup>23</sup> Indian family heritage for those of Indian descent in the UK was typically synonymous with the Gujarat region of India.



encouraged within the family setting.

## Family Life

Men of Indian descent reported being more likely than men of white British descent to have come from a type of household in which their parents remained married. There was a virtual absence of reports of parents separating, divorcing or remarrying, as was any reference to step-families. These men had also experienced living in the same household or in close proximity to many of their relatives, as well as having close by the presence of community elders.

Another difference noted between the two groups of men related to the concept of family itself. For men of Indian descent, the term family often encompassed the larger kinship network of extended family members and family friends, and reflected the strong bonds that were present within these close-knit networks. These people were seen as what was termed a 'sub-family' even though they were not always related by blood ties.

In contrast, family life for men of white British descent was reported to have been affected by relatively more incidents of marital/family breakdown in their upbringing. Some men of white British descent had been brought up in what might be seen as more 'unorthodox' family compositions such as a single-parent family, and/or had parents who designated care to childminders. Men of white British descent also had fewer family members living in close proximity.

These differences portrayed in the structure of the family among the two groups of men seemed to have had a bearing on the characteristics of relationships formed, as well as feelings with regard to family relationships. Men of Indian descent emphasised the close-knit nature of their families. They spoke of frequent family get-togethers, community events and festivals, aided by the local proximity of family members. They also relayed the help, advice and support that were offered to each other through the family. Some even reported family members going into joint family business ventures together. There was a strong sense of family alliance felt, which often meant, as mentioned earlier, these respondents had lived in close proximity to many of their relatives. The local proximity of family members, having close family ties as well as

frequent family get-togethers and community gatherings also helped reinforce family allegiances among the younger generation.

More fundamentally, the nature of family roles and responsibilities defined by the family also often encompassed the larger kinship network of extended family members and family friends. This had a marked impact on the upbringing of men of Indian descent with concerns for their personal welfare and development being extensively shared by many family members and family friends. The guardianship this provided helped reinforce the value of having family and perpetuated both sustained allegiance and interdependence.

Alongside senior family members and kinship networks, men of Indian descent also reported often having community elders at the forefront of ‘mentoring’ them as the youth, guiding their decision making. The receipt of this wisdom and advice, coupled with close ties with their kith and kin, influenced these men’s lives and practice, as well as highlighting a set of shared values and ethics which they were expected to follow. These values encouraged a sense of duty and loyalty for one’s community, family and elders, as well as commanding them a mark of respect that made dissent more difficult.

Men of white British descent tended to speak more about the fractured nature of their family relationships. Their increased experience of parental divorce, family breakdown and being cared for by childminders (had all) put a strain on both the dynamics of family life and immediate family relationships for these men. Some men spoke of their severed ties with parents, whilst others had struggled to find much common ground with other family members.

The reported fragility of immediate family relationships among men of white British descent extended to greater detachment and fewer ‘get-togethers’ with other more distant family members. This decline in contact with wider kin, compounded by fewer family members living in close proximity, reduced the support available from kinship networks. In addition, it weakened the development of a sense of communal belonging in this group of men. The overall impact of these changes in family life was that for these men the special significance of the family had been considerably diminished.

The family upbringing of men of Indian descent also encouraged these men, from an early age, to value their parents' cultural and religious heritage. Respondents felt obliged to adhere to dominant family and community values in their own lives, in order morally to repay their parents, as first generation immigrants. This respect derived from recognition of their parents' hard work and sacrifice, in addition to the wish to make their parents feel proud. The emphasis on not forgetting their family's roots helped create a strong sense of identity and communal belonging in these men which, in turn, reinforced the religious orientation of both the family and wider community.

Men of white British descent, on the other hand, found it hard to pinpoint what exactly had influenced them in shaping their initial outlook and approach in terms of family and upbringing, other than sometimes their parents' political beliefs or the more secular values and ethics they had encountered. Little overt value had been placed on promoting their initiation into a shared culture or religion. Neither did respondents report having received much explicit encouragement to secure a sense of duty, loyalty and respect for one's family. Few described their parents having used religious precepts to caution them as children against participating in certain activities. There was also little evidence of parents wishing to exert discipline over the more 'moral' aspects of their children's lives.

Instead, these men had grown-up with different rules emanating from their parents and with a set of norms in their families, more to do with their children should do well at school and "stay out of trouble". Provided this happened, men were rewarded with greater freedom to do what they wanted or as one respondent put it "You're organising your own lives and you had the space to do it".

The family setting in men of Indian descent, in association with religious sentiment discussed later, appeared to reinforce more traditionally defined gender roles and standards of appropriate behaviour. Men were expected to take responsibility and provide for their families. Male figures in the household, including fathers and older brothers, provided boys with gender role models which helped to acquaint them with culturally and religiously exemplary forms of behaviour.

Men had learned, even from an early age, that they were expected to fulfil a responsible position in family life. This had meant most respondents in this study had readily accepted responsibilities and duties demanded of them, such as being actively involved in the family business or looking after siblings and/or other family members. This strengthened their reported family loyalty. However, whilst many seemed happy to continue practising such distinct gender roles in their own future relationships, some had already had to negotiate new ways of acting due to the differing attitudes of their girlfriends. This meant, for example, it became difficult wanting to be chivalrous and pay for things rather than split things equally with a girlfriend.

Being entrusted with responsibility in their development as a man was rewarded with a greater freedom and independence than that reported to be given to Indian girls. Men were afforded freedom to socialise outside the family and home, although this also meant they had to be vigilant against perceived lapses in their moral behaviour.

Men of white British descent had difficulty putting into words exactly how their family and upbringing had influenced them in becoming men. This may be due partly to their experiences being to some extent aligned with dominant hegemonic culture. Certainly, there was less evidence of clearly defined gender roles and adherence to them having been encouraged within the family setting. Particular behaviours that might be seen as 'traditional' did remain in some families but were tempered by the impact of modern feminist ideologies with respect to sexual equality. Masculinity in these men was more likely linked to participation in egalitarian and 'contemporary' ideologies and lifestyles, with few respondents in this group feeling comfortable following an exclusively dominant role in their own partnerships.

Family life and upbringing in the men of Indian descent, as has previously been mentioned, encouraged these men to follow a set of shared values and ethics. These values and ethics included sensitivity regarding overt discussion of sex which was usually avoided because sex was viewed as a personal and private matter. When sex was discussed in family situations, this was primarily in relation to marriage.

Men of Indian descent were encouraged to think about marriage from a very early age due to the value placed on marriage and its underpinning of family life being asserted by their family members. Marriage and having a family were strongly felt to be, both

through culture and religion, intrinsically rewarding and a sacred part of life. Men were also consoled that entering into marriage, or, more specifically, undertaking the responsibilities associated with a regular relationship, had symbolic significance, not only of reaching adulthood but also of enhancing their sense of masculinity.

Marriage also symbolised the union of two families, rather than just a couple, and therein bolstered the family's involvement in finding a suitable partner. This meant family members being involved in arranging introductions but with the individual having the final say, unlike the more conventional arranged marriage system.

There had been a reported shift in the way some of the families of the men of white British descent spoke about sex. Most parents largely exemplified the white educated middle-class population and among whom the influence of the Church appeared to have declined. Sex was seemingly no longer kept private and few referred to it only in connection with married life rather than in terms of a broader concept of relationships.

On the whole, the parents of men of white British descent interviewed in this study appeared to be more relaxed when discussing the subject of sex with their children. They had tried to educate them about it and a few referred candidly to their own experiences, especially in terms of their pleasure. The accounts of more liberal approaches in family life suggest why men in this group were apparently less discomforted by discussions of sex.

These developments in more freely discussing sex mirrored the decline in importance placed on marriage or getting married. Many respondents had experienced, at firsthand, as mentioned earlier, family breakdowns. This, together with the current high divorce statistics, meant these men were more inclined to be critical of what modern marriage would personally offer them. The low importance attached to marriage meant that other committed non-marital relationships such as co-habitation now carried a similar status to marriage – denoting maturity, helping to authenticate a sense of masculinity (or, as some felt, 'a reason for being') and in giving them comfort.

### *The Place of Religion*

Part of the distinctive character of masculinity displayed by men of Indian descent derived from the pivotal role religion played in their personal development. Hinduism

was seen by these men as offering a systematic way to lead one's life. Their religion required them to observe, as best they could, a set of ethical principles and strive to embody a number of widely revered traits among Hindus in their behaviour, as these were deemed necessary, as one respondent reported, in their "Path to righteousness – to see God". This culminated, for some young men, in Hinduism becoming not so much a faith but rather more a committed way of life, which provided them with an influential set of principles.

The role that religion played in the lives of the men of white British descent and its explicit influence on their masculinity differed. Much of these men's religious involvement was confined to attendance at an occasional Christian ceremony (such as a wedding or funeral), and even that had diminished alongside a decline in the kinship-based religious events. Few, other than one devout Christian, felt obliged to commit to a formal religious morality on how to live their lives. Religion and its influence had become largely redundant and rather abstract in nature.

Another important factor shaping masculinity among the group of men of Indian descent was the promotion within Hinduism of an altruistic perspective, which linked closely to designating them, as Hindus, with a collective, rather than an individualistic, identity within their community. This perspective helped further strengthen community relations among the younger generations, making it more difficult for family and community values to be challenged.

Religious and cultural precepts and instruction on how to live one's life were instrumental in developing what might be seen as a deeply rooted form of masculinity in men of Indian descent. This resulted in these men having a complex and historically located form of masculinity that appeared to place them at odds with the notions of masculinity predominantly accentuated in wider British society.

These men's masculinity was defined by culturally revered qualities including having respect and compassion towards other living things. These principles were linked to the rudimentary concept of *Ahimsa* which encouraged men to refrain from engaging in violent thoughts or actions.<sup>24</sup> Adherence to such beliefs distanced these men from traits

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<sup>24</sup> *Ahimsa* is an important tenet of Hinduism that refers to being non-violent to all living beings. It is closely connected with the notion that all kinds of violence entail negative karmic consequences.

synonymous with prevailing 'lad culture' and its associated brands of bravado and machismo.

There was a degree of tension in enacting such culturally favoured characteristics as being thoughtful, particularly with other men, when this behaviour was seen as incongruous both with 'lad culture' as well as with more traditional notions of masculinity. This inhibited 'sharing' in male friendships, even when male camaraderie was strong, as men openly risked compromising their sense of manhood.

Finally, men of Indian descent noted that Hinduism judged marriage as the only legitimate outlet for sex, with the sexual act being depicted as a gift between husband and wife. Marriage and having a family were strongly felt to be a sacred and highly valued part of life which encouraged these men to think about marriage from a very early age. Some men adhered to these principles about abstaining from sex until married as testament to their religious convictions and to safeguard their own virtue.

In line with Hindu values, men of Indian descent articulated in this sample strong disapproval of casual sex or one-night stands, both of which were seen as being devoid of love and security. Such forms of sexual conduct were associated with 'lust', which was considered both sinful and wrong, and needed to be restrained even if it was regarded as a 'basic' instinct. Same-sex sexual behaviour was on occasions said to be wrong, not least because it too was regarded as simply a form of gratification.

It seemed that without having the strength of an explicit religious moral code behind them, men of white British descent were, instead, more open to display their sexuality through sex. Some noted that Christianity decreed marriage as the only legitimate outlet for sex. However, very few respondents, in what they viewed as a predominantly secular society, felt strongly enough (if even bothered) to want to comply with this ethic or were worried that flouting it would provoke reproach.

### *The Influence of Peer Relations*

The degree of influence of peer relations, along with the media, appeared to be significantly linked to the place of family and religion in shaping different forms of masculinity among the two groups of men interviewed. Peer expectations seemed more persuasive among men of white British descent in the study given they lacked the

aforementioned explicit effects of family or religion that men of Indian descent had on their masculinity. The influence of peers, although not unimportant among men of Indian descent, appeared to be more limited.

The basis of friendships differed among the two groups of men. For men of Indian descent, the pragmatism of having a shared religion/cultural heritage formed a hub around which a special kind of camaraderie and affinity existed. Men in this group could speak their 'mother tongue', share in customary pastimes and practise their religion. Moreover, they could attend festivals, celebrations, ceremonies and acts of worship together. These all added to a sense of community and cohesion among men of a shared ethnicity and cultural background. In addition, a sense of distinction and solidarity was triggered by resistance to racist bullying at school and a sense of being 'different'.

A shared religion or cultural heritage gave men of white British descent little sense of explicit communal belonging. It also reduced the likelihood of meaningful friendships and social networks being formed on the basis of religious or cultural affiliation. This group of men looked elsewhere for other things in common, such as having a similar intellect or sense of humour when choosing their friends.

The wider impact of peer relations meant that some relatively traditional notions of masculinity continued to symbolize manhood among both groups of men. For example, displaying a keen interest, and also, to an extent, being actively involved, in sport, seemed to epitomise a key aspect of masculinity for all the men. In addition, being good-looking and having a well-defined male physique was important for both groups of men, as it boosted their perceived attractiveness to women which, in turn, some commented, enhanced their social standing.

However, men of Indian descent, in particular, seemed to want a muscular physique or good 'look' more than their white British counterparts in this study. Weight training helped men of Indian descent to improve their physical appearance which, in turn, they said assisted them to feel more confident and self-assured.

Rather than by explicit reference to family and religion, masculinity among men of white British descent was predominantly influenced via expectations among friends and



peers to act and behave in particular ways. Much of this behaviour appeared to be linked to 'lad culture' and its associated brands of machismo. One example of the influence of peers was seen to be through the use of alcohol. Drinking formed the basis of much recreational enjoyment, especially with other men and other male university students. Men of white British descent were more likely to validate their masculinity through drinking and getting drunk, as well as being expected to handle the effect of alcohol. Furthermore, alcohol was associated with a lowering of inhibitions and occasionally resulted in situations and exploits, such as having sex, that men of white British descent later regretted.

Arguably the most coercive element of the impact of peer relations was linked to how men were expected to assert their masculinity through displays of sexual prowess. Being seen as popular and successful with women existed in the wider context of the 'sexualisation' of Western society (which fuelled what has been academically termed 'the sexualisation of peer society') and encouraged, along with the media and pornography, the sexual interest in women and displays of sexual attraction.<sup>25</sup>

Men of white British descent were more open than men of Indian descent in their display of sexual interest and occasional sexual objectification of women. They reported having engaged in sexual banter, innuendos and gossip at school. Such joking also took place at university heightened by male bravado and rivalry. Even those men who wanted to show respect to women, most usually because of the impact on them of modern feminist ideology (rather than any religious rationale) with respect to sexual equality, found themselves inveigled into the group sexual objectification of women when spending time with other men.

Men of white British descent appeared to do little to limit themselves from either asserting their masculinity through displays of sexual prowess or revealing their sexual experiences among peers. Such talk also helped provide the entire peer group with a more graphic account of sex. These men had largely been left to fathom out things for themselves regarding their sexual conduct, although some parents had reportedly inferred that becoming sexually experienced was a healthy part of growing-up (corresponding to the folklore that young men should 'sow their wild oats'). Having

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<sup>25</sup> Eckert (2002), for example, writes about the sexualization of peer society and the socialization of sexuality.

little explicit religious moral code underpinning their behaviour was also set in a wider context of the uncertainty regarding the primacy of marriage and that sex no longer necessarily had to involve such ideals as love, security or commitment. Indeed, most men accepted that having sex was more about the pleasure elicited and the recreational aspects, as well as it being a means whereby they could assert their masculinity.

All these conditions meant that few men of white British descent seemed troubled by the ethics of having premarital or casual sex – which seemed to be more or less the norm and subject to little recrimination. They regarded losing their virginity as one of the first steps to be achieved in order to prove their manhood, as well as a response to a degree of peer pressure. They then felt they had to become more sexually accomplished with women which, in turn, encouraged greater sexual activity and sex becoming equated with technical performance.

The threat of being seen as less sexually experienced than their peers (and therein having less to disclose) pushed these men of white British descent to have multiple sexual partners (as this was symbolic of the archetype of manhood as both virile and detached – and therein rewarded with a greater prestige and reputation among friends) so as not to feel left out. Even so, fears of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (rather than an explicit religious moral code), along with the security attached to having a regular sexual partner, made many reconsider having or wanting to have too much non-committed sex.

The opportunity to have sex was made easier for men of white British descent once a man thought that his partner believed that the couple were in a relationship. Sex was typically regarded as an integral part of validating a relationship. This not only enabled some respondents to become sexually active but also helped them to become more proficient at sex. It was generally accepted that sexual pleasure often formed the bedrock of modern relationships. Since there was little moral objection to premarital sex by the men of white British descent themselves, or reportedly their female partners, the greatest deliberation about having sex appeared to revolve around whether the girlfriends of this group of men interviewed wanted to wait until a particular point had been reached in a relationship.

For men of Indian descent, the explicit intervention of family and religion proved of

greater influence despite there being wider peer expectations that they, too, faced to assert their masculinity largely through drinking alcohol, women and sex. Their decision to drink alcohol, the way they viewed and treated women and their approach to having and talking about sex were all linked with the values and ethics taught to them by their family and religion.

Drinking alcohol more responsibly, if they even drank at all, avoided their inhibitions being lowered, particularly when they were interacting with women. There was resistance to participating in sexual banter concerning women, since this contrasted sharply with how women were portrayed within Hinduism and their culture. Women, especially those of Indian heritage, were to be respected, as potential mothers or sisters. This silenced candid talk of sex (or even girlfriends) when women were present.

Still, men of Indian descent found it harder to avoid at least conveying a basic sexual interest in women, given its display typically represented a way of asserting masculinity, via heterosexuality. This did not mean, however, that they tried to ‘pull’, get dates and keep a girlfriend, or, likewise, accumulated numerous sexual conquests. They had been encouraged to think of relationships more as a prelude to marriage rather than an opportunity to have sex. They were expected to get married, along with assumptions this carried concerning their heterosexuality. Many were able to defuse at least some of the wider pressure to meet women and find a girlfriend since they recognised they would, in time, with family assistance, be found a suitable partner.

Men of Indian descent were able to deflect wider societal pressure on them to assert their masculinity through displays of sexual prowess due to the strength of having an explicit religious moral code about sexual conduct. That said, some feared how having less sexual experience singled them out from wider peers and risked exposing them to ridicule and gossip when it came up with other men. These men were after all caught up in a wider climate of calls to disclose sexual experiences, accompanied by a degree of bragging particularly to help stifle rumours about homosexuality. Some close friends tentatively alluded to being sexually active, which further increased pressure among men of Indian descent to have sex or feel left out.

Some men of Indian descent in this study did admit that they had struggled to reconcile their more religious ideals with their newly found sexual freedoms outside of marriage

or a long-term relationship. The pressure imposed on them to acquire sexual experience had resulted in them having, or envisaging having, premarital sex under certain conditions, which they felt was more admissible providing it occurred within a serious and loving relationship.

However, on the whole, men of Indian descent stated that they would not be drawn into sharing details if they had had sex because of two other more pressing reasons. Firstly, discussing the subject of sex was considered a taboo. Secondly, divulging information about personal sexual experiences was viewed as disrespectful and dishonourable. Such norms conversely reduced expectations on these men to extend their sexual experience or initiate sex simply in order to brag about it.

Finally, men of Indian descent reported being restricted in having intimate relationships with Indian girls because of the intense scrutiny these girls were apparently under. Moreover, these men spoke of Indian girls themselves being apparently extremely reluctant to have sex before marriage, never mind casual sex, as they feared the personal loss of their reputation. This appeared to give men of Indian descent fewer options to become sexually experienced, with some men having to look elsewhere at 'other' women (notably of a white British background).

That said, it was reported that some girlfriends of men of Indian descent interviewed had or were willing to start having premarital sex, once they were betrothed or, alternatively, involved in what was seen as a long-term committed relationship. However, this was not always necessarily equated to having actual sexual intercourse, so as not ostensibly to breach any explicit religious moral code. Consenting to sex was done in confidence, which meant it was not usually discussed out of respect and a widely held belief that this type of talk remained highly inappropriate, making the practice of sex before marriage among these couples barely evident.

## **Discussion**

Recent interest in how forms of masculinity are produced has led to an examination in this thesis of some of the potential influences shaping men's lives and the structuring of patterns of power between them. A body of recent social research has challenged the idea of a unitary model of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1987) was at the forefront of emphasizing the social structures that organise masculinity, as well as the power

relations that existed between men and other men. He stressed that there are, in fact, multiple masculinities that interact and change the conditions for each other's existence, transforming themselves as they do (Connell, 1995).

This thesis notes, too, the existence of multiple masculinities within and across different social groups. It has found that the interaction between differing masculinities was somewhat multifaceted with some forms of masculinity appearing to be strongly held even though they were somewhat marginalised from dominant masculine cultures.

Different kinds of masculinity can be explained, according to Connell (2000; 2005) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), by the social variables that intersect the category of 'men', positioning power unevenly between them and creating different forms of masculinity. Connell (1987) proposed a hierarchy of different forms of contemporary masculinity connected to the binaries of heterosexual/homosexual. Adherence to a form of masculinity helped men curb certain characteristics and qualities likely to contravene notions of acceptable male behaviour. Work by Lancaster (1995) has illustrated how homosexual stigma can structure masculinity and both Connell (1995) and Dowsett (1996) have illustrated how class critically influences forms of masculinity.

Other authors have sought to identify the interplay of race and ethnicity that positions one racialized masculinity over another. Nayak (1999), for example, has suggested that South Asian masculinities have been depicted as passive and weak. More recent studies by Alexander (2000a), Frosh et al (2002) and Malkani (2006), amongst others, noted that racialized masculinities are able to interact and change the conditions for each other's existence.

This study found there to be a number of pivotal factors structuring different forms of masculinity. A heterosexual reputation is seen to be of fundamental importance in shaping masculinities. The study also highlights that masculinity is influenced, in particular, by race, ethnicity and religion. The concept of a masculine hierarchy based on race and ethnicity did appear to be somewhat complex and there is some support for the idea that South Asian masculinities are not necessarily the same as those associated with either a white ethnicity or being passive and weak. The exploration of how the intersection between ethnicity and religion influenced masculinity also relates to other (typically conflated) background factors. There are, for example, a number of issues at

play in the formation of racialized masculinities such as those that are associated with religious, familial and peer relationships.

Interest in the interplay between the family and masculinity can be seen, to an extent, in Mac an Ghaill's (1994) work. Discourses about family and kinship relations were identified as helping to produce and reproduce different forms of masculinity. There have been authors, for example Nava (1984) and Connell (1995), whose work has converged on the family more in relation to how it had helped collectively enforce and support heterosexuality. Sinfield (1997) has stressed the need to understand different lived experiences of groups as having to be negotiated through the context of family and neighbourhood. Moreover, Connell (2000) has stated that the childhood family is one of the key influences in the formation of masculinity for most men. Hearn and Kimmel (2006) have called on scholars to examine the experience of growing up, as they regard this as a long-standing under researched theme that would help better understand the development of masculinities.

This study highlights how the family appears to be important in the construction of masculinity. It shows how men can be guided by the family from an early age to prepare for a particular future that values marriage and certain forms of family life as well as heterosexuality. Moreover, it notes how the family structure and characteristics of family relationships, as well as associated ethics, values and feelings, play some part in shaping masculinity.

There has been little work that has focused explicitly on how religion shapes masculinity. Portrayals of the influence of religion have predominantly been conflated both with ethnicity and identity formation, which have reflected these factors being so entwined. Brah (1996) has more broadly stated that minority ethnic identities need to be understood partly through social divisions created by race and the negotiation of community values and norms alongside the wider social environment. Frosh et al (2002) have touched on how religious commitment can shape masculinity, whilst Hopkins (2006) and Ramji (2007) have highlighted the importance of religion, particularly in the context of structuring group identity formation. Hopkins (2006) and Ramji (2007) also note how interpretations of religious doctrine, to an extent, influence male roles. Brod and Kaufman (1994) and Seidler (2006) have called for a closer focus on religion, which Hopkins (2007) believes will illustrate the experiences of men whose

lives are negotiated by and through religious beliefs.

Weeks (1995) has suggested how the contrast in fundamental East/West principles equated to collectivism and individualism is at the forefront of structuring differences in lives and meanings. Such forms of understanding associated with religious beliefs mean that for some Diasporic communities these religious beliefs have to be negotiated as part of their cultural heritage. Moreover, having a collective rather than individualistic identity made it essentially more difficult to challenge the underlying consensus. Another important distinction about the role religion plays in directing lives and behaviour can be deduced from Foucault's (1979) work. He identified why the influence of religion had historically declined, albeit in the West. Up until the nineteenth century, concerns regarding the sanctioning of permissible sexual behaviour had been a matter of religious concern. However, as the West began to industrialise with resulting urbanisation, the modern State became more concerned and ultimately took charge of the regulation of sexuality, therein beginning a progressive marginalization of the religious until late in the twentieth century.

This study notes that religion, just as race and ethnicity, can have a significant place in the shaping of men's personal lives as well giving them a sense of group belonging. It also, more broadly, indicates how social systems from other areas of the world can be negotiated by Diasporic communities with the way of life of the West. Whilst the significance of religion appears to have waned over successive generations in the West, societies further afield (such as those which the parents and ancestors of the men of Indian descent came from) have not seen the same degree of separation of religion's influence, with ramifications for their offspring who, despite being born in the West, are required to negotiate religious beliefs as part of their cultural heritage. The study also suggests that religious commitment and interpretations of religious doctrine shape masculinity at a personal level and are of personal significance to those men who consider themselves devoutly religious. Indeed, the values and ethics offered by religion is used by some young men, at least, to help them decide how best to lead one's life as an individual.

This study highlights that a broad range of issues such as appearance, socialising, sexual prowess, heterosexual reputation and the role of women all appear to be associated with forms of masculinity. Some of these issues have been pointed to in earlier work, such

as that of Mort (1988), for example, who highlighted that a more muscular physique could enhance a sense of masculinity. Recent work on lad culture by Francis (1999) has illustrated how issues to do with getting drunk and displays of sexual interest in women denoted modern forms of masculinity. Brittan (1989) and Segal (1990) have argued that manhood in the West ultimately hinges on competitive displays of sexual prowess, its prolific discussion through telling stories and dirty jokes, as well as a heterosexual reputation. Brittan (1989) has also added that contemporary Western ideology equates masculinity to an autonomous and adventurous hegemonic sexuality. Seidler (1997) has also recognised that 'exclusive heterosexuality' has to be constantly reaffirmed, particularly during adolescence, in order to quell the constant doubts about sexuality.

Moreover, interest in the influence of peer relations has not only been confined to men and other men but also included the influence women have on men. Connell and Messerschmitt (2005) have stressed the need not to ignore the role played by women, especially as mothers, sisters, girlfriends or wives, in the formation of masculinities. They suggest that new patterns of identity and practice, particularly among younger women, are becoming increasingly accepted by younger men, and need to be considered in terms of understanding the development of new femininities and masculinities.

This study finds that what it means to be a man can still be associated with certain types of physique (as well as interest and participation in sport). Some forms of masculinity in this study are also linked with 'lad culture', including the use of alcohol and displaying a sexual interest in women. Moreover, this work shows that sex can sometimes be perceived as a means to assert masculinity – with masculinity being associated with sex as more or less a social pursuit. This study also notes that manhood can be grounded on competitive displays of sexual prowess – a masculine heterosexual reputation being dependent on its repeated discussion with the need for a heterosexual reputation constantly to be reaffirmed.

This thesis also highlights how the role of women (and their agency) should not be underestimated in the formation of masculinities. Women appear to play a fundamental role in influencing the ways that men are able to validate their masculinity, and therein have a bearing on the different kinds of masculinity that exist. Moreover, this study suggests that the influence of all these above factors needs to be understood by taking account of not only the basis of friendships themselves and how peer expectations are



framed, but also, importantly, the interplay of family and religion on the degree of influence of peer relations.

Before turning to an outline of the possible implications for future research, it is first important to spend some time returning to how the study and its findings can be utilised, as indicated earlier in the methods chapter. The applicability of findings of the research, whilst they may not necessarily hold true for men in other circumstances, may provide an understanding of why social processes occur in particular ways in the men who were interviewed.

This study reflects a picture of masculinity that is historically located in a generation of men who have been socialised and experienced growing up in the late 1980s and 1990s. It represents something of the perspectives of a group of men of white and Indian descent who were relatively young (18-23), residing in Greater London (so their personal perspective captured the effects of urban living) and had (or were in the process of having) a university education.

The other focus of the sample meant that one group of men was selected on the basis of having a Hindu background (India has a diversity of religions that are practised and so this needed to be addressed for reasons of homogeneity). The purposive sampling strategy, along with recruitment of Hindu men being conducted at a religious event (for practical reasons to enlist them), could mean, however, that this group of men of Indian descent interviewed may particularly bring to the fore certain religious issues.

The findings of this study also need to be measured against the research processes undertaken both in the interview process itself and at the data analysis stage. Explicit reference was made about where all the interviews took place and any interruptions that occurred. Taking a life-history approach and using an interview schedule helped to frame the interview process. This approach and method, along with applying the same ethical considerations, helped provide consistency across interviews. An audio-recording of the interviews also offered a detailed record of the interaction and content. Finally, a systematic and as transparent an account as possible of how data analysis proceeded was provided to help illustrate the adequacy and wider applicability of the theoretical and inductively derived findings from the data.

My potential effects, as the researcher, on the research processes were monitored. Details of my ascribed characteristics, background and agenda were specified, although no explicit reference was made by myself or the interviewees to my class, religion or sexuality. I tried to alleviate some of the potential effects of being perceived as an 'outsider' (in terms of my ethnicity, age, class, religion and sexuality) by emphasising that I was a fellow student, and by dressing in a similar way to interviewees. Making good field relations to help build trust and 'rapport' were further enhanced through exhibiting a warm and friendly manner, finding an initial way to 'break the ice' with the men (such as, for example, talking about sport with some of them) and highlighting the ethical considerations adhered to during the recruitment and interviewing process.

However, had this not been a self-financed study, other people of a different cultural identity and background might have been utilised to conduct the interviews as well as strengthen the study's analytic credibility. This would have helped offset the separate potential effects on the two groups of respondents of myself, as the interviewer, being a white British male appearing slightly older and being perceived as fairly middle-class. An interviewer chosen with a similar cultural background to the men of Indian descent and perceived as part of the local Indian community would not have been considered an 'outsider' with potential positive effects for the interview process. Conversely, with respect to the men of white British descent, an interviewer from a different cultural background might have avoided the pitfall of respondents feeling it unnecessary to elaborate too fully on their experiences in the belief that I shared their perspectives. With additional resources, and the inclusion of one or more co-researchers, the study's analytic process could have also included a degree of researcher triangulation to help strengthen the study's analytic credibility.

### **Possible Implications for Future Research**

This study highlights how there appears to exist multiple masculinities and suggests that these are shaped by, at least, ethnicity and culture. Future research in the area should be aware of the pivotal role that ethnicity and culture may play in shaping masculine forms – and building on the work of earlier authors who have enquired into sexuality and class. When enquiring into the masculinities of minority ethnic groups, such as Afro-Caribbean and South East Asian men, studies could seek also to compare and contrast the interaction of the three important issues that have arisen in this study: religious, familial and peer relationships.

Future research could also further examine the structuring of masculinities through the salience of religion. To date, little attention seems to have been paid by academics in the West to the interplay of religion with masculinity, possibly because of the changing nature of society and place of religion. Certainly, it appears from this study that religion was of particular significance (in the case of Hindus and one respondent who defined himself as a devout Christian) in helping explain how different masculinities are structured. Future studies could compare and contrast forms of masculinities among men whose Christian, Jewish or Sikh faiths, for example, were important to them – so trying to gain a better understanding conceptually of how different masculinities ‘play out’ within and between men from these groups.

The study also makes a contribution to advancing understanding of concepts of masculine hierarchy. There is some evidence to suggest from the present investigation that the positioning of power between different ethnic groups is somewhat more complex than a masculine hierarchy organised only around race and ethnicity. Forms of racialized masculinity, as exemplified in the men of Indian descent interviewed, need to be more clearly understood in terms of inter-related background factors. Ethnicity, culture, family, religion and peer relations (and their interactions) *all* play a pivotal role in creating different types of masculinities. This study highlights how family and religion appeared to inhibit the effects of peer pressure in the formation of a distinctive sense of masculinity which was strikingly resilient, albeit a somewhat marginalised form, among men of Indian descent. Among men of white British descent on the other hand, peer expectations seemed to be more powerful in influencing aspects of masculine practice, particularly in public spaces.

Finally, it might be worthwhile to compare and contrast the perspectives of men with those of women with whom they have relationships (whether as a friend, girlfriend, wife or mother). It appears from the study that some women may hold a key influence in how men construct their masculinity. Furthermore, women may, of course, hold certain expectations regarding their male friends, boyfriends, husbands and sons that may help contribute to shaping and positioning different forms of masculinity.

Progress in our conceptual understanding of the formation of masculinity will occur if new work widens its focus to examine the impact of race, ethnicity, cultural heritage and religion alongside existing theoretical frameworks, in different groups of men.

Such work, whilst valuable in illustrating the existence of multiple masculinities, will strengthen understanding of the multifaceted influences of social processes on the making of masculine selves.

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# Appendix 1 – Preliminary Interview Schedule (Pilot)

## Interview Schedule: Themes to be explored.

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

NAME:

PSEUDONYM:

NOTES: (on appearance, dress, hairstyle, physique, physical characteristics & mannerisms).

INTRO: Casual conversation to include:

This proposed study seeks to try and understand the influence of cultural factors and background on men, and their relationships and sexuality.

**\* NB \* Explain confidentiality of info and ask for consent to tape record the interview.**

To explore with the respondent what topics and themes should be possible to include in the study?

In order to put this discussion into a context of this day in the your life, can I find out what you were doing before this interview and what do you anticipate doing after the interview? For example is there anything particularly unusual or different about today, as opposed to any other day?

BACKGROUND INFO:

I want to start by briefly looking at your family origins and background:

Where were you born?

How old are you?

Can you tell me what areas you have lived in since you where born?

What is your current living situation?

Can you outline, if any, your employment history since leaving school?

Details about family: Family members

Position in family

Upbringing

Parents' employment

Class

Relationship with mother

Relationship with father

Current family ties

CHILDHOOD:

Who were your most memorable friends through your school age years? And why were they friends?

Details of schooling?

EARLY SEXUAL EXPERIENCES:

How and when would you describe your interest in sex begun to develop?

Can you describe your earliest memories of a sexual nature?

Did you know at the time that these early memories and interests were of a



sexual nature?

Can you recall how you learnt to label these early interests and experiences of sex as sexual? What factors helped you to do this?

Can you describe your first sexual experience alone?

Can you describe your first sexual experience (if applicable) with another person(s)

Discuss:

Context

Meanings

Location

Enjoyment/Problems/Fears/Doubts

Do you remember having any feelings after this first experience of sexual contact?

#### HISTORY OF SEXUAL EXPERIENCES AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS:

Can you recount the most memorable sexual experiences and sexual relationships you have had to date?

Can you describe these in terms of:

Context - Why and how did they happen?

Meanings - What did they mean?

Location - Where did they happen?

Discuss enjoyment/problems/fears/doubts

Discuss the most recent sexual experience/ sexual relationship, also in these terms.

#### SEXUAL PRACTICES AND FANTASIES:

What sort of influence do you think your family origins and background has had on you in relation to your sexual behaviour and fantasies?

What other major factors have helped shape, influence and perhaps restrict your sexual practices and fantasies in your life? And have these altered in any ways as you have got older? (e.g. friends, peers, religion, television, media, magazines, the law & threat of HIV). Have your feeling, attitudes, and beliefs on sex changed over time? And if so, what influenced these changes?

Can you describe what meanings and appropriateness you put on sexual behaviour (eg in terms of reproduction/pleasure). How did these develop?

Do you feel that you had a choice in your sexual development? And can you explain what you mean by this?

Can you remember any memorable television programmes or films linked with your developing interest in sex?

What type of images do you think contemporary advertising uses to portray the male body? What effect do you feel these images have had on your masculinity and sexuality?

#### SEXUAL INTERESTS AND PREFERENCE:

What sort of influence has your family origins and background had on you in relation to your sexual interests and preference?

What other major factors have helped shape, influence and perhaps restrict your sexual interests and preference?

Can you describe your sexual interests and preference in terms of enjoyment?

Can you describe any ways that your sexual interests and preference have altered as you have got older? And the reasons why they have altered?

Have you ever used pornography of any sort? What kind(s)? Do you find any pornography sexual arousing? Do you think it has influenced your sexual

interests and fantasies? In what ways and why?

**SEXUAL SELF:**

What sort of influence has your family origins and background had on you in relation to your sense of self? Discuss family identity and having an adult identity only when you get married.

How would you describe your sense of self in terms of gender, race, class and sexuality?

Is this how other people see you? And if so, how does this differ from your 'real self'?

In what ways do you think that your sense of self differs from a white English male because of your family origins and background?

Do you feel masculine? What factors influence this?

What importance did your background place on the influence of gender roles on sexuality?

How would you describe your sense of self concerning sexuality? What factors influence this?

Has your sense of self concerning sexuality changed as you have got older?

And do you think it is likely to change in the future? Why?

What do you feel is the purpose and need for your sexual identity?

Who is aware of your sexual identity? Has this changes as you have become older?

Have you ever participated and felt part of a group because of your interest in sex? Define what this is?

Do you feel you were sexually labelled at school by your peers? If so, why do you think this was? If applicable discuss gender non-conformity, look at voice, appearance, body, gestures, personality and who you were associated with.

**Thank respondents for giving their time and answers.**

**Find out if respondent knows of any other men of South Asian descent from Hindu backgrounds, aged between 18 -35 would be willing to take part in this study?**

## Appendix 2 – Revised Interview Schedule (Main)

### Interview Schedule:

This particular study seeks to explore the influence of cultural background and cultural factors on shaping men's lives in the UK. This work will focus on the biographical experiences of some men of Indian descent living in the UK, and will compare their experiences with those of a group of White British men. It is hoped that this project will help contribute to a better understanding of the influence of upbringing, cultural background and religion in a pretty under researched area. Is there anything you would like to ask me before we begin?

**\* Explain confidentiality and ask for consent to tape interview. \***

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

NAME:

PSEUDONYM:

### INTRO:

How are you feeling at the moment?

Have you got anything on your mind that you feel could be influencing your mood at the moment?

### PERSONAL INFO & BACKGROUND:

How old are you?

Were you born in the UK? If not, how old were you when you came to live in the UK?

Where were your parents (/grandparents if 2/3 generation) brought up?

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

What position are you in the family?

What do your mother and father do for a living?

What areas have you lived in from birth to the present day?

What type of school did you go to?

What is the highest educational qualification you have passed?

What type of work have you done?

### FAMILY:

What aspects of your upbringing would you describe as positive?

What aspects of your upbringing would you describe as less positive?

How would you describe your relationship with mother and has it changed over time?

How would you describe your relationship with father and has it changed over time?

How would you describe your relationship(s) with your siblings (if any) and has it/they changed over time?

Are there any other significant members of your family? If so, who are they and why are significant/important to you?

How would you describe your current family ties?

### MASCULINITY:

What key factors have helped define your own sense of who you are as a man?

What sort of influence do you think your family origins, background and upbringing have had on the way you are?

Can you recall any significant experiences that have helped to validate your sense of being a man?

Do you feel you have things in common with other men? If so what?

Are there things you don't feel you have in common with other men? If so what?  
 What factors influence the friendships you make with other men?  
 How do you generally spend your time with your male friends?  
 How much time do you spend with your male friends?  
 How would you generally describe your friendships with men in terms of help and support?  
 In what ways have social pressures from other men influenced you?  
 How has the pressures from other men influenced you in having and talking about sex, and how does this compare to the way you actually feel?  
 In what ways do you feel different to other men?  
 In what ways has your sense of being a man been questioned or threatened?  
 How does the way you look contribute to your sense of being a man?  
 What influence and effect have contemporary images of men in magazines and film had on you?  
 What influence and effect has the stereotyped portrayal of a gay man had on you?

### RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Are you religious in any sense?  
 To what religion, if any, would you say you belong?  
 Do you practice your religion in any way? How? When?

### SEX:

What does sex mean to you?  
 What sorts of things interest you sexually?  
 Can you describe how you began to learn about sex? What factors helped you to do this?  
 In what ways if any, did your peers sexually label you at school?  
 Can you tell me about your first sexual experience (if applicable) with another person?  
 Can you recall (if applicable) why you had sex for the first time?  
 Can you recall how you felt after this first experience?  
 What type of sexual experiences and sexual relationships have you had from your first sexual experience to the present?  
 What factors have helped shape, influence and perhaps restrict your approach to sex?  
 What factors have helped shape, influence and perhaps restrict your sexual interests and preferences?  
 Can you describe how important the pleasurable aspects of sex are to you? And how does this influence you?  
 Can you remember any significant television programmes or films linked to your developing interest in sex?  
 Have your feeling, attitudes, and beliefs about sex changed over time? And if so, what has influenced these changes?  
 Do you ever use pornography? And if so, in what ways, if any, has pornography influenced you?

### RELIGION & BACKGROUND

(\* Only those men from a religious background were asked the first two questions below)

\*Do you think that your religious background, if applicable, has influenced your attitudes and beliefs about sex?  
 \*Do you think that your religious background, if applicable, has influenced your attitudes and beliefs about being a man?

What differences do you think it would have made to the way your parents treated you and the way you behaved if you had been a girl?

What importance do you place on marriage and why?

Who do you think should make the decisions about prospective marriage partners and why?

In what ways, if any, do you think your attitudes and beliefs about sex differ from your parents? And if so what do you think has influenced these differences?

\* Ask about contacts \*

## Appendix 3 – Study Respondents

### Men of Indian Descent (in alphabetical order<sup>26</sup>):

1. **Arjun** was aged nineteen and the younger of two children. He had lost his father a couple of years ago. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up respectively in Uganda and Gujarat. Arjun had lived in London all his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having some sexual experience with his current girlfriend.
2. **Hagrid** was aged twenty-two and the eldest of two children. He had lost his father when he was much younger. His parents had moved to the UK having been brought up in Kenya. He was unsure of where his father's family were originally from in India but his mother's side came from Gujarat. Hagrid had moved around quite a lot during his childhood. He had started his education at boarding school but then moved to a comprehensive and finally a grammar school. He was already a graduate and was currently employed as an actuary. He reported having no sexual experience although had had a girlfriend since school.
3. **Joe** was aged eighteen and the middle child of three. His parents had moved to the UK having been born in Kenya but brought up in Gujarat. Joe had lived in London much of his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having had some sexual experience with his first girlfriend.
4. **Kat** was aged twenty-one and the youngest of three children. His parents had moved to the UK from Gujarat. Kat had lived in London much of his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience although he was in a committed relationship.
5. **Mahesh** was aged twenty-one and the younger of two children. His parents had moved to the UK having been brought up in Kenya. His grandparents were from Gujarat. Mahesh had lived in the East Midlands all his life and had received a state education. He was currently doing a sandwich year for his undergraduate degree. He reported having had some sexual experience but chose not give any further details.

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<sup>26</sup> To protect anonymity, respondents have been allocated false names.

6. **Rahul** was aged eighteen and an only child. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up respectively in Kenya and Madhya Pradesh in India. He thought all his grandparents were from Gujarat. Rahul had lived in London for many years and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience.
7. **Raj** was aged twenty-three and the elder of two children. He had lost his father a couple of years ago. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up respectively in Tanzania and Uganda. One of his grandparents and all his great-grandparents were born and brought up in India. Raj had lived in London much of his life and had received a state education. He was already a graduate and was currently employed as a scientific researcher. He reported having had some sexual experience.
8. **Ram** was aged eighteen and the elder of two children. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up in Rajasthan in India. Ram had moved around quite a lot during his childhood. He started his education in a state school before going to a private school. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience.
9. **Rishi** was aged twenty-one and an only child. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up respectively in Kenya and Gujarat. All his grandparents were from Gujarat. Rishi had lived in the East Midlands virtually all his life and had received a state education. He had just completed his undergraduate degree. He reported having no sexual experience.
10. **Sachin** was aged nineteen and the younger of two children. His parents had moved to the UK having been brought up respectively in Kenya and Uganda. His grandparents were from Gujarat. Sachin had lived most of his childhood in London. He briefly went to a state school before transferring to a private school. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience.
11. **Sanjay** was aged nineteen and the eldest of four children. His father had moved to the UK having brought up in East Africa. His mother, like all his grandparents, was from the State of Gujarat in India. Sanjay had lived most of his childhood in the East Midlands. He had received a state education and was currently an undergraduate. He reported having had some sexual experience with his long-term girlfriend.
12. **Vijay** was aged nineteen and the younger of two children. His parents had moved to the UK having been born and brought up respectively in Kenya and

Uganda. Three of his grandparents were from Gujarat whilst the other grandparent was born in East Africa. Vijay had lived in London for many years and had gone to a junior state school before transferring to a private school. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no premarital sexual intercourse but had performed some other sexual activities with his girlfriend.

### **Men of White British Descent:**

1. **Brian** was aged twenty-one and the elder of two children. He had moved around a bit during his childhood and had gone to a junior state school before transferring to a private school. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with several women and described them as one-night stands or with friends.
2. **Daniel** was aged twenty-three and the middle child between a step-brother and a half-sister. He had moved around a lot during his childhood. He had received a state education and was already a graduate. He reported having two sexual experiences with women both described as one-night stands.
3. **Dave** was aged twenty-one and the middle of three children. He also had a step-brother and step-sister. He had moved around a bit during his childhood. He had received a private education and was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with two women, one as a one-night stand and the other in a short relationship.
4. **Elliott** was aged twenty-three and the elder of two children. He had lived in the Home Counties all his life and briefly went to a state school before transferring to a private school. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with women but only when in relationships.
5. **Guy** was aged eighteen and an only child. He had lost his father when he was much younger. He had lived in London all his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience.
6. **James** was aged nineteen and the older of two children. He had lived in London all his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience.
7. **Joe** was aged twenty-two and the younger of two children. He had moved around quite a lot during his childhood. He had received a state education and



was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with women, quite a few of them casual, and within three relationships.

8. **John** was aged twenty-two and the middle child of three. He had moved around quite a lot during his childhood. He had received a state education and was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with three women, all within relationships.
9. **Nathan** was aged nineteen and the oldest child among a half-brother and half-sister. He had lived in London all his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having numerous sexual experiences with women, mostly one-night stands and the rest in short relationships.
10. **Richard** was aged twenty and the eldest of five children which included two half-brothers. He had lived in Hampshire all his life and received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having no sexual experience with women but had had sexual experiences with his current and previous boyfriend.
11. **Seb** was aged twenty-two and the youngest of three children. He had lived in London most of his life. He had received a private education and was currently an undergraduate. He reported having sexual experiences with three women, all within relationships.
12. **Steve** was aged twenty-one and the oldest of three children. He had lived in London all his life and had received a state education. He was currently an undergraduate. He reported having some sexual experience with his long-term girlfriend.

## Appendix 4 – Data Analysis<sup>27</sup>

INT: What factors have helped shape, influence and perhaps restrict your sexual interests and preferences?

SANJAY: Okay. Uhm, (pause) I mean, again just morals and religion in terms of restricting. In terms of shaping just uhm, just the experiences as, as a man.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Just uhm, just general reading and things like that. It's watching films and just understanding what, how, *et cetera*.

INT: Yeah. Okay, can you describe how important the pleasurable aspects of sex are to you?

SANJAY: I mean at the moment, that is perhaps the only reason why uhm, we, we I mean I have...

(Tape Runs out and is turned over).

INT: Yeah sorry, so you mentioned it's sort of like the pleasurable aspect of sex is one of the reasons you're having sex and it also helps the relationship in a way.

SANJAY: (Agreeing).

INT: Do you just want to sort of just expand a little bit more on what you mean in helping the relationship in terms of?

SANJAY: Okay perhaps uhm, in bringing two people closer together.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: Uhm, I mean they say men are most intimate when, when they actually have sex so.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Yeah, I mean that, you know, applies to me as well (laughs) so.

INT: Can you remember any significant television programmes or films linked to your developing interest in sex?

SANJAY: (Laughs) Most people would probably say Basic Instinct!

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Uhm, ah (pause) (thinking).

INT: So do you feel that one that applies to you as well?

SANJAY: No, not really.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: No. Uhm, I don't know it's uhm, hard to (pause) what shall I settle on. Uhm, I mean no specific, specific film or anything has influenced me. But uhm. TV programmes uhm, I don't know, perhaps just soaps, just seeing the whole relationship thing and for seeing the actual progression.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: And just on, on film just seeing what ideal relationships are supposed to be like.

INT: Right.

SANJAY: I mean you kind of seek for that ideal within yourself so.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: I suppose that's the only way in which it's uhm, influenced. Yeah.

INT: Yeah and is that television how it's portrayed in, in the UK or?

SANJAY: Uhm.

INT: Also on satellite as well you know through different cultures?

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<sup>27</sup> A colour coding system was used to highlight interview data relating to the four original main themes - Green (the rituals of manhood); Orange (the family and its effects); Pink (the influence of religion); Yellow (the silencing of sex/private aspects of the sexual).

SANJAY: Yeah, I mean. Yes.

INT: You're talking about both yeah?

SANJAY: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Mostly, mostly I mean, just UK culture but I mean (laughs) say I don't really watch Indian films but.

INT: I've seen some, yeah.

SANJAY: Yeah, probably one or two maybe. You know, they tend, they tend (laughs) to exaggerate everything so (laughs).

INT: Yeah. Okay. Have your feelings, attitudes and beliefs about sex changed over time and if so, what has influenced these changes?

SANJAY: Okay uhm, perhaps at the age of fifteen, sixteen it's all about pleasuring yourself and uhm, you know, just I think that men have to do ah, what I've come to realise is that, it's not quite like that.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Uhm, I mean (pause) to have like proper sex, you probably and, and for both of you to enjoy it, there must be some sort of connection there.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: And just uhm, I mean that's probably come with understanding women a bit better.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: I think that's the main change.

INT: And how do you think you've achieved that understanding of women? Is that...

SANJAY: Uhm, probably just talking to and being very open with uhm, say close female friends including my girlfriend.

INT: Okay. Last question on this bit.

SANJAY: Yeah.

INT: Do you ever use pornography and if so, in what ways, if any, has pornography influenced you?

SANJAY: Okay, uhm, perhaps when I was younger, just to understand what, just to see what females look like (smiles). I mean, I've read pornography.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: Yeah (whispers). But I mean I, I don't like looking at pornography, so I mean I try and stop myself from.

INT: Yeah. Do you think that your religious background has influenced your attitudes and beliefs about sex?

SANJAY: Uhm, partially yeah. I mean again uhm, what things are right, what things are wrong.

INT: Yeah you've touched on that.

SANJAY: Yeah.

INT: And do you think your religious background has influenced your attitudes and beliefs about being a man?

SANJAY: Uhm yeah, I mean Hinduism much like some other religions tend to uhm, see men in a leading role.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Perhaps being more responsible and taking care of, of females (grins) and the family and what not. And I mean that has uhm, made me follow it through.

INT: Yeah. Can you just tell me how you feel about that? Is that, do you think that's an easy role to live up to?

SANJAY: Uhm, definitely not.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: I mean just due to the sheer pressure and I mean again now like changing



times I mean uhm, I mean my girlfriend's Punjabi.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: So she, she has like a different, I mean their religion treats all men and women equal.

INT: Right.

SANJAY: I mean so uhm, (smiles) I mean just being a gentleman, trying to pay for things and what not (laughs) like it tends to upset her so.

INT: Right.

SANJAY: Yeah, I mean that sort of thing it makes life a bit difficult as well.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: I mean, uhm.

INT: So you're going to have to, well you're trying to adjust to that a bit.

SANJAY: Yeah I mean I have to adjust myself. I mean there are certain things like uhm, I mean my gran has just told me not to do certain things and that's like taking money off younger people or females and what not. And just accepting the fact that she's gonna pay for some things does (pause) does like put me on my knees I suppose.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: Yeah.

INT: What differences do you think it would have made to the way your parents treated you and the way you behaved if you had been a girl?

SANJAY: Uhm, if I had been a girl, I think my parents would have been a lot stricter than they are with me. Uhm, I mean they are fairly strict with my two sisters.

INT: Right.

SANJAY: Uhm, in the sense that ah, you know, I can go out whenever I want, can walk in and what not. Uhm, that's partly due to their, their safety, rather than you know stopping them from getting involved in certain things. I mean they would approve of having a boyfriend but not so much at an early age. And I mean then there, I mean, I think my mother would be very strong about issues such as sex before marriage and things like that.

INT: Right. (Sanjay looks at his watch) Okay five more minutes.

SANJAY: Okay.

INT: What importance do you place on marriage and why?

SANJAY: Uhm, marriage is I mean has always been looked upon by Hindus as, you know, fairly important. I mean all they, I mean, parents try to marry off all men before they reach say twenty-eight or whatever.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: That doesn't always happen these days. Uhm, I mean personally I (pause) even this is like, even though this isn't, is probably like, this is my first proper relationship. I mean I, I do (emphasised) want to marry this girl so.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: I mean I do, I do place uhm, that quite highly.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: And...

INT: Yeah, why do you think that is? Do you think that's because of your religion and.

SANJAY: Uhm, not so much the religion but just uhm, my up... my upbringing in general and.

INT: Perhaps even the ideals you have of marriage?

SANJAY: Yeah I mean the, the ideals.

INT: Okay and who do you think should make the decisions about prospective marriage partners and why?

SANJAY: Okay the, the individual. I mean it's uhm, fine for them to have guidance from parents and what not. I mean there are certain things that say I, I haven't foreseen

(smiling) or what not which may cause difficulties later.

INT: Okay

SANJAY: But I mean that emphasis is now changing in general. Uhm, lots of parents I mean allow their children to go out and find their partners. If they don't have much success they might try and you know help them to find someone.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: A free introduction but yeah, but times are changing now.

INT: Yeah. Do you feel that's, how do you feel about that change? Is that okay or?

SANJAY: I mean I, I quite welcome that change.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: My, I mean my parents are quite liberal but, but my girlfriend's parents they are fairly strict.

INT: Right.

SANJAY: I mean they, they don't know that she is in a relationship or anything.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: I mean they'll probably seek to find her someone within uhm, you know her caste and what not.

INT: Yeah. Okay and last question, in what ways if any, do you think your attitudes and beliefs about sex differ from your parents?

SANJAY: Okay, uhm, perhaps due to my upbringing in a Western country, uhm, I've been more influenced by the life here.

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: So uhm, I mean (pause) okay even, even though the Karma Sutra (laughs) came from India, I mean I don't foresee them as uhm.

INT: Long time ago.

SANJAY: Yeah, yeah, uhm, and ah (pause) uhm, I'm not really sure what their sexual beliefs are.

INT: Okay.

SANJAY: Yeah, I mean but whereas what I see them..

INT: So the conversation's not often really had in that context?

SANJAY: No we don't (laughs) like probably, like most ah, kids and their parents.

INT: Absolutely.

SANJAY: Yeah, I mean uhm, it's quite a personal thing that ah, I mean I, I don't know I, I see them as quite limited (grins) in that department (laughs).

INT: Yeah.

SANJAY: Yeah.

INT: So in some ways the differences, what's influenced the differences, is where you've, you know, what influences you've had?

SANJAY: (Agreeing).

INT: So with your parents have had different influences to you in some ways.

SANJAY: Yeah. I mean just due to a totally different environment and.

INT: Absolutely.

SANJAY: Age group, I suppose.

INT: Yeah. Okay that's great.

SANJAY: Yeah okay.

(End of Interview – Tape switched off).