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COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY OF DISCLOSURE PRACTICES

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology

City University, London
Department of Psychology

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DECLARATION

I grant powers of discretion to the Department of Psychology to allow this thesis to be copied in whole or in part without any reference to me. This permission covers only single copies made for study purposes, subject to the normal conditions of acknowledgment.

ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises four sections which are as follows: a preface, a critical literature review, an empirical research study and a case study. The first section provides an introduction to the thesis. Within this section, I highlight how the evolution and construction of the research area facilitated the development of the other components within this thesis. I also illustrate how the structure of the sections within this thesis demonstrates the evolution of the research topic area. Finally, I comment upon the writing style I have adopted within this thesis.

The critical literature review explores the current status of sex offender treatment programmes within the UK, and the implications this has upon the rehabilitation of rapists. Within this review, I critically explore the literature which details the theoretical underpinnings and effectiveness of sex offender treatment programmes within prison and community settings. I argue that the rapist is a distinct type of sex offender who requires specific, tailored treatment interventions. I attempt to review whether or not the specific rehabilitative needs of the rapist are being addressed within the current status of sex offender treatment programmes.

In the empirical research study, I adopt a social constructionist epistemology which is informed by a critical realist position. I explore the discourses of unmarried second-generation South Asian women, with regard to their disclosure processes within their families and communities. I questioned four unmarried South Asian women using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and the women's talk was analysed by a method of discourse analysis. The analysis of the women's talk revealed four discourses of disclosure practices: political discourse, disparity discourse, conflict discourse and discourse of individualism and collectivism. Further analysis of the emerging discourses revealed various subject positions and implications for subjectivity and practice. The research study concludes with a section detailing reflections and recommendations for practice emerging from the analysis of the women's discourse.

The case study is a reflexive exploration of therapeutic work with a South Asian female client. In this case study, I illustrate working within a cognitive behavioural approach whilst facilitating the client's disclosure within therapy. I also highlight how the therapeutic relationship is affected by the client's disclosure processes.

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

PREFACE

The various pieces of work within this thesis encompass the knowledge and skills required by a counselling psychologist. Section B consists of a critical review of the literature within a specific area of psychology; section C consists of an empirical research study; and section D consists of a case study which demonstrates my professional practice as a counselling psychologist. The construction and evolution of section C facilitates the connection between the theoretical and professional elements of this thesis. A description of this is provided below.

My initial interest was in the "taboo" nature of sexual issues within the South Asian family and community. Reflecting upon my own experiences and those of close female friends, I concluded that often a South Asian woman's sexuality remains "hidden" or is frowned upon. This led me to consider the distress and psychological damage that may ensue as a result of being unable to express one's sexuality. Furthermore, since sexuality is proscribed, being a South Asian woman who has experienced sexual assault may also hold grave implications. If a South Asian woman's sexuality needs to remain hidden or can only be expressed with much trepidation, perhaps this is also true regarding an encounter of sexual assault. This led me to reflect upon the manner in which a South Asian woman would construct her disclosure processes of an adult sexual assault. Thus, initially, I was interested in exploring South Asian women's discourses regarding disclosures of adult sexual assault within family and community settings.

However, I found it very difficult to recruit women for my original study. I contacted voluntary organizations, requesting them to help me with my recruitment. Some organisations agreed to place my flyer (refer to appendix 1) in their waiting areas, but they would not commit to providing any further assistance. Other organisations refused to offer any assistance. One particular organisation responded by stating that I had chosen a very sensitive area to explore, and thought it would be difficult for me to recruit participants. Additionally this organisation stated that they did not want their clients' experiences "used" for research purposes. Perhaps some of the voluntary organisations were, implicitly, suggesting that the area of sexual assault, amongst

South Asian women, was too threatening to disclose and make public. The reactions of the voluntary organisations and the lack of responses from individual women made me reflect upon the wider issue of what "can" and "cannot" be disclosed. Perhaps a research study aimed at exploring sexual assault was too intrusive and would deter women from participating. Thus, in this way, my research evolved into my current topic area. I still wanted to explore the nature of hidden, "taboo" issues, but this was now coupled with a growing interest in what "can" and "cannot" be disclosed.

The sections within this thesis have been structured in an order which most appropriately represents the construction of the research idea. Thus section B represents the starting point of the construction of the research idea. Within section B, I critically evaluate the theoretical and practical elements of sex offender treatment programmes within prison and community settings. In particular, I aim to explore the implications of the current treatment programmes for the rehabilitation of the rapist. In reviewing the literature on sex offender treatment programmes I hoped to explore the realities of perpetrators of sexual assaults within the penal system. Thus initially the aim was to connect sections B and C by exploring the realities of the perpetrators of sexual assault as well as exploring the realities of women who had endured these crimes. In studying both of these groups I hoped to provide a more comprehensive account of the nature of sexual assault within the arena of counselling psychology.

Having completed the research element of this thesis, another theme emerged which links section B and C. The women's talk in section B draws upon a discourse of disparity, which conveys the patriarchal society they find themselves within. Within the discourse of disparity, they are constructed as being in an inferior position to their male counterparts. This gender dynamic is implicit within the research explored in the literature review. Much of the research I review explores the treatment of male rapists who have assaulted women. Groth (1980) asserts that a rape is an expression of a rapist's dominance and power, and an assertion of his strength over the individual he rapes. This places the male rapist in a position of superiority and power, whilst the woman is in an inferior position. These themes tie in with my exploration of the women's discourse of disparity.

The presence of male dominance and power which constructs women as being in an inferior position to their male counterpart is also evident within the case study; consequently, it is these themes that link sections B and D of this thesis. The case study mentions the client's disclosure of growing up in a controlling environment and having to endure domestic violence. She makes explicit that the control in her household was held by the male members of the family and they also were the perpetrators of the abuse she endured. Within the case study it is hypothesised that these predisposing factors triggered the development of the negative core and intermediate beliefs that were exacerbating her present day problems. Thus control and power is seen to be held by the males in both the critical literature review and the client study by means of the abuses they inflict upon women.

Additionally the case study in section D provides an extension to the research element. Within the empirical research study, I aim to explore the talk of unmarried second-generation women with regard to their disclosure practices within their families and communities. Within this research, I seek to highlight the individual subjectivities and specific psychological needs of this group of women. It is hoped that this will allow counselling psychologists and other professionals to provide tailored treatment programmes which suit this client group's clinical needs. Whilst the research explores the disclosure practices of South Asian women within their families and communities, section D explores a South Asian woman's disclosure within a therapeutic setting. The aim of the case study was to demonstrate how the client's disclosure, within therapy, both hindered and facilitated the therapeutic relationship.

Within this thesis, I write in both the third and the first person singular. The third person singular has been used, at times, to enable the women's talk and the voices present in the literature to take precedence. At other times, the first person singular has been used to underline my position as the author of this thesis and my role in its construction. By using the first person singular, I hope to reflect upon how my position, as an unmarried second-generation South Asian woman, affects the construction of this research. Furthermore, I hope to reflect upon the implications my position has upon the other theoretical and professional components of this thesis.

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Groth, A.N. (1980). Men who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender. New York: Plenum Press.

SECTION B: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

THE CURRENT STATUS OF SEX OFFENDER PROGRAMMES, AND THE IMPLICATIONS THIS HAS UPON THE REHABILITATION OF RAPISTS

Note:

The statistics and literature suggest that adult females are the persons most frequently the victims of rape or attempted rape. Thus, on occasions, when discussing an individual who has encountered rape, the individual is referred to in the feminine. However, I recognise that this is not true of all instances of rape.

1. Introduction and rationale

I argue in this review that the sex offender population is a heterogeneous group, and the rapist is a unique member of this group. Following on from this argument, treatment programmes should be tailored to reflect the varying needs of the rapist in order to reduce reoffending rates. I aim in this review to explore the current status of sex offender treatment programmes. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the current treatment programmes in rehabilitating rapists and the consequential implications of this are reviewed. My review of the literature has revealed a tendency to view the sex offender population as a homogenous group. This has resulted in treatment programmes overlooking the rapist or assuming he is similar to other types of sex offenders. Consequently, within this review, I question research that makes claims regarding the sex offender population in general, when the rapist has not been adequately represented within the sample.

I have further found, in this review, that the majority of research on sex offender treatment programmes (i.e., Beckett et al. 1994; Beech et al. 1999; Beech et al. 2001) concentrates upon child molesters. In making this claim, I do not dispute that research upon this group of sex offenders is needed; however, I argue that the treatment of rapists should be given an equal degree of attention within the research on sex offender treatment programmes. Polaschek and Devon (2003) also report that the rehabilitation of rapists attracts little attention compared with the rehabilitation of child sex offenders. Consequently, they state that sidelining the rehabilitation of rapists results in there being little research to guide whether and how rapists can be rehabilitated effectively.

Until the 1970s, rehabilitation was the main focus of treatment programmes for sex offenders. These treatment interventions came under attack in a report by Martinson (1974), which summarises the results of research that had been conducted by

Martinson and his colleagues (Lipton, Martinson & Wilks, 1975) on the effectiveness of sex offender treatment programmes. Within his report, Martinson (1974) describes the results of the research team's evaluation of 231 sex offender treatment programmes, conducted between 1945 and 1967. He states the following in relation to the results emerging from his research: "...with few and isolated exceptions the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism" (Martinson, 1974; p.25). It was concluded, from this report, that "nothing works" in the rehabilitation of sex offenders. This view became widely accepted as the "truth" regarding the current status of sex offender treatment programmes. However, this was despite Martinson and his colleagues denying that they concluded that "nothing worked." In fact they actually stated that their research contained too many flaws in order to determine accurately the effectiveness of treatment programmes (Brown, 2005). These claims are supported by the following quote from Martinson's (1974) report: "It is just possible that some of our treatment plans are working to some extent, but that our research is so bad that it is incapable of telling" (p.49).

As a result of the widespread conclusions drawn from the research of Lipton, Martinson and Wilks (1975) and Martinson's (1974) report, the rehabilitative treatment of sex offenders was replaced by correctional remedies, such as deterrence and incapacitation (McGuire, 1995). However, following prison riots across England and Wales in 1990 and growing public anxiety regarding the increasing number of sex offenders, the government introduced the Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTPs) in 1991. The SOTPs reintroduced the principles of rehabilitation within prison and community services. These programmes now comprise the current treatment programme used with the majority of sex offenders (McGuire, 1995). Easton (2001) asserts that the majority of the public believe sex offenders should be treated more harshly than the current penal policy permits. With regard to these issues, according to Easton (2001, p. 90) there is:

> ...less public tolerance of sex offenders in the UK, less sympathy for medical models of individual pathology, and greater willingness to see sex offenders as bad rather than mad, to be removed from the community rather than being changed or cured through treatment.

It has been highlighted that the public is wary, fearful and unforgiving of this group of individuals and are unsupportive of their rehabilitation. Thus it would cause further public dissatisfaction if the rehabilitation of these offenders proves unsuccessful. This highlights the need to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the SOTPs and alert professionals to any aspects which require amending.

2. Relevance to counselling psychology

The content of this review is particularly relevant to counselling psychologists working within prisons and probation services in the UK. It is assumed that these psychologists are involved with devising and/or providing treatment programmes for sex offenders which include rapist populations. Thus this review may raise questions about their current practices, and the effectiveness of treatment programmes provided for their client group. It is hoped that any questions raised will aid the process of devising and providing a better informed treatment programme for rapists and other sex offenders; in turn this will contribute to a reduction in the incidence rate of serious sexual assault in this country.

3. Definition and statistics of rape

In this thesis, rape is defined in terms of the description provided by the Sexual Offences Act (2003): "any act of non-consensual intercourse by a man with a person...the penetration of a penis of the vagina, anus or mouth..." (pp. 4-5). Rape is an immensely traumatic and often also a humiliating experience. A rape is not only a physical violation but also a mental one too. The victim of a rape is often left with psychological damage that may haunt them for years to come (Scully, 1994).

The British Crime Survey (Jansson et al., 2007) records the most recent and official rape statistics for the UK. According to this survey, between the years 2006 and 2007, in England and Wales, 8228 adult women (aged 16 years and over) are recorded as having experienced the criminal sexual offence of rape. This figure does not include the women who experienced a rape but chose not to report it and hence is an underrepresentation of the actual number of adult women raped between the years 2006 and 2007.

A previous history of committing rape is a key indicator that an individual may recommit a sexual offence in the future (Scully, 1994). Thus it is hypothesised that many of the incidents of rape reported in the British Crime Survey (Janson et al. 2007) were carried out by men who had committed sexual offences in the past. In order to reduce the number of adult sexual assaults committed in the UK, and the consequential psychological damage that individuals of this horrific crime endure, attention needs to be paid to the rehabilitation of rapists.

4. Distinct nature of the rapist

Before an argument advocating a tailored treatment programme for the rapist can ensue, the distinct nature of this type of sex offender needs highlighting. In order to distinguish a rapist from a child molester, within this review, a rapist is defined as an individual who commits the sexual offence of rape against an adult as opposed to a child. Holmstrom and Burgess (1980) stress power and anger are the two main motives for rape. They assert that although rape contains elements of sexuality, it is never the main component. Alternatively, Knight and Prentky (1991) suggest that in understanding a rapist's motivations, one cannot separate power and sexual factors. They also assert that anger and sadistic factors overlap. McCable and Wauchope (2005) state that although most modern conceptualisations recognise that rape involves both aggressive and sexual motives, theorists tend to emphasise one motive other others. This can be seen within the assertions made by the theorists described above.

Milner and Webster's (2005) research highlights that the aggressive motives of the rapist represent the key difference between rapists and other sex offenders. Their research focuses upon identifying schemas in child molesters, rapists and violent offenders. They report that a prevalence of a "hostility and distrust of women schema" amongst rapists is distinct from the schemas of child molesters and violent offenders. This suggests that anger and aggression are the precursors of committing a sexual offence against a woman but are not necessarily precursors of committing a sexual offence against a child.

Additionally, Mann and Hollin (2007) report the following, regarding differences between the motivations of rapists and child molesters:

> ...rapists tend to see their offences as due to impulsivity or grievance thinking, and that child molesters believe that they offended for sexual pleasure, to alleviate negative emotional states or to achieve a sense of intimacy to the victim. (p.9).

The above quote suggests that the rapist tends to view his crime as an impulsive, unplanned and spontaneous act, or as an act of revenge after having been "wronged" in some way by his victim. These differences in motivation indicate that a rapist requires treatment that is tailored to suit his distinct objectives and processes in relation to the offence. However, currently within prison and community services, the same treatment programme is used to treat rapists and other sex offenders (Falshaw et al., 2003).

In contrast to the findings above, Overholster and Beck (1986) suggest that a distinction cannot be made between rapists and child molesters. In their study, rapists and child molesters were assessed on scales of hostility, impulsivity and attitudinal variables. The results indicated that neither rapists nor child molesters display a tendency for overly hostile or impulsive behaviour. However, as is the case for much research on sex offenders, the results were obtained through self-reports. The reliability of studies in which outcomes are heavily reliant upon self-reports is questionable, as the relationship to actual offending is not known. Furthermore, with self-reports there is the risk that sex offenders may minimise and discount their reoffending (Furby et al., 1987). Hence this places some doubt on the credibility of Overholster and Beck's (1996) study. Perhaps further research is needed in order to carry out thorough assessments of both rapists and child molesters. It is through means of assessment that rapists will be defined as a distinct group, in need of a specific and tailored treatment programme.

I will now proceed with a closer examination of the current status of treatment programmes within the UK. I will address this by: firstly, a theoretical exploration of the model of relapse which underpins the majority of SOTPs; and, secondly, examining the literature which investigates the effectiveness of treatment programmes in prison and community settings.

5. The current, dominant treatment intervention for sex offenders

A review of the published research conducted since the early 1990s revealed Relapse Prevention (RP) to dominate the majority of SOTPs in Britain (e.g. Beech et al., 1999). Furthermore, RP has been equally prevalent in several other Western countries, such as North America (e.g. Freeman-Longo et al., 1994) and New Zealand (Hudson et al., 1998). Thus, I shall concentrate upon the RP model within this review, as it is the preferred and dominant treatment programme for sex offenders.

The main aim of RP is to reduce the offender's probability of reoffending. The therapist attempts to teach the sex offender how to recognise, avoid and cope with "high risk" situations. In most programmes this involves formulating an "individualised treatment plan". This plan helps the sex offender recognise events, affects, moods and cognitions that place him at risk of reoffending. Thus it is hoped that a sex offender, having gone through a RP treatment programme, is able to recognise early warning signs or triggers, take himself out of "high risk" situations, and decrease his probability of reoffending. The rapist is also taught how to cope with situations that may be unavoidable but potentially "high risk" (i.e., finding a woman/child in a shop attractive) (Polaschek & Devon, 2003).

6. The relapse model

The treatment framework for RP is based upon the relapse model, which has its origins in the treatment of alcoholics (Pithers et al., 1983). This model follows the principles of mainstream cognitive behavioural therapy and accounts for the sequence of cognitive, affective and behavioural factors leading to relapse. Based upon this model, Pithers et al. (1983) highlight that the relapse process for a sex offender typically follows a series of steps. Firstly, the individual experiences an excessive need for pleasant events or acute stress which creates a feeling of emptiness and a desire to indulge oneself. The individual then unconsciously makes a series of decisions which bring him closer to a "high risk" situation. The situation may be an affective state (e.g. feeling angry/sad) or an environmental cue (e.g. going past a school playground where children are playing). It is hypothesised that these situations will threaten the offender's self-control over refraining from reoffending and result in a lapse. This lapse can be fantasising about committing a violent sexual offence or perhaps purchasing pornography. During this time of lapse, the immediate

gratification in committing a sexual offence becomes very prominent. This experience was termed by Pithers et al. (1983) as the "problem of immediate gratification". It is during this time that a lapse develops into a relapse (i.e., committing an actual sexual offence). This relapse is coupled with what is termed the "abstinence violation effect". This is a build up of negative cognitions and affect directed at the self due to reoffending.

The literature highlights many problems with regard to the relapse model which are beyond the scope and aims of this review (Hudson et al., 1992; Ward, 2000). However, claims regarding the relapse model's disregard of the heterogeneity of offence goals and processes are of relevance to this study. This disregard of heterogeneity is illustrated by the model's assumption that all sex offenders will feel remorse for their reoffending behaviour, and this remorse will foster motivation to participate in treatment. It is evident, from the literature, that rapists are the group of sex offenders whose offending behaviour has been least affected by RP interventions (Beckett et al. 1994; Beech et al. 1999; Beech et al. 2005). Perhaps this indicates that some rapists may not feel remorse and thus do not fit the relapse model. Consequently, much of the research has failed to explore, prior to conducting the studies, whether the treatment of choice was an adequate fit for the heterogeneity of the sample of sex offenders under investigation. Furthermore, when devising an adequate model for rapist treatment programmes, the heterogeneity amongst rapists themselves must be attended to. For example, the goals and processes of a rapist may differ depending upon whether or not they rape an individual known to them. Ward (2000) suggests sex offender treatment programmes should entail thorough assessment, formulation and tailored treatment planning for each sex offender.

Polaschek et al. (2001) have devised a model they regard as being a more suitable fit for the rapist than the relapse model. This model concentrates upon the details of the individual's offence and includes offender goals at several points. These goals highlight the importance of sexual as well as nonsexual motivators within the offence process. The model suggests rapists have three common offence pathways. One pathway contains goals of casual sex; obtaining sex is considered a means of increasing an already apparent positive mood. In the second pathway, the goal again is of a sexual nature, but alternatively it is considered as being a means of reducing

distress and negative mood. The third pathway contains goals which are non-sexual and formulated prior to the offence. The model notes that these offenders use the sexual offence as a means of addressing their belief of being wronged or harmed by the victim. These offenders generally have personality traits that indicate they have a strong tendency to impose their will on others, and seek revenge on women who have "wronged" and/or "harmed" them in some way (e.g. ending a relationship or humiliating them in front of their friends). Although this model seems to be a better representation of the rapist's offence processes and goals than the relapse model, one would have to question the validity of applying this model to rapists of adults. Polaschek et al.'s (2001) original model was actually devised using a sample consisting only of child molesters, and it was at a later date that slight methodological changes were made for the model to apply to the rapist. Although this research has its flaws, it is useful in its acknowledgment of rapists as a distinct group of sex offenders.

Hence it has been implied that perhaps RP, due to its theoretical underpinnings, is not the most suitable treatment of choice for rapists (Polaschek et al., 2001). Despite the dominance of RP in SOTPs, there is a concerning lack of empirical evidence to suggest that it is an effective treatment for sex offenders (Polaschek & Devon, 2003). Furthermore, as far as I am aware, there is no evidence to suggest that this treatment is effective for rapists.

Why is it, then, that in the last twenty years, despite the lack of reliable empirical evidence, RP has emerged as the dominant intervention for rapists and other types of sex offenders alike? Polaschek and Devon (2003) offer three possible explanations. Firstly, approaches prior to the 1980s had yielded no evidence to suggest their effectiveness in preventing reoffending. The treatment of sex offenders was in a state of flux, and there was a general need amongst applied psychologists to adopt a new set of instructions in order to increase optimism. Secondly, RP approaches offered a familiar language to applied psychologists working in the field, as its basis was predominantly cognitive behavioural theory. Thirdly, RP reduced therapist anxiety because it provided clear, coherent guidelines as to what must be done in the treatment of sex offenders. Polaschek and Devon (2003) state that these factors alone have been sufficient for applied psychologists to continue to use RP, with little critical analysis of the theory (the relapse model), or empirical evaluation of its effectiveness.

Based upon Polaschek and Devon's (2003) explanations, described above, it is deduced that the needs of the applied psychologist, as opposed to the effectiveness of treatment programmes, have promoted and sustained the development of RP. Following on from this argument, it is important for counselling psychologists and other practitioners to assess their motivations for using RP techniques with sex offender populations. I would argue that the treatment of sex offenders is, perhaps, in state of flux again, as it was in the 1980s. There is a need for professionals working in the field to encourage and/or conduct further research that empirically tests the effectiveness of current principles and models which guide sex offender treatment programmes.

7. The effectiveness of the SOTPs

This section of the review concentrates upon a critical appraisal of the research conducted in Britain on SOTPs. In this way, I hope to determine the current status of treatment trends, and the implications this holds for the future practice of counselling psychologists working with sex offenders in prison and probation services in the UK. The literature examined spans over a period of approximately 10 to 15 years. This is due to recidivism rates being the predominantly used measure for evaluating the effectiveness of treatment, and the acquisition of these rates, in some research, can span over a 5–10 year period (Beckett et al., 1994). Consequently, there is a limited amount of research conducted on the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders, especially with regard to rapists.

The Home Office has made some efforts to address this gap in the literature by conducting research on sex offender samples which contain rapists in both prison and community-based settings (Beckett et al., 1994; Beech et al., 1999; Beech et al., 2005). Brooks-Gordon et al. (2004) argue that it is in the best interests of the government to portray SOTPs as a success. Subsequently, this may result in there being a lack of data and research which highlights the negative aspects of these programmes. Therefore, it is important to critically analyse the research that has been conducted in this area. By critically analysing the research on SOTPs, I hope to highlight measures that need addressing in order to improve treatment.

7.1. The effectiveness of SOTPs used in prison settings

Perhaps one of the most extensive studies carried out in Britain on the effectiveness of SOTPs in prison settings was conducted by Beech et al. (1999). A cognitive behavioural group programme for sexual offenders, which has its roots in the RP treatment, was devised. The programme, like most RP treatments, places a strong emphasis upon risk management (Ward and Stewart, 2003). The programme was initially executed in HM Prison Services in England and Wales. Six prisons were selected for the study. The sex offenders in each prison were divided into groups which contained approximately eight men each, and two groups from each prison were studied in detail. The study gathered information on 100 sex offenders prior to treatment and depended upon individuals volunteering to take part in the treatment programmes. Measures were recorded before and after treatment to monitor attitudinal change in relation to sexual offending in the following areas: denial/admittance, pro-offending attitudes, social competence/accountability, acceptance of accountability, emotional identification with children and relapse prevention knowledge. The measures were obtained by means of self-report questionnaires. The results indicate that the treatment was significantly effective in improving levels of deviancy; 80 men showed some reduction in attitudinal attitudes across the six measures. A follow-up study was carried out which involved each sex offender who had completed the treatment filling out the same self-report questionnaire nine months later. Interestingly, the study conducted nine months post-treatment contained only child molesters, as the rapists refused to participate in the follow-up study.

Beech et al.'s (1999) study did yield results which imply the SOTP is effective. However, on closer inspection, the study contained some significant flaws which question the credibility of its findings. Of most relevance to this review is the fact that 82 of the 100 men in the sample were child molesters. Thus, although the study claims that its results apply to the sex offender population, in actual fact, this is invalid. The study did not contain a sample of sex offenders that was representative of the rapist population. As mentioned earlier, Ward et al. (2000) identify a fundamental flaw of the relapse model as its assumption that sex offenders are motivated to take part in treatment programmes by reasons of remorse. Since participation in the SOTP was voluntary, this study reveals the rapist population, in prisons, as being unmotivated to participate in treatment programmes. Furthermore, the results indicate that 80 men in

the sample showed some reduction in pro-offending attitudes. However, the study fails to report what percentage of these men were rapists. Again, the study assumes that the sex offender population is a homogenous group and dismisses the potentially differing goals and processes of rapists.

Another contentious issue (as discussed above) is the use of self-reports to measure the effectiveness of treatment. Self-reports are likely to yield a high "desirability" effect, especially if the sex offenders think parole may be dependent on their reported attitudes. Furthermore, although the research attempted to validate the results by a follow-up study, nine months was not a sufficient amount of time to effectively monitor relapse. There is some debate as to the most appropriate follow-up period. However, it is generally agreed that two years should be the minimum appropriate follow-up period, and five years is ideal. This is due to the proportion of sex offenders who reoffend growing slowly and steadily over time (Lloyd et al., 1994).

This study could be improved by tackling the methodological errors. This could involve, for example, ensuring that the sample is representative of the sex offender population, or by separating the sex offenders into groups according to their offences. The results would then be applicable to rapist, child molester and other sex offender populations. Secondly a more accurate measure, such as recidivism rates, taken two, four and six years post-treatment, would have increased the validity of the research. Of particular concern to this review is that the study, generally, failed to motivate rapists to take part in the treatment. A possible improvement to this study, and consideration for future research, would be to implement components that may motivate rapists to participate in treatment. Ward et al. (2003) suggest that a treatment plan which emphasises a "good lives model" as opposed to a "risk-need model" would be more effective in motivating sex offenders to take part in treatment programmes. The SOTPs do offer a "Booster Programme" which is intended to "boost" skills, shortly before release, and is based upon the "good lives model". However, this model comprises only one component of the entire SOTP and Beech et al. (1999) report that the core components of the SOTP are risk assessment.

Ward et al. (2000) state that the "risk-need model" dominates SOTPs within the United Kingdom, North America, Australia and New Zealand. This perspective is

concerned with risk assessment, and the main aim of treatment is to avoid harm to the community rather than to improve the sex offender's quality of life. From this perspective, the enhancement of the sex offender's functioning is not of primary concern. On the other hand, the aim of a "good lives model" is to enhance the offender's skills and strengths in order to improve the quality of his life. It is believed that improving a sex offender's quality of life will reduce the probability of him reoffending, when he is released from prison. Ward et al. (2003) argue that there is a relationship between the well-being of the offender and recidivism. They suggest that developing a sex offender's capabilities rather than attempting to remove parts of his deviancy, which are classified as risk, will motivate an offender to take part in treatment. However, it is not known whether these, actually, are the reasons why rapists within prisons are reluctant to take part in treatment programmes. It would be interesting and beneficial for future research to investigate the actual reasons behind the reluctance of rapists to participate compared with other sexual offenders.

The "good lives model" is just one of the numerous approaches, based upon the enhancement perspective which is being developed within the area of sexual offending (e.g. Ellerby et al. 2000; Freeman-Longo, 2001). Any of these approaches could be critiqued for their suitability in the treatment intervention programmes for sex offender. This area of research would be especially pertinent for motivating rapist populations due to their low level of commitment to such programmes. However, further research will need to address how these enhancement perspective models can be incorporated within the current RP "risk-need" treatment model which dominates SOTPS within the United Kingdom.

Beech et al.'s (1999) study does contain many limitations (some of which are discussed above); nonetheless, it is important to recognise the contributions this research has made towards the area of sexual offending. There is limited research in this field and Beech et al. (1999) have carried out the first large-scale evaluation of the current treatment trends in Britain. They have created the foundations for future research (i.e., Beech et al. 2005) to be conducted within this area. Furthermore, Beech et al.'s (1999) study highlights important issues regarding the low rate of rapists volunteering to take part in these programmes and the high drop-out rate of this client group. Another important finding is that Beech et al. (1999) note that the sex

offenders who felt most understood and least judged and who described their therapists as acting warmly towards them experienced the highest change in attitudinal levels. This finding could be helpful in informing the practice of counselling psychologists and other practitioners in the field. It illustrates that Rogers' (1990) core conditions (unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence) may have a positive effect upon the offenders remaining motivated and completing therapy with some positive effect.

Despite the problems highlighted above, Beech et al. (1999, p.22) argue that "the mixing of child abusers and rapists within the programme was not seen as problematic". However in 2005, the Home Office commissioned a study addressing the offending behaviour of rapists and sexual murderers (Beech et al., 2005). I see this as a positive step, as it attempts to address the underrepresentation of rapists in Beech et al.'s (1999) previous study into the evaluation of SOTPs. As far as I am aware, Beech et al.'s (2005) study is the most recent research that investigates the effectiveness of SOTPs in the UK. The main aim of Beech et al.'s (2005) study was to evaluate the relevance of the Core SOTP (which comprises factors of RP and the 'risk-need model') in rehabilitating rapists and sexual murderers. The authors assert the following in relation to the framework of SOTPs and its application to the rehabilitation of rapists:

It should be noted that this framework has been has based on the research literature pertaining to child abusers and is therefore to be used with more caution when applying it to offenders against adults. Programmes for sexual offenders have generally been developed to address the factors shown by research as being either contradictory or characteristic in child abuse. Hence, to date, the treatment of rapists and sexual murderers on the STOP programme consists of essentially the same treatment that would be offered to child abusers (Beech, Fisher & Beckett, 1999). However, it may be that the approach to therapy with child abusers does not necessarily map on to the treatment needs of rapists and sexual murderers (Beech et al., 2005, p.7).

The study collected pre- and post-treatment data on 112 rapists and 58 sexual murderers. The offenders completed questionnaires before and after treatment which measured the following psychometric scales; personality factors, motivation to change offending behaviours, level of denial of offence-related behaviours, sexual preoccupation, pro-offending attitudes, social competence/social adequacy and

angry/grievance styles of thinking. As well as completing questionnaires which assessed these problematic areas, they were also interviewed before and after the treatment. Additionally, treatment facilitators were interviewed before and after conducting the treatment. The rapists and sexual murderers were classified into three groups according to their main motivation for their offending behaviour. The three groups of offenders were classified as follows: grievance motivated offenders who committed crimes which were 'impulsive' and 'vengeful' as opposed to being 'sexually motivated' or 'planned'; sexually motivated offenders who committed crimes which were usually 'planned' and 'fantasised' about their sexual crimes prior to committing them; and sadistically motivated offenders who murdered their victims and were aroused by sexual violence.

Having analysed the findings, Beech et al. (2005) assert that the Core components of the SOTPs were not sufficient in reducing risk amongst the sample of offenders. They suggest that the Core components need to be accompanied by other features of the existing SOTPs. For example, they assert that the grievance-motivated offenders need further work on anger and hostility than the Core components of the SOTP can offer. They also state that the sexually motivated offenders need further assistance in relation to their negative beliefs regarding women. Thus they recommend that these offenders also complete the Extended components of the SOTPs, which focus upon negative emotions, and relationship and intimacy skills (Crow, 2001).

There are many positive features of Beech et al.'s (2005) study. Firstly, as mentioned above, this study acknowledges that existing literature has sidelined the rapist and his rehabilitation. Secondly, this study manages to achieve pre- and post-treatment results from a large sample of rapists and sexual murders. Beech et al. (2005) state that these numbers are an adequate cross-section of the rapists undertaking treatment. However, it should be noted that this sample of rapists is not necessarily representative of the rapist population who chose not to participate in the treatment, and also those who have not been convicted. A further positive feature of this study is that it acknowledges the heterogeneity amongst rapists. The study classifies rapists into groups according to the main motivation for their offending behaviour. Lastly, this study used multiple methods to gather its findings (i.e., questionnaires completed by

the offenders, and interviews with both the offenders and facilitators). These positive features increase the credibility of Beech et al.'s (2005) findings.

The fundamental finding of Beech et al.'s study (2005) is that the Core components of the SOTPs, alone, are essentially ineffective in reducing the rapists' and sexual murderers' risk of reoffending. This suggests that the current Core components of the SOTPs are not adequately rehabilitating the rapist population of sex offenders. The authors do recommend that the Core components need to be supported by the existing additional components of the SOTPs in use within prisons. However, these suggestions have not been empirically tested, and require further research in order to be validated. Thus further research needs to be conducted into the effectiveness of the SOTPs in rehabilitating rapists.

7.2 The effectiveness of SOTPs used in community settings

Beech et al.'s studies (1999, 2005) were restricted to a prison setting. However, the rehabilitation of sex offenders can also take place within the community. Research carried out by the Home Office investigated the effectiveness of RP-based SOTPs in the community for sex offenders on probation. This research was divided into three separate studies which became known as the three phases. The first phase consisted of a review of the research into the effectiveness of treatment programmes in Europe and North America. Additionally, a survey was also compiled of the treatment programmes operated by or that ran in conjunction with probation services in England and Wales. The review concluded that cognitive behavioural approaches, which place a strong emphasis upon RP techniques, are the most effective (Barker & Morgan, 1993).

The second phase of the research was conducted by Beckett et al. (1994). Their study carried out research into seven community-based treatment centres. Four of the centres provided short-term treatment, two provided long-term treatment, and the seventh treatment centre was privately run and offered interventions for up to one year. Attitudinal and behavioural measures (e.g. ability to empathise with victims, sexual obsession and victim-blaming) were assessed before and after treatment, through the use of self-report, in order to monitor the effectiveness of treatment. Beckett et al.'s (1994) study reports that the privately-run programme was the most

effective in changing the attitudes of offenders. They state this was due to the offenders spending a lot more time in therapy than the offenders in the other programmes. Furthermore, they state that the effectiveness of this programme was also due to it being tailored towards child molesters. In contrast the other programmes claimed to cater for all types of sex offender. The offenders in the probation-service centres, who were classified as low deviancy, displayed some behavioural changes post-treatment. However, the treatment appeared to have little impact upon the more deviant sexual offenders. Thus the probation-run programmes had some success with low deviancy offenders but appeared to have little impact upon the more deviant ones. In conclusion, the probation treatment centres were ineffective. The treatment programmes allowed the offenders to begin understanding their offending behaviours, however, there was little success in aiding them with developing strategies to avoid future reoffending.

Phase three of the research consisted of two parts and measured the reconviction rates of the sex offenders who had completed the treatment programmes in phase two. Part one measured reconviction rates after two years (Hedderman & Sugg, 1996) and part two measured them again after six years (Beech et al., 2001). The aim was to discover whether or not treated offenders were convicted of fewer or less serious offences. After two years, Hedderman and Sugg (1996) state that only 11 (8%) of the 133 offenders, who were referred to one of the seven community-based treatment programmes, had been reconvicted of an offence. Beech et al. (2001) found that, after six years, 8 (15%) out of 53 offenders had been reconvicted of an offence. However, this last sample contained only child molesters.

There are some positive attributes to this research. Firstly, phases one and two involved an investigation into the various existing treatment programmes, so that the most effective combination of treatment options could be selected for phase three. This implies that the researchers were choosing a treatment option which had been empirically validated. Furthermore, phase one, phase two and part one of phase three all contained participants who had committed the sexual offence of rape. Having said this, these samples did contain a higher percentage of offenders who had committed sexual assaults against children. Phase three of the research relied upon reported convictions in order to determine the effectiveness of the treatment programme.

Although this method has its drawbacks, in that convictions are underepresentative of offending, it is the best possible measurement available that monitors the effectiveness of treatment programmes for sex offenders. Self-reports, of which previous research (i.e. phase two; Beckett et al. 1994) made use, are not reliable as sex offenders are particularly susceptible to minimise and undercount their offending (Lloyd et al., 1994).

However, the research does also contain some limitations. Part one of phase three claims that the treatment programme under investigation is an effective method of treating the sex offender. However, closer inspection of the data reveals that 74% of the sample of sex offenders was composed of individuals who had been convicted of "indecent assault" or "indecent exposure". This holds many implications for the validity of the research. Firstly, the term "indecent assault" has not been defined. Thus it is unclear whether the sex offender committed an assault against an adult or child. Consequently, the results cannot be generalised to the sex offender population, as it is not known how representative the sample was of the various types of sexual offender. This study, like previous ones, makes the implicit assumption that sex offenders are a homogenous population. Secondly, the study refers to the sex offenders who are described as committing the "indecent assaults" or "indecent exposures" as low deviancy offenders. Since these offenders form the majority of the sample, the study actually attempts to show the effectiveness of treatment programmes for sexual offenders with low deviancy. However, such a claim is not made, and instead the authors declare that the results can be generalised to a sex offender population with both low and high deviancy.

One of the community-based treatment centres, which was investigated in phase two, was a private centre that provided treatment to a sample of child molesters. The study states that one of the reasons for the effectiveness of this programme was its focus upon one particular group of sex offender. This highlights the importance of treating sex offenders as a heterogeneous population. A similar study investigating the benefits of providing treatment to a community sample comprised solely of rapists is required. However, the authors also state that the success of this tailored programme was partly due to the extra hours of support the therapists in the privately-run service were able to provide the offenders. This suggests a lot more funding is required in

order to provide intense, thorough and tailored treatment programmes for particular sex offenders.

A further limitation of the research, conducted in both the prison and community settings, is the lack of exploration these studies invest into differentiating the relationship between the rapist and the individual he rapes. The relationship a rapist has with his victim could subsequently impact upon his goals and processes in relation to committing an offence and/or reoffending. For example, a sex offender may decide to rape a woman because he feels she has humiliated him by declining to go on a date with him. Thus rehabilitation may need to assess his belief that the woman deserves to be raped. Additionally, the research focuses upon male perpetrators who rape women and does not adequately address those who rape adult male victims.

Furthermore, the research recruited sex offenders who had been arrested, convicted, and were in prison or involved with probation services. This is a very common and justifiable selection process, and perhaps the only possible means of obtaining a sex offender sample (Furby et al., 1989). However, as a result of this selection process, these studies were restricted in studying quite a specialised sample. Thus, claims regarding the transferability of these results to an unknown population, outside of the prison and probation services, need to be treated with caution. Lastly, the studies reviewed mainly depend upon reconviction rates in order to determine the effectiveness of treatment programmes. Falshaw et al. (2003) highlight problems in relying upon reconviction data. They found that the actual reoffending rates were 5.3 times higher than the reconviction rates recorded within research due to a lot of crimes going undetected. Thus, there is a need for future research to employ other methods, besides reconviction rates, in order to measure the effectiveness of sex offender programmes.

8. Conclusions and summary

Within this review, I have attempted to critically evaluate the theoretical underpinnings of the SOTPs, and their effectiveness in rehabilitating sex offenders, in particular the rapist. Relapse prevention and the "risk-need model", which form the basis of the SOTPs within the UK, have been reviewed. Additionally, other possible models, which could further be incorporated into the treatment of sex offenders (i.e.

the "good lives model"), have been discussed. I have also explored the research (i.e., Beckett et al., 1994; Beech et al, 1999), which makes the implicit assumption that data collected on child molesters can be applied to a rapist population. Within this research, the rapist has been under-representative, and the differing nature of the sexual crime committed has been ignored. Due to the scant attention that has been paid to the heterogeneity of the sex offender population and the methodological flaws of the existing research, it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of SOTPs in rehabilitating rapists. However, in recent years, research (i.e., Beech et al., 2005) has been conducted on the effectiveness of SOTPs in specifically addressing the offending behaviour of rapists and sexual offenders. This research raises important questions regarding the suitability of a uniform treatment programme for all types of sex offender (i.e., child molesters, rapists, sexual murderers). Having critically evaluated the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of the SOTPs, I conclude that future research needs to be conducted in order to address the specific rehabilitative needs of the rapist.

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SECTION C: RESEARCH

AN EXPLORATION OF UNMARRIED, SECOND-GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S TALK OF DISCLOSURE WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

ABSTRACT

My main objective in this study was to analyse the discourses of unmarried, second-generation South Asian women with regard to their disclosure practices within the family and community. I hope this study has produced findings that can aid counselling psychologists and other professionals and services to understand the specific needs of this client group better. Consequently, within this study, I promote the application of appropriate clinical interventions that are compatible with the individual subjectivities of South Asian women.

I adopted a social constructionist epistemology, informed by a critical realist perspective. Due to the exploratory nature of the research objectives, a qualitative approach utilising semi-structured interviews was deemed the most appropriate for this study. I conducted interviews with four South Asian women, aged between 24 and 26 years, and analysed this data was using discourse analysis. My analysis of the women's talk revealed four discourses of disclosure practices within the family and community; political discourse, disparity discourse, conflict discourse and discourse of individualism and collectivism. The women's talk was also analysed for the subject positions and implications for practice and subjectivity contained within the discourse.

The analysis revealed the women's discourses as being constrained by social and institutional structures of patriarchy and collectivism. In the last chapter of this research study, I explore the relationship between the women's discourses and their material reality. Due to the analysis revealing structures of patriarchy, I employed a feminist standpoint in order to further understand the discourses emerging from the women's talk on disclosure. Additionally, "intersectionalities" of gender, race and culture are explored as well as the implications for clinical practice arising from the study's findings.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research element of this thesis. Its aim is to introduce the literature, concepts and ideas that will be developed and elaborated upon throughout the thesis. Within this chapter, I define the term "South Asian" which comprises the participant group in this study. I provide some background information regarding the South Asian culture, and the importance placed on family within the South Asian community. Furthermore, I hope to frame this research in the context of a study conducted with women. I hope this will aid the reader to further appreciate the context within which the discourses in this study are constructed. What follows is a review of the literature regarding the mental health status of South Asian women in the UK; an account of the gaps in the literature my study addresses; and a brief overview of the self-disclosure literature. Lastly, this chapter summarises the study's objectives and the means by which reflexivity will be attended to.

1.2 The definition of "South Asian"

The broad ethnic category "South Asian" has been used to refer to the participant group within this study. Within the UK context, Marshall and Yazdani (2000) define the category "South Asian" as follows:

> ...those peoples whose familial or cultural backgrounds originate from the subcontinent of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The term Asian is broad and heterogeneous; diversified along the lines of religion, class, migration patterns, language, traditions... (p.414).

I have striven to make this study inclusive and representative of the differing countries in the Indian subcontinent, and the subgroups of South Asian women in the UK. Thus for the purposes of this study, I am extending Marshall and Yazdani's (2000) definition to include women with familial origins in Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and East Africa. The South Asian families who have origins in East Africa made an initial migration to East Africa from the Indian subcontinent, and then a second migration to the UK (Katira, 2003). For this reason, women who have origins in East Africa were seen as suitable participants for this study.

1.3 The South Asian culture

Culture has been defined as a collection of values, behaviours and meanings held by a group, as they create their interpretation of the world (Alarcon et al., 1998). Dasgupta (1986) states that the South Asian culture has a core set of beliefs and values regarding human beings which have come about from the mythology and philosophy of the particular country of origin. Thus South Asian women born and raised in South Asia typically have a set of behaviours reflective of these core beliefs and values. These learnt behaviours are compatible and appropriate to their surrounding environments and culture. However, South Asian women living within a culture outside their culture of origin may encounter difficulties in carrying out these behaviours. The difficulties inherent in integrating the two conflicting cultures of South Asia and the West have been well documented within the literature (Segal, 1991; Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996; Abrahamson 1999; Inman et al., 2001; Gupta et al., 2007).

Berry (1980) provides a model of the acculturation process. The acculturation model is typically associated with first-generation individuals who leave their country of origin in order to migrate to a "host" culture. The model asserts that the level of distress experienced by the acculturation process is dependent upon the degree to which the dominant culture is adopted, and the culture of origin internalised. A high degree of integration within the dominant culture as well as a strong internalisation of the culture of origin may result in distress. Inman et al. (2001, 2006) illustrate how second- and third-generation women, born within a Western culture, may also experience degrees of acculturation. Thus Berry's (1980) model can be extended to apply also to second-generation women born within a Western culture such as the UK.

1.4 The South Asian family and community

Typically, the South Asian family is described as an extended network of relationships, comprising several nuclear families which form part of a community. Notions of collectivism override individualism and the pursuit of one's personal goals. Abraham (2000) notes how notions of the South Asian family are in contrast to that of Western countries. South Asian women are expected to develop an identity that is in unison with the family. Their actions and behaviours are perceived as

affecting and reflecting the family's wellbeing and standing within the community (Prathiknati, 1997; Inman and Tewari, 2003). Furthermore, Abraham (2000) finds that acculturation levels are associated with the extent to which a South Asian individual interacts with their family and community. This suggests that the family and community are the upholders of the South Asian culture, and they may affect the degree to which the culture of origin is internalised by the individual.

1.5 The mental health status of South Asian women living in the UK: A review of the literature

The most recent statistics detailing the ethnic diversity of the UK population are recorded in the 2001 Census. According to this Census, 92.1 per cent of the UK population describe themselves as white, and the remaining 7.9 per cent (4.6 million) are from non-white minority ethnic backgrounds. 2,331,423 of these people (4 per cent of the total population) define themselves as having cultural origins in the Indian subcontinent. Within the South Asian population in Britain, 1,053,411 people have origins in India, 747,285 have origins in Pakistan, 283,063 have origins in Bangladesh, and 247,668 individuals describe themselves as 'other' South Asian. These statistics demonstrate that British South Asians are a culturally and religiously heterogeneous group. The Census states that, between the years 1991 and 2001, there has been a 53 percent growth in the minority ethnic population.

The following literature review is not an exhaustive account summarising the entirety of research conducted upon South Asian women. However, I hope to provide an overview of some seminal studies. Since this study analyses the discourse of a sample of South Asian women living in the UK, this section has been restricted to UK research. Thus this review aims to place this study in the context of UK research, and illustrate the gaps in the literature it is attempting to address.

The literature review revealed epidemiological studies focussing upon the prevalence of suicide, parasuicide, deliberate self harm, depression and eating disorders amongst South Asian women. This finding is in unison with the review carried out by Anand and Cochrane (2005) on the mental health status of South Asian women in Britain. Additionally, the review of the literature carried out for this study revealed an increasing amount of studies adopting a qualitative paradigm. These studies portray

the impact of cultural influences and practices upon conceptualisations of mental health and constructions of distress amongst South Asian women.

Epidemiological studies carried out by Cochrane and Stopes-Roe (1977, 1981) reveal lower rates of psychopathology amongst South Asian women living in Britain than their native white counterparts. Furthermore, Cochrane and Stopes-Roe (1981) report unmarried Indian women, who were able to move socially upwards and appeared more integrated into British society and culture, as having the highest levels of distress and psychological disturbance. This finding is of particular relevance to the participant group of this study. However, these studies have been criticised for containing fundamental methodological flaws which included errors regarding the recording of ethnicity and place of birth. Also, Bengali women were not included in this study, despite now being considered a high-risk group amongst South Asian women (Anand & Cochrane, 2005). These factors call into question the credibility of these findings, and the subsequent claims that are asserted. Furthermore in contrast to the findings of Cochrane and Stopes-Roe (1977, 1981), other epidemiological studies investigating the mental health status of South Asian women within Britain reveal a higher prevalence of mental health problems amongst this community (Glover et al. 1989; Bhugra et al. 1999a, 1999b, 1999c).

The majority of the studies conducted from the 1980s to the present day reveal a higher prevalence of attempted suicide and self harm amongst South Asian women than Asian men and also non-South Asian women (Anand & Cochrane, 2005). Merrill and Owens (1986) investigated the prevalence of attempted suicide amongst a population of 196 South Asian patients; 139 of these patients were born in the Indian subcontinent, 52 in the UK and the remainder in East Africa. The results indicate that South Asian women are three times more likely to present with attempted suicide than South Asian men. The study claims that women who present with attempted suicide report higher levels of marital and cultural conflict, particularly within arranged marriages. During the years 1980–1984, Glover et al. (1989) investigated the demographics of patients aged 10-24 years who were reporting to the East End casualty departments of London and presenting with self-poisoning. The prevalence of South Asian females reporting to the casualty departments for reasons of attempted suicide exceeded that of the base population.

Within a London-based treatment centre, Bhugra et al. (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) sought to discover the prevalence rates of attempted suicide amongst South Asian, African/African-Caribbean, white and other ("mixed") individuals. The sample of individuals was recruited from accident and emergency services, psychiatric or medical wards. The participants were compared with a group of individuals who attended the GP surgery and were within a similar age range. The studies report that the prevalence rates of attempted suicide amongst South Asian women are 1.5 times higher than their white counterparts. The highest difference between prevalence rates for South Asian and white women was found within the 16-24 year age group of South Asian women; 44 per cent of the individuals in the 16-24 year age sample were married.

In contrast to the findings described above, epistemological studies do not report conclusive findings in relation to problems of depression and anxiety amongst this population of women (Anand & Cochrane, 2005). In primary care settings, in the UK, prevalence rates of depression and anxiety amongst South Asian women have been reported as being on par with or lower than the general population (Cochrane & Bal, 1989; Balarajan & Raleigh, 1993). Contrastingly, the household survey commissioned by the Department of Health, reports that depression is twice as prevalent amongst "Asian and oriental" women in comparison with their white counterparts (OPCS, 1995, p.34).

The Fourth National Survey (Nazroo, 1997) investigated prevalence rates of anxiety and depression. The survey carried out structured interviews with 1273 Indian, 1185 Pakistani, 591 Bangladeshi and 2865 white participants. Nazroo (1997) reports that all subgroups of South Asian women have lower prevalence rates of anxiety and depression than their white counterparts. Nazroo (1997) states that the merging of South Asian subgroups into one homogeneous group revealed a prevalence rate of 2.5 per cent. This is still lower than the 4.8 per cent prevalence rate amongst the sample of white participants. An additional finding which is of particular importance to this study, was that second-generation immigrants (women who had migrated at age <11 or were UK born) had higher prevalence rates than women who migrated to Britain at the age of 11 years or over.

Studies report minority ethnic groups within the UK as having high rates of eating disorders. Bulimia nervosa is noted as being common amongst Asians and Egyptians in the UK (Nasser, 1986; Munford & Whitehouse, 1988). McCourt and Waller (1996) state that Asian females coming from the most traditional homes, which they refer to as being families who are the least integrated into British society, have a higher prevalence of eating disturbances than those from less traditional families. The authors state that this finding is due to these women experiencing a greater degree of culture conflict.

Epidemiological studies need to be viewed with some caution, as they are based on a "treated" population which may not provide "true" prevalence rates. For example, they may not include populations who suffer from mental health problems, but have no access to treatment or who choose not to seek treatment (Hussain & Cochrane, 2004). Thus the "true" prevalence rate of mental health difficulties amongst South Asian women in Britain is difficult to ascertain. Furthermore, the majority of these studies have grouped South Asian women together into one homogenous group. Hence these studies disregard demographic variability due to religious orientation, region of origin, cultural factors etc. within subgroups. There is a danger in generalising the findings of these epidemiological studies across subgroups, for it may produce unreliable information regarding the mental health status of South Asian women.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, a growing amount of literature has utilised qualitative methods in order to explore the experiences of mental health amongst South Asian women (i.e., Hicks & Bhugra, 2003; Burr & Chapman, 2004). In exploring personal constructions of mental health, attempts are being made to convey the individual experiences of South Asian women. Hicks and Bhugra's study (2003) involved collecting data from focus group discussions in order to identify participants' perceptions regarding causal factors of suicide. A thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected. The results identified three possible causal factors for suicidal behaviour; being trapped in an unhappy family situation, depression, and marital violence.

Adding to the qualitative literature on South Asian women, Malik (2000) conducted 120 interviews with indigenous and UK-born Pakistanis aged between 30 and 65 years. The author adopts a social constructionist approach and reports the causes of distress conveyed by the female participants to be external factors such as relationships and situations. Symptoms of distress were expressed in terms of "others" outside of themselves and social roles, as opposed to internalised states.

Furthermore, Burr and Chapman (2004) carried out a study in order to conceptualise experiences of depression amongst women from South Asian communities. The background to this study is described as being the low recorded prevalence rates of "treated" depression amongst South Asian women; as well as the assumption that these women "somatise" emotional distress due to being unable to articulate their difficulties in psychological terms. Qualitative data was collected from both focus groups and ten interviews with women from the South Asian community who had experienced feelings of depression. A discursive approach revealed that the women were able to clearly articulate their emotional and physical "symptoms", and the relationship between them. This finding disproved previous claims in the literature of South Asian women being unable to articulate their feelings of distress. Furthermore, the data revealed a discourse of "embodied subjectivity". Thus the women revealed their depressive feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness as being "embodied". In the words of the authors, "embodied" is being "grounded in the materiality of the body which is also immersed in subjective experiences and in the social context of women's lives" (Burr & Chapman, 2004, p.433).

Thus the review of the literature revealed that early epidemiological studies report lower prevalence rates of psychological disturbance amongst South Asian women compared with the dominant culture (i.e., Cochrane & Stopes-Roe, 1977, 1981). However, this review also highlights a number of studies, conducted from the 1980s to the present day, which indicate that South Asian women do indeed suffer from mental health difficulties. Recently, qualitative researchers have turned their attention towards exploring the individual narratives and discourses of South Asian women in relation to their constructions of mental health. These studies report the discourses of South Asian women as conveying cultural dynamics that do not necessarily depict the dominant culture's constructions of mental health.

1.6 The gap in the literature

As indicated above, the literature search revealed that South Asian women living within the UK suffer from mental health conditions similar to those of the dominant culture. However, the studies suggest South Asian women are exposed to a set of pressures which are unique to their cultural orientation. Thus, this indicates that the dominant Western perspective of mental health does not adequately address the needs of these women. Since this group of women is part of a significant population within the UK, it is important that their psychological needs are adequately taken into consideration within the literature.

The quantitative and qualitative research studies have made some valuable contributions in furthering understanding of this group. However, these contributions have mainly been of a quantitative nature and are insufficient compared with the breadth of research that is conducted upon the dominant culture. Thus there is a need to carry out further research upon this group, especially in the form of qualitative research. Further qualitative research will hopefully add to the important findings of past qualitative studies, which have striven to explore the dynamics between culture and mental health through an exploration of individual narratives and discourses.

Furthermore, Chantler et al. (2001) state that South Asian women are not given "...adequate priority in service planning or provision of...services" (p.25). Thus further research is needed in order to continue to address this imbalance in both academia and clinical practice. This study aims to address this imbalance, within the literature, by conducting research on the specific needs of South Asian women. Consequently, it is hoped that this study will aid counselling psychologists and other practitioners alike in adapting dominant Western models of clinical intervention in order to work effectively with this group. Additionally, these models of clinical intervention will need to take all aspects of the women's subjective experiences into consideration.

The majority of the recent literature on South Asian women either groups together the experiences of first- and second-generation women or neglects the experiences of second-generation women altogether. For the purposes of this study, the term "first generation" will refer to those women who were born abroad and migrated to the UK.

The term "second generation" will refer to those women who were born in the UK but have familial origins in the Indian subcontinent, e.g. their parents were born in India. It is acknowledged that the needs of first-generation women are important; however, the needs of second-generation women need to be attended to equally within the literature. It is hypothesised that second-generation women may experience different pressures from first-generation women. The former may feel greater connections towards the dominant British culture due to being born, raised and educated within this culture. However, these connections need to be managed alongside living within a South Asian family which promotes the values and beliefs of the culture of origin. Thus this study attempts to address this gap in the literature by solely focussing upon the discourses of second-generation women.

As mentioned in sections 1.2 and 1.3, Prathiknati (1997) asserts that the behaviours and actions of South Asian women affect and reflect the family's wellbeing and standing within the community. These expected behaviours reflect the core beliefs and values of South Asian culture (Dasgupta, 1986). Thus, following on from this, it is presumed that there are behaviours and actions the women could partake in that jeopardise or call into question the family's wellbeing and standing in the community. Thus, the women may find themselves pursuing behaviours and activities which reflect their own goals/interests but are in conflict with the family's expectations. Disclosing these behaviours to the family and/or community, whether by choice or accident, may be a difficult process and have detrimental consequences. Subsequently, disclosure processes may become a cause of distress and affect the psychological wellbeing of these women. Within the literature on practices of disclosure (refer to section 1.6.1), the term *self*-disclosure has predominately been used. However, for the purposes of this study the term disclosure will be used as opposed to *self*-disclosure. It is felt the term disclosure better encompasses the entirety of this activity as practised by the women, their families and communities, and conveyed within the women's discourses.

The literature on South Asian women does not adequately address disclosure practices within family and community settings, and the subsequent distress and disturbances that may ensue. If self-disclosure is mentioned in the literature, it has been in the context of particular topics such as abuse or domestic violence (Yoshioka, 2003;

Reavey et al., 2006). Here the focus is not upon disclosure practices but the unique topics of concern. Self-disclosure of these unique topics may be mentioned as part of an experience of abuse or domestic violence, but there is no in-depth analysis regarding general disclosure practices. Given the importance placed upon family and community, I feel disclosure practices within these networks are an important area that needs to be given further attention within the literature. In this way, this study aims to address this gap in the literature. Also, it aims to add to the understanding of second-generation South Asian women's experiences of living within a family and community.

1.7 The psychology of women

The literature comprising the psychology of women has yielded two seminal texts. These texts highlight the importance of studying the discourses of women within a psychological framework, and the potential power relations and factors of domination and subordination which may be constructed within these discourses.

1.7.1 The voice of women

This study attempts to convey the discourses of a group of women. It is anticipated that the women's discourses of disclosure processes will be distinct from a set of discourses produced by a group of men. Gilligan (1982) talks of a distinction between the voices of men and women in their portrayal of moral problems and their description of relationships between self and other. She also describes the voice of women as being distinct from the traditional psychological descriptions of identity and moral development, much of which has been formulated utilising the voice of men. This highlights the difficulties in interpreting women's development using existing psychological models of human growth. This disparity between women's experiences and psychological theory is a limitation within the literature. Thus there is a need for research to explore the voice of women in order to add to existing psychological theory, and hence to adequately portray the entirety of the human condition.

1.7.2 Difference, inequality, and positions of dominance and subordination

Miller (1978) discusses the relationship between difference and inequality in relation to men and women. She asserts that although difference can bring about the

enhancement and engagement of both parties involved, there are times when it can also lead to deterioration, terror and violence for individuals and entire groups of people. The latter is found in situations of inequality where individuals or entire groups become either "dominates" or "subordinates". Within her text, Miller (1978) asserts that women have historically been defined as subordinates whilst men, contrastingly, have been defined as dominates. Within these positions of subordination, women have been assigned to passive, permissive, docile and secondary roles. Additionally, it is the dominants who usually identify one or more "acceptable" roles for the subordinates.

Miller (1978) describes the actions and words of the dominant group as being destructive of the subordinates. Moreover, Miller (1978) states that the dominant group's power extends to influencing a culture's overall philosophy, morality, social theory and science. Consequently, this implies that the women are powerless within this culture that is governed and created by men. Miller (1978) asserts that mutually enhancing interaction is not possible where difference creates inequality and positions of dominance and subordination. Instead, she predicts that conflict is inevitable within such cultures.

Nevertheless, Miller (1978) asserts that despite the positions in which subordinate groups have historically been placed, they do tend to progress towards greater freedom of expression and action, however, this development varies substantially between individuals and circumstances. For example, some women have pursued greater personal development and freedoms, although this has varied greatly both within and between cultures. Miller (1978) states that subordinates progressing towards greater freedom of expression and action will need to expose the inequalities and question their very existence; consequently bringing the subliminal conflict into the open. The roles that need to be taken on in order to accomplish these tasks are at polar opposites to the roles historically assigned to women; this makes the process all the more difficult for these individuals.

1.8 The term Disclosure

The original research idea focussed upon the disclosure of sexual violence (refer to Section A; Preface). Thus the aim was to explore the disclosure of a very specific and

unique topic area. As discussed above, due to the potent nature of this topic area, this may have resulted in the emphasis being placed upon sexual assault as opposed to disclosure practices. Opening up the research topic and making it inclusive of a variety of disclosures, as opposed to a disclosure of one specific kind, changes how the term "disclosure" is interpreted. The disclosure of sexual assault conceptualises "disclosure" as being a potentially threatening, painful and emotive experience. In the context of this present study, however, "disclosure" does not necessarily carry the same connotations. The women will be asked to convey their experiences of disclosure practices in general within their families and communities. In this way they are free to introduce their disclosure of an array of topic areas. Thus the term disclosure can include the revealing of a range of information regarding oneself.

1.8.1 Self-disclosure literature

Again, as it is beyond the remit of this study, this is not an exhaustive account of the literature on self-disclosure. However, it is a brief overview of the literature that is of relevance to this study. Self-disclosure refers to the process of letting oneself be known to others. Derlega and Grzelak (1979) define the process of self-disclosure as including "any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future" (p.152). Decisions regarding self-disclosure are part of the daily activity of most individuals. Berg and Derlega (1987) state the decision to disclose one's thoughts, feelings and past experiences, and the level of intimacy of each disclosure is negotiated by the individual on a daily basis. The disclosure decisions that an individual makes will influence their life with regards to the type of relationships they have with others, how they are perceived by others, and the level of self-awareness and knowledge they possess. Self-disclosure has been an area of interest amongst specialists across disciplines, including clinical and counselling psychologists, social psychologists and communication researchers.

The literature on self-disclosure explores two main areas. It explores the role of self-disclosure in promoting wellbeing and reducing distress. Secondly, it explores factors that promote an individual's self-disclosure and also determine the degree to which the individual benefits from such acts. The research indicates that one's ability to reveal feelings and thoughts to another is a basic skill for developing close relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berscheid & Walster; 1978). Furthermore Berg

and Derlega (1987) state that self-disclosure facilitates caring relationships, where mutual understanding exists. Sprecher and Hendrick (2004) report self-disclosure to facilitate satisfaction, love and commitment in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, Stokes (1987) reveals that a lack of self-disclosure results in dissatisfaction with one's social networks and feelings of loneliness.

Pennebaker (1997, 2004) states that the benefits of self-disclosure are in contrast to the impact of emotional inhibition. Emotional inhibition is reported to interfere with cognitive integration and if experienced for an extended and prolonged period of time it can place a heavy burden on both the body and mind. In contrast structured self-disclosure is reported to have positive effects on well-being and health. This is partly because self-disclosure processes bring about insight and cognitive integration of experiences (Pennebaker, 1997, 2004). However, these benefits of disclosure and the negativity associated with keeping secrets are notions specific to a Western context (Caughlin et al., 2005).

Nevertheless there is a wealth of experimental work, spanning three decades and totalling 146 studies, reporting further benefits of self-disclosure (Frattaroli, 2006). Frattaroli (2006) carried out a meta-analysis on 146 randomised studies of experimental disclosures. The results of random effects analyses proved that experimental disclosure is effective. The meta-analysis found self-disclosure to be beneficial for an individual's psychological health, physical health and overall functioning. More specifically, self-disclosure has been recorded to prevent individuals from experiencing intrusive thoughts (Lepore et al., 2000, 2004) and it can also facilitate insight (Kelly, 1999). Stanton et al. (2002) carried out a research study which revealed how self-disclosure practices can aid physical health conditions. Within their research medical patients suffering from breast cancer were assigned to an experimental disclosure group. The findings indicate a reduction in cancer-related doctor visits.

Research conducted upon individual differences regarding ability or willingness to self-disclose spans over thirty years. Berg and Derlega (1987) state self-disclosure to be a multidimensional concept which is influenced by a number of facets. For example, Archer (1979) argues that the ability or willingness to self-disclose is

dependent upon personality traits. Solano et al. (1982) declare that the practice of self-disclosure is dependent upon behaviours in interpersonal situations. Furthermore, Cozby (1972) states that individual variations in self-disclosure depend upon the intimacy level between the individuals involved and the content of disclosed information.

Although there are discrepancies with regard to the factors that predict self-disclosure, the literature research clearly reports it as being a very important practice. It promotes healthy and close relationships between people as well as having an array of additional benefits. One would envision a healthy family setting as having a sufficient amount of self-disclosure. The literature review revealed a few studies that have been conducted on self-disclosure practices between family members. However, the majority of these studies concentrate upon the self-disclosure practices of married, heterosexual couples. Antill and Cotton (1987) measured four aspects of self-disclosure practices amongst 108 married couples. The study's focus was upon correlates of self-disclosure levels. Four different but related aspects of self-disclosure were measured (positive, negative, anger and sex). The results revealed that husbands and wives disclose a similar amount of information, and disclosure levels decrease with factors such as age, length of marriage, and particularly with the number of children. Furthermore, marital happiness correlated positively with all aspects of one of the spouse's disclosure levels. Additionally, Schumn et al. (1986) report that both low quality and low quantity disclosures, especially for wives, are detrimental for marital satisfaction.

Findings regarding the differences between self-disclosure practices across the genders have yielded conflicting results. A meta-analysis carried out by Smyth (1998) suggests that experimental disclosure has a positive and significant effect for both males and females, however, this positive effect occurred more frequently amongst male participants than female. Magai et al. (2004) suggest that men may benefit more from emotionally-based self-disclosures as, unlike women, they less frequently partake in such activities (Consedine et al., 2007). Contrastingly, these differences were not apparent in the more recent meta-analysis carried out by Frattaroli (2006).

There has been little research conducted with regard to the effects of cultural differences on self-disclosure practices. The majority of studies have either neglected to mention the ethnicity of the participants or have recruited a predominantly Caucasian sample (Consedine et al., 2004). Magai et al. (2004) state that other ethnic groups have been reported to be either more or less emotionally expressive than Caucasians; thus, this is sufficient grounds to suggest that self-disclosure research carried out on Caucasians may not generalise to other ethnic groups. Additionally, one of the few studies exploring disclosure practices amongst Caucasians and Asians, carried out by Rivkin et al. (2006), found significant differences in symptom reduction. Having made a disclosure, Asians were more likely to experience a reduction in shame and physical symptoms than Caucasians. This study indicates the importance of self-disclosure practices in reducing pathology amongst Asian populations.

Consedine et al. (2007) explored the impact of ethnic, gender and socioeconomic factors upon self-disclosure rates. The authors measured self-disclosure in 203 young adults. There were equal numbers of males and females and half of the sample was African-American. The results indicated that once income was controlled, disclosure was equal amongst African-American participants and non-African-American participants. However, within the domain of interpersonal disclosures, young men and African Americans reported disclosing less regarding intimate relationships. Following this result the authors suggest that low income may be important in predicting low disclosure rates.

Thus the literature reviewed in this section draws upon some factors that may affect self-disclosure practices. Additionally, the important psychological and physical benefits of partaking in disclosure practices have been highlighted. Thus it is an important topic that needs exploring amongst South Asian women (refer to section 1.5). In order to add to the current research on self-disclosure, this study investigates South Asian cultural influences and additional, important features of subjectivities (i.e., the "intersectionalities" of gender and cultural practices; refer to chapter 4, section 4.2.3) which may affect disclosure practices within the family and community.

1.8.2 Changing societal attitudes towards disclosure practices

Disclosure practices are an important area that needs to be adequately addressed within the literature due to the changing societal attitudes towards these practices in general. I believe now more than ever a self-disclosure culture is being accepted and promoted within society. As communities progress and become more tolerant of diversity and public awareness increases of issues such as sexual abuse, domestic violence etc., individuals are encouraged to disclose more about themselves. Furthermore, practices which involve disclosure processes, such as psychological therapies, are being accepted as credible means of aiding people with their difficulties. Changing societal attitudes can also be linked to the increased use of blogs and personal websites on the internet, where individuals can disclose personal information that can be viewed by mass audiences. Consequently these changes lead to individuals disclosing more about themselves and disclosure in general becoming an accepted practice in today's society.

1.9 Summary of the study's objectives

The main objective of this study was to analyse the discourses of second-generation women, with regard to their processes of disclosure within their families and communities in order:

- to identify and address the gaps within the literature;
- to increase understanding regarding the disclosure processes of second-generation South Asian women, and the specific factors contributing to the experiences they reveal;
- to aid counselling psychologists and other practitioners in better understanding the specific needs of this client group; and
- to encourage services to adapt/modify existing Western models of clinical practice in order to work effectively with this client group.

1.10 Reflexivity

Willig (2001) refers to two types of reflexivity; personal and epistemological. She defines personal reflexivity as reflecting upon how the researcher's values, beliefs, interests, political orientations and social identities have impacted the research process. She also highlights that this involves reflecting upon how the research

process has impacted and changed the researcher. Epistemological reflexivity involves reflecting upon how factors such as the research design and method of analysis have shaped the data and findings.

Working within a social constructionist framework, I am very much aware that I am constructing this research and shaping the findings through the language I use. Hence it is critical for me to place importance upon personal and epistemological reflexivity throughout the stages of research design, data collection, analysis and the actual write-up. I shall attend to reflexivity, within this research, by writing in the first person and also embedding reflections throughout the thesis. Through the research process I kept a research diary in which I recorded my thoughts regarding issues of personal and epistemological reflexivity. These diary entries have formed the basis of the reflections included within this thesis. Willig (2001) argues that the continual process of reflexivity, where the researcher monitors his or her role within the research process, promotes validity.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

The main objective of the present study was to explore the talk of second-generation South Asian women, with regard to their experiences of disclosure within their families and communities. Due to the exploratory nature of the research objectives (refer to section 1.7), a qualitative approach utilising semi-structured interviews was deemed the most appropriate (McLeod, 2003). Having attended to some of the debates within social constructionist psychology, it was decided this research study would adopt a social constructionist epistemology informed by a critical realist perspective. Thus this study is based on the premise that discourse constructs social realities, however, it also acknowledges that these constructions are dependent upon the potentialities and limitations existing within the material world (Willig, 1999). Furthermore, in adopting a critical realist perspective, this study can advocate a process of change in order to improve the social realities of South Asian women (Parker, 1992; Willig, 1999). It was appropriate to choose a method of discourse analysis to explore the women's talk due to the study's focus on the constructive nature of language and also its epistemological commitments. The women's discourse was analysed using the six steps of discourse analysis set out by Willig (2001).

A discourse analysis research method was chosen as it is compatible with the study's focus on the women's talk and also in its epistemological commitments. Furthermore, other qualitative approaches (i.e., grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis) were rejected as possible methods for they were incompatible with the ethos and/or the epistemological commitments of this study.

2.2 Compatibility of qualitative methodology to counselling psychology

McLeod (2003) argues that qualitative research is in unison with the values of counselling psychology. The advantages of conducting qualitative research include its ability to attend to the complexity of the phenomenon being researched; its ability to facilitate the active engagement of participants; and its primary aim of advancing understanding. Thus these advantages, being in unison with my professional background, make it appropriate for me to carry out research in the qualitative paradigm.

2.3 Social constructionist psychology

In this section, I will illustrate some of the main themes and complex debates occurring within social constructionist psychology. In the process, I hope to demonstrate how they have contributed towards my choice of epistemology and method of analysis.

2.3.1 Rationale for adopting a social constructivist approach

According to Willig (2001), social constructionism asserts that human experience is mediated historically, culturally and through language. Research conducted from a social constructionist standpoint aims to identify the various ways of constructing social reality that are accessible in a particular culture. Additionally, it aims to explore the conditions of using these constructions and to uncover the possible implications for human experience and social practice. With regards to my research, I was interested in exploring the ways in which South Asian women utilised language in order to construct their experiences of disclosure within the family and community. It was assumed that their cultural orientation would impact upon the construction of their talk. Hence a social constructionist approach seemed appropriate for my research area.

2.3.2 The divided camps within social constructionism

As stated above, social constructionists believe that realities are the products of social processes. However, Nightingale and Cromby (1999) have identified disagreement amongst social constructionists regarding the extent to which this argument can be applied. On one side of the camp are the constructionists (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards et al., 1995) who believe talk of a reality consists purely of the world we discursively construct. In essence a reality outside of "text" does not exist. These social constructionists identify with a relativist tradition. In contrast, constructionists such as Parker (1992) argue that there is a material world manifested in structures which are independent of what we may think or say about them. Parker (1992) recognises that knowledge of the world is constructed through language (as do the relativists). However, he states there are underlying structures and mechanisms which produce experiences, versions of which are created through language. Hence Parker advocates a critical realist position.

One of the strongest critiques of an ontological reality is illustrated by Edwards Ashmore and Potter (1995) in their seminal paper "Death and Furniture". A realist argument that is vehemently challenged within this paper is the existence of an extra-discursive reality. Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) demonstrate how the realist notion of the extra-discursive can actually be deconstructed discursively. This is conveyed by illustrating that even the physical act of hitting a table can be represented and interpreted by a semiotic system or by human perception.

In response to the above argument, Willig et al. (2007) state that it cannot be denied that realities can usefully be analysed by deconstructing them in the form of text. However, further insights can be acquired by adopting a critical realist perspective. Critical realists assert that there is a relationship between material and social structures that is not tangible and hence is not directly available to the researcher. These structures are only detectable from the experiences they produce. Thus, as stated by Willig et al. (2007), acknowledging deep structures is an attempt to understand the material constraints present within reality. Thus knowledge of "reality" is always limited; however, this is not the same as the relativist argument which denies the existence of a "reality".

2.3.3 A critical realist perspective

As stated in section 2.1, critical realists believe that the construction of social realities is dependent upon the potentialities and limitations existing within the material world (Willig, 1999). Within social constructionist psychology, critical realism has disputed the notion that discourse is the focal component of analysis. For the critical realist, material practices cannot be deconstructed discursively; neither is it believed that they hold no meaning without a discursive interpretation. The critical realist will argue that material practices possess an ontological status that is independent of but in association with discursive practices. Furthermore, material practices are understood as facilitating but not producing the discourses that occur within these material conditions. This is due to the understanding that social conditions offer an array of potentialities which are then taken up by an individual if they feel it is appropriate.

2.3.4 Rationale for adopting a social constructionist epistemology informed by a critical realist perspective

For theoretical and ethical reasons, as well as my own personal philosophies regarding research, I adopted a social constructionist epistemology informed by a critical realist perspective. Willig (1999) asserts that the belief held by social constructionist research regarding the construction of social realities is in contrast to traditional sciences. Social constructionist research challenges positivist reductionist science which is sometimes accused of producing rather than uncovering evidence in support of explanatory categories. Willig (1999) argues that positivist research can be seen to divide, discipline and oppress people, and she uses positivist constructs such as "personality", and "mental illness" to illustrate this point. Following this line of argument, social constructionist research can be viewed as empowering, as it can challenge these mainstream positivist ideas and the research that it generates.

However, by and large, constructionist ideas are used to deconstruct positivist categories but fail to put alternatives in place. Since relativists claim that all realties can be deconstructed discursively, this implies that all "readings" are equally valid and no one "reading" can be favoured over another. Consequently, the relativists are accused of not being able to take a moral or political position in order to instigate change. Instead, what is provided by this division of social constructionist work is a philosophical or methodological argument (Willig et al., 2007). Many practitioners of discourse analysis recognise these problems inherent within adopting a relativist position (Burman, 1990, 1991; Burr, 1996). Burman (1991) acknowledges that, working within these approaches, it is difficult to position oneself in any explicit political camp.

In contrast, the writings of Parker (1992) and Willig (1999) suggest a process of change and a means to improve social realities can be facilitated through adopting a critical realist approach. This perspective formed a prime justification in adopting a critical realist perspective within this research. In the context of this research, adopting a critical realist perspective will allow this study to advocate the implementation of relevant processes in order to improve the social realities experienced by South Asian women. As a scientist-practitioner, the ethically-minded counselling psychologist has a social responsibility to conduct research that is not

confined to the realms of philosophical debate. The counselling psychologist's participation is needed in research which strives to change social processes and institutional structures that affect clients negatively, and aims to improve social realities.

Furthermore, critical realists (i.e., Parker, 1992; Willig et al., 2007) claim that taking material practices, which impact upon a participant's talk of their experiences, into account is an ethical responsibility on the part of the researcher. Analysing participants' talk in ignorance of their material, physical existence does not always accurately portray, or do justice to their lived experiences. A social constructionist epistemology informed by a critical realist perspective will allow me to acknowledge my participants' material, physical worlds.

2.4 Overview of discourse analysis

Willig (2001) states that there are two main versions of discourse analysis; Discursive Psychology and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. These two versions are similar in terms of their acknowledgement of the part language plays in the construction of social reality, and therefore also in their critique of cognitivism. However, there are also important differences between the two approaches which include varying intellectual origins. Discursive Psychology places an emphasis upon discourse practices, and has its origins in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Additionally, the emphasis is upon how individuals use discursive resources, available within language, for the purposes of achieving interpersonal objectives within social interactions. In contrast, the origins of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis can be found in the work of Michel Foucault and post-structuralist writings on the role of language in the make-up of social and psychological life. Foucauldian Analysis aims to explore the nature of objects and subjects constructed through discourses, and the implications they hold for the lived experiences of individuals.

A contentious issue within discourse analysis is whether or not a definite conceptual divide should be made between these two strands of analysis. Parker (1997) offers detailed commentaries upon the distinction between these two approaches. He argues for this distinction as the two approaches are born out of differing theoretical and disciplinary traditions. However, there are others, such as Wetherell (1998), who

endorse an amalgamation of these two approaches. Wetherell (1998) argues that it is counterproductive to promote such a definite divide between the two versions and prefers a more "eclectic approach" (p.405).

As the main aim was to explore the talk of second-generation women, the version of discourse analysis that was favoured in this study (refer to Willig 2001) has its origins in the work of Foucault (1971). It is hoped that the use of this approach will illustrate how institutions, practices and the women's subjective experiences can be understood through a set of discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 1994). I felt combining the approaches, within the practical constraints of this study, would have resulted in an analysis that only superficially addressed the concerns of these two approaches. In line with Parker's (1997) claims and in order to provide a detailed and comprehensive account of the women's varying discourses, the two forms of discourse analysis were not combined.

2.4.1 Rationale for favouring discourse analysis

A research method using discourse analysis was chosen, as it is compatible with the study's focus on the women's talk and also in its epistemological commitments. Furthermore, other qualitative approaches (i.e., grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis) were rejected as possible methods, because they were incompatible with the ethos and/or the epistemological commitments of this study. Due to my own cultural identity, and "insider" perspective regarding the women's discourses (refer to chapter 3, section 3.9), reflexivity is a very important element of this study. Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that the primary aim of grounded theory is to develop new theories, and this aligns the approach closely with inductivist positivism. In aligning itself closely with the positivist paradigm, grounded theory has been accused of not paying adequate attention to factors of reflexivity. Due to not recognising the role of the researcher in constructing the research, inductivist grounded theory is an inappropriate method of analysis for this study.

In order to address this criticism of grounded theory, researchers are recommended to adopt a social constructionist epistemology that pays attention to details of reflexivity (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). Willig (2001) states that social constructionist versions of grounded theory are a new development. She asserts that these studies do

acknowledge the epistemological limitations of an inductivist grounded theory approach, however, it is questionable whether a mere acknowledgment of the researcher's role within the research process is sufficient grounds to adopt a social constructionist epistemology. Willig (2001) suggests that perhaps a social constructionist version of grounded theory would need to address the role of language in the construction of categories as well as the role of the researcher. Consequently, this requires an engagement of discourse, and may result in the analysis resembling a form of discourse analysis as opposed to grounded theory. Due to the questionable nature of a social constructionist version of grounded theory, a method of discourse analysis was chosen as the preferred approach for this study.

In a similar vein, interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) was also deemed an inappropriate method of analysis, as it fails to address the epistemological standpoint of this study, i.e., the constructive nature of language. IPA's main goal is to capture an individual's experience of their world. Thus this approach views language as representing experience (Smith et al., 1999). However, I would argue, as do social constructionists (Parker, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), that language constructs social realities as opposed to describing experiences. The language a participant uses to convey a particular event is one possible constructed version of an experience. The same experience can be constructed in many different ways, depending upon the language that is used. Thus, in this way, what is gained from a participant's transcript is not an account of the experience, but the discourses they choose in order to construct an experience within a particular context.

2.4.2 Conducting the discourse analysis

The chosen research method, discourse analysis, does not follow a "recipe book" approach. The emphasis is not placed upon step-by-step procedures, but what is required is a sound reading and interpretation of the data (Gill, 2003). Some researchers have attempted to provide systematic guides on carrying out discourse analysis. Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a set of twenty guidelines. These twenty steps guide the analyst from the initial selection of a text for analysis, through a systematic procedure which aids to identify the subjects and objects constructed within the text, to an exploration of the manner in which the discourses emerging from the text create relations of power.

Parker (1992) highlights seven criteria for identifying discourse as well as three auxiliary criteria concerned with institutions, power and ideology. Parker's (1992) steps take the analyst through stages which include: realising texts are the focus of study; identifying the objects within the text, and the manner in which they are constructed; specifying the types of person that are talked of within the discourse; speculating upon what these persons can and cannot say within the discourse; illustrating systems of meaning the discourse is presenting; and referring to other texts in order to elaborate upon the discourses under analysis. Parker's (1992) steps and auxiliary criteria aid the researcher to distinguish the relationship between discourses, their historical location, and their political and social effects.

Willig (2001) sets out six stages to carry out the analysis of discourse. These stages enable the researcher to identify some of the discursive resources used in a text, the subject positions they contain, and an exploration of their implications for subjectivity and practice. For the purposes of this study, these stages were used as a guide to analyse the women's discourse. Willig (2001) states that these six stages provide "a way into Foucauldian Discourse Analysis" (p.118). I was concerned that, as a novice to discourse analysis, if I were to use either Potter and Wetherell's (1987) or Parker's (1992) guides, I would lose sight of the reading and interpretation of the text, and end up giving precedence to the numerous stages involved. Willig's (2001) stages were preferred as it was felt this guide would provide my analysis with some structure, but then also retain the ethos of discourse analysis not being a prescribed methodology. Willig's (2001) six stages, which structured the analysis of this study (refer to chapter 3) are discussed below:

Stage 1: Discursive constructions

The first stage of analysis identified the different ways in which discursive objects were constructed within the text. The discursive objects that are analysed depend upon the research question. Since I was interested in how unmarried second-generation South Asian women talk about the process of disclosure within their families and communities, "the family" and "the community" were chosen as the discursive objects.

Stage 2: Emerging discourses

The second stage of analysis aimed to locate the various discursive constructions of "the family" and "the community" within wider discourses.

Stage 3: Action orientation

The third stage of analysis involved the exploration of the discursive contexts within which the different constructions of "the family" and "the community" were being deployed. The purpose of this section was to illustrate the motivations and gains behind constructing "the family" and "the community" in a particular way and at certain points within the text.

Stage 4: Positionings

Having identified the various constructions of "the family" and "the community" and having located them within wider discourses, this stage explored the subject positions they offered. Thus this stage attempted to illustrate how the women's discourses constructed subjects which, subsequently, made available positions that they could take up as well as place others (i.e., the family and community) within.

Stage 5: Practice

The fifth stage of analysis attempted to illustrate the relationship between discourse and practice. It involved an examination of the ways in which the discursive constructions of "the family" and "the community" and the subject positions contained within them (as revealed from stage 4) opened up or closed down opportunities for action.

Stage 6: Subjectivity

The last stage was the most speculative stage of the analysis. It attempted to explore the consequences of taking up various positions on the women's subjective experiences. The rationale behind this stage was that the women's discourses made available certain ways of "seeing" and "being" in the world, constructing both a social and psychological reality.

Gill (1995) acknowledges how analysts construct meaningful accounts of texts, drawing upon their own knowledge via linguistic resources and ideological frameworks. I agree with this assertion and feel my similar cultural orientation has allowed me an "inside" knowledge and understanding of the text which has made the analysis richer. However, on the other hand, the similarities I share with my participants also meant I brought certain preconceptions and assumptions to the

analysis of the discourse. Hence there was a risk that I would lose or dismiss certain accounts unknowingly (refer to chapter 3, section 3.9). In order to manage these biases, I discussed my accounts of the emerging discourses with my supervisor who is of a Caucasian background.

2.5. Data collection

2.5.1 Sample size

Initially, it was anticipated that the sample would contain five participants. Four of the participants were unmarried South Asian women, and the fifth participant was a married South Asian woman. However, having conducted the first four interviews, it was felt the data collected was ample and rich enough in order to carry out a comprehensive analysis. An additional interview would not allow the discourses to be conveyed in the depth which is deemed appropriate for a discourse analysis study. Wood and Kroger (2000) state that when using discourse analysis, as the aim is not generalisation of results beyond the sample, the endpoint of data collection is determined at the researcher's discretion. When the researcher feels he or she has sufficient data to warrant the arguments they are proposing, this is when they may claim to have reached the endpoint.

As the aim of the analysis was to produce a rich account of discourses, as opposed to transferable results, depth of analysis was favoured over quantity of interviews. Potter and Wetherell (1987) state that, since the focus in discourse analysis is on language use rather than language users, the units of analysis are texts or parts of texts as opposed to participants. The critical issue is the size of the sample of discourse as opposed to the number of participants. In line with Potter and Wetherell's (1987) comments, since each interview was at least one hour long, containing approximately 7000 words, four participants was viewed as an adequate sample size. Furthermore, the fifth interview revealed discourses that occurred within a different context due to the participant's married status. I felt it was beyond the remit of this study to analyse satisfactorily the discourses of the first four interviews as well as the fifth interview. The fifth interview conveyed discourses that perhaps were better suited to a separate study which explored the discourses of married women. Thus for this additional reason, I felt it appropriate to omit the fifth interview.

2.5.2 Sample inclusion criteria

Unmarried second-generation South Asian women, born in the UK, with parental roots in the Indian subcontinent (i.e., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan) was the criterion that guided the recruitment process. I appreciate that in stating this is a study conducted upon *South Asian* women, I may be criticised for grouping these women into one homogeneous group. However, the motivation behind recruiting in this manner, as opposed to concentrating upon a particular subgroup (i.e., women with Pakistani origins), was actually to acknowledge the heterogenous nature of these women. It was hoped this study would attract women from a variety of South Asian backgrounds, and hence be able to illustrate the diversity amongst this group. Also in conducting a qualitative discourse analysis, I would be able to consider each woman's set of discourses individually. This would allow me to attend to their individual differences in culture, religion, region of origin etc. (if indeed they did arise) as well as the commonalities between their constructions. In attending to features of difference and commonality between the discourses, appropriate suggestions can be made in order to improve the social realities of these women.

I anticipated the similarities I share with my participants could be seen as a positive or negative factor by them. On the one hand, I predicted that they may feel I could relate to them and understand some of the issues that they were discussing. However, on the other hand, I also anticipated that my cultural orientation may be seen as a hindrance. For example, they may have received a negative reaction from other Asian people/women and feared I held the same judgements/views. Having asked each of my participants, at the end of the interview, how the experience of being interviewed by a South Asian woman felt for them, they all replied that it did not hinder them from disclosing. In fact, two participants stated that my obvious similarity encouraged them to disclose more than they had expected. This was due to them feeling that I could empathise with the material they were bringing, and as a result would not judge their actions regarding particular incidents.

2.5.3 Recruitment of participants

Four of the participants were known to me either from a personal or professional setting. One of the participants was not known to me and recruited via a mutual

contact. Out of the four participants who were known to me, three were known professionally and one, I had some social contact with. I would like to clarify that although these participants were known to me, the contact I had with them prior to the interviews was minimal. Thus I had no prior knowledge of most, if not all, of the issues raised within the interviews. This was important as any prior knowledge may have influenced my interpretation of the women's discourses. If I did share close relationships with the participants, perhaps the discourses emerging would have been due to my prior knowledge of them as opposed to close readings of the text. This would have affected the credibility of my analysis and the subsequent conclusions and recommendations I made.

Initial contact differed slightly according to whether or not I knew the participant in another context. Participants known to me were initially approached via email, the purpose and nature of the study was outlined, and any questions were answered via an email exchange. With these participants, I was aware that they may feel obliged to participate because of our personal or professional relationship. In order to avoid this, I made it explicit in the initial contact that they need not feel obliged to give their consent, and if they decided not to take part no explanation would be required. It was also stressed that if I was to see them again, in a personal or professional setting, their participation, and the content of the interview would not be discussed unless they chose to start a conversation about these issues. Refer to appendix 2 (pp. 204-205) for a template of the recruitment message email sent out to participants.

The one participant who was not known by me was initially contacted via a mutual contact. She was provided with a brief outline of the study (which I provided to the mutual contact) and my contact details. The participant contacted me shortly after, and I answered any further questions she had.

2.5.4 Characteristics of sample

The participants were asked to answer some background questions before the commencement of the interview (refer to appendix 3). These questions were asked as I thought they may help the reader place the women's talk in context with each of their individual profiles. The women's responses reveal that they are in the age range of 24–26, and all have acquired at least A-level qualifications. Furthermore, they all

rate their families as placing a greater emphasis upon religion than they do. Also, they all rate themselves as regarding their culture as being of greater importance to them than their religious orientation. Another interesting aspect of the women's responses is that they all define their culture as being a combination of a South Asian culture (i.e. "Persian/Asian", "Bangladeshi") as well as a British and/or English culture. Appendix 3 lists each woman's responses to the questions asked. The reader may want to refer back to this information whilst reading the sections on analysis (chapter three) and the conclusions and recommendations (chapter four).

2.5.5 Use of semi-structured interviews

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were approximately an hour long each. Semi-structured interviews are a familiar method of data collection across many forms of qualitative analysis. However Wood and Kroger (2000) note that there are key theoretical and procedural differences when semi-structured interviews are utilised within discourse analytic research. In this type of research it is normal practice to urge participants to speak fully. This is in order to promote the type of variability that is seen as a significant feature of discourse. This variability is then utilised as a tool for analysis.

A schedule containing questions was used as a guide (refer to appendix 5) to structure the interviews. However, the interviews revealed that it was not necessary to ask each question individually as most of them were answered in the flow of talk. I facilitated the flow of talk and encouraged the participants to tell their stories by conducting, what Holstein and Gubrium (1995) refer to as an "active" interview. This is where the interviewer and interviewee are equally constructing meaning. In conducting an "active" interview, I drew upon some of my therapeutic skills of active listening (i.e., reflecting, summarising, providing minimal prompts etc.). In this way, I was able to put the participants at ease, and consequently they freely offered information without me having to extract it through the use of questions. Also the use of open-ended questions, and requesting the participants to elaborate upon their responses, further facilitated the participants to talk.

Potter and Wetherell (1995) state that it is not assumed there is one possible version the interview can take and that the interviewer's role is to ensure the participant

conveys this information accurately and in its entirety. This makes the conventionally neutral and uninvolved stance adopted by the interviewer problematic for a discourse analytic study. Hence the manner I adopted (which has been described above) was in line with the ethos of discourse analysis. However at the same time, I did not want this interview style to encourage the participants to reveal more than they anticipated, and for them to then be left feeling exposed and vulnerable. Thus I had some ethical concerns with Wood and Kroger's (2000) suggestion of encouraging the participants to talk about issues in their entirety. I tried to balance this conflict by maintaining a constant awareness of my participants' levels of distress.

2.5.6 Pilot studies

Pilot studies testing the interview topic, style and structure were carried out with two South Asian women. These women were known to me from a personal setting. Once the interview had been conducted I asked each participant in the pilot study to comment on the following features of the interview:

- the clarity of the instructions used throughout the interview;
- the appropriateness of questions used during the interview in order to explore the topic area;
- the terminology (i.e., disclosure) used during the interview;
- the pace, flow and structure of the interview; and
- my style as an interviewer.

The pilot studies also gave me an opportunity to practise administering all the tasks of the interview (i.e., signing of consent forms, explaining the contents of the information sheet etc.). Additionally, I had an opportunity to make an initial exploration regarding the type of discourses that were constructed. Some of the important features that were raised from the pilot studies, and the subsequent changes that I made, were as follows:

- One of the pilot participants stated that she felt the first few questions I asked her were too threatening and would have preferred for them to be asked at a later point in the interview. She informed me that, initially, she would have preferred to

answer questions that she found non-threatening in order to ease herself into the interview. The pilot participant's comments made me reflect upon the structure of the interview and also the nature of the questions that I was asking. I realised that the interview schedule solely consisted of questions regarding the difficulties inherent in disclosing (i.e., disclosures that were made with much difficulty or ones, which participants had made a conscious decision not to make). I recognised that I may have been missing the opportunity to obtain some valuable discourses regarding disclosures the participants found less threatening to disclose. Thus I adapted the interview in order to assess the entirety of disclosure practices. Additionally, I asked questions regarding non-threatening disclosures to begin with, in order to ease the participant into the interview.

- As I was interested in the sharing of information and communication processes within the family and community, I decided to use the word "disclosure" to encompass these ideas. I felt this term captured the essence of what I was trying to research and also self-disclosure has been well documented within the literature (refer to chapter 1, section 1.6). I am aware using the term "disclosure", rather than words such as "sharing of information" may have affected the nature of discourses that were constructed. For example, "disclosure" may be viewed as holding greater emotive connotations than the words "sharing of information". In order to reduce my influence in constructing this research, I did not provide a definition of "disclosure" to the participants. I wanted to allow them to draw upon their own definitions of disclosure, and subsequently answer the questions in whichever way they saw fit. I thought this would be compatible with the interviews' objective to gather discourses that reflected the women's social realities. The pilot participants informed me that this approach facilitated them to provide full and detailed accounts. They felt that if I had provided them with a definition of "disclosure", it would have restricted their responses.

Additionally, the participants in the pilot study stated that they felt the term "disclosure" was appropriate, and fitted well with the nature of the questions I was asking and their responses. This was evident in how the participants readily adopted this term, and they themselves referred to it throughout the interview. The ease with which the participants incorporated the word "disclosure" within their

talk was also evident in the interviews carried out with the women who participated in this study.

As well as carrying out pilot studies, I asked each participant, if they felt comfortable to do so, to give feedback upon how they found the interview experience and my style as an interviewer. My interview style evolved and developed as I became more confident as an interviewer and familiar with the interview material. I observed that the whole process became a lot more natural, and the interviews flowed a lot better.

2.5.7 Transcriptions

As mentioned by Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), in discourse analysis, it is the recordings that are the actual data, as opposed to the transcripts. Regardless of how thorough the researcher is in including features of the recordings, a literal account is never possible. Hence, within this study, the transcripts were not the main focus but were used as a tool in conducting the analysis. I also ensured that I listened repeatedly to the recordings of the interview. However, having said this, transcription is important, as it slows down the discourse so that details of the analysis can be identified. Also, the process of transcribing allowed me to begin engaging with the discourses that were emerging from the data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The method of transcription that was chosen stresses readability rather than "accuracy". Here, "accuracy" refers to noting all the features of talk. Stressing "accuracy" was an inappropriate method of transcription, as my main concern was the broad discourses as opposed to "moment by moment conversational coherence" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The interviews raised very sensitive and personal material. Thus in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the transcripts have not been included in the appendices.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Many sensitive issues were raised during the course of the interviews. I was also aware that it may have been the first time my participants had discussed certain issues in the context of disclosure within the family unit and community. Talking about their experiences could have evoked new or underlying, unexplored feelings and/or thoughts. I was also conscious of the participants, especially those known to me in a different context, disclosing more information than they initially planned to. Hence, in

order to protect my participants, I had to minimise potential harm and convey clearly the possible issues the interview may raise.

These factors were addressed in the information sheet (refer to appendix 6) they received before consent was requested, and the interview commenced. The information sheet requested the participants to ensure, for their own well-being and protection, that they were not currently depressed, having any suicidal tendencies, receiving trauma counselling or treatment for a psychiatric condition. Furthermore, the information sheet also informed them of potential feelings, thoughts, memories etc. that may be evoked either during and/or after the interview. At the end of each interview a debriefing was carried out. The participants were given an opportunity to comment on the experience of the interview. Additionally, contact details for possible avenues of support (refer to appendix 7) were provided, where issues could be addressed appropriately if they needed to be discussed further. It was hoped that this process would contain the material that was raised within the interview setting.

2.6.1 Gaining participant consent and ensuring confidentiality

Participants were required to sign a consent form (refer to appendix 8). Before signing the consent form participants were made aware of the following points:

- all data would be treated in the strictest confidence;
- the interview transcripts and recordings would be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed after the thesis has been examined;
- the results of the research will be coded in a manner where the identity of the participant will not be revealed;
- participants can refuse to answer any of the questions asked during the interview if they request to do so;
- participation is voluntary and contribution can be withdrawn from the study at any point during the data collection and write-up stages; and
- my personal details, i.e., name, address of institution where I am studying and contact details.

Whilst conducting an interview, if I felt the participant appeared to be distressed, the tape recorder was stopped, and the participant was allowed to compose herself. After a break, the participant was asked if she wished to continue with the interview. I had an ethical responsibility throughout all the interviews to attend to boundaries and maintain an awareness of my participants' emotional states. Simultaneously, I had to be aware of my own feelings in response to the material that was raised in the interviews.

During one particular interview the participant, who I happened to know in a different context, revealed she had been sexually abused as a child. It was evident that she had been concerned about informing me of this, due to our relationship outside of the interview setting. I felt it was my ethical responsibility to stop the tape and put the participant at ease by reiterating issues of confidentiality. Additionally, I also informed her that she did not need to continue discussing the sexual abuse, if it made her feel uncomfortable or caused any distress. Before recommencing with the interview, I ensured I had her consent to continue. During this occasion, my initial reaction was to respond as a counselling psychologist, however, in order to maintain boundaries I remained within my role as an interviewer.

In addition to the consent form, participants were also required to sign a form which highlighted issues of confidentiality regarding the audio-tape recording (refer to appendix 9). Participants were made aware of the following issues before signing the form:

- the tapes will only be heard and analysed by myself; and
- the tapes and transcripts will be securely stored and destroyed after the thesis has been examined.

Thus anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. This was exercised, as stated above, by the raw data (i.e., tape recordings), containing identifying features, only being heard by myself, being securely stored in a locked cabinet and being destroyed after the thesis has been examined. Also the analysis has been coded in a manner so that the identity of the participants has not been

revealed. This was achieved by using pseudonyms to represent the participants and any individuals they referred to within their discourses. In order to make the analysis authentic and also remain close to the participants' realities whilst maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, the pseudonyms chosen were generated in accordance with the participants' cultural and religious background. For example, if the background questions asked before the interview (refer to appendix 3) confirmed that a participant was from an Islamic faith, the woman would be given a Muslim pseudonym. In order to verify the accuracy of the pseudonyms in representing the participants' individual cultural and religious backgrounds, they were generated with the help of an individual who also has a knowledge of South Asian names.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

I am conscious that this analysis may fuel stereotypical notions of the South Asian woman, family and community. It is not the objective of this study to exacerbate stereotypes or generalisations, and unintentionally perpetuate racist interpretations of the South Asian community. Although I am conscious of how my study may be perceived; I feel an ethical duty not to silence these women, or deemphasise any aspects of their discourse. My aim is to stay true to the positions and subjectivities conveyed within the women's discourses, and attempt to report them in their entirety. It is hoped this will promote cultural sensitivity and awareness amongst services. When positions of inferiority and superiority or subjectivities reflecting passivity and dominance are expressed within this study, they are in reference to close readings of the discourse and my commitment in portraying the women's realities.

Chantler et al. (2003) acknowledge that the anxieties service providers feel in discussing issues of abuse, violence and distress within South Asian communities are due to their fears of being seen as perpetuating or giving rise to racist interpretations. Chantler et al. (2003) further claim that, due to fears of being labelled as racist, individuals working in these services may deemphasise these issues and choose not to challenge them, assuming them to be cultural practices. They assert that issues of abuse and violence are not the accepted practice of any culture, and declare that viewing these issues in such a manner is a racist act in itself. I feel these assertions can be applied to this study. The women's discourse raised issues of abuse and violence which I have attempted to illustrate in a comprehensive and accurate manner within this analysis. I am aware that in doing so I may be labelled as "betraying" the South Asian community of which I am a member, or portraying it in a negative light. However, the alternative would have been to deemphasise these issues and not to challenge them. As highlighted by Chantler et al. (2003), this alternative is very dangerous as it promotes the assumption that these issues are accepted cultural practices. Consequently, this implicitly condones the suffering and distress of individuals exposed to these issues.

Hence, in conducting this study a parallel process may occur, whereby the women's discourses convey the difficulties inherent in disclosing to their communities (as will become evident through the analysis), and I too encounter difficulties in disclosing the

findings of this study to my communities. Despite these potential difficulties, I again stand by the notion that it is my ethical responsibility, as a researcher, to portray the findings of this study in their entirety whilst safeguarding the individual participant's confidentiality. For this reason, a central feature of this study is the women's accounts. Additionally, it is my personal desire, as a member of the South Asian community, to highlight and increase understanding amongst researchers and clinicians of the interrelationship between disclosure processes, oppression, abuse and violence within my community. This is ultimately to improve the mental health and wellbeing of South Asian women. Also, I hope to facilitate an open dialogue regarding these issues amongst community and non-community members. I believe encouraging an open dialogue of these issues will aid South Asian women with their disclosure processes within their families and communities.

Additionally, the reader should bear in mind that issues of oppression and inequality, sexual abuse and domestic violence, emerging from the discourse, are not solely found within South Asian communities. These issues are also rife within the dominant, majority British culture. However, the reader should be mindful of cultural factors, which effect the South Asian's women's constructions of these issues in relation to processes of disclosure.

I would like to reiterate that, for the purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used throughout this research study in order to represent the participants and the individuals they refer to within their discourses. Additionally, certain other identifying features have also been altered.

3.2 Stages of analysis

As stated in the methodology chapter (refer to chapter 2, section 2.4.2), the discourse analysis will be conducted using Willig's (2001) stages as a guide. This chapter proceeds with the six stages of analysis, and ends with a section dedicated to my reflections emerging from the analysis. Coyle (1995, p.265) states that one's linguistic resources and ideological framework should not be viewed as "undermining the analysis...but should be seen as a process of making research more accountable, more transparent and easier to evaluate". Thus, bearing Coyle's (1995) assertions in mind,

the section on reflections explores the inter-subjective nature of the relationship between myself, as the researcher, and the South Asian women I interviewed.

3.2.1 Discursive constructions

For purposes of clarity, this stage of analysis has been organised into subheadings. The subheadings divide the various constructions of "the family" and "the community" into sections. Whilst reading this first of analysis, I would like the reader to bear in mind that the constructions, illustrating the discursive objects (i.e. "the family" and "the community"), do overlap and are interrelated. Efforts have been made to prioritise the women's own words in this section, as Potter (1996) states this is the most important feature in the validation of discourse analysis studies. Hence, the presentation of rich and extended accounts of "raw" data allows readers to evaluate the quality of discourse analysis work.

In order to place the women's discourse in context with the experiences of other South Asian women, the findings emerging from the women's talk have been discussed in relation to the literature. Willig (2001) asserts that the presentation of the analysis, within a discourse analytic study, comprises the most extensive component of the research. She states it is important to provide detailed discussions of extracts from transcripts, and for this reason it is common practice to merge sections of analysis and discussion. Following Willig's (2001) claims, it was felt important to include the relevant literature alongside the women's discourses and the explanatory discussions provided in this chapter and chapter 4.

I would like the reader to bear in mind that the literature search I conducted revealed consistencies either between the women's discourse and previous research or highlighted the gaps in the literature which my study is attempting to address. Few actual discrepancies were found between the women's discourse and the existing literature on South Asian women.

A liberal and restrictive nature

The family is constructed as fluctuating between creating a liberal and flexible environment to one that is restricting and constraining in nature. The discourse conveys the family as adopting the former environment around specific subject areas;

consequentially, this facilitates the open disclosure of these topics within the family. However, the women's discourse also reveals experiences that they believe would be met with opposition by the family. As a result, disclosures concerning these experiences, which are revealed as being far more controversial, are shared with much difficulty or not disclosed at all. This constructs a family atmosphere that is deemed restricting and constraining.

Simran's discourse draws upon career choice to demonstrate the liberal and flexible nature of her family. Her discourse indicates that her career path *"isn't typical of Asian people"* (1:10). She compares her family with *"other Asians"* (1:6) and draws the conclusion that her parents are *"really open"* (1:11) in their acceptance of her career choice. Due to her parents' tolerance of her unconventional career path, Simran's discourse refers to them as *"not being the norm"* (1:47). In comparing her family with other South Asian families, Simran's discourse constructs her parents as being of a unique and progressive nature. It is implied, through her discourse, that she sees these distinctions as favourable as they have allowed her to pursue her career of choice.

Simran's discourse continues to construct her parents as being *"really open"* (1:11) by conveying that she *"was allowed to go out"* (1:12-13). The use of the word *"allowed"* suggests that she has been granted permission. Hence, although Simran attempts, through her discourse, to construct the liberal characteristics of her family, there is a sense that approval is required for certain behaviours to take place. Reflecting upon the limited amount of disclosures her friends can make within their families, her words indicate that she *"feels quite lucky"* (1:41). Again, within her discourse, she uses a comparison between herself, and other South Asian women's experiences within their families to construct herself as being in a privileged and unique position. The use of the word *"lucky"* suggests Simran feels grateful for her family's acceptance and tolerance of her decisions, and the freedom they have granted her. Additionally, the word *"lucky"* conveys a sense of her having won against the odds, by being part of a family that isn't the *"norm"* (1:47), which may be of a more restrictive nature. This also reveals her lack of agency in bringing about her "liberal freedoms" which she regards as a matter of chance and destiny.

Ahilya's discourse attempts to emphasise the open nature of her family with her words: *"now as an adult I kind of share everything"* (2:23). However, the words *"kind of"* contradict the subsequent use of the word *"everything"* and are indicative of the limitations surrounding disclosure within the family. When asked to describe a disclosure she found easy to make, Ahilya's discourse gave the example of informing her parents of the racism she endured at school. Her talk reveals that her parents had *"experienced similar things"* (2:42), hence *"it was acceptable"* (2:49), *"something they could hear"* (2:51-52), and consequently she *"knew they would be on my side"* (2:52). From Ahilya's words we can conclude that the family places conditions upon disclosures. Families are constructed as only being able to tolerate disclosures when they themselves have experienced the content of them. Thus following on from this, the word *"acceptable"* indicates that some disclosures would be deemed unacceptable and would not be heard by Ahilya's parents. An important element which made this disclosure easy for Ahilya to make was the awareness it was *"acceptable"* and that she would be supported and understood by her parents.

Hence, within the women's constructions of the liberal and flexible nature of the family there are echoes of the existence of a darker, uncompromising substrate. Simran's discourse makes direct reference to this darker substrate: *"there's also kind of unsaid boundaries as well that you don't cross, umm in terms of like cultural values..."* (1:15-16). Making reference to certain experiences that are classified as being beyond the *"unsaid boundaries"*, her discourse indicates *"it's just not the done thing...so there's always got to be that element of hiding stuff"* (1:39). Some experiences needing to remain hidden contradict the image of a family that is transparent and open, and in turn exposes a more restrictive nature.

According to Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996), fears of "cultural obliteration" encourage immigrant parents to impose stricter restrictions upon their children than non-immigrant parents. Simran's discourse conveys a restrictive and controlling type of parenting existent within South Asian families. Belman (1999) highlights some of the negative psychological effects of being subjected to this type of parenting. Belman (1999) interviewed teenage daughters who had mothers suffering from obsessional compulsive disorder. Factors of control and restrictions were discussed during the interviews. Having been exposed to excessive restrictions, as a result of their mother's

fears, these women are reported as often feeling frustrated, fearful and anxious, as well as struggling with their identity development. Thus the findings of this study suggest that South Asian women who, according to Simran's discourse, may also be exposed to this type of parenting will struggle from similar distress and be in need of psychological help.

When asked to comment upon an incident she made a conscious decision not to disclose to her family, Simran describes an experience of dating a man outside of her cultural and religious background.

> *...there was always this fear. What if they did find out...umm it's maybe a fear that they would disown me umm, or it'd, you know, completely change my life in terms of I might end up losing my family over this...* (1:77-82).

> *...he's like, he's Muslim and I'm Sikh. It would have been a big, it's like a big no no. It's a line you don't cross, and he wasn't even Asian and that's another line you don't cross as well.* (1:87-89).

Simran's words identify that the required criteria a partner must possess is defined by the family. By identifying that differing religions are *"a big no no"*, Simran's discourse conveys commonality of religion as being an expected criterion set by the family. Furthermore, the word *"even"* in the statement *"he wasn't even Asian"* suggests that being Asian is the most intrinsic and elementary of requirements set by the family, and thus it is naturally expected that it will be met. Hence for her ex-partner to not *"even"* meet the most fundamental of requirements, as well as being of the "wrong" religious orientation, conveys the impossibility of this disclosure ever being revealed to the family.

Simran's discourse demonstrates that she is aware of what is within and outside the *"boundaries"* (1:16) of *"cultural values"* (1:17), and consequently the experiences that would and would not be tolerated by the family. The discourse conveys the boundaries as being unyielding and inflexible, which can be seen by the choice of her words: *"you don't cross"* and *"it's just not the done thing"* (1:39). This constructs the image of there being a prescribed list of behaviours that would be viewed as

"acceptable" by the family. If the family does discover a woman has participated in behaviours outside of the prescribed list, there is no room for discussion or compromise, and it will result in drastic measures. This can be seen by Simran's words: *"they would disown me umm, or it'd, you know, completely change my life."* For these reasons, the experience needs to remain hidden, due to fears of rejection (i.e., *"I might end up losing my family over this"*) and severe resistance from the family. As a result, the construction of the transparent and open family atmosphere is compromised by Simran's decision to keep this experience hidden. Thus the discourse constructs some experiences as being too threatening for the family to tolerate and if they were disclosed, the consequences for the discloser would be detrimental i.e. disownment and a complete change of life.

In Simran's talk below, she labels some of the experiences that cannot be made open and disclosed.

> *...sexual issues, like pre-marital pregnancy, sexual abuse, sexual activity. I think that's one of the, even relationships, that's one of the main areas where I think there's this element of boundaries and not really being able to be open.* (1:380-382).

Simran's discourse reveals that there is *"an element of boundaries"* around *"sexual issues"* such as *"sexual abuse, sexual activity"* and *"relationships"*. This implies that the open expression and disclosure of a woman's sexuality is prohibited by the family and community. Furthermore, the discourse represents South Asian women as being in a position of limited power regarding issues of their own sexuality. This is supported by a study conducted by Reavey et al. (2006) in which professionals providing services for South Asian women who had experienced sexual abuse were interviewed. A key finding was that South Asian women do not experience themselves as self-contained units who are in control of their sexuality and relationships. Furthermore, in relation to sexual issues being an area of conflict, Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) report that sexuality in South Asian women is often seen as a threat against not only the family but also the community. Engaging in sexual behaviour is seen as a betrayal of the South Asian culture, and an over engagement in the dominant host culture.

Simran's discourse has been both adamant and direct in conveying the impossibility of disclosing sexual and relationship issues to the family. This can be seen in her words: *"it's like a big no no. It's a line you don't cross"* (1:87-89) and *"it's just not the done thing"* (1:39). In this way, she openly reveals the severity of the family's restrictive nature. Thus it is interesting that, in the extract (1:380-382) above, Simran uses modifiers such as *"I think"* and *"not really"*, which act as masking the severity of the restrictions. Perhaps this is an attempt to construct her family in a more "liberal" and favourable light in order to protect them from criticism and judgement.

Simran's talk conveys the area of *"relationships"* as being *"one of the main areas"* which cannot be disclosed within the South Asian household. This is consistent with the literature. Inman et al. (2001) state that for South Asian women, the dimension of dating is an area of "cultural value conflict". The authors assert that South Asian women, who are exposed to a culture in which dating and exploring sexuality are salient parts of identity development, may experience guilt and other such negative emotions. This is due to possibly finding themselves deviating from the cultural values and behavioural expectations endorsed by their families. Thus considering the potential conflict embedded within these issues, it is no wonder that the disclosure of them causes the women in this study great anxiety and distress.

Furthermore, Segal's (1991) study supports the notion that pre-marital relationships, and issues of a sexual nature are in conflict with South Asian cultural values. Segal (1991) reports second-generation Indian adolescents, born in the United States and with familial origins in India, as experiencing adjustment difficulties. Segal's (1991) study conducted two pilot focus group seminars; one of the groups consisted of parents and the other adolescents. The participants were requested to reflect upon the following issues: the importance of open communication between parent and child; the physical, social and emotional changes associated with adolescence; and the difficulties immigrant families may encounter during the process of cross-cultural adjustment (1991, p.237). The aim of the seminars was to highlight the nature of parent-child conflicts, and to demonstrate whether these conflicts were embedded within the cultural and value differences of immigrant Indian families.

The focus groups highlighted a major area of conflict as being pre-marital relationships between the sexes. For the majority of the immigrant Indian parents, their marriages had been arranged by their families. Thus the idea of pre-marital dating, and individuals "choosing" their own partners were alien concepts to them. For the first-generation parents, growing up in their country of origin, sexuality was not recognised, and sex education was not a topic of concern either at home or in schools. Due to these reasons, the parent participants reported fearing that if their children began to date, they would be encouraged to participate in sexual relations. The seminars revealed that the majority of adolescents who were dating refused to disclose this information to their parents. This finding is in line with Simran's account which acknowledges that there is an *"element of hiding stuff"* (1:39) within the family.

It is interesting that despite Simran being a 25 year old adult, there are similarities between her constructions regarding the family's restrictions around sexual issues and the accounts of adolescents reported within Segal's (1991) study. These similarities may be explained by the findings of Gupta et al. (2007), who explored the experiences of adolescent (16-20) second-generation South Asian women. The participants in Gupta et al.'s (2007) study reported Western societies as having age-related markers, which allowed adolescents to begin adopting adult roles. However, the participants regarded this as being contradictory with traditional Asian values. In a Western society it is deemed acceptable for an adolescent female, between the ages of sixteen and twenty, to adopt adult roles; however, within the Asian culture, if the young woman is unmarried than she remains within the role of a child. Consequently, the unmarried status of both the adolescents in Segal et al.'s (1991) study and the adult women in my study may result in consistencies between the accounts of the former and the constructions of the later.

Gupta et al.'s (2007) study highlights the difficulties experienced by South Asian adolescents in asserting their emerging adult status within the family. This is similar to Simran's discourse which conveys the difficulties in asserting an independent adult role within the family. For example, Simran's words, *"I was allowed to go out"* (1:12-13), convey the permission and approval that she needs to seek from her parents. This highlights that even the outcome of everyday decisions, such as going

out to socialise, are dependent upon her parents' approval and consent. This emphasises the power imbalance between Simran and her parents. In not granting Simran the autonomy to make her own choices and decisions, her family is constructed as creating a restrictive atmosphere in which she is unable to assert herself. In this way, the discourse reveals the family unit as encouraging Simran to remain in a childlike, dependent role.

Ahilya's words, below, convey Gupta et al.'s (2007) findings regarding the prominence that is placed upon marital status.

> *..it's like marriage means you can then just do everything. If you marry the right person then that's your key to freedom...and then you're out to be whoever you want to be.* (2:386-388).

Ahilya's discourse reveals that marriage and the appropriate choice of partner allows the individual self-governance over their actions and behaviours. Her words, *"it's like marriage means you can then just do everything...you're out to be whoever you want"*, imply that she feels limited in her independence and the decisions she can make due to her current unmarried status. This reiterates Gupta et al.'s (2007) findings that adulthood, within the South Asian family and community, is not defined by age but by an individual's marital status. This has also been verified by cross-cultural research which demonstrates that various cultures differ in their definitions of adulthood (Adler & Gielen, 2001). Implicit within Ahilya's discourse is that the family's and community's restrictions will only end when a woman marries "appropriately". This is conveyed by her words: *"If you marry the right person then that's your key to freedom"*.

When asked to describe something she had chosen not to disclose to her family, Ahilya's discourse conveys the reactions she anticipates from making a disclosure of childhood sexual abuse:

> *...it would destroy them. It would destroy them, and the whole idea of their daughter having been abused by somebody that they know as well, it would destroy them. Um and it's, I don't know, it's something that you don't talk about. You don't*

talk about it, just sex in general, it just doesn't happen, so you know to then be abused, it's just something that people don't talk about. It's not, you know, you see programmes about it on television, if it's an Asian woman that's talking about it or there's an article in the paper people start freaking out... (2:206-214).

Ahilya's talk reveals that she chose not to disclose her experience of being sexually abused, as she anticipates the detrimental consequence of such a disclosure would be the destruction of her family. Ahilya's use of the words *"destroy"* and *"freaking out"* suggest severe reactions which are uncontrollable and unmanageable. This constructs the family and the community as being completely unequipped, and lacking all resources needed, to bear and tolerate the open discussion of such issues. Hence silence on these matters is demanded.

Ahilya's discourse begins by discussing her family's potential reaction to the sexual abuse, and then puts this in context with the reaction of the wider South Asian community. In this way, she demonstrates that the reaction she anticipates from her family is similar to the general reaction held by the wider community. Thus her words remove the negative focus from her family, by locating the problem as being held within the attitudes of the community as a whole. Ahilya words, *"You don't talk about it...it's just something that people don't talk about"*, convey that keeping silent about sex and sexual abuse has become a social norm within the South Asian community. Thus, as well as wanting to protect her family from destruction, the denial of sex and sexual abuse within the family and community deters Ahilya from making a disclosure. The repetition of phrases such as *"it would destroy them"* and *"it's something you don't talk about"* places added stress upon these words, demonstrating the impossibility of disclosing, and the finality of the decision she has made. In this way, Ahilya's discourse reiterates the family's intolerance of sexual matters, and the consequential hidden nature of these issues within the family and community. Thus Ahilya's words echo Simran's talk regarding these matters.

Ahilya's discourse stresses the influence of the family and community in shaping her decision not to disclose her experience of sexual abuse; however, it neglects any notions of selfhood. Thus, when considering disclosures of this nature, Ahilya's words convey familial context and cultural dynamics as surpassing any notions of self

hood (this idea will be developed further within the next section: "Gender role expectations").

The family's resistance to sexual disclosures can be extended to issues of sexuality, as is evident within Nusrat's discourse. This intolerance is demonstrated by the fact that Nusrat felt it necessary to leave her family home once a disclosure regarding her sexuality had been made. Below is an account from Nusrat's discourse, describing the prospect of remaining at home after a disclosure of sexuality has been made.

> *...if you're living under their roof it's a whole different story. I have to say 'cause you're under their control, as much as I love my parents, I don't think they would have been very nice to me.* (4:90-93).

The material possession of the house places Nusrat's parents in a superior position of authority and power which could then be used to manipulate her, if she was *"under their roof"*. Remaining in the family home once the disclosure had been made would have meant Nusrat encountering *"a whole different story"*; one in which she would be powerless, under the *"control"* of her parents. This is quite a bold statement to make, as it clearly conveys the dictatorial nature of her parents, and subsequently places them in a negative light. Although having said this, she retracts from making such a strong assertion by using the words: *"I don't think they would have been very nice to me"*. The raising of a modicum of uncertainty through the use of the expression *"I don't think"* and the words *"very nice"* makes this claim far less emotive than the one discussed previously. Her discourse also asserts her love for her parents, implying that they are recipients of affection. This creates an impression of them being much gentler than the dictatorial parents she formerly described. Thus Nusrat's words construct a family atmosphere which is restrictive and constraining, but then within the same account she shies away from this construction, producing a conflicting account.

Nusrat elaborates upon the issues described above: *"I would not want to be an Asian person coming out, and then having to stay at home"* (4:274-275). Nusrat's words convey the difficulties present for a South Asian individual making a disclosure of sexuality to the family; however, of much greater concern is a South Asian individual living with or in near proximity to the family after the disclosure has been made.

Nusrat's words reflect upon her own individual situation and then make a general comment regarding homosexuality in the South Asian community. Embedded within this statement is the notion that being of a South Asian background and making a disclosure of sexuality would invariably result in undesirable repercussions. In making such a generalisation, Nusrat's words reveal the unacceptability and disapproval of homosexuality to be a community or cultural norm.

The South Asian family's negative reaction to a disclosure of sexuality is consistent with studies investigating the effects of traditional family values on the "coming out process" of gay male adolescents. Newman and Muzzonigro (1993) found individuals who came from families with highly traditional values perceived their family's feelings towards homosexuality as being more negative than those from less traditional families. Additionally, they report more negative family reactions to actual disclosures of homosexuality compared with those individuals from less traditional families. Within this study, "traditional family values" was operationally defined as: the importance of religion to the family; the importance the family places upon whether or not the individual marries; the importance the family places upon whether or not the individual has children, and whether a language besides English was spoken in the family home. Thus the operational definition of "traditional family values" makes the findings of this study transferable and consistent with the traditional cultural values of a South Asian family.

The resistant reactions amongst minority families to disclosures of sexuality have been further documented in the literature by Armesto and Weisman (2001). Participants were requested to imagine their gay son coming out to them, and then they were required to articulate their response. Compared with Caucasian Americans, African American and Asian American participants were more likely to verbalise negative emotional reactions, articulate a lessoning of affection towards their hypothetical sons and be less willing to help them.

<u>Gender role expectations</u>

The women speak of a gender divide that exists within the family. Simran's words, *"...me being a female, you do hold the honour of the family on you"* (1:96-97), convey that in being a South Asian woman, the responsibility of preserving the family

honour is placed upon her. The notion of *"family honour"* (1:326) illustrates the existence of a community outside of the family which evaluates and passes judgement on the family unit. A disparity is highlighted, as the collective honour of the family unit is placed solely upon the individual female members of the family. Consequently, Simran's words establish an inherent sense of obligatory pressure present in the lives of South Asian women. The words *"on you"* attached to the end of this quote construct an image of the female members being subjected to carrying the weight of the family honour. Consequently, in carrying the weight of the family honour, it is implied that their behaviours are controlled and restricted.

The idea of the individual being a representative of the family unit, and the implications of this has been noted in the literature. Abraham (2000) illustrates South Asian notions of the family to often be in contrast to those of Western countries. With regard to the South Asian family, Abraham (2000) states the following:

> ...the family and group-oriented structure views the individual as a representative of the family...and there is considerable pressure to maintain harmony and minimise any actions that would potentially jeopardize the family and community (p.19).

The male members are absent from Simran's account (1:96-97) which creates the impression that they are devoid of this responsibility. Hence their actions and disclosures have fewer implications upon *"the honour of the family"* (1:96-97), giving them a greater sense of freedom. In contrast, it is assumed holding the *"family honour"* (1:326) not only affects Simran's actions and behaviours outside of the family but also determines what can and cannot be made public within the family. This is because some disclosures, even when made within the family setting, may have repercussions upon the family's honour within the community.

Conveyed within Simran's words is the disparity between males and females that exists within the collectivist notion of the South Asian family. This has been noted by Abraham (2000), who states that the collectivist family orientation is structured predominately for the benefit of male members of the South Asian community. This patriarchal context places the male members of the community in a position of greater power than the females. Within this patriarchal context, where the female is subjected

to a lower status, women may adopt culturally approved and accepted female responses to factors, such as issues of sexual abuse, sexuality etc. This is due to these factors being seen as outside the *"unsaid boundaries"* (1:15) and are thus potential threats to the family's honour within the community. These culturally approved and endorsed responses may involve South Asian women being silent about these issues and refusing to disclose, and hence sacrificing their personal autonomy for the sake of preserving the *"family honour"* (1:326). Abraham (2000) argues that South Asian women's silence regarding factors such as sexual abuse may result in the exacerbation of long-term psychological damage.

Simran's words convey the disadvantaged position women are in within the community: *"I think in the Asian community people are more critical of girls and what they're doing."* (1: 337-338). Thus emerging from Simran's discourse is the idea that South Asian females are under tight scrutiny and examination by both the family and community. Through singling out *"girls"* in this statement, Simran's discourse reiterates that the male members of the community are not exposed to a similar scrutiny. This impression of women being under tight scrutiny and examination is consistent with Dasgupta's (1998) findings. Dasgupta (1998) argues that women experience a restrictive monitoring and censorship of their behaviours and actions in order to ensure they are maintaining the culture's traditions and customs.

Further elaborations on the gender divide are conveyed within Simran's talk. Contradictory roles and expectations required of women are discernable.

> *...and I think with girls, there's so much, it's a hard balance because you're expected to be traditional, but then you're expected to be modern as well. You know, it's almost like uhh you go out and work and then you're probably expected to come home and then do all this stuff that a housewife might do as well...* (1:97-101).

Simran uses the words *"hard balance"* to convey the contradictory nature of the roles and expectations that a woman is required to uphold. The contradiction lies within being expected to *"balance"* both a *"traditional"* as well as *"modern"* role. The words *"hard"* and *"there's so much"* convey the difficulties in managing these roles,

and a sense of the impossibility in being able to achieve what is *"expected."* Furthermore the repetition of the word *"expected"* conveys the burden Simran feels and wishes to emphasise through her words.

In the above account, the description of *"modern"* has been identified as pursuing a career outside of the family home. It is interesting how this description has been confined to the realms of career path and excludes all other possible descriptions. It is assumed that these descriptions have been excluded, as they may be classified by the family as inappropriate and hence outside of the *"unsaid boundaries"* (1:15). Thus the family requires a woman to be of a *"modern"* nature but then also determines the acceptable limits of this state of being. This expectation to be both *"modern"* and *"traditional"* is illustrated within the literature. Bhugra and Hicks's (2000) findings suggest that husbands and in-laws want wives to be educated and participate in mainstream careers and also to remain within the roles of a traditional Asian woman.

Dasgupta (1998) argues that South Asian families who have immigrated to Western countries expect their female members to carry a disproportionate amount of responsibility with regard to maintaining the culture of their country of origin. Simran's discourse refers to this responsibility as the expectation placed upon female members to remain *"traditional"*. This notion of the female members maintaining the culture has been elaborated upon by Inman and Tewari (2003). They state that South Asian women living in the USA are exposed to great pressure from the family to develop an identity that is consistent with the values of a traditional family structure. These values, which are conveyed within the women's discourse, have been described as maintaining gender roles, fulfilling family obligations and adhering to cultural beliefs regarding intimate relations.

The disparity between what is expected from males and females is made explicit in Simran's discourse below.

> *...I think guys can kind of think more about themselves and be a bit more selfish, in the respect, like I was saying women are expected to kind of be a career woman now, be educated, which is positive, but then also to kind of think about everyone*

else around them. Um so it's more about thinking about everyone else rather than thinking about yourself. (1:236-241).

Simran's discourse conveys South Asian women as being expected to take on an altruistic and selfless role, where they prioritise the collective needs of others over their own. It is implied that if women were seen to be pursuing their own needs, outside those prescribed for them, this would be evaluated negatively. Consequently, it is inferred that disclosures, describing the pursuit of such needs, would either be avoided or approached tentatively by the women. In contrast, since this is not expected of South Asian men, they can take on a more autonomous, *"selfish"* role.

Simran's discourse, *"women are expected to be a career woman now"*, draws upon the progressive nature of the family and community. The discourse identifies this to be *"positive"* as it creates a greater sense of equality between males and females, through encouraging women to pursue roles that were traditionally assigned solely for men. However, the word *"expect"* implies that pursuing a career and being educated has become a mandatory requirement, and hence is another imposed pressure placed upon South Asian women.

Furthermore, the expectation to be a *"career woman"* and take on a more *"modern"* role is not at the exclusion of still being expected to fulfil the *"traditional"* female roles. Thus South Asian women are expected to fulfil both roles; consequently, Simran's discourse describes it as being a *"hard balance"*. This identifies South Asian women as not necessarily having a choice regarding which roles they would like to adopt. On the surface, the South Asian community may be seen as being quite progressive, as they are encouraging women to pursue careers; however, Simran's discourse constructs this as being yet another expectation which restricts a woman's freedom of choice. This mirrors the constructions discussed earlier, regarding the family being perceived as liberal and progressive in their actions but then simultaneously supporting a darker, uncompromising substrate.

The literature highlights that a primary goal for the South Asian woman, as defined by the family and community, is marriage (which will be elaborated upon further into the analysis). Education serves to increase the female's attractiveness to potential suitors

and their families (Almeida, 1996). Thus the literature demonstrates that the family's expectations of their female members (i.e. to *"be educated"* and *"modern"*) are in line with upholding the traditional family values, i.e., maintaining gender roles and fulfilling family obligations.

The following discourse conveys Simran's response to being asked how these roles and expectations directly impact upon her experience of disclosure: *"...it's almost like being female affects what you say, and I do find myself thinking about quite carefully, like, what's gonna be the repercussions if I did say this..."* (1:260-261).
In her response to the question, Simran's discourse makes a link between being female, and the impact this has upon disclosure. Being a female, careful thought is needed when considering the potential repercussions of disclosures. This suggests she feels some of her experiences may be viewed as outside of what is accepted and required of her as a South Asian woman. Additionally, there is a sense that she has to tread very carefully, as the process of disclosing these experiences is fraught with difficulty and risk.

Within her discourse Ahilya reveals her reasons for not making a disclosure regarding the sexual abuse she experienced as a child.

> *I've always grown up being more concerned about others and their emotional wellbeing, and I know this is exactly what I'm doing with this particular thing in not telling them, and I know it's, you know, that I've grown up with it by myself to a certain extent, and had to deal with it myself. But I don't think that now it would be helpful in any way whatsoever and they would take it personally.* (2:201-206).

> *...you know you see programmes about it on television if it's an Asian woman that's talking about it or there's an article in the paper people start freaking out umm, you know, I don't know, it just makes me sick cause so much goes on within our community and people just ignore it or they wanna hide it...domestic violence, another huge one, happens everywhere, no one talks about it, women get battered everyday but nobody, you know, and people that do say something about it are looked down on so I think that's probably why I made that decision not to tell them.* (2:210-219).

As stated earlier (refer to the section above: "A restrictive and liberal nature"), Ahilya's discourse conveys her refusal to make a disclosure, having prioritised the collective needs of others over her own. Her words, *"I've always grown up being more concerned about others...this is exactly what I'm doing with this particular thing in not telling them..."*, demonstrate self-awareness in her tendency to prioritise the collective needs of others over her own. Ahilya's discourse places her experiences in the context of the female experience by conveying the general reaction within the community to South Asian women expressing issues of violence and abuse. By neglecting the needs of self, this account constructs the individual needs of the female and the representation of culture as being opposing factors which fail to coexist.

This apparent opposition between the individual female and culture is raised by Abrahamson (1999). Abrahamson (1999) argues that these opposing forces result in South Asian women being caught up in a system of "dual" subordination. They are subordinated by the sexual abuse that they may experience from male family members (i.e., fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands/partners etc.), as well as the oppressive practices they are subjected to, due to their ethnicity.

These ideas, regarding the incompatibility of culture and the individual, have been further represented in the literature. In Reavey et al.'s (2006) study, participants were interviewed regarding their experiences of working with South Asian women who had been sexually abused. The participants reported their clients to be located within the *system itself* of family and community cultural dynamics. Within this study, the family's and community's power in shaping the individual's needs and emotions is stressed. Furthermore, the notion of a therapy which concentrates upon a "self" that has individual thoughts and feelings is challenged. The study argues that a therapy which immediately brings to the forefront cultural issues, in order to provide a context for the emotions and distress, is required. In order to further the understanding of South Asian women's experiences of abuse, the authors (Reavey et al., 2006) adopt the term "cultured selves" which recognises the impact of family and community relations. I would argue that the notion of "cultured selves" can be applied to the analysis of the women's discourse in this study, in relation to their disclosure practices of issues such as sexual abuse and other sex-related issues.

In conveying the collective needs of her family as being the justification for not making a disclosure, Ahilya adopts the altruistic and selfless role that is "expected" of South Asian women. The discourse indicates that Ahilya has internalised this role, and consequently she is unable to disclose to her parents. In not making this disclosure, she protects her parents from ruin and destruction (refer to the section aboveentitled, "A restrictive and liberal nature") and maintains their *"emotional wellbeing"* (2:201). Ahilya's words, *"I don't think it would be helpful in any way whatsoever"* (2:206), demonstrate that she is adamant in her refusal to not make a disclosure. Any recognition that a disclosure would be helpful for her own wellbeing is dismissed. Reavey et al. (2006) highlight the difficulties South Asian women have in identifying themselves as individuals in need of help, support and care. The authors explain this as being due to factors of female submissiveness and male superiority, inherent within the organisation of South Asian culture.

Reflecting upon whether they feel it is appropriate to disclose, both Simran and Ahilya convey concern with regards to the effects the disclosures will have on others. Almost as a prerequisite of taking on this role of carer, the women readily disregard their own needs and wellbeing: *"it's more about thinking about everyone else rather than thinking about yourself"* (1:241); *"I've always grown up being more concerned about others and their emotional wellbeing"* (2:201). The role of South Asian women as carers has been noted in the literature. Batsleer et al. (2003) refer to the role of the woman as a carer to be a powerful one within South Asian families. They assert that when these women are distressed and in need of support, it is important to be aware of the lack of support and care that is offered to them by their families and communities, due to the "caring" role is deemed to be their responsibility.

Ahilya's discourse reveals that her parents would take a disclosure *"personally"* (2:206). The word *"personally"* implies that her parents may regard the disclosure as having a direct reflection upon their nature as parents and their ability to raise a family. It also suggests that they may feel under attack and prone to criticism. Reavey et al. (2006) state that a South Asian woman's disclosure of sexual abuse calls into question her reputation, as opposed to the abuser's. Consequently, these authors claim that the community systems which place precedence upon a woman's purity and chastity and the widespread practice of protecting the honour of families will affect

the woman's decision regarding disclosure. Bearing in mind Abraham's (2000) notion regarding the individual's responsibility in representing the family within the community a woman's disclosure of sexual abuse, which impugns her purity and chastity, will reflect negatively upon the entire family unit. Thus, Ahilya's parents may take the disclosure *"personally"* as it could discredit their reputation and honour as a "respectable" family within the South Asian community, and hence expose them to criticism.

Bearing in mind the extreme importance that is placed upon "family honour" within the South Asian community, it is no wonder Ahilya's discourse reflects fears that a disclosure would *"destroy"* her parents. Perhaps, implied within the words, *"it would destroy them"* (2:206), is that their standing and reputation within the community would be destroyed. Consequently, as standing, honour and reputation are defining features of the family, the disclosure would lead to the destruction of the family unit.

When asked if she thinks she will ever feel able to make a disclosure to her parents regarding the sexual abuse, Ahilya constructs the following response:

> *I have toyed with it quite a lot and I think it's something, it will always be there in the back of my mind. Even though like consciously my decision is not to tell them, I think on some level, there's you know, there's little Ahilya inside of me that wants to tell them.* (2:225-229).

When considering disclosing to her parents, she uses the words, *"little Ahilya"* to label herself. Implicit within the word *"little"* is the suggestion that she would be naïve and displaying the egotistic characteristics of a child if she were to disclose. Again, what is implied is that if she follows her desire to disclose, she would be acting in a self-serving manner. In accordance to Simran's accounts, this is not a desirable characteristic for the South Asian woman to have. Additionally Ahilya uses the word *"toyed"* to convey that she has contemplated disclosing. This word also has childlike connotations; it suggests she has played with the idea of disclosing, in a manner that is casual and holds little seriousness. *"Toyed"* is an interesting choice of word, as its light-hearted meaning is in contradiction to the severity of the content of the potential disclosure. Perhaps the choice of word conveys Ahilya's inability to allow herself to

seriously consider disclosing, due to the disastrous consequences she feels would result.

Ahilya's talk reveals the family's expectations of marriage and choice of partner that are placed upon her.

> *...there's so much expectation on marriage and ticking the right boxes and that the man you marry must come from a certain family, a certain caste, a certain religion, a certain profession or, um, like academic kind of level...and for me that's not important, it's the qualities that a person holds.* (2:109-114).

Implicit within this extract is the obligatory involvement Ahilya's family has with regard to the choice of her marriage partner. This takes the decision away from the individual, as it primarily becomes a collective choice made by the family unit. Hence this places the family in a position of authority and power over the individual. Prathikanti (1997) highlights that marriage within the South Asian culture is seen to be an alliance between families as opposed to a union of two individuals.

The repetition of *"certain"* in this extract portrays the image of an endless list of criteria and a fine discrimination set by the family. The repetition also suggests Ahilya holds an almost flippant attitude towards these criteria. Her use of the word *"certain"* suggests a dismissal of the criteria, and that she feels it is unnecessary to elaborate upon the details. This is also echoed in her words *"that's not important"*. These factors mark a clear rejection and separation between her criteria of partner choice, and those set by her family and community. The criteria set by the family are based upon status and standing in society: *"a certain profession or, um, like academic kind of level."* Subsequently, it is assumed that the family views her choice of marriage partner to bear reflection upon the family's collective status and reputation within the community. Thus since Ahilya's criteria of what she requires from a marriage partner is not in unison with her family's criteria, it is inevitable that the disclosure of a partner would be a difficult exercise for her.

The discrepancy between Ahilya's requirements from a partner and those required by her parents is consistent with findings emerging from the literature. It has been noted

that in hopes of perpetuating traditions and maintaining cultural values, immigrant families place great emphasis upon marriage within the same community, ethnicity and religion (Das & Kempt, 1998; Pranthikanti, 1997). In contrast, Lindsey (1994) notes that within an American culture, both love and marriage are viewed to go hand in hand. This finding can be translated to the majority British culture. The second-generation South Asian women of this study, having been socialised and educated within the dominant culture, will probably assimilate the notions of love and marriage associated with this culture. In contrast, the parents may be the upholders of collectivist notions of marriage, emerging from the culture of origin. Thus one can anticipate marriage and choice of partner as being areas of conflict within the South Asian family.

In order to convey the disclosure she made regarding her choice of partner, Ahilya uses the following words: *"...I just found it really, really, really difficult to pluck up the courage to tell them"* (2:88). This quote identifies how courage is needed to make a disclosure. The repetition of the word *"really"* stresses the extent of the difficulty experienced when planning a disclosure of this kind. Ahilya conveys the difficulties involved within the disclosure process to begin prior to the actual disclosure and during the lead up to it. This indicates the hard work and anxiety involved in disclosure decisions.

The differing expectations placed upon males and females regarding marriage are evident within Ahilya's discourse below.

> *...such a big deal, even though everything was like fine. He ticked all the right boxes, but it was still, I think 'cause I'm a girl. Like my brother, he has a girlfriend and everybody knows about that and that's fine...* (2: 83-85)

There is a sense that it is a lot easier and less complicated for a male member of the family to disclose a romantic relationship than for a female. This is conveyed within Ahilya's concluding remark: *"Like my brother, he has a girlfriend and everybody knows about that and that's fine..."*. Thus her brother has been able to openly disclose details regarding his relationship, and this seems to have been readily accepted by the family. These differing expectations, placed upon males and females regarding choice

of partner and marriage, convey a disparity between the treatment of males and females within the South Asian family and community. Ahilya's discourse indicates that even though her choice of partner *"ticked all of the boxes"* it was still *"such a big deal"*. It is implied that even if a female adheres to the set expectations, she will still face resistance from the family and be at a disadvantage due to her gender. The added pressure for the South Asian female to marry "appropriately" is highlighted by Ibrahim et al. (1997). The authors assert marriage and children as being the primary two factors that define a woman's status. Bearing Ibrahim et al.'s assertions in mind, the woman's status, as described earlier, has implications for her family's honour and standing within the community. Thus if a woman marries "well", this reflects positively upon the family's honour.

The woman is seen to carry the pressure of representing the honour of her family of origin, and eventually also the honour of the family she acquires through marriage. This is conveyed in Simran's following words: "*...Asian families like, you're not just, if you get married or if you're in a relationship, you're not just getting married to that person, you're getting married to the whole family*" (1:138-140). The relationship between marriage and maintaining family honour is consistent with Marshall and Yazdani's (2000) findings. The authors used a discursive analysis in order to explore constructs of self-harm behaviours within a clinical sample of South Asian women. Furthermore, they examined the location of culture within the emerging discourses of self-harm behaviours. Constructions of self-harm were conveyed in relation to traditional, gendered family expectations, and consequential feelings of pressure and distress. An example of traditional family expectations was revealed as the requirement for a woman to marry by a certain age. Furthermore, failure to do so was viewed as failing to maintain the family's honour (*izzat*) within the community.

Risk assessment: Potential and actual losses, gains and familial reactions

Ahilya's discourse continues to discuss the process of disclosing her choice of partner to her parents and the potential risks involved.

> *...plan what I was going to say, how I was going to say it, trying to think about how they would react and planning for that. Um I mean I was thinking in terms of, "okay what if they chuck me out", like it was to that extent. I was that*

worried...okay they've got to a point where they've accepted that I've had male friends, but then to have a boyfriend is a completely different story. It's a completely different ballgame altogether, as being a girl you know (2:90-96).

For Ahilya a potential risk in disclosing was being *"chucked out"* of her family home. This is similar to the fear of being disowned that Simran talks of in relation to making a disclosure about her former relationship. The possible repercussions of Ahilya's disclosure are conveyed as being extensive. This is demonstrated by her words: *"it was to that extent. I was that worried."* Consequently, this anticipation resulted in the process of disclosure involving a great deal of planning and preparation.

Ahilya's discourse constructs her family as being of a progressive nature, as they are adapting over time in their acceptance of her male friends. However, this progression falls short of the understanding and development that the family requires in order to tolerate a disclosure of a romantic relationship. Conveyed within the discourse is Ahilya's belief that, when making a disclosure of this kind, the evolving nature of the family will not protect her from experiencing resistance. This can be seen by her words which construct this disclosure as being a *"completely different story"*; *"a completely different ballgame"*. The root of these difficulties she accredits to *"being a girl"*.

When constructing the process of disclosure, Ahilya's discourse makes implicit reference to the assessment of risk; however, Simran's talk is explicit in the use of risk assessment language. Simran's use of this language is demonstrated within the extract on the next page. This extract conveys her thought processes behind her decision not to make a disclosure regarding her relationship with a Muslim man.

> *...if I look at my last relationship, it's more like if I felt that he was like the one then I probably would have risked it and kind of fought for it...because I knew that I wasn't really gonna be with him for that long; it wasn't worth the risk of bringing it up and going through all the hassle with it.* (1:29-33).

In this circumstance *"it wasn't worth the risk"* of disclosure, as the potential gains were slim due to the relationship not being *"the one"*. The use of the word *"fought"*

suggests this disclosure would have involved Simran going into battle with her parents. However, since she did not value sufficiently what she was essentially fighting for, it was not worth investing the energy in such a disclosure: *"it wasn't really worth...going through all the hassle with it"*. Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) assert that in fears of social disapproval, South Asian women may avoid disclosing aspects of intimate relations. In this way, they present the expected public image of chastity and purity. Perhaps in Simran's case, as this relationship was a casual attachment that did not serve the purpose of marriage, part of the *"hassle"* in disclosing would be the community questioning her motives for pursuing such an attachment. Subsequently, this may tarnish her image of the chaste, pure woman within the community.

The nature of Simran's risk assessment is apparent in the account below.

> *...it'd, you know, completely change my life in terms of I might end up losing my family over this. So I think that's why at the end of the day, I remember weighing it up and saying, well, do I like love him so much that I wanted to risk losing everything?...* (1:81-84).

The disclosure would have resulted in the loss of family and a way of life. Evident within the discourse practice is a process of risk assessment, which entails calculating the gains she would reap in making the disclosure and weighing this up against the potential losses. Consequently, with regard to this disclosure, the losses were far too great in comparison to the amount of love she would gain in return. Having assessed the situation in this informed manner she chose not to disclose.

The discourse below conveys Simran's views on disclosing her current relationship to her family.

> *I felt this was gonna be a long term thing, that's why I felt like, yeah, I can share it with them. It's okay for me to share it with them. Like I knew they would be okay, even if it's a Hindu person, umm, and I thought well, yeah, if I can see it as a long term thing it's not so much of a risk to kind of share that.* (1:158-161).

In contrast, the possible losses involved in making this disclosure were less, as she anticipated her choice of partner would be accepted by the family. Hence there was no risk of being disowned. Additionally, the gains from disclosing were greater this time round, as the relationship was regarded as being *"long term"* and she possibly saw her partner as being *"the one"*. As the gains were much greater and in excess of the potential losses, in Simran's words it was *"not so much of a risk to kind of share"*.
The disclosure of her boyfriend has been a gradual process, one that has required an investment of time. Consequently, the initial disclosure became the first part of this overall process. The importance of time facilitating acceptance within the family is evident in the following extract:

> *...it's taken a while for everyone to become used to having my boyfriend around, but now it's like he's part of the family. But even with my dad it took him a while to adjust to me having someone. I think it took him...probably a good year.* (1:196-200).

The disclosure was a year-long project which involved an investment of time and energy. This is made evident within her words *"it's taken a while"*. The process involved, gradually, allowing her family to *"adjust"* to this development in her life. However, Simran has gained from this year long process, as her boyfriend has now been accepted and given a position within the family. Implied within this extract is that romantic relationships and marriage are a collective family activity as opposed to an individual activity. This can be seen by the fact that *"everyone"* had to adapt to her having a boyfriend. With regard to Simran's situation, time and continual exposure to her boyfriend has gradually persuaded her family to accept this disclosure. The use of the word *"even"* singles out her father's reaction to the disclosure. Perhaps this conveys the elevated importance of her father's reaction compared with the reactions of other family members. The father's reaction may hold greater influence regarding the perspective adopted by the entire family unit. This underlies the dominant and influential position of the father, and draws upon the disparity between gender roles within the family (discussed in the previous section).

Simran's boyfriend has been accepted into the family and she is pleased at having made the disclosure: *"I'm actually happier that we disclosed"* (1:275-276). However,

she is still very aware of future risks and losses that could take place which is evident in the account below.

> *I think if we split up then I might regret sharing it with them, um, because I think there is this element of shame on the girl's part...it'll be really embarrassing I think for my parents, um, because three years is quite a long time to be with someone. I think now even they're like, "Oh next year are you guys getting engaged?". So there's starting to be that kind of pressure in terms of are you gonna make a commitment.* (1:279-287).

Here the potential future risks are shame, embarrassment and an ever-growing pressure to make a commitment. The use of the word *"we"* in the statement *"if we split up"* indicates Simran and her boyfriend are two individuals who are part of a couple. Furthermore, the statement conveys the act of splitting up as being instigated by her and her boyfriend, as they have been the ones involved in a relationship. However, contradictory to this opening statement, the loss of the relationship will be experienced, collectively, in the form of *"shame"* and embarrassment by her parents. This can be seen by her words: *"it'll be really embarrassing I think for my parents"*. Now that Simran has disclosed her relationship to her parents, in the future, if there is a break up, the loss will be experienced collectively by the family. Her parents are aware of this possibility, and as a result she now feels a growing *"pressure"* to make a commitment. It is interesting that the female members of the community and their families are the only ones subject to this shame and embarrassment: *"there is this element of shame on the girl's part"*. Thus her partner and his family are exempt from enduring this process. Again this illustrates the disparity in the treatment of males and females felt by the women in this study.

Simran's discourse conveys notions of *"shame"* and embarrassment. The literature has highlighted two major concepts that pervade significant relationships within South Asian families; shame and obligation. Individuals are obligated to behave in a manner that never brings shame onto the family (Chatrathi, 1985; Ho, 1988). Thus although Simran is glad about the short term outcomes of the disclosure, there are still concerns that she may *"regret"* making the disclosure in the future due to the potential *"shame"* it could bring the family. Thus, in disclosing the relationship and making it

public, the women are risking the possibility of future family *"shame"*. One can imagine that the possibility of bringing *"shame"* onto the family persuades women to remain in unhappy relationships.

Implicit within Simran's talk is that a female can only have one serious relationship, which has to be with the "acceptable" marriage partner, and the outcome of the relationship must be marriage. Furthermore the "freedom" to be within this relationship, without having made a commitment, i.e. marriage, can only occur for a certain length of time. Simran's discourse reveals that after three years, her time to remain in this relationship, uncommitted, is approaching an end. This constructs the family's "tolerant" and "liberal" attitude towards Simran's courtship as containing limits. Again, there are echoes of the "liberal" and "flexible" family existing above a darker, uncompromising substrate. These findings are consistent with the literature which asserts that, for the South Asian woman, dating is only acceptable within a committed relationship that has prospects of marriage. Additionally premarital relations may only be acceptable if they are non-sexual (Inman et al., 2001).

It is evident from the women's discourse that disclosing within the family involves either an explicit or implicit process of risk assessment which essentially determines the course of action. When considering disclosing, the women assess the risks involved by weighing up the potential gains against the possible losses, and the likelihood of being able to manage the consequences of making a disclosure. Both Simran's and Ahilya's discourse reveal that the loss of family was a possible repercussion of their disclosures. This potential loss highlights that, for some of the women, the continual presence of family in adult life is dependent upon choosing the appropriate partner. Hence, the presence and support of family is conditional upon meeting the set expectations. As Ahilya's discourse reveals, *"there is so much expectation placed upon marriage. Ticking the right boxes."* (2:109).

The process of risk assessment undergone by both Ahilya and Simran was thought out, planned and required time. The aim of this process was to minimise and manage the potential losses that could occur whilst making their disclosures. Nusrat's recollection of the process of risk assessment, in relation to her disclosure of

sexuality, is in contrast to that of Simran's and Ahilya's. The extract below is an account by Nusrat conveying the experience of disclosing her sexuality to her brother.

> *I had given up. I was so upset. I was just like, well, "You might as well just hurt me more, I actually don't want to live," because I wasn't happy with my sexuality...I didn't really want to be different, I just wanted to be like everybody else. I couldn't believe it was me, I felt quite unlucky. And so I hadn't even been dealing with my sexuality. So I just had enough that day and in a moment of distress, that's how it came out and once it did come out, he just stopped hitting me and I said, "I'm, you know," I said, I was really upset. I was crying. I shouted at him I said, "I'm fucking gay leave me alone," or something like that, that's what I said and he was really shocked...* (4:153-162).

Nusrat's disclosure was not pre-planned but said *"in a moment of distress"*. Nusrat's discourse reveals an instant process of risk assessment which happened seconds before the disclosure was made and was instigated by having *"given up"*. Within the context of being physically abused Nusrat made an assessment that if she disclosed her sexuality it would inevitably lead to further violence. This can be seen in her words: *"I was just like, well, you might as well hurt me even more"*. Nusrat was aware of the losses she would entail if she made a disclosure, but had no desire to minimise them or invest time in consulting how to manage them. In those few moments she conveys within her discourse, she saw no future and thus resigned herself to the detrimental consequences that she believed were to follow.

The volatile situation Nusrat found herself in can be seen in the direct nature of her words: *"I was really upset. I was crying. I shouted at him..."* Furthermore, her discourse, *"so I just had enough that day and in a moment of distress, that's how it came out"*, conveys that she had reached her level of tolerance. It is this state of high emotion, instability and imbalance that fuels Nusrat's instant risk assessment and hence impulsive self-disclosure. In contrast, as discussed earlier, Simran's and Ahilya's discourses convey a risk assessment that is well thought out, planned and is approached with much caution and deliberation. For Simran and Ahilya, the process of disclosure was instigated by the hope of a desirable future and acquiring a new beginning. However, in contrast, Nusrat's discourse reveals a disclosure made in

recognition that she had reached an end point, and the future she did see was undesirable: *"I actually didn't want to live because I wasn't happy with my sexuality".*

The literature asserts that for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, the act of disclosing their sexuality represents a major psychological decision and often one of the biggest challenges of their lives (Savin-Williams, 2003). Thus if cultural values and attitudes are added factors encountered by individuals, as was the case for Nusrat's "coming out" experience, this aids further challenges to the disclosure process. Due to the magnitude of challenges and difficulties involved within the disclosure process, as is conveyed within the literature, it is not surprising that it was once Nusrat had given up all hope of a future that she managed to disclose. Perhaps if she had the time to make a thorough risk assessment, in a less acute and stressful situation, she would have been deterred from making a disclosure. Her reluctance to disclose, prior to the events conveyed above, is revealed in her following words:

> *...so I found myself in a very precarious kind of place. I was feeling uncomfortable and I was worried. It was like a feeling of dread, when he (brother) finds out. It was only a matter of time. This is a big rumour; people don't come out at school...* (4:133-136).

Nusrat's talk conveys that she was not planning to make a disclosure but expecting and fearing her brother to learn of her sexuality through others. This confirms that it was the *"distress"* of the moment that instigated the disclosure.

As well as the potential risks and losses that are embedded within disclosures, i.e. being disowned, the women's discourse also reveals the unexpected gains that can be made. With some of the women it is apparent that a potentially threatening disclosure, which creates a prelude period of unrest and instability, can result in a less catastrophic outcome than initially anticipated. This is evident in the disclosure Ayesha made to her mother, regarding a romantic attachment she has with a man who is not of the same Islamic faith as her family. Within her discourse, she conveys the following:

...that was the biggest ever disclosure I've ever made to my mum and it was really, really hard. (3:80-81).

I'm so glad I shared it with my family, that's how I feel basically, so relieved, so glad and happy that I made the decision to tell them, especially my mum. (3:212-214).

The discourse above reveals that despite the difficulties surrounding the disclosure, in hindsight Ayesha feels *"relieved"* and *"glad"* to have disclosed to her family. The repetition of the word *"really"* reveals the extent of the difficulties surrounding the disclosure. Furthermore, the use of several words to represent her present attitude towards making the disclosure (i.e. *"glad"*, *"relieved"*, *"happy"*), suggests that the outcome was both positive and desirable. Ayesha's discourse reveals that she questioned whether she *"had made a wrong decision"* (3:224) due to her mother's initial silence surrounding the disclosure. However, over time, Ayesha's talk reveals her mother to have *"become used to the idea"* (3:226) and she is now *"a lot more understanding"* (3:138) of Ayesha's situation. As a consequence, her mother *"now asks questions about the relationship and Adam"* (3:225). Thus it is evident that important gains, which are not anticipated during the process of risk assessment, can be made from a difficult disclosure. Additionally, this also demonstrates that initial resistance from the family can sometimes evolve into acceptance and more liberal attitudes.

The following account demonstrates the process of disclosure that took place between Nusrat and her mother:

...in the beginning I, you know, I could totally understand why she didn't want to hear about it and I would not speak to her about it that much, but at the same time I didn't want to deny her that part of myself, who I was. I wanted to be me. It was all out in the open, you know, I could carry on like it was a bad secret, like I had done something wrong, cause I hadn't. Um, I taught my mum to have a bit of understanding about it. I think I didn't want to have this, for it to be a barrier between us in getting to know each other. But now my mum, she's just amazing. She's just fine about it. I can talk to her about stuff... (4:70-78).

Thus like Ayesha's mother, over time, Nusrat's mother also became more open and tolerant of her disclosure. This in turn removed *"a barrier"* and eventually facilitated an open dialogue between mother and daughter, giving Nusrat an opportunity to express her true self. Again it is evident that an important part of the process of disclosing is the management of the aftermath that follows. For Nusrat this involved an acceptance and understanding of her mother's initial reaction. This is demonstrated by her words: *"...in the beginning I, you know, could totally understand why she didn't want to hear about it"*. Nusrat's understanding and acceptance of her mother's initial response derives from an awareness that her mother's culture of origin is distinct from her own and existing within differing normative values. This is revealed by her words below. Within this extract, Nusrat conveys her mother's preoccupation with the community's response to Nusrat's sexuality.

> *I've always said to her, "Mum please don't care about what other people say", this and that. But she's come from a completely different culture, so it's a whole different ballgame for her...* (4: 461-463).

Nusrat's discourse constructs her mother's culture as being *"completely different"* to her own. The difference between the cultures is rooted within the value and importance that is placed upon what others say and think within the community. Implicit within the discourse is that the culture Nusrat has adopted does not place value on the opinions of those who may condemn her sexuality. This is evident within her words, *"Mum, please don't care about what other people say"*. The idea of her mother coming from a culture which involves a *"whole different ballgame"* constructs the image of the community as being a playing field for a game, and its members as being the players of this game. In order to remain a player within the game, one needs to play by the rules. In a similar sense, in order to remain a member of the community one needs to adhere to the rules of the cultural norms. Perhaps Nusrat's sexuality is deviating outside of the cultural norms, thus breaking the rules of the game, and consequently threatening the family's position and membership within the community. Nusrat's astute awareness of these factors allows her to empathise with her mother's initial reaction to her sexuality. Additionally, a second feature of managing the aftermath of the disclosure was to educate her mother around issues regarding her sexuality: *"I taught my mum to have a bit of understanding"*. This

conveys how resistance in the family may be due to ignorance, and in such situations attitudes can be adapted through educating members.

It is evident within Nusrat's discourse that in order to gain support from her mother, she had to be patient, and maintain an understanding of her mother's initially reaction to the disclosure. However, this was clearly a difficult process. Nusrat's talk reveals the internal conflict she felt regarding her mother's initial reaction. On the one hand she understood, perhaps, that her mother needed time, but Nusrat also struggled with not being able *"to speak to her about it"* and being forced to *"deny"* a part of herself. Thus despite having made the disclosure and her sexuality being *"out in the open"*, she was continuing to live as if *"it was a bad secret"* as though she had *"done something wrong"*.

However, despite the initial turmoil, an important gain for Nusrat was the change in her mother's attitude, which her discourse reveals to be *"amazing"*. The use of the word *"amazing"* suggests almost disbelief in how well her mother has adapted to her sexuality, and also highlights the unexpected nature of the gain. Thus in describing the long-term reactions to their disclosures, the women's discourse constructs the flexible and mouldable aspects of the family. Once the initial crisis period has subsided, uncompromising and constraining attitudes held by some members of the family can adapt into understanding and tolerance. The evolving, more tolerant responses of Ayesha and Nusrat's mothers, as represented within the discourse, are discussed in the literature. Inman et al. (2001) report an increasing tendency amongst the older generation to adopt a more liberal attitude towards issues such as intimate relations and dating. This is described as being an attempt, on the part of the older generation, to adapt to progressing times and values.

Alternatively, the progressive and adaptable construction of the South Asian family conveyed within the discourse could be due to the type of South Asian women this study attracted. It could be argued that this study attracted South Asian women who were in a more progressive situation and had overcome distressful times. Those women who were not in such situations may have been deterred from participating in this study as they did not hold a similar set of resources which would have made such

an act possible. Thus the progressive and adaptable construction of the South Asian family may be due to reasons of self-selection for the study.

Nusrat's discourse indicates a divide in her family's reactions to the disclosure of her sexuality. The reactions of her father and brother are in contrast to that of her mother, demonstrating the process of disclosure to differ amongst members of the family. The following account conveys Nusrat's father's long-term reaction to the disclosure of her sexuality.

> *...my dad, like I said, I don't speak to him about being gay or having relationships at all, it's just something that is unspoken about. Um, that's more for him...but, you know, if he finds it hard to deal with that's completely up to him to deal with it. There's nothing I can do, there's nothing I can say to make it better, and so if he wants to speak about it I'd be totally happy.* (4:284-290).

Nusrat's discourse reveals her mother to have progressed from a state of denial into one of tolerance. The account she provides of her father's reaction is one of stagnation and denial. As a result, issues around Nusrat's sexuality and her relationships have remained *"unspoken"* between herself and her father. Thus, in contrast to what some of the other women have stated, the initial disclosure did not lead to a more open relationship with her father, and for this reason no further disclosures could be made to him. The continual resistance she receives from her father is consistent with the literature on disclosures of sexuality (Boxer et al., 1991).

Nusrat's father's reaction to her sexuality disclosure is in contrast to the research cited previously by Inman et al. (2001). This research reports an increasing tendency amongst the older generation to adopt a more liberal attitude towards issues such as intimate relations and dating. However, perhaps this progressing attitude on the part of the older generation has its restrictions too. Perhaps this attitude is only adopted towards dating in a heterosexual context. For example, if an individual was involved in an intimate relationship with a "suitable" marriage partner, i.e., a South Asian of the opposite sex, this may be accepted as it is still within the realm of what is expected of a South Asian community member. However, homosexual relations may

be deemed too far outside the boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour and thus will receive resistance from the older generation, as is the case for Nusrat.

Nusrat's talk indicates that the lack of disclosure between herself and her father is due to her father's needs as opposed to her own: *"that's more for him"*, *"he finds it hard to deal with"*. When Nusrat conveys the role she plays in her mother's changing attitude, her talk constructs a sense of equality between mother and daughter; Nusrat offered her mother understanding and time, in return her mother gave her acceptance, and in this way Nusrat was able to educate her mother. However, in her father's response to the disclosure, Nusrat's discourse conveys herself to be powerless. This can be seen in her statement: *"...that's completely up to him to deal with it, there's nothing I can do. There's nothing I can say to make it better."* Her discourse reveals that she has abdicated all responsibility regarding his acceptance of her sexuality, and this is due to her feeling that her words and actions will have no impact upon her father's attitude.

Furthermore, the discourse confirms the power hierarchy which favours the male within the family. This is indicated by her father controlling the silence between himself and Nusrat. Nusrat is restrained from speaking first, as a discussion regarding her sexuality will only proceed if *"he wants to speak"*. Subsequently, the power to resolve this situation lies in the hands of her father. Additionally, the discourse conveys a conflict between Nusrat wanting to disclose further to her father but being unable to do so because of the power dynamics existing between them. At a later point, within the discourse, Nusrat herself comments upon the power dynamics present within her family:

> *I saw exactly what was going on in the family, and it was a, don't really wanna say typical, but you know from lots of Asian cultures, men do run the household, in a way, with aggression and force and violence, a lot of it goes on. So I just came from a family like that basically.* (4:309-313).

In stating *"I saw exactly what went on in the family"*, Nusrat's discourse conveys she was not naïve or unaware of the power dynamics that were at play within her household. The male figures are constructed as being in a position of control, as they

"run" the South Asian household through *"aggression"*, *"force"* and *"violence"*. The extract highlights a gender imbalance existing within the family; the female members are in a position of inferiority, and it is assumed that they are the recipients of this *"aggression"*, *"force"* and *"violence"*. Thus, if the power lies with the male members of the household, this invariably will also include the control of disclosure within the family. This is in unison with Nusrat's differing experiences of disclosing to both her mother and father. In this manner, Nusrat's discourse conveys that when making this disclosure, she was in a position of inferiority due to a generational and gender divide.

Nusrat's discourse reveals her hesitancy in conveying that this power dynamic is *"typical"* of South Asian households. This may be due to Nusrat's reluctance to appear judgemental and biased due to her own background of domestic violence; she may feel that if she did portray herself in this way, this will reduce the credibility of what she is trying to assert. Furthermore, Nusrat's words, *"lots of Asian households men do run the household...so I just came from a family like that"*, normalise her experiences. In this way Nusrat's discourse constructs her household as being no different from or unusual with regard to the majority of Asian households. Consequently, in normalising her experiences it reduces the negativity directed towards her family, as the *"aggression"* and *"violence"* becomes a community issue as opposed to one experienced by her family alone. Her family is removed from being at fault, as they are conveyed as merely following what is *"typical"* of a South Asian family.

Boxer et al. (1991) investigated how the parent-child relationship evolved over time after a disclosure of sexuality had been made. It was discovered that girls were more likely than boys to describe positive changes in maternal relationships and negative changes in paternal relationships. Possible causes for these variations were not highlighted. Boxer et al.'s (1991) findings are in agreement with Nusrat's case. Her discourse conveys positive changes with her mother as she was able to influence her mother's attitude by educating her. However, she was not able to achieve this with her father, due to the power imbalance within the household that did not allow her to break the silence. Macoby's (1990) research suggests that males begin to show a resistance to influence when only three and half years old and this resistance seems to

increase with age. She states that resisting influence, especially from females, is a characteristic present within boyhood as well as manhood. These findings are interesting as they are consistent with Nusrat's experience of her disclosure of sexuality. She was able to influence her mother and gain acceptance from her over time; however, this was not the case with her father who resisted her influence.

Relations with the community

The women's discourse conveys their relationship with their families and subsequent levels of disclosure are dependent upon the family's relationship and attachment with the wider South Asian community. When asked to describe what she would find difficult in disclosing to her family, Simran's discourse refers to the attachment her parents have with the community.

> *...they're kind of in their own culture as well, so they're more aware of what others are gonna think or say, so there's this element of still kind of keeping face within the community.* (1:47-49).

Simran's discourse separates herself from her family, revealing her parents as being *"in their own culture"*. The main distinction that separates Simran's culture from that of her parents is their involvement *"within a community"* in which *"keeping face"* and presenting a certain image are important. Implicit in Simran's words is that certain actions and their subsequent disclosure could potentially result in her family "losing face" within the community. *"Keeping face"* has similar connotations to Simran's earlier discourse which refers to the female's responsibility of preserving *"the family honour"*. Again within the account above, Simran uses the modifier *"kind of"* in reference to her family being *"in their own culture"* and *"keeping face"*. As previously stated, modifiers may be used to reduce the extent in which the family is portrayed as partaking in activities that may label them to be restricting and constraining. In this way, she attempts to construct her family as being of a more favourable, "liberal" nature.

However, having defined this distinction between cultures later on in the interview, in response to the same question, Simran's discourse reveals the following:

...if I was to say, I'm gonna have a cigarette or I'm gonna smoke some weed or something, it's not done ... even though like we're British Asians we're still Asian at the end of the day. (1:52-59).

Here, *"British Asians"* is seen as the culture Simran's words connected her to in the previous extract (1:47-49). The British Asian culture is seen as being distinct from the culture her parents are within. In the statement above (1:52-59), Simran's acknowledgement of being a part of the *"British Asian"* culture is overshadowed by her kinship with the *"Asian"* culture. This can be seen by her words: *"we're still Asian at the end of the day"*. She implies that being part of a British Asian culture does not eradicate the fact that she is first and foremost South Asian. The words *"at the end of the day"* attached to this comment convey the finality and inescapability of being *"Asian"* and the consequential factors and meanings that come attached with this title. She creates the image of there being no alternative but to accept that she is Asian, and this inevitably means the acceptance of all that is associated with being part of this community. Thus here she draws a strong affinity between herself and her family and community which is in contrast with the former separation she makes.

Interestingly, the account contains no emotion or indication as to how Simran feels with regard to what her discourse reveals. This makes the account very clinical and factual, adding to the impression that her South Asian heritage and culture is something that she has to accept and tolerate without question or complaint. The literature suggests that a greater sense of ethnic obligation and involvement promotes a stronger ego identity and collective self-esteem. This enables individuals to cope better with cultural conflicts. (Phinney, 1989; Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000). Thus the findings of the literature suggest that the affinity Simran feels towards her South Asian community could be viewed as a positive element which promotes well being.

Both the separation and affinity Simran feels towards her family and the wider Asian community are conveyed in the following discourse:

There's an element of me wanting to be independent, but then you're still linked into your family, and they're still linked into the community in some way. So you can't be completely independent. You can't just say this is what I'm going to do or

say; this is how I'm going to present myself; I don't like give a shit about what anyone else thinks. Because it does matter, at the end of the day, like if it doesn't affect you it's going to affect the parents, and they are gonna have to live with your decision as well. (1:145-151).

A tension is evident between Simran wanting to be autonomous, but then also being part of a family and a wider community, and the implications this has upon her actions and behaviours. Her words, *"So you can't be completely independent. You can't just say this is what I'm going to do or say; this is how I'm going to present myself"*, convey the restrictions and the impossibility she feels in following her own free will. The restrictions placed upon talk and open disclosure are indicated by her words: *"you can't just say..."*. Simran's discourse constructs the impression of the individual having to present themselves in a certain light that is possibly not a true reflection of their real self. Earlier she spoke of *"the parents"* having to *"keep face"* in the community; here she reflects upon the individual having to monitor how they *"present"* themselves. In making these references, Simran's discourse draws upon the idea of keeping up appearances.

Her individual actions and behaviours regarding disclosure are governed by a collective force that is the family unit which in itself is equally driven by the expectations of the community. This is made evident in the words: *"you're still linked into your family, and they're linked into the community"*. The family is described as the intermediary element between the individual and the community. This constructs an image of the individual being one step removed from the community, as can be seen from Simran's words: *"if it doesn't affect you, it's going to affect the parents"*. Here, the parents are acting as a buffer to the rebuke of the community and have been positioned as the victims of their children's decisions. For example, as mentioned earlier on, in Simran's case, a *"split"* in her relationship would be a decision made by her, which her parents would have to *"live with"*.

In describing how her actions and behaviours must be restricted in order to preserve the wellbeing of her parents, Simran's discourse places her family's needs above her own. In doing so, she takes on the selfless, altruistic role (that has been mentioned earlier) which is expected of female members by the South Asian community. The

word *"independent"* conveys Simran's separation from the South Asian community. This reflects the notion of autonomy which is inherent within the dominant culture in Britain. The discourse representing her affinity towards the South Asian culture, draws upon aspects of collectivism as can be seen by her words *"linked into your family"*. These findings, reflecting the struggle that is experienced by second-generation women regarding feeling a sense of belonging and legitimacy to both the South Asian community and the dominant culture has been documented in the literature. The opposing forces from both cultures may result in the women experiencing conflict between loyalty towards their families and to themselves as they strive to accomplish their own, personal goals in life (Fernandez, 1988; Inman et al., 2001).

Whereas Simran's discourse alternates between positions of both separation and affinity, Ahilya's talk concentrates solely upon her separation and rejection of the community. In the following extract, Ahilya's discourse reveals her desire to distance herself from a community which dictates her actions and suppresses her happiness.

> *...as I've got older, I've become a lot more confident in knowing what I do want and what I don't want in my life. And I've also got to the point where I'm sick of the hypocrisy and I'm sick of people telling me, you know, on some level because of the way the community is and the way our culture is that I can't do things or can do things. I'm really reaching my boiling point with it and at the end of the day I want to be happy in my life, and if people whoever they are whether they are family or friends, if they are genuine and they do care about me then they would want me to be happy.* (4:156-162).

Evident within the discourse is that maturity and confidence has allowed Ahilya to assess and assert her needs and wants in life, which are consequently in conflict with what is expected and required of her by the community and the culture. There is a sense that in the past she did follow what was expected of her. This is evident in her words: *"I'm sick of people telling me, you know, on some level because of the way the community is and the way our culture is that I can't do things or can do things"*. Now, having complied long enough, she is *"reaching her boiling point"* as the expectations placed upon her by the community are in conflict with what makes her

happy in life. The words *"sick"* and *"boiling point"* are very strong images. They construct the impression of her harbouring feelings of illness, revulsion and anger, towards the community which have now approached the maximum possible level of tolerance. Her words, *"I am sick of the hypocrisy"*, also convey a sense that she is separating herself from a community, which she feels is insincere in their demands of her. Ahilya retaliates against the *"hypocrisy"* of the community through asserting her desire to be surrounded by people who are *"genuine"* in their acceptance of her choices.

As already discussed, due to the difficulties inherent within disclosure practices, the women's discourse reveals a lack of transparency between individuals and their families. Ahilya's discourse conveys a similar process to occur between the family unit and the community:

> *...inside the home, so much goes on that people don't know about and there's this whole thing about, within the Asian community, about putting on a front and showing other people that you're this or that, when whatever goes on inside the family, you know, there's a big gap between them both...* (2:259-263).

> *...our family fearing people are gonna judge them as like parents, or you know they're not the good Asian family that everybody thought they were like.* (2:279-280).

> *I think shame's a huge thing again, what like, the whole what an Asian family or Asian people should and shouldn't do comes into it, and that even that within the family* (2:310-312).

The discourse conveys the family to be under the same scrutiny from the community, as the individual is from the family unit. Again this describes a culture of appearances, which Ahilya's discourse refers to as *"putting on a front"*. Ahilya's talk conveys a discrepancy between what actually occurs within the family and what is disclosed and perceived by the outside community. Again, what is disclosed is in accordance with what is expected from *"a good Asian family"*, Implicit in Ahilya's words, *"inside the home, so much goes on that people don't know about"*, is the

notion that the reality is far too threatening and disturbing to be revealed; a reality that the family fears they will be judged for, one that will bring shame, and possibly tarnish *"the family honour"*. Consequently, the tarnishing of *"the family honour"* may call into question the impression of the *"good Asian family"* in the eyes of the community.

<u>The healing nature of the community</u>

As well as demonstrating the restrictive nature of the community, the women's discourse also reveals how the community can aid the individual and family to manage the impact of a disclosure. Ahilya's words reflect this in the following extract:

> *...my dad's best friends, they kind of mediated between my mum and dad and me. I just felt like, I don't know, it wasn't a really nice experience, but it was good in the sense that I was able to communicate through them to my parents and vice versa...so that was what happened, and how we kind of reached an agreement of waiting a year and see how things go...* (2:144-150).

The above account is in reference to the disclosure Ahilya made to her parents regarding the man she had chosen to marry. Having called upon members of the community to *"mediate"*, an *"agreement"* was made. Thus, although the mediators were friends of her father, they were able to act in a neutral role coordinating the discussions around the disclosure. Initially her parents had been resistant towards Ahilya's choice of life partner; however, through the aid of community members a compromise was possible, whereby the situation would be reassessed in a year's time. This was a more tolerant response than the initial *"nope, nope, nope"* reaction Ahilya received from her mother during the initial disclosure. The community is often recognised, within the discourse, as being the impetus behind the family placing expectations and restrictions upon the women and thus instigating difficulties around disclosure. Thus it is interesting to see Ahilya's discourse convey the community coming to her aid with the disclosure process. Ahilya's talk indicates that, in this situation, her family was able to put aside the culture of appearances and was *"putting on a front"* within the community in order to receive support and guidance from its members.

Nusrat's discourse also demonstrates the community coming to her aid. Having made the disclosure regarding her sexuality to her family, her brother's violence towards her escalated, and this meant Nusrat, fearing for her life, had no choice but to leave the family home. Homeless at seventeen, Nusrat took refuge in a South Asian women's centre.

> *...it helped meeting certain people, I was really lucky to meet Nikhat, an older woman who I still know now...who managed to get me a place in the Asian women's refuge...I was emotionally distressed about the experience that I had been through, if I had to sit there and explain to a person of another culture, Black, White, Greek it would have been too much for me. So the fact that everyone was Asian, I just, you know, my counsellor was Asian, I didn't have to explain anything, she knew where I was coming from and because she knew she could help me basically, and so that's why the Asian, in the end that's what I mean about the good things about the community, the Asian women helped me in the end.* (4:510-539)

Nusrat's discourse conveys how she was able to disclose her situation to women within the community, who then came to her aid during difficult times. The factor that played a major part in helping her through this situation was the understanding and insight the women at the refuge had with regard to her situation. Nusrat's talk conveys how at the time it would *"have been too much"* to explain to someone outside of the community the cultural dynamics that had affected her experience. The understanding her *"Asian"* counsellor had of her cultural background and the environment she had come from was enough to help her. This is made evident by the words: *"because she knew she could help me basically"*. Here Nusrat assumes that an individual outside of the community would not have adequate knowledge of her cultural background and for this reason would be unable to help her. Implicit within Nusrat's words is not that it was essential for the counsellor to have been of South Asian origin; however, it was necessary for them to have an awareness of the cultural factors which had affected her experiences and contributed to her distress. Thus precedence is placed upon the counsellor's knowledge as opposed to their cultural orientation. This is supported by Reavey et al.'s (2006) findings, which reveal that the need for culturally sensitive services is not necessarily addressed by employing South Asian therapists to work

with South Asian clients. Rather, their findings suggest that an understanding of culturally embedded experiences is required in order to alleviate distress.

Nusrat's discourse conveys that the South Asian women's recognition of the failings within their own communities allowed her to openly disclose to them. Thus Nusrat was able to draw upon the resources of the community during her time of need, and the discourse refers to this as being one of *"the good things about the community"*. In this way, she provides an account of the positive features of the community.

Essentially, the women, Nusrat refers to have sought help from the refuge as they have been forced to leave their families and communities. Thus it is likely they may be viewed as "outsiders" by their families and communities. In order to gain support and aid and be helped through difficult times, these women have successfully formed an alternative community within the refuge. However, Nusrat does not acknowledge this alternative community within her discourse, and instead she refers to them as *"the good things about the [South Asian] community"*. In this way, although these women have probably been rejected from their particular communities, Nusrat's discourse reveals that they are part of the wider South Asian community. Thus, in connecting herself to these women within the refuge, she too remains part of the wider South Asian community. Perhaps this reflects Nusrat's deep need to feel a part of and remain connected to the South Asian community. In conveying *"the good things about the community"*, her discourse constructs a more balanced account of the South Asian community. Hence the account provides both negative and positive features which serve to protect the community's reputation.

<u>Future families and adaptability</u>

Some of the women's discourse referred to their parents as the main components of the family unit who dictated their experiences of disclosure. Based upon this information, I asked the women to reflect upon their experiences of disclosure within their families, and then to describe, if they were to have children, how they imagined the process of disclosure to be in their future family units. The responses the women provided convey the adaptable and evolving nature of the family unit within the South Asian community. Below is an account illustrating Nusrat's discourse in response to this question.

I would want my child to talk to me about everything...and for them to have the confidence to come to me and talk to me about anything, even if they found it embarrassing. I would want them to be honest about what they had done, even if they had made mistakes with drugs, drinks or with having unsafe sex, or you know, I would want them to be able to talk to me about it... (4:579-586).

Nusrat's talk conveys a family unit that has no restrictions and boundaries around disclosure; she would like her children to discuss *"everything"* with her. Her talk reveals the possible barriers to open, *"honest"* communication, i.e., not having the *"confidence"* and feeling embarrassed, and she hopes her children will be able to surpass these factors and come to her in times of need. Furthermore, Nusrat's discourse conveys a family which is open and tolerant to hearing *"mistakes"* and one that provides support and understanding. Nusrat constructs the image of a future family that is liberal and progressive.

Simran's talk conveys similar desires when envisioning her future family. The following account reflects Simran's discourse regarding these matters: *"I'd wanna have less boundaries between me and my children...I'd rather they be able to speak to me and not have this element of fear."* (1:439-440).

Whereas Nusrat's discourse conveys a family which shares *"everything"*, Simran's talk reveals a desire for a family which has *"less boundaries"*. The inclusion of the word *"less"* in this account suggests a family which is adapting and changing, but one which is still holding onto some of the boundaries, perhaps from a previous generation. Nusrat hopes her children will have the confidence to disclose to her, and Simran desires her children to be free from fear when disclosing to her. Thus both women construct the image of some disclosures, within families, requiring a certain amount of courage on the part of the discloser.

The desire for a family unit which is *"open"* and *"honest"* is echoed within Ayesha's discourse:

I'll be different to the way my mum has been with us. Um...I would be a lot more open with my children and I would want them to be honest with me. In that aspect,

I would hate it if my kids were secret, um, secretive with me...I wouldn't avoid it, I would prompt them and I would want to know, so I would be, I would communicate really. You know, I'd have a, I'd try and have a really good relationship with my kids... (3:454-469).

Within the extract above, Ayesha's discourse conveys that her experience of disclosure within her family is encouraging her to change the dynamics within her future family. Ayesha's talk reveals that she will be *"different"* to her mother in how she addresses the communication and subsequent disclosures within her future family unit. This constructs disclosure within the family to be fluid and able to change overtime, through generations. The women's talk conveys that they are consciously deciding to change the disclosure protocol within their future families as opposed to repeating patterns of behaviour. Ayesha's talk reveals that through changing the protocol of disclosure, within her future family, she will be facilitating *"a really good relationship with my kids"*. Embedded within Ayesha's words is how the adaptability of the family can bring about hope for the future.

Conveyed within both Nusrat's and Ayesha's discourse is the desire for their children *"to be honest"*. Thus an expectation they have in response to providing this tolerant and supportive atmosphere would be honesty from their children. Even as the family evolves and develops into providing a more liberal and progressive environment, it is still constructed as a unit which places expectations upon the members of the family, with regard to their disclosing activity. The discourse reveals Ayesha would *"hate"* if her *"kids were secretive"* with her. The word *"hate"* conveys how strongly and passionately Ayesha wants her children to be open with her. It would be interesting to see if this passion for an open atmosphere will be translated by other members of the family as a demand and expectation. Hence this would mean the open, less constraining family Ayesha hopes for begins to lean towards the characteristics of the restrictive family. Thus the family is constructed as being on a sliding scale, fluctuating between conditions of restriction and liberalness, and all the while affecting the process and boundaries of disclosure within the household.

Alternatively, this insistence that their children *"be honest"* may be due to realising, from their own experiences, the negative effect a lack of open communication has

upon individuals and their families. Perhaps they do not want their children to feel restricted and suffer from the subsequent distress they have within their families. Furthermore, the intensity and passion the women feel with regards to wanting their children not to suffer in a similar way to them can be seen from the highly emotive language they use, i.e., *"hate"*. Perhaps the women's mothers may have also said similar things before they had children. Coming from restrictive families in their country of origin and migrating to a western culture, perhaps they hoped for more open relationships with their children than their mothers had. This may explain why some of the women's mothers were able to accept the women's disclosures over time. However despite this, the women's discourses still convey the presence of restrictions within the family which affect the process of disclosure. The women's mothers may have succumbed to the pressures inherent within the South Asian community and felt forced to impose a certain amount of restrictions upon their children.

Summary of the constructions

This section provides a summary of the constructions of disclosure within "the family" and "the community", emerging from the women's discourse. The family is constructed as fluctuating between a liberal and flexible nature, to one that is restricting and constraining. These positions are constructed in accordance with the nature of the disclosure that is being conveyed within the discourse. Particular disclosures that would be regarded by the family as deviating from the cultural norms are constructed as being met with opposition and resistance by the family.

A gender inequality is apparent which constructs the female members of the family as being exposed to a greater degree of restrictions. These restrictions are placed upon the women, essentially, to ensure that they do not partake in any activities which may call into question the family honour and standing within the community. The women are constructed as existing within two cultures with differing value systems; one being the dominant British culture and the other being the culture of origin, upheld by the family. Thus, they struggle between upholding the collectivist values of the culture of origin and asserting their individualism which comprises the value systems of the dominant culture. The responsibilities of holding and preserving the family's honour and the subsequent restrictions placed upon the women affect the process of disclosure. Disclosures containing elements that may be seen, by the family, as

deviating outside of the expected gender roles are constructed as undergoing a process of risk assessment by the women. The risk assessment is conveyed, within the discourse, as revealing whether or not disclosures should be made by the women. If they do decide to disclose, this begins a process of disclosure that is usually constructed as time consuming, anxiety provoking, fraught with difficulty and confrontation, and involves managing familial reactions.

The discourses also reveal that the community may take on a positive role by aiding the women with the aftermath of a disclosure. For example, Ahilya describes how members of the community mediated between herself and her parents in order that an agreeable compromise could be decided upon following a disclosure. Additionally, Nusrat conveys how the South Asian women in the refuge gave her shelter and support when she was made homeless as a result of disclosing her sexuality to her family. Another feature of the women's discourse which reveals the community to be of a positive nature is the family's ability to adapt and evolve. Certain members of the South Asian community are revealed as accepting disclosures over time. This demonstrates the South Asian community's ability to progress over time.

3.2.2 Emerging discourses

Having identified the constructions of disclosure, within stage 2, I shall now focus upon the differences between them. Furthermore, I shall attempt to locate the differing discursive constructions of "the family" and "the community" within wider discourses. For the purpose of clarity, I have divided the different discourses into sections. However, as hopefully becomes evident, I would like the reader to bear in mind that these discourses are in fact all interrelated.

Political discourse

The first set of constructions of disclosure resonates with a political discourse. Within a political society, the government is the ruling power and has the authority to pass laws. In a similar vein, the family unit acts as the ruling power over the women and their actions. Political governments can be both democratic and autocratic in nature. The women's discourse constructs their families as fluctuating between positions of democracy and autocracy with regards to their attitudes towards particular disclosures. In turn, the family's sliding scale of attitudes regarding disclosures affects the

women's process of disclosure within the family. The language used suggests certain disclosures made by the women are encouraged, and consequently the family adopts a more democratic position regarding these disclosures. The atmosphere created as a result of this democratic position is said to be open, transparent, tolerant and flexible. Within this liberal atmosphere, the women describe feeling supported and understood by their families. A fair environment is conveyed, where the women feel heard, respected, and their choices and decisions are valued and accepted by the family. Furthermore, emerging within the construction of a liberal family, is the concept of adaptability. The language suggests a family that can grow in tolerance and acceptance over time. Consequently, some disclosures that were not initially approved of were accepted over time by the family. Like democratic governments, the family is conveyed as being of a progressive nature.

Interestingly, some of the disclosures that were immediately received with a liberal response were the ones which fulfilled the expectations imposed upon females, as described by the women in the study. For example, Simran's discourse conveys her family to have been *"really open"* (1:11) regarding her career choice which *"isn't typical of Asian people"* (1:9). Later on in the discourse it is revealed that having a career and working for a living are some of the expectations that are placed upon women. Thus her family's response was actually in line with what is expected of female members. This constructs an image of the family masking an undercurrent of restrictions within the guise of a liberal attitude. In a similar vein, democratic countries are sometimes criticised for displaying the illusion of democracy, for example, through holding political elections, when in actual fact the practical running of the nation follows an opposing philosophy.

However, at the opposing end to the liberal construction of the family is the restrictive nature of the family. This construction mirrors an autocratic state that is dictatorial in nature. The language conveys the family as adopting an uncompromising and inflexible attitude towards disclosures that are seen as being threatening in nature. Perhaps, in a political sense this would be regarded as disclosures that threaten the status quo. In terms of the family setting, these disclosures are described as threatening the *"honour of the family"* (1:97). Whilst some experiences remain hidden, never to be revealed to the family, others are disclosed with much trepidation.

As discussed earlier, the potential disclosures that create this restricting, autocratic attitude are ones of a sexual nature, or the introduction of partners into the family. The women's discourse conveys fears that their families will discover, either through a disclosure made by the women or by other means, that they have crossed *"unsaid boundaries"* (1:16). The fear these women feel can be compared to the fear that runs through a state governed by a dictatorial regime. In such a state, a ruling power asserts its authority and control through coercion and generating fear amongst its people.

The women's discourse also constructs notions of their future families as being an adapted, progressive version of their current family, ones that would facilitate disclosure. Consequently, the women can be compared to citizens of an oppressive state who have hope for freedom and a better way of life in the future. However, even within their talk of desiring a more liberal and progressive future family, the discourse conveys them to have expectations which could evolve into certain members feeling restricted. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the women's expectations of an open environment may be rooted in wanting their children not to encounter the same difficulties they have within their family environments.

Disparity discourse

The second set of constructions of disclosure draws upon a discourse of disparity between the male and female members of the family. The female members of the family are conveyed as managing a *"hard balance"* (1:98) of contradictory expectations and roles which require them to be both *"modern"* (1:99) but also *"traditional"* (1:99). The lives of South Asian females are revealed as being *"harder"* than those of South Asian men. Direct links are made by the women in the study between the disadvantages they face within the family and *"being a girl"* (1:217, 2:95). Within these expectations imposed upon the women is the implicit notion that they hold the *"honour of the family"* (1:16). Consequently, the women's discourse indicates that this affects their behaviour and subsequent disclosures within the family.

The women's discourse reveals that disclosures of a sexual nature (i.e., premarital relationships, premarital sex, sexual abuse and sexuality) are too threatening for the family to tolerate. Associating these factors with the female members, perhaps, calls

into question the *"honour of the family"* (1:16), and consequently affects the family's standing within the community. Contained within the discourse is the idea that the women need preserving, hence they cannot be tainted by factors of a sexual nature and even if they are, this cannot be made public within the community.

Marriage is conveyed as being the main purpose for this preservation, and once a woman has married "appropriately", she is granted "freedom." This is indicated by Ahilya:

> *...it's like marriage means you can then just do everything, if you marry the right person then that's your key to freedom, and not being judged, and then you're out to be whoever you want to be.* (2:386-388).

The disparity conveyed within the women's discourse regarding disclosures of a sexual nature is also apparent within the women's talk of marriage, and the associated disclosures these practices bring about. Again the women feel added expectations are placed upon them, as opposed to their male counterparts, to marry the appropriate person, someone who *"ticked all the boxes"* (2:109). Embedded within this discourse is the idea that the female is a material possession who represents the wealth, standing and status of the family. Meeting certain expectations, i.e., marrying the appropriate man, increases the individual female's material worth, and hence adds to the collective wealth and prestige of the family. Consequently, due to the expectations placed upon marriage, and the subsequent implications this has upon the family's honour within the community, the women's discourse reveals disclosures regarding choice of marriage partners are made with much trepidation.

Conflict discourse

The third set of constructions regarding the process of disclosure within the women's families and communities reveals a conflict discourse. This discourse emulates features of warfare in battlegrounds, risk assessment, diplomacy and humanitarian aid. The scene of the actual disclosure is the battleground and the enemy is the family, usually represented by the parents. As politicians assess the threats involved with going into war, similarly the women undergo a process of risk assessment with regard to making a disclosure. For the women, this process involves assessing the potential

gains and losses ensuing from making a disclosure. Furthermore, for some of them (i.e., Ahilya and Simran), it also involves assessing their abilities in managing the possible consequences of making a disclosure. Politicians would undergo a similar process before taking their country into battle. The gains and losses of going into conflict would be assessed, and also the country's ability to withstand the potential aftermath of warfare would be reviewed.

Thus a clear picture of the risk factors and their potential harm is presented by the women. Having made their risk assessment, the women decide whether or not to make a disclosure, depending upon the potential losses and gains involved, and the outcome they desire. If they do decide to go into battle and actually make a disclosure, the women exchange their roles as politicians for those of soldiers "on the front line". Similar to soldiers in conflict, the women need to believe in the cause they are fighting for in order to keep their morale high. Simran's talk reveals, with regard to a particular disclosure she chose not to make, that if she had believed it was *"worth the risk"* (1:33) then she would have *"fought for it"* (1:31). Conveyed within Simran's words is the need to believe in the cause you are fighting for, as solders need to during times of conflict in order to foster motivation and keep morale high.

Before making the disclosure regarding her choice of marriage partner, Ahilya consults with her cousins and plans how to approach her parents. She talks of role playing with her cousins in order to prepare for the disclosure. Ahilya's discourse reveals that her cousins were able to help her prepare, as they knew her parents well and hence could anticipate their responses. This is interesting, as Ahilya draws upon her cousins' help, which is similar to countries at war drawing upon the help of allies. Since Ahilya's allies knew the enemy well they could help her in developing strategies to deal with risk factors. This is a process which often occurs, during times of warfare, before going into battle.

During times of conflict, occasionally, the situation of stalemate occurs and neither side is able to achieve victory. This can be seen as occurring during Ahilya's process of disclosure, regarding her choice of marriage partner. As the situation was not resolved with a clear outcome, Ahilya and her family drew upon another feature of warfare used in times of conflict, diplomacy. Ahilya refers to friends from the

community coming into the family home in order to *"mediate"* (2:145) and help both parties reach a compromise. In this way, a mutual *"agreement"* (2:150) was made by Ahilya and her parents. The *"agreement"* (2:150) resembles a treaty that is sometimes drawn between countries in order to mark a truce after conflict.

During times of war, once the conflict is over, there are victims who have lost their homes and need refuge. Humanitarian aid is often provided by external sources in order to help the citizens of the war torn countries. This is conveyed within Nusrat's account of her situation after having made the disclosure regarding her sexuality. As a consequence of the disclosure, Nusrat was made homeless and she received aid from the women's refuge centre. Here she was able to draw upon their resources of shelter and therapeutic intervention.

Discourse of individualism and collectivism

The last set of constructions of disclosure represents a discourse of individualism and collectivism. The language that the women use to reveal the dynamics of the family their position within the family, and the consequential disclosures that are made, seems to reflect elements of both an individualist and collectivist society. The women's discourse conveys the struggle between desiring to be autonomous and also desiring to be part of a family that is firmly rooted within a wider community. The discourse reveals that the women have desires and goals, which essentially assert their own independence and are for purposes of individual achievement. This reflects the self-expression, individual thinking and personal choice that are typical features of a society which is heavily geared towards an individualistic value system. However, the discourse conveys that this often comes into conflict with the collectivist values held by their families. In turn, this affects what the women feel can and cannot be disclosed within the household, and the subsequent family reactions towards certain disclosures. Consequently, the women struggle to fit neatly into one conceptual scheme. This is conveyed by Simran: *"...there's an element of me wanting to be independent, but then you're still linked into your family, and they're still linked into the community"* (2:145-147).

Within many societies there may be a stronger affiliation with one of these conceptual models, however, it is extremely difficult for a society to completely adhere to any

one of these models. A similar scenario is revealed to exist within the family unit. The women's discourse conveys the family as being predominately geared towards a collectivist model. The family is constructed as being influenced by the community and like a collectivist society, the family contains a hierarchical system in which the parents are predominantly placed in a position of authority. However, on some occasions the women's discourse reveals their families as adopting an individualistic standpoint with certain disclosures, hence, allowing them to pursue their individual desires. Here, the women convey that there is equality between family members, across generations. Equality is, supposedly, one of the defining features of individualistic societies. However, as stated previously, the women reveal that this reprieve their families grant them may be due to the fact that it does not interfere with, or threaten, the larger collectivist goals of the family and community.

The women's discourse indicates that the family absorbs and upholds the values of the community they exist within. Consequently, the family is conveyed as mirroring a collectivist society within the home by expecting its members to act "appropriately" and understand their responsibilities towards the family unit and the community. Thus the women's discourse reveals that the expectations which are placed upon them are the family's attempt to uphold the wider values of the community. Fulfilling these expectations is constructed as sometimes resulting in the suppression of the women's individual desires. Consequently, the successful completion of these expectations maintains the family's status within the community, and thus is of benefit for the collective good of the family. The women's discourse conveys that the values of the collectivist society are imposed more upon the female members of the family than the male. For example, their choice of marriage partner, which in some cultures is seen as an individual practice, becomes a collective activity. The decision about marriage partner becomes a choice made by the family unit, and is one that will be evaluated by the community.

Following on from being part of a collectivist society, the discourse conveys the women as being involved within a culture of appearances. The women and their families are involved in a series of deceptions which consist of *"putting on a front"* (2:277) and *"keeping face"* (1:49). There seems to be a gap between the actual realities of situations and what is perceived by others. This culture of appearances is

practised by both the individual within the family, and also by the family within the community. The individual and the family shape the image that they portray to others by deciding upon what and how to disclose.

3.2.3 Action orientation

At this stage, I shall attempt to illustrate the function of the discursive contexts within which the different constructions of disclosure are deployed. The women are part of the family unit, and hence it may be said that they have as much influence as the other members of the family to affect the course of events. Thus in this way, they may be accused of inaction and maintaining the status quo, and being somewhat responsible for the predicament they find themselves in. However, by locating disclosure practices within a political discourse, they no longer have an equal standing compared with other members of the family. The political discourse conveys that certain members of the family are in a greater position of influence. These members are in charge of running the household, and consequently determine the rules and regulations effecting disclosure. The members that are in charge are usually revealed as being the parents, and thus this highlights that power is distributed according to a generational divide. The position of power and authority held by the women's parents is clearly highlighted by Nusrat's discourse. The discourse reveals that her *"coming out story"* (4:249-250) would have been very different if she had remained within the family home, once the disclosure was made, as her parents would have been in a position of control over her.

The women's discourses reveal the family as exhibiting both democratic and autocratic regimes, depending upon the nature of the disclosure. The women will have varying degrees of influence in each of these regimes. However, essentially, within a political discourse whichever doctrine is being followed, the women are not the ones in power and do not have the final say in the household. Due to their position of limited power within the family, the women are excused from being accused of inaction and maintaining the status quo.

The discourse of disparity views the women as victims of a patriarchal society. Some of the other discourses discussed may create an impression of the women's struggles being unique to their families, cultural background and communities; however, the

discourse of disparity places them in the arena of wider hardship, felt by women irrespective of their race, culture etc. In this way, the women have become victims of a set of entrenched beliefs and values that exceed their communities and are apparent within the wider society. Consequently, the struggle and hardship they face becomes a more tangible and known entity, as they have located themselves within a discourse that is a reality for many women across cultures and backgrounds.

The women's talk reveals times when they are unable to make disclosures or occasions when they are made with much trepidation and fear. This may create the impression that the women are weak, unable to withstand the family's resistance and are succumbing to the demands and expectations of the community. Alternatively, it may also create an impression that they are exaggerating the potential threat they feel. Thus, perhaps, constructing disclosure as being located within a discourse of disparity counteracts these impressions. A discourse of disparity thus has connections to the global concerns of a patriarchal society, and thus highlights the magnitude, severity and reality of what the women are enduring.

By employing a conflict discourse the women are able to describe the extent of the struggle and hardship they endure within their family households. A disclosure of a relationship, which in another household could be brought up in everyday conversation, becomes an entire military operation for these women. Others, perhaps from a non South Asian family background, may take for granted the ease with which they can disclose issues such as those described by the women. However the women highlight that, for them, these disclosures become laborious projects that may completely change their lives, often in a detrimental manner. The conflict discourse also highlights the energy, time, strength of character and resilience that is sometimes required to endure the process of disclosure within the family.

By locating disclosure within a conflict discourse, the women also highlight that the magnitude of losses, violence and destruction experienced during times of warfare is equivalent with their own experiences within the family. The potential ruin and destruction that a disclosure can bring about is conveyed within Nusrat's discourse. The discourse reveals that having given up hope, she makes a disclosure, as she believed this would result in something as detrimental as losing her life.

Placing the family in the context of a collectivist discourse conveys the power and influence the community has over the family's actions, behaviours and responses to the women's disclosures. In this way, the family is seen as being the naïve recipients of the community's authority and control. The discourse conveys the family, similar to the women themselves, as being victims of the community's demands and expectations. The discourse reveals that in order to maintain their standing within the collectivist community, the family "needs" to enforce these expectations and demands upon the women, however these expectations are essentially created by the community. In this way, the collectivist discourse allows the family to be one step removed from causing the suffering and hardship experienced by the women. Thus the blame is constructed as essentially lying with the wider South Asian community, and the family unit is abdicated of this responsibility. This is highlighted by Nusrat's discourse within the following account:

> *My mum, um, she's worried about people finding out about my sexuality because she thinks this may affect my sister getting married...She doesn't want the fact, you know, I'm gay and they can see that as a negative thing to affect my sister's future...because of the way the community is.* (4:424-431).

Nusrat excuses her mother's attitude by placing the responsibility upon *"the way the community is"*.

Despite being rooted within the collectivist society, the family are seen to support the women with some of their disclosures, comprising individualistic goals. Thus the discourse constructs an image of the family having to meet the demands of the community, but then also having to balance this with supporting the women with their goals and desires. Again, this places the family in a favourable light, as despite the community's pull, the family are attempting to make concessions for the women.

When asked to discuss some of the disclosures they could make either with ease or some difficulty, the women's discourse, generally, favours the value system of the individualistic society. However, when asked to comment upon the experiences they chose not to disclose, the women's talk draws upon notions of the collectivist South Asian community. The individualistic and collectivist discourse becomes a

justification for why some experiences are public knowledge and others remain hidden. In this way, the women's discourse conveys the stress involved with being part of two conflicting societies, one being the South Asian community and the other being the dominant society within the UK. Hence due to these conflicting values and ways of functioning, within these two societies, it makes the process of disclosure all the more difficult and complicated for them.

3.2.4 Positionings

> Discourses construct *subjects* as well as objects and, as a result, make available positions within networks of meaning that speakers can take up (as well as place others within. (Willig 2001: 110).

In this stage of the analysis, I shall attempt to explore the subject positions which the identified discourses may offer. The community is constructed as setting the expectations and roles that the women are required to fulfil. If the women disclose that they are stepping outside of these prescribed roles and expectations, the community is constructed as negatively judging and critiquing them. As the assessors of the women, the community is placed in a position of superiority and authority. Contrastingly, the women are in a position of inferiority and passivity. The discourse of disparity reinforces these positions held by the women. Additionally, the family is positioned as the passive workforce of the community that accepts the doctrine and whether by coercion or negotiation attempts to instil community values within the women.

In contrast, the conflict discourse places the women in an opposing position to the one described above. Here, the women construct themselves as more equal in strength to the family unit and community, and display a greater sense of control over their actions and behaviours. The discourse conveys them to make conscious decisions regarding the disclosure process. They are seen to be critical thinkers and question the values of the community, and the expectations that are imposed upon them. On occasions, they demonstrate the courage needed to *"fight"* (1:38) and make a disclosure that they anticipate will be received antagonistically by the family. Here, they are not placed in a position which succumbs to the order of things but are in one that retaliates against authority and takes action. The women make a conscious effort to rebalance the distribution of power within the family household.

Within the discourse of disparity the family is seen as being quite passive, following the guidelines set by the community. The community is seen as holding the power as opposed to the family unit. However, within the political discourse the family unit, usually led by the parental figures, is placed in a much more powerful and influential position. The parental figures are constructed as being the leading authority within the family home, and they essentially are the ones who decide upon the type of atmosphere that is adopted within the household. Since they are the authority within the household, they have the power to decide upon the extent to which they adhere to the community's expectations. This choice that the family unit has is expressed within Simran's following words: *"if I compare them to other Asians they're quite open"* (1:6). Here, the discourse reveals that Simran's parents have asserted their authority by setting themselves apart from other families.

Within the political discourse the family has been placed in a position of greater influence, however, the women are again subject to a governing power over them. On some occasions, their contributions manage to influence the family and they are pivotal in the family's gradual adaptability to their disclosures. Nonetheless, the overriding decision of whether or not the disclosures are accepted and the subsequent implications usually lie with the parental figures of the family. Even with regard to the occasions when the family are seen as being tolerant of their disclosures, the women talk of being *"allowed"* (1:12, 2:12) and granted permission. Inherent in their words is the need to gain acceptance and approval from their parents in order to partake in certain activities.

Within the individualistic and collectivist discourse, the women are seen as fluctuating between conditions of heteronomy and autonomy. The condition of heteronomy involves the family's and community's values of collectivism governing the women's actions. Alternatively, the condition of autonomy involves the women's actions and the content of their disclosures serving their own, individual interests. This discourse places the women in a position of fluidity, one in which either condition can be adopted, depending upon the atmosphere and what is at stake. Again, the women's behaviour and responses (i.e., whether they choose to adopt a condition of heteronomy or autonomy) is partially determined by the atmosphere that the family creates. The fluidity in which the women can alternate between the conditions of

heteronomy and autonomy, and the degree to which they subscribe to each of these states, illustrates the sliding-scale nature of this position. The discourse of individualism and collectivism offers a further position which places the community in an alternative, favourable light. Some of the women's discourse reveals the community to provide refuge, support and aid after a disclosure has been made. This places the community in a much more favourable position of caregivers.

3.2.5 Practice

Within the fifth stage of analysis, I shall attempt to highlight the relationship between discourse and practice. Within the disparity discourse, the community is positioned as a superior force above the family, and consequently the family is constructed as having no choice but to endorse the community's requirements and expectations of the women. The family becomes the voice of the community, and in turn it can feel justified in its treatment of female members. This legitimises any practices of coercion, force and manipulation used by the family within the process of disclosure.

Due to the community's superiority and consequential hold over the family, the family becomes unaccountable for its actions, especially towards the women in this study. However, the discourse conveys the family to be unaccountable only for actions which display resistance and an association with an autocratic regime. When the family is constructed as displaying liberal characteristics, it is praised and commended for taking such a stance. This is apparent within Simran's discourse which conveys her family as not being *"the norm"* (1:47), and Nusrat's discourse which reveals her mother's reaction to her sexuality as *"amazing"* (4:77). However, within the political discourse, the extent of the community's hold over the family wavers. This opens up opportunities for the family to question the community's expectations of the women and gradually adapt and accept some of the women's disclosures. Nonetheless, despite the family's increased influence within this discourse, the overriding influence of the community is still ever present.

Within the discourse of disparity, women are located in an inferior position which minimises the influence they have over the family and community. In this way, the women are confined to their expected roles which close down opportunities for action. In contrast, within the conflict discourse, the women are placed in a position of

strength and influence. This allows the women to challenge the order of things and gives them a voice within the family and community. Consequently, their actions can change attitudes and responses towards disclosures. However, even within the conflict discourse, where the women may be given a voice and an opportunity to assert themselves, there are still limitations regarding what can be practised and disclosed. Some disclosures need to remain hidden because of the collective force of the community and their influence over the family. Nonetheless the choice to keep some disclosures hidden is at the women's discretion. This choice may be influenced by the family's and community's expectations, but essentially the decisions regarding disclosures remains in the hands of the women.

3.2.6 Subjectivity

Within this final stage, I shall attempt to illustrate possible links between the discursive constructions of disclosure with the family and community and the implications for subjective practice. Within the women's discourses of disclosure, their desire to protect their families and fears of being disowned are evident. Additionally, their participation in lengthy and careful procedures in order to gain acceptance and approval from the family is evident. These factors demonstrate that they care deeply for their families and value being part of a family unit, and hence would not want to hurt or upset family members. This is conveyed within Nusrat's statement: *"I don't really wanna offend my parents or upset them or anything like that"* (4:8-9). Thus partaking in activities which call into question *"the honour of the family"* (1:97) may result in the women harbouring feelings of guilt. If a woman consciously chose not to disclose an experience of this kind to the family, she may still feel guilty for having "overstepped the boundaries" and potentially jeopardising her family's reputation. She may begin to question her own "honour" and integrity and experience increasing feelings of fear and anxiety that her family may become aware of what she is refusing to disclose. This is illustrated within Simran's discourse, when she talks of the *"fear"* (1:77) she feels that her family will discover she had a relationship with a Muslim man. A woman may also worry about her prospects of finding a "suitable" partner if these experiences did happen to became public within the community.

Additionally, a woman may also feel guilt if she actually decided to make a disclosure that demonstrated she had stepped outside of what is expected of her. The women are very much aware of the importance the family places upon honour within the community, and how it can potentially be damaged by certain disclosures. Thus a woman may feel guilty, that in making this disclosure, she is following her individual needs as opposed to protecting the collective honour of the family. Thus, in order to make a potentially "threatening" disclosure, the women would either need to have complete faith and belief in what they are disclosing, or have been pushed to an extreme state of not caring about the potential consequences.

Each woman's family within this study is part of the community which judges and critiques other South Asian families. Perhaps the parental figures of the family unit feel a sense of duty and obligation in preserving the values of the community, both within their households but also within their critique of other families. They may even feel proud to be part of a community that places such importance upon collectivist values. Additionally, the parental figures may also fear the judgement of the community. Hence when they feel they are falling short of what is expected of them and their children, their behaviours begin to reflect *"putting on a front"* (2:277) in order to maintain the image of the *"good Asian family"* (2:280. In order to avoid the community's scrutiny and remove the spotlight from themselves, some families make publicly known the actions of others which may be viewed negatively by the community. Ahilya's discourse refers to this as the *"hypocrisy"* (2:158) of the community. The fear parents have of being judged and their position as *"the good Asian family"* (2:280) being questioned is reflected by Ahilya's discourse in the following account:

> *...putting on a front and that's about not showing people what's going on, people you know, my family fearing people are gonna judge them as like parents, or you know they're not the good Asian family that everybody thought they were.* (277-280).

3.3 Reflections

I felt my position as researcher and the aims of this study imposed an agenda on the interviews. I felt restricted by this agenda and as a result I was unable to reflect upon

the women's individual experiences to the extent I would have liked. Thus the role of researcher is somewhat in contrast to my Counselling Psychology background, where I am used to adopting a more therapeutic stance; hence I experienced some conflict in this regard. As a second-generation South Asian woman and being a part of the South Asian community, I was familiar with the family and community reactions that were spoken of. I had previously been exposed to a lot of what the women conveyed within their discourse, either via firsthand experience or through my own contacts within the community. Hence, I was aware that I was approaching the data with already formed personal opinions and beliefs regarding some of the issues that were raised. Throughout the analysis stage of the research, I attempted to keep hold of this awareness in order that I may concentrate upon the women's constructions of their processes of disclosure as opposed to my own. I feel it would have been impossible for me to be completely objective, as I consider myself to be an insider; however, I wanted to approach the data with a fresh outlook, and as far as possible not contaminate the analysis with my own impressions of the community.

At some points during the discourse, it was evident that the women were aware of my position as an "insider". For example, within Ahilya's discourse, when conveying her separation and rejection of the community she talks of *"our culture"* (4:160). She followed this with a hand gesture, indicating that she was referring to the two of us. The use of the word *"our"* and the hand gesture reveal that she was conscious of my position as a member of the South Asian community. At this particular point, I felt she wanted my support in acknowledging the negativity of the community. I recall nodding at her response in order to indicate that I understood what she was trying to convey. Perhaps she took this as a sign displaying my agreement with her opinions, and this allowed her to elaborate further. In general, I feel my similar background, at times, may have prompted Ahilya and the other women to be open and disclose fully, as they felt I had an understanding of the issues they were discussing. This was evident from all the women stating that my cultural orientation did not act as a hindrance to them disclosing (as was mentioned in the methodology chapter; section 2.5.2).

However, at other points during the discourse, the understanding the women felt I had could have resulted in them omitting some details, as they believed I already had an

awareness of them. Furthermore, Chantler et al. (2003) state that some women may avoid services dedicated to South Asian women, due to fears of information not staying confidential and leaking out into the community networks. I feel this can also be applied to the research setting. Consequently, although the women informed me that my cultural orientation was not a hindrance, they may have felt obligated to say this. In actual fact, on occasions, they may have been deterred from disclosing certain information to me due to fearing that we shared community networks. Consequently, all these factors, regarding my position as an "insider", could have impacted upon the women's constructions, and hence the findings presented within this study.

As well as acknowledging the implications my position as an "insider" may have had upon the findings of this study, I think it is of equal importance for me to be aware of my position as an "outsider". Some of the women's constructions were based upon their individual experiences and personalities, to which I was an "outsider". I believe feeling too connected to the topic area and participants could lead to certain constructions of disclosure being overlooked; the researcher may find themselves looking for a particular set of constructions. Thus my awareness of my position as an outsider promoted a less biased and clearer perspective.

Working within a social constructionist epistemology, I am aware that all forms of knowledge are constructed through discourse and discursive practices. Consequently, the "scientific" knowledge of this chapter is a discursive construction in itself that has to be evaluated within a discursive framework. Thus, the claims I have made within this chapter and the discourses I have used to construct them are my personal constructions rather than a discovery of knowledge. Consequently, it is likely that another researcher's discursive construction of this chapter would differ from the account I have produced.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

4.1 Summary of emerging discourses

The previous chapter highlights the following discourses to have emerged from the analysis of the women's talk regarding disclosure practices within the family and community; a political discourse, a disparity discourse, a conflict discourse and a discourse of individualism and collectivism. The political discourse conveys the differing atmospheres the family adopts (i.e., liberal and restrictive), depending upon the content of the disclosure the women are making. Conveyed within the disparity discourse is that, if the women's disclosures are contradictory to the expectations and roles required of them, the family and community adopts a restricting and constraining attitude. Within both of these discourses the women are positioned as inferior to the family and community, and this places constraints upon what can and cannot be disclosed by them. The control and power is held by the family and, ultimately, the community, and this is often conveyed as silencing the women.

Within the conflict discourse, the women's thought processes and actions during the lead-up and the actual disclosure are conveyed. In contrast to the discourses described above, within the conflict discourse the women are more equal in strength and standing compared with the family and community. The women are revealed as being able to follow their individual goals as opposed to being confined within the collectivist expectations and roles set by the family and community. Within the discourse of individualism and collectivism, the family are revealed as upholding and preserving the collectivist values of the community. The family is conveyed as having no choice but to enforce the community's expectations upon the women. In this way, the family's constraining and restricting treatment of the women is excused. Whereas in the political discourse the family is conveyed as holding the power within the household, this is overridden by the force of the community within the individualism and collectivism discourses. Thus, although the emerging discourses are interrelated they offer contrasting subject positions that are taken up by the women, family and community, and this consequently has implications for practice and subjectivity.

Having analysed the women's discourses, this chapter provides some conclusions and reflections emerging from the analysis. This chapter reflects upon the existence of a relationship between the women's discourses and material reality, the relevance of feminism to the women's discourses, implications for clinical practice arising from

the analysis, and the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. This chapter ends with a section summarising some of my thoughts regarding how the research process has changed and impacted me.

4.2 The women's discourses and a material reality

As highlighted within the methodology chapter (section 2.3.3), by adopting a critical realist perspective, this study combines both constructionist and realist ideas. Thus this study argues that the women's social realities are constructed discursively, and also acknowledges the non-discursive material factors which impact upon their social realities. The analysis conducted in chapter 3 demonstrates the role of discourse in constructing the women's realities, regarding disclosure practices within the family and community. This section strives to explore factors surrounding the material reality which constrains the women's discursive constructions of disclosure.

It is asserted that the women's discourses are produced within a certain set of material conditions. This means that the women are limited to constructing versions of their disclosure practices that are compatible with these material conditions. These material conditions represent underlying social and institutional structures (Willig, 2001). It has been illustrated, within the analysis, that the women's discursive constructions are constrained by social and institutional structures of collectivism and patriarchy. Within these structures, the women are restricted to act, accept and resist in particular ways regarding disclosure practices (Parker, 1992). Thus this illustrates that power is not produced within discourse, and highlights it as something which is actually controlled by particular people. Within the context of this study, the women's discourse conveys that power is held by the male members of the community.

These social and institutional structures, which shall be referred to as the extra-discursive, do not determine the particular accounts used by the women in this study, as there will always be more than one way to explain disclosure practices within the family and community. However, it is argued that these structures do facilitate or limit the ease with which particular accounts are used by the women. Thus, these structures may facilitate an interpretation as to why one account is used over another (Willig et al., 2007). For example, in the context of this study, the material structures of

collectivism and patriarchy may have enabled the women to draw readily upon the discourse of disparity and the discourse of individualism and collectivism.

Potter et al. (1999) have criticised critical realist approaches for not having a systematic method that distinguishes between discursive and extra-discursive features. Thus, the distinction between the discursive and extra-discursive is often determined by the political standpoint of the researcher. Willig et al. (2007) address this critique within their work; they suggest a systematic method of distinguishing between the discursive and the non-discursive would focus upon three factors; embodiment, institutions and materiality (Cromby & Nightingale, 1989). This systematic method involves exploring how these factors are manifest within the literature. As is indicated within the analysis, the literature is consistent with the study's findings which suggest that structures of patriarchy and collectivism, apparent within "the family" and "the community", affect the social realities of South Asian women. It is acknowledged that patriarchal and collective structures, upheld by the family and community, are not an exhaustive account of the material factors constraining the women's discourses. However, these structures seemed prevalent within the literature and the women's accounts and thus have been stressed within this section.

Critical realism has generally been a minority position within discursive psychology (Willig, 2007). Parker (1992) advocates the need to adopt a critical realist approach in order to improve social realities and facilitate change. Despite calls for a critical realist discourse analysis, there has been little empirical work conducted in this area. A review of the critical realist literature revealed very little empirical work. Willig et al. (2007) suggest this may be due to few being able to address the criticism that critical realists have no systematic method to distinguish between the discursive and non-discursive. As far as I am aware, Willig et al. (2007) are the only researchers who have attempted an empirical, systematic critical realist discourse analysis.

Empirical critical realist work is in its infancy and thus writings on critical realism have largely been theoretical. This study has been greatly influenced by and has benefitted from the important writings that call for a constructionist epistemology which is compatible with a political/moral position and critical realism. However, it was felt, there currently was not enough empirical literature to draw upon in order to

conduct a valid, detailed and comprehensive systematic critical realist discourse analysis within this study. Thus a limitation of this study is that, although it has been informed by a critical realist perspective, it has not provided a systematic critical realist analysis of the data. However, I hope that in attending to some of the arguments within this field and by illustrating the standpoint this study adheres to, I have highlighted the existence of a relationship between the women's discourses and a material reality.

4.3 The relevance of feminism to the women's discourses

As mentioned within section 4.2, material structures of patriarchy may have enabled the ease at which the women drew upon the discourse of disparity. Due to the impact of patriarchal structures upon the women's social realities, regarding disclosure practices, it was felt important to attend to feminist writings. Feminist approaches focus upon power relationships entrenched within social histories and practices, and on subjectivity. Furthermore, feminist approaches aim to expose and challenge discursive processes that define and maintain a particular version of reality, which consequently marginalises and silences individuals. These approaches concentrate upon how broader relationships of power impact personal, individual experiences, and the subsequent construction of dominant discourses of gender. Working within a feminist framework requires a reflexive approach, in which the researcher acknowledges the subjective position they bring to the research process (Burman, 1994; Parker 1994; Letherby, 2003).

The discourse of disparity conveys the women as being immersed within relationships of power with the family and community. Within these relations, the women find themselves in a position of inferiority and the family and community are the dominant forces. The discourse reveals a disparity between gender role expectations, and this subsequently impacts upon the women's process of disclosure within the family and community. Thus emerging from the discourse is the significance of the feminist ideology within the lives of the women in this study. Through my own personal experiences of living within the wider South Asian community, I too have felt a gender divide and can identify with a discourse of disparity. I am aware that as the individual who has constructed this study, my experiences, values, beliefs and social identities will no doubt have somewhat shaped this research project and its findings.

In order to minimise the potential bias I brought to the research process and not wanting my personal discourses to privilege certain discourses over others, I felt it was important not to take a feminist epistemological position from the outset.

Thus having analysed the women's discourse, it is evident that gender inequalities do impact their experiences of disclosure within the family and community. For this reason, it is important to place this finding in relation to the epistemological debates surrounding feminism in psychology, and assess the applicability of these debates within the lives of South Asian women. I would like the reader to bear in mind that this is not an exhaustive account of feminism, and the current debates within psychology. This is a complex domain, which does deserve attention, but is beyond the scope of this study.

4.3.1 The criticisms of science

Keller (1985) argues that within the social sciences domain, women are neglected and distorted in a manner which favours men. Furthermore, she asserts that the very nature of positivist science is intrinsically masculine, which is illustrated by the use of sexual metaphors within modern science. Over the years, psychology too has been criticised for partaking in this bias and favouring men. Topics of pertinence to women, such as rape and domestic violence, have been neglected due to being classified as too trivial or taboo. Instead, research areas such as achievement, leadership and power have been given precedence (Epstein, 1988; McHugh, Koeske and Feieze 1986; Smith 1987). Silverman (1992) asserts that when women are studied, their actions are interpreted as deficient or pathological. A classic example is Freud's (1925/1961) formulation in 1925 of the theory of penis envy.

Psychological research carried out on women has been noted to contain another bias, a neglect of social context. A danger in neglecting social context may result in an overreliance upon presumed biological causes. Sociocultural determinants which may be just as significant, if not more so, than biological causes are ignored. It is duly noted that biological variations between the sexes are important, however, it is crucial to determine between the differing biological and social elements of that variation (Connell, 1987; Lips, 1988; Rossi, 1979). These biases, embedded within scientific research, have been a long running concern for researchers who study women (Rigor,

1992). In recent years, the increased influence of feminism within psychology has paved the way for further research to be carried out upon women (i.e., Purnell, 2008; Wallace 2008; Wilcox 2007). This has helped to reduce the bias within psychology.

4.3.2 Feminist responses to the bias

Feminists have responded to the bias embedded within science with three main reactions: empiricism, standpoint, and postmodern feminism. The empiricists remain faithful to positivistic scientific traditions in order to challenge male dominated findings. They identify bias as being within experimenter effects and choose not to reject traditional notions of experimentation. Hence, bias is seen as an error where the experimenter steps outside the realms of objectivity. These feminists believe paying meticulous attention to scientific methods, and a closer adherence to objectivity will minimise the impact of error upon research findings (Harding, 1986).

Standpoint feminists adopt a perspective that pays heed to the social world. Importance is placed upon individual experience, as this is viewed as being the basis of understanding and insight. The experiential is seen as providing the foundations for the production of knowledge. These feminists believe that a researcher approaching an experience as an outsider and on the periphery of dominant ideologies, practices and discourses needs to attend to reflexivity. Reflexive engagement will allow the researcher, in the position of the "other", to analyse the dominant structures which are invisible to those who are inside and invested within them (Letherby, 2003; Parker, 2005). Standpoint feminists have been criticised for assuming a superior position above their participants. Additionally, they have been criticised for drawing upon a shared gender as a basis of commonality. Within this context other forms of oppression are either not seen or remain unaddressed (Letherby, 2003).

Postmodern feminism reflects views held within social constructionist psychology. The aim of postmodern feminist research is to investigate the construction of relationships, and highlight how dominant discourses emerging within the wider society impact upon perceptions. Adopting a postmodern perspective allows the researcher to analyse the dominant discourses and decipher the manner in which women and others are defined. Additionally, in adopting this position one can reveal how certain constructions of realities have been accepted as innate (Letherby, 2003).

Having reflected upon the three major feminist responses to the bias within science, I believe postmodern feminism, due to its emphasis upon the constructive nature of social realities, is most compatible with the epistemology of this study. Furthermore, I believe a standpoint feminist approach is incompatible with this study. This is due to the women's discourse reflecting an awareness of how the patriarchal structures affect their processes of disclosure. Thus the social constructionist epistemology adopted by this study has been informed by a postmodern feminist perspective. The emphasis this study places upon critical realism is in unison with the values of postmodern feminism. Postmodern feminism strives to improve the social realities of women. Similarly, adopting a critical realist perspective allows the researcher to advocate political change in order to improve the social realities of participants. Burman (1990) highlights the problems and dangers in attempting to mesh together feminism and deconstruction. Consequently, the critical realist perspective adopted by this study facilitates the postmodern feminist perspective.

4.3.3 'Intersectionalities' of gender, culture and race

This study attempts to draw upon aspects of cultural issues as well as gender inequality. It is hoped that analysing South Asian women's discourses, with regard to their processes of disclosure, will highlight the attention mental health services must pay to the specific cultural and gender oriented needs of this client group. Silverstein (2006) argues that "competent clinical practice requires a complexity paradigm that encompasses the intersectionalities of class, gender, race/ethnicity, and other aspects that define an individual's subjective experience" (2006, p.2). She argues that multiculturalism research has focussed almost solely upon race and ethnicity, whereas feminism has focussed mainly upon white, middle-class women. Silverstein's (2006) claims regarding feminist literature echoes the arguments raised by black critiques, such as Amos and Palmer (1984). In their paper, "Challenging Imperial Feminism", they strive to "...identify the ways in which a particular tradition, white Eurocentric and Western, has sought to establish itself as the only legitimate feminism, in political practice" (p.3). In a critique of feminist literature, Reed (2002) elaborates upon this debate. She asserts that in order to achieve a culturally sensitive clinical practice, professional psychologists must adhere to a paradigm which incorporates all aspects of a client's personal identity and social location. She too argues for a complex

paradigm, which incorporates multiple domains of experience, including issues of culture, race and gender.

Thus focussing upon either multiculturalism or gender as opposed to the intersectionalities of these areas has consequently resulted in the marginalisation of both these domains. Having conducted the analysis of this study, I can conclude that in the lives of South Asian women these two domains are intrinsically interrelated. In order to understand fully the discourses that impact upon the lives of South Asian women, these domains cannot be studied in isolation from each other. Consequently, due to the analysis revealing the intersectionality of these domains and the apparent gap in the literature, one of the aims of this study is to address the need for research to focus upon issues of both gender and multiculturalism.

Burman et al. (2002) conducted research investigating service responses to South Asian women attempting suicide or self harm. Their research adopts an anti-racist and feminist agenda. In approaching their research with an acknowledgement that some feminist perspectives have contributed to obscuring black contributions (Burman and Chantler, 2003), and by integrating complex issues of multiculturalism and feminism, these researchers address the needs highlighted by Reed (2002) and Silverstein (2006) (as discussed above). A key finding emerging from Burman et al.'s (2002) research notes health professionals as feeling anxious when discussing issues of "race" or anticipating charges of racism. Consequently, these workers tend to place increased importance upon issues of "race" and culture as opposed to gender. In turn, this marginalises those South Asian women who have experienced issues of suicide and self-harm. Thus, as Burman and Chantler (2003) assert, this highlights a parallel process between the research arena and the clinical world. The tendency to research these domains in isolation, possibly due to the difficulties inherent within combining both domains, is mirrored by many practitioners who struggle to work with intersections around "race", cultural issues and gender.

Burman and Chantler (2003) have written a reflexive piece which includes issues of "race", gender and mental health arising from their work. They reflect upon a challenge which was presented at the launch conference of their research paper, regarding their findings of workers privileging issues of "race" over gender. The

authors were accused of using a measure of "white feminism" in order to highlight the provision and needs of South Asian women. With regard to these issues, Burman and Chantler (2003) state the following: "It is a key challenge to simultaneously critique the gender insensitivity of much anti-racist analysis and the Eurocentricism of dominant feminist analysis" (2003, p.5). This challenge and the authors' response highlight some of the difficulties in conducting research that combines both domains of multiculturalism and gender issues.

In a similar vein, my study could also be challenged on the grounds described above. I have asserted that the women's discourses have been informed by the epistemologies and theories of knowledge emerging from "white feminism". I argue that in order to gain a full understanding of experiences of subjectivity the answer is not in studying these issues in isolation of each other as has been the case. What is required is further research, such as the study conducted by Burman et al. (2002), which combines these two discourses of oppression. Due to this being an area of limited research, initial empirical work attempting to address these issues may need to apply wider discourses of feminism to the discourses of minority groups. Hopefully, this will begin the process of investigating the applicability of "white feminism" within the lives of minority women, such as South Asian women. In turn, this may facilitate research informed feminist models and knowledge that are applicable to South Asian women and can inform clinical practice.

4.4 Implications for clinical practice arising from the study's findings

Having adopted a critical realist perspective, this study aims to improve the social realities of South Asian women. This section contains some insights emerging from the findings of this study which may be of interest to counselling psychologists, other mental health practitioners and service providers. The women's discourse reveals there to be conflict between unmarried second-generation women and their families. The conflict predominately lies between the women and their parents who have migrated to the UK from the Indian subcontinent. The conflict seems to derive from a "clash" of two conflicting cultures.

The parents are instructed by the community to uphold the traditional cultural values of their country of origin. If they are seen to deviate from this role or are unsuccessful

in maintaining a traditional culture, the family "loses face" and may be rejected by the community. Thus, under the watchful eye of the community, the family becomes a vehicle for disseminating and maintaining the cultural values of the country of origin. Consequently, the second-generation women, raised and educated within the UK are caught between the conflicting value systems of the culture of origin and the dominant culture of the UK. The discourse demonstrates how these conflicting cultures, and the patriarchal context that is embedded within the South Asian culture, affect the women's processes of disclosure. For example the discourse reveals experiences which are contradictory to the values of the country of origin as remaining hidden, or disclosed with much trepidation. Additionally, if such a disclosure is made it holds grave implications for the individual, and the family's standing and honour within the community.

This study highlights important issues for practitioners to take into consideration when working with South Asian women and their families. This study has made apparent that the process of disclosure involves a range of stages. These stages include the initial period of contemplation and risk assessment, to the actual, either planned or spontaneous, disclosure, and the management of the aftermath and subsequent familial and community reactions. Inherent within the findings of this study is that each stage of the disclosure process may impact negatively upon the mental health of the individual woman. Thus practitioners may find themselves working with clients who are at differing stages of the disclosure process and in need of some therapeutic intervention. For example, like Nusrat, an individual may seek psychological therapy to address the consequences of a disclosure. Additionally, an individual may want to pursue therapy in order to assess the risks involved in making a disclosure.

Inherent within the difficulties surrounding disclosure processes within the family and community is the individual's collectivist concerns and needs. Services are often focussed upon the "individual" and his or her psychological needs and well being. Thus when working with South Asian women, especially in terms of disclosure processes, professionals need to pay heed to systemic processes. The incompatibility between services catering for individual psychological needs, and the experiences of South Asian women who have encountered sexual abuse, has been documented in the

literature (Reavey et al. 2006). I argue that this focus upon the "individual" and the "social" needs to be extended to include therapeutic interventions aiding South Asian women with their processes of disclosure.

Furthermore, the discourse highlights that the disclosure processes affect the mental health of the family unit as well as the individual woman. For example, a disclosure having been made by the individual may result in the family losing "honour" and being rejected by the community. Due to the importance that is placed upon standing within the community, being rejected may have a negative impact upon the mental health of the parents. Thus, there is a need to provide clinical intervention to South Asian families dealing with the disclosure process, and the subsequent implications this may have upon relations between the individual and the family.

The interventions that are required are "culturally sensitive" systemic approaches that will be able to work with cultural and generational conflicts, and the collectivist and patriarchal context within which South Asian families exist. However as noted within the literature (i.e., Gupta et al., 2007), although systemic processes have made significant contributions with regards to family therapy, the focus has been upon the nuclear family. The discourse within this study has revealed that the wider South Asian community is a key factor in the women's and their families' experiences of disclosure processes. In order to gain a greater understanding of how to work effectively with South Asian individuals and families, it may be beneficial for the systemic literature to consider the influence of community practices.

The discourse reveals the first-generation parents to display resistance towards issues which conflict with their culture of origin, and this in turn affects the women's ability to disclose. Due to this resistance and the consequential low levels of communication within the family, it is anticipated that the family will not readily seek help from external services. Furthermore, Abrahamson (1999) suggests that South Asian women may be reluctant to seek professional help. This is due to fearing South Asian professionals may breach confidentiality by exposing their private information to the community. Such fears may be held by the family unit as a whole and deter South Asian families from seeking help. Also, "therapy" may be seen as a Western concept that is in conflict with the cultural values of the family, and thus this may also deter

families from seeking help. Kleinman and Lin's (1981) findings illustrate ethnic minority individuals not considering mental health services as a means to help with emotional and family problems. It is documented that these individuals usually seek the help of family and community members. However, the findings of this study highlight that this is problematic, as open disclosure and communication, between members, cannot take place due to resistant attitudes and the need to "keep face".

Thus I am arguing for further clinical intervention and tailored services for South Asian individuals and their families. However, there is evidence to suggest that these communities may not access these services (Abrahamson, 1999; Kleinman and Lin, 1981). This is a complex area and further research is required in order to gather information regarding South Asian families' perceptions of therapy. It will be beneficial for future research to investigate under what circumstances South Asian families would seek professional help, what type of therapy this client group views as being acceptable, the barriers they perceive in seeking help, and how services could begin to eradicate some of these barriers. Hopefully, research within these areas will aid mental health services to promote their services within South Asian communities. In turn it is hoped that this will encourage South Asian individuals and families to seek professional help.

However, on a practical therapeutic level, it may be beneficial for services and community workers to make links with these communities, especially the first-generation parents, in order to assess their needs and address any fears of accessing 'Western' services. Due to the women's discourse identifying the community as the greater source of influence and power than to the family itself there is a need to approach the community as a whole. Perhaps this could be achieved by holding discussions and forums, and this may even began to remove the stigma from discussing some of the issues raised within this study.

4.5 Further limitations of the study

As a qualitative discourse analysis study, this research has analysed the discourses of four women with regard to their processes of disclosure within their families and communities. Thus this study is based upon a small sample of women. In recognition that South Asian women do not comprise a homogeneous group, I acknowledge that

my study is limited, as it was only able to convey the discourses of two Muslim and two Sikh participants from particular regions of the Indian subcontinent. Differing religious/spiritual affiliation could affect disclosure processes within the South Asian family. Inclusion of Hindu women and participants from the range of diverse countries that comprise the Indian subcontinent (i.e., Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) could have resulted in the emergence of differing discourses. The impact differing regions could have upon the women's discourses is conveyed within Simran's following words:

> *I think I've noticed the difference between, umm, East African Asians and Indian Asians as well. Cause I suppose like East African Asians have lost some of their roots along the way anyway. They've kind of adjusted to a new culture, now that they've come here, they've had to adjust again. Whereas some, like people with Indian roots, I think sometimes they need to hold onto their Indian-ness a bit more, but that's what I've kind of found.*

Simran's family migrated to East Africa before migrating to the UK. Thus she may, again, be attempting to convey the liberal qualities of her family by stressing the less traditional nature of East African Indians. Furthermore, the discourse conveys the differences Simran feels exist between South Asians migrating from varying countries.

A further limitation may be that the participants agreed to take part due to having a particular interest in the research area. Thus the discourses of the women who chose not to participate may be different from those who did. Additionally, it is possible that some of the participants who opted to participate in my research saw my flyer describing the initial research idea (refer to appendix 1). I emailed my initial flyer to all of my contacts who then emailed it onto their contacts. Within this process, some of the participants of this study may have come into contact with my initial flyer. This may have framed their interpretation of my interview questions and prompted them to provide certain responses which in turn affected the discourses emerging from the analysis. For example, being aware that my initial research was on the disclosure of sexual assault may have encouraged my participants to think about the issues involved with making a disclosure of a sexual nature to the family and community. This may

explain why the women stressed issues of a sexual nature, i.e., sexuality, sexual abuse, sexual relations etc within their discourses. This does not mean that the issues of a sexual nature which were raised within the interviews are not of particular pertinence to this research area, however, it does suggest that viewing the initial flyer may have prompted the participants to construct discourses around these issues as opposed to alternative ones.

Thus it is recognised that the construction of the research idea (refer to section A; Preface) and research design, as well as the aims of this study and my interpretation of the data have all impacted upon the discourses that have emerged from this study, and the subsequent findings.

Taking all of the above factors as well as my influence upon the research process into consideration, it is noted that the discourses discussed within this study do not convey the realities of all second-generation South Asian women. However, they are seen to be a representation of the participants' constructions of their disclosure processes within the context of this research. Like all discourses they are not static and all encompassing but are transient and constructed within a particular context.

Thus for the reasons discussed above, this study is restricted in its ability to make claims of transferability. However, as a qualitative study, this was not one of the aims of the research. Rather, the goal has been to allow the discourses of South Asian women to be recognised and address gaps within the literature, as historically this participant group has been one of the most understudied populations in the counselling and psychological literature (Abraham, 2000). Despite this research being unable to make claims of transferability, all the women have been able to provide rich and detailed discourses regarding their experiences of disclosure within their families and communities. These discourses and their subsequent analysis will hopefully allow clinicians to better understand this client group and plan culture- and gender- sensitive interventions. Furthermore, wherever possible the findings emerging from this study have been placed in the context of existing literature, much of which has been based upon qualitative research. The consistencies between the findings and previous literature increase the credibility of the findings of this study.

All the women who participated in this study were unmarried women. It was felt important to study the discourses of these women due to them being of marriageable age, and the great importance that is placed upon marriage within the South Asian family and community (Segal, 1999). Consequently, their unmarried status did in fact impact the constructions of their discourses. Although the discourses of married South Asian women were beyond the remit of this study (refer to chapter 2, section 2.5.1), I feel there is a need for future research to be conducted within this area. The single interview I conducted with a married woman revealed differing discourses of disclosure which were constructed within the family context that she had acquired through marriage. This illustrates the need to carry out research with this group of women, as their differing discourses may mean their clinical needs vary from those of unmarried South Asian women. Furthermore, epidemiological studies of suicide and clinical studies refer to sociocultural factors, such as marital conflict, in-law problems and unhappy arranged marriages, which have a significant role in the suicidal tendencies of South Asian women (Bhugra et al., 1999). The role of marital issues in the suicidal tendencies of South Asian women is another factor strengthening the case for additional research to be conducted upon the disclosure processes and other factors of distress amongst this group of women.

All the participants in this study were educated at least to A-level (completed secondary school to university entrance level). It is assumed that the women's level of education bears reference upon their social class and economic positions. Interestingly, an economic or class discourse is not conveyed within the women's talk. Perhaps this is an indication that class and economic factors do not impact their processes of disclosure. If participants had included a variety of educational backgrounds, any social class and economic discourse, and any subsequent inequalities and oppressions within this discourse, may have been more apparent. In this way issues of culture, gender and class, and their interrelatedness could have been attended to.

This study has focussed upon difficulties surrounding disclosure practices for South Asian women, and the subsequent distress and forms of oppression to which they are subjected. Thus the research highlights the pressures/stressors placed upon this participant group due to the familial and community context and structures

constructed within the women's discourse. However, there are dangers involved in this approach. Firstly (as discussed in chapter 3, section 3.1) this may promote stereotypes and racist interpretations of the South Asian woman, family and community. Secondly, this approach may be seen to further pathologise and marginalise this participant group. Phoenix (1987) discusses the representation of the black woman's experience within the literature. She asserts that the black woman's experiences are either absent from the literature or present in the form of her pathologies. Within such a representation, the black woman is illustrated as deviating from the norms of the dominant culture. Phoenix's (1987) assertions regarding the black woman can be extended to apply to the South Asian woman's representation within the literature. Furthermore, this study may be seen to neglect the positive aspects of being a second-generation South Asian woman living in the UK, and also deemphasise individual strengths and attributes. The limitations inherent within this study call for further research to be conducted on the entirety of the experience of being South Asian. It is anticipated that such research will facilitate an understanding of the positive aspects of these women's experiences.

Additionally, further research is required to investigate the South Asian woman's discourses around resilience strategies and coping mechanisms. It is important for psychologists and other clinicians to acknowledge the ways in which South Asian women are successfully managing their lives despite the oppressions and cultural constraints they may face. At this point, I would like to acknowledge that, although the emphasis of this study was not upon resilience and coping mechanisms, each woman who participated in this study conveyed great resilience and strength of character in managing and facilitating her disclosure practices within the family and community.

4.6 Reflections

I would like to end with reflections upon how the research process and this study has changed and affected me. My reflections within this section are a summary of some of the notes I made in my research diary, which I kept throughout the research process. The research topic under analysis has made me much more aware and conscious of my own disclosure processes within my family and my social networks. It has made me reflect upon some of the decisions that I make regarding disclosures and the

impact my identity as a South Asian woman has had upon these decisions. It has made me reflect upon the negative and positive impact disclosure practices have had upon me as an individual, and the importance it has had in shaping aspects of my life and my interpersonal relationships. However, most importantly I have come to realise the value I place on feeling safe and secure enough to disclose to another.

At times during the research process I was conscious of how others within the South Asian community, if they were to read my study, may perceive the findings. Due to the nature of this study, the focus is often upon the distress and disturbance experienced by the women as a result of the South Asian culture, family and community. I wondered if I would be perceived as "betraying" or sensationalising aspects of the South Asian culture. However, my responsibility towards presenting the "truth" as I interpreted it from the women's discourses overrode these concerns.

The women's discourse raised some very sensitive material regarding their own personal experiences and elements of the South Asian family and community to which I could relate. Analysing the discourse, there were times when I was greatly moved by the bravery and courage conveyed by the women within their discourse, and I felt deeply emphatic towards what they had endured. On other occasions, I was annoyed and dismayed by *'my'* community's negative and disempowering reactions towards the women and their experiences as conveyed within the discourse. During these moments, I acknowledged that the women's words were having an emotional impact upon me, and that my own personal reactions could severely bias the analysis of the discourse. Thus, it was important for me to disconnect from the discourse, by engaging in some other activity, and then after a sufficient amount of time to continue with the analysis. Taking time to disengage from the discourse and renew my energy, for the next phase of research, became a form of self-care, which I built into my routine. Much literature has been written on the importance of self-care for practitioners (i.e., Baker, 2007; Gilroy 2002; Rosen 1993). With regards to self-care within the practice of psychology, Baker (2007), states:

> The practice of psychology can be demanding, challenging, and emotionally taxing. Failure to adequately attend to one's own psychological wellness and self-care can place the psychologist at risk for impaired functioning...self-care

> is essential for the prevention of burnout and for maintain one's own psychological wellness. (p.607).

Baker (2007) stresses the importance for practising psychologists to partake in self-care in order to maintain the well-being of their practice and their own "wellness". From my experiences of having conducted this research, I would say the importance Baker (2007) places upon self-care for practitioners needs to be extended to apply to researchers also. Due to the demanding nature of research, self-care amongst psychologists and other academics is essential in order to produce ethical, sound research and maintain one's own "wellness".

Through the process of conducting this study, I have had the opportunity to read an array of studies and literature written by academics and researchers in the field. I have often been impressed by their insightful and detailed findings and discussions, creative and novel presentation of research designs and method of analysis, and eloquent style of writing. On numerous occasions during this process, I have felt writing to this high standard has been beyond my reach and capabilities at this present time. However, I appreciate that this is the first doctoral-level research I have conducted and written. Furthermore, I most definitely feel this process has improved my skills in conducting and writing at this level of academia. I have come to appreciate, through conducting my own research and reading the work of others, that the qualitative research process is very much a creative art and skill, as much as a science. I have enjoyed working through the challenges this study has presented and the learning I have gained and hope to conduct further research in the future. I believe that with time and experience and through conducting future studies my research and writing skills will improve.

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SECTION D: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

THE CASE OF KAREENA:

A REFLEXIVE EXPLORATION OF WORKING WITHIN A COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH WHILST FACILITATING A CLIENT'S DISCLOSURE AND THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND THE START OF THERAPY

1.1 Rationale for the choice of case and therapeutic approach

For purposes of confidentiality, I will name the client presented in this study Kareena. Additionally, certain other identifying features have been altered. I have chosen to present the case of Kareena as I feel my work with her illustrates the changeable and evolving nature of the therapeutic relationship during the course of therapy. This case study explores Kareena's initial attitude of distrust and scepticism towards the therapeutic relationship. At the same time, I had my own set of doubts and questioned how effective the service would be in meeting Kareena's needs. Over the course of therapy, as she gradually disclosed more information, we both became trusting of the therapeutic process and relationship. Consequently, as a result, Kareena began to address some of the concerns that had bought her into therapy. This is in line with many theorists and researchers who argue that, for most clients, progress within psychotherapy will vary directly as a result of their self-disclosing behaviour (Stricker, 1990; Derlega & Hendrick 1991). Furthermore, this case was chosen as it provided me with the opportunity to reflect upon working with a client from a similar cultural orientation to my own, and the implications this may have upon therapeutic practice.

I used the cognitive behavioural approach with this client for three main reasons. Firstly, due to practical constraints within the placement, I was only able to offer Kareena up to ten sessions. Scott (1992) argues that the cognitive behavioural approach works effectively as brief therapy, as it is quickly assimilated by some clients who find short interventions helpful. Secondly, Kareena's presenting problem was depression; however, as therapy progressed, collaboratively, we discovered her symptoms of anxiety as being the main concern in her everyday life. The NICE guidelines state that CBT is the most effective treatment for both depression and anxiety. Thirdly, Kareena's initial presentation indicated potential dependency issues. Consequently, I noticed Kareena's behaviour and presentation resulted in me wanting to protect her and "make her better". These ideas will be developed further within this report. Sudak (2006) asserts that an important aspect of CBT is to allow the client to become their own therapist through encouraging their active participation within and

outside of the sessions. Thus, I believed CBT would counteract the promotion of a relationship based upon dependency and protection by allowing Kareena to take an active role in her recovery.

1.2 Summary of theoretical orientation

Scott and Dryden (2003) argue that the cognitive-behavioural perspective views human experience as a product of four interacting elements; physiology, cognition, behaviour, and emotion. It is mainly from negative early experiences that clients learn incorrect habits of processing information which produce core beliefs, dysfunctional assumptions, and the accumulation of negative automatic thoughts. It is the activation of this negative thinking that may cause emotional upset and dysfunctional behaviours (Wills, 2009).

Curven et al. (2000) state that CBT provides a structured, short-term and present-focussed therapy, which enables the client to evaluate rationally and modify dysfunctional thoughts and behaviours. In order to facilitate this, the CBT therapist aims to develop a good collaborative working relationship with the client. Traditionally, cognitive behavioural therapists have focussed upon technical skills, and less importance has been placed on the quality of the therapeutic relationship than other therapeutic approaches. However, in recent years, cognitive behavioural therapists have increasingly been stressing the importance of the therapeutic relationship within therapy (Roth & Fonagy, 2005; Wills, 2009). The cognitive element of CBT involves discussions between client and therapist, which aim to elicit and challenge these negative thoughts and beliefs via techniques such as Socratic questioning. This occurs in conjunction with the behavioural part of CBT, which tackles the dysfunctional behaviours practically, possibly, in the sessions and as behavioural homework assignments set by the therapist. A fundamental aspect of this approach is to educate clients regarding the principles of the CBT model. It is hoped that this process of psycho-education as well as an open discussion of their difficulties will encourage them to become their own therapists (Beck, 1995).

1.3 The context of the work

The work with Kareena took place at a voluntary organisation. Therapy at this organisation is free for clients. The referrals are generated via the NHS, Social Services and self-referrals. The service offers each client up to ten sessions.

1.4 The referral

The referral was made by a general practitioner (GP) and stated that the client suffered from long-term depression. The referral went on to say that recently the client's symptoms had exacerbated with no identifying trigger. It was at the suggestion of the GP that the client be referred to the voluntary organisation's counselling service.

1.5 Summary of biographical details of client

Kareena was a 28 year old South Asian woman who lived with her husband and three children in a two-bedroom flat. She was born in India and immigrated to England with her parents when she was 15 years old. Kareena informed me that her husband was unaware of the difficulties which had bought her to therapy. Consequently he was not aware that she was seeking therapy. She stated her reason for not sharing this information with her husband was to prevent him from worrying about her.

1.6 Convening the first session

When I first met Kareena, I noted that she appeared very nervous, shy and timid. She seemed scared when I introduced myself to her and spoke in a very quiet voice, making little eye contact. During the actual session, Kareena came across as "vulnerable" and in need of guidance. I remember at the time my instant reaction was a strong desire to "make things better for her". Additionally, I felt her presentation and the stress she placed upon "needing my help" indicated, she too wanted me to "make things better for her" and possibly to take on some sort of parental role. I made a mental note of these feelings and thoughts Kareena was evoking within me, as I felt this may become a problematic factor within the therapeutic process. As I was already aware of possible dependency issues, I wanted to encourage a collaborative relationship from the start of our work together. Thus when explaining the CBT model to Kareena, I stressed that the collaborative relationship was essential in order to work within this model (Westbrook et al., 2007).

Due to Kareena's presentation and the possible difficulties she would have in disclosing, the emphasis of the first session was placed upon putting her at ease and making her feel comfortable within the therapeutic setting (the ways in which I attempted to achieve this will be explained in section B). As a result, I was not able to complete the assessment, and at this stage did not feel I had a clear idea as to what Kareena's difficulties were. I explained to Kareena that I would like to continue with the assessment in the following session and would then discuss with her the therapeutic plan. Kareena seemed satisfied by my response and stated that she would attend the next session of therapy. My therapeutic response during this initial session was guided by Burns and Auerbach's (1991) assertions. They state that when clients are stuck or expressing strong affect, therapists need to put a hold on their cognitive and behavioural techniques and respond in an empathic manner. It is only when clients feel relaxed and validated and are trusting of the therapeutic process that technical interventions can be resumed.

1.7 The client's definition of the problem

When I asked Kareena to describe, in her own words, what had brought her to therapy, she replied that the GP thought she was depressed and in need of some counselling. From the first session, it was difficult to get a clear picture of what Kareena saw as being the problem. She seemed very reluctant to disclose personal information, especially with regard to her childhood. She appeared to find the whole process of sharing information very anxiety provoking. I reflected back to her my observations regarding the difficulties she was having in disclosing information. This prompted Kareena to inform me that she had always been actively encouraged not to say things that may place her family in a negative light. This made me hypothesise that perhaps Kareena's early familial relationships may have influenced the development of intermediate or core beliefs around disclosure (Wills, 2009). I was aware that such beliefs would definitely impact upon the material Kareena bought to therapy.

It became evident in the first session that if she did disclose the content of what she was referring to, then I would be the first person she had shared this information with. I recall feeling my own anxieties at this point. My anxieties were due to wondering if what she wanted to bring to these sessions could actually be addressed in the

timeframe that we had together. Also, I wanted her first experience of disclosure to be a positive one. As if it was positive, she would be able to draw upon this experience as evidence to counteract some of the possible negative thoughts she may have regarding making disclosures outside of the family unit. She could then begin to develop alternative productive thoughts which may further facilitate disclosure. This is in line with Leahy's (2003) description of cognitive behavioural treatment. Leahy states that the process involves the eliciting of automatic thoughts, recognising their relationship to behaviour and emotions, testing their validity and generating alternative thoughts.

I was able to review my initial concerns with my supervisor at the organisation. My supervisor and I discussed how I was perhaps taking on too much responsibility with regard to making this a positive experience of disclosure for Kareena. We spoke of how I could provide the conditions to make it comfortable and safe for Kareena to disclose information. Additionally, we discussed the importance of ensuring that what was bought to the sessions could be addressed in the timeframe we had together. However, ultimately the content of what was brought to the sessions and the type of experience that was encountered as a result was Kareena's responsibility. We spoke of how my impressions of Kareena being particularly vulnerable and my initial desire to take on a parental type of role may have resulted in me feeling overly responsible for her experience of disclosure within the sessions.

My supervisor and I decided that it was too early to come to a definite decision as to whether or not the service was appropriate for Kareena. I needed to complete my assessment in order to determine whether the timeframe available was appropriate to work with Kareena. It was agreed by my supervisor and myself that if, after the next session, I felt Kareena was suited for longer term work then my assessment could help me make a referral to an appropriate service.

1.8 Initial assessment

In the second session, Kareena informed me of some symptoms that she was suffering. These symptoms were incompatible with the diagnosis of depression stated within her referral. She stated that for a number of years, she had not felt any interest or pleasure in most activities besides looking after her children. She also informed me of often feeling fatigued and having difficulty in falling asleep. According to the

DSM-IV (APA, 1994), these are three symptoms of depression; however, in order to make a diagnosis a person must have experienced at least five of the nine symptoms listed in the DSM-IV criteria of depression. This was one of the reasons I doubted depression to be the root of Kareena's problems.

Furthermore, as the session developed, it became apparent that the activities in which Kareena had no interest or pleasure involved social situations. She stated that she had always feared being in social situations, but in recent years she had only been going out and being around people when it was absolutely necessary. She described experiencing certain bodily sensations (palpitations, sweating, trembling, hot flushes and going red in the face), when she was in social situations, like collecting her children from school. Kareena's experiences of social situations made me hypothesise that she was suffering from social phobia.

Social phobia is defined in DSM-IV (APA, 1994) as being a "marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur". Like most people with social phobia, Kareena described being anxious in any situation where she might be observed or scrutinised by others. She spoke of believing that people evaluated her negatively (i.e., "people would think I'm crazy, if they heard all of this") and anticipated that they would reject her (i.e., "who would want to know a freak"). Also, she believed that she was inadequate/inferior (i.e., "I'm not good enough"). These thought processes of negative evaluation, rejection and inadequacy are experienced by people with social phobia (Leahy, 2004). Wells and Clark (1997) state that negative self-evaluation is central in the cognitive formulation of social phobia and also a key factor in its maintenance. I used Wells and Clark's (1997) model of social phobia (see appendix 10) as the theoretical basis for understanding Kareena's condition and in order to guide therapeutic intervention.

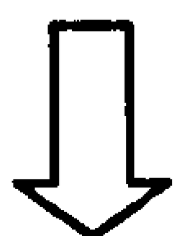
1.9 Case conceptualisation and formulation of problem

I asked Kareena to describe, in detail, a social situation which made her feel very anxious.

Below is an illustration of Kareena's difficulties, using Wells and Clark's (1997) model.

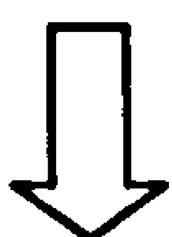
Social Situation

Collecting her children from school and waiting in the playground with the other mothers.



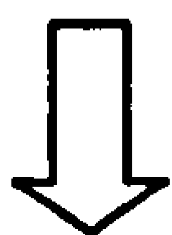
Activates Assumptions

This will be awful, everyone will be looking and pointing at me, this will be humiliating.



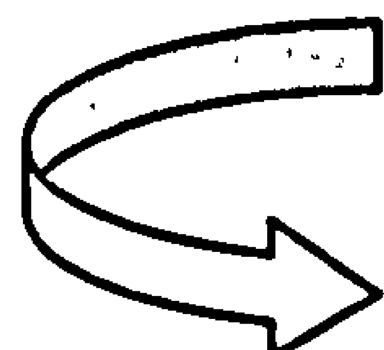
Perceived social danger

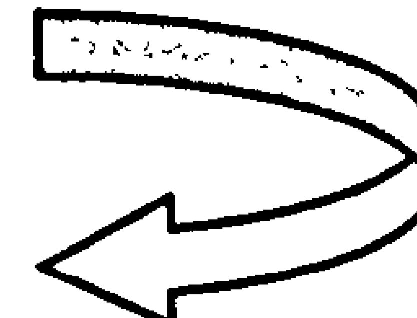
I'll be trembling and will lose control. Everyone will think I am pathetic, I am a freak, I'm a failure.



Self-conscious

Image of self, violently shaking and appearing pathetic





Safety behaviours

Tenses body, avoids eye-contact, doesn't draw attention to herself

Somatic and Cognitive symptoms

Trembling, breathless, mind racing

Combining Wells and Clark's (1997) model and Curven et al.'s (2000) notions of case conceptualisation, I devised a formulation of Kareena's difficulties. Particular attention was paid to the factors described below:

Predisposing factors are early experiences which impact upon the formation of beliefs about oneself and the world;

Precipitating factors are critical, recent experiences which activate an individual's belief system;
Perpetuating factors maintain an individual's difficulties; and
Protecting factors are existing factors which aid the individual with their recovery.

Predisposing factors

From the initial assessment, and as therapy progressed, it became apparent that Kareena had developed an array of negative, intermediate and core beliefs about herself. These beliefs included; "I am pathetic", "I am not good enough", "I am a freak", "I am crazy", and a core belief of "I am a failure". As therapy progressed Kareena gradually revealed more about her early experiences. She spoke of growing up within a household where she was constantly belittled and controlled by the male members of her family. Whilst growing up she also endured domestic violence at the hands of her father and other key male figures in her life. Kareena disclosed these details with great difficulty, within the sessions, due to the sensitive and personal nature of them. In order to protect my client's identity, I have chosen to omit further content details regarding her early experiences. Barlow et al. (2003) state that dysfunctional beliefs develop from childhood. Thus, I hypothesised that Kareena's early life experiences encouraged the development of the aforementioned beliefs.

Additionally, as already indicated, Kareena found the process of disclosing information about herself very anxiety provoking. She informed me that this was mainly due to her fearing negative judgement and evaluation from others. I hypothesised that these fears originated from the negative judgement and criticisms she had endured from her early experiences and relationships. In the first session, Kareena had also indicated that she had received negative messages regarding disclosing outside of the family whilst growing up. I hypothesised that these messages contributed towards her developing beliefs that linked disclosure with being "wrong" and "bad". These rules and beliefs were making it difficult for Kareena to practise disclosure in her daily life and also within therapy.

Precipitating factors

In recent years Kareena had developed social phobia. It seems apparent that an individual suffering from social phobia develops certain beliefs about themselves

through negative self-evaluation (Wells & Clark, 1997). Kareena found social situations extremely anxiety provoking; she assumed other people were judging her negatively for appearing "pathetic", "weak" and a "failure". Kareena also believed that her presentation in public revealed the experiences she had endured during her early life. Her beliefs (as discussed overleaf) and the negative automatic thoughts, which emerged from them, affected her perception in social situations and this was fuelling the anxiety (Leahy, 2003).

Perpetuating factors

The main factor that was maintaining her anxieties around social situations was her avoidance of them, which perpetuated the negative self-evaluation. She managed to endure the few social situations she did experience by adopting safety behaviours such as not making any eye contact, tensing her body etc. These behaviours also maintained her condition, as they convinced her that she could not cope in social situations unless she had these behaviours to depend on.

Protecting factors

Kareena had taken the first step to addressing some of her issues by attending therapy, despite it being a very anxiety-provoking experience for her. As therapy progressed (refer to section 2), Kareena disclosed a lot more about herself. Furthermore, she demonstrated motivation to change by engaging in the sessions and making brave attempts to complete the behavioural homework assignments. By the end of therapy (refer to Section 3), Kareena was a lot more comfortable with disclosing information about herself.

1.10 Negotiating a contract and therapeutic aims

I informed Kareena that if we discussed events from her past, we had to ensure both that the material could be addressed in our timeframe, and that the focus was on improving the quality of her current life. Working within a CBT framework meant acknowledging and exploring how childhood experiences may produce incorrect habits of processing information, resulting in the formation of intermediate and core beliefs (Beck & Emery 1985). However as Westbrook et al. (2007) state, the focus is on the present, and the exploration of how these negative patterns of thinking are

activated in the present day. Bearing this in mind our therapeutic aims were as follows:

1. **For Kareena to feel comfortable in disclosing information within the therapeutic relationship;**
2. **For Kareena to be aware of how her early experiences developed certain negative patterns of thinking that have a detrimental effect on her daily life;**
3. **For Kareena to use CBT methods and techniques within and outside of the sessions to challenge some of these negative patterns of thinking; and**
4. **For Kareena to think and behave in a more realistic manner and ultimately feel less anxious in social situations.**

We agreed to meet each other on a weekly basis for a total of ten sessions. A maximum of ten sessions was chosen as this was a requirement of the service.

SECTION 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THERAPY

2.1 The therapeutic plan and the main techniques used

It was very important to create a good working relationship with Kareena, due to the difficulties she was displaying with disclosing information. Beck (1976) stresses the importance of developing rapport with the client by utilising Rogers's (1951) core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence. Beck (1976) argues that, without this, therapy is unlikely to be effective. In order to aid Kareena's disclosure within therapy, it was important for me to listen actively through making reflections and summarising. Alongside this process I was developing my assessment and formulation of Kareena's difficulties.

Kareena was experiencing visible anxiety in the sessions, which was evident from her body language and mannerisms. It became apparent that within the sessions a lot of the anxiety was around the fear of having to disclose information. Thus, I thought it was appropriate to practise progressive muscle relaxation during the beginning stages of therapy in order to help Kareena disclose (Ost & Sterner, 1987). I instructed Kareena to practise these behavioural skills outside the sessions. Once she felt comfortable with them, they could be used between cognitive restructuring

interventions in order to stabilise her anxiety. Additionally, she was advised that she could use them in order to ease her anxiety when practising the behavioural experiments that would be set between sessions.

Kareena appeared to have little awareness of her difficulties and believed she was "going mad" and that others must have assumed this of her as well. Ellis (1962) notes that clients often "disturb" themselves about their disturbances. CBT is psycho-educational in nature and focuses upon educating the client regarding their difficulties. This is especially pertinent if thoughts and beliefs about the disorder cause them considerable distress (Curven et al., 2000). During the first few sessions, I used CBT techniques of psycho-education to help Kareena understand the social anxiety model (Wells & Clark, 1997). It was hoped this would normalise the symptoms she was experiencing and alleviate the fear that she was "going mad".

Through Socratic questioning and the downward arrow technique, automatic thoughts, dysfunctional assumptions, thinking errors and beliefs were elicited in order to complete Kareena's cognitive model of social phobia (Wells & Clark, 1997). Through this method and the continual sharing of the conceptualisation of the problem, it was hoped that Kareena would become aware of the factors that were maintaining her anxieties. Safety behaviours that were maintaining her condition were also elicited and highlighted. Once the negative thinking had been made explicit, further exploration involved gently challenging her negative thoughts in order to produce more realistic thinking patterns regarding social situations (Halpern, 2003).

Having elicited and challenged some of Kareena's negative thoughts, the next stage involved concentrating upon systematic desensitisation and using graded exposure to extinguish Kareena's anxieties regarding social situations (Wolpe, 1961). Together we produced a graded hierarchy, which included the situations Kareena had been avoiding or exposing herself to only with the use of safety behaviours. The idea was that Kareena would gradually expose herself to the listed situations without her safety behaviours. The graded hierarchy guided homework behavioural tasks between sessions.

In hindsight, I believe it would have been beneficial to start this process alongside the first stages of therapy which concentrated upon the cognitive elements. The practical experiments would have further aided the process of challenging the negative thinking. At the time, this felt too much to manage and explore simultaneously. On reflection, I realise that I felt overwhelmed by the thought of addressing Kareena's anxieties regarding disclosing her early experiences as well as, simultaneously, working on cognitive and behavioural elements. This prevented me from combining these aspects of therapy. In hindsight I feel I became overwhelmed due to the anxieties I was experiencing, as a result of being aware that I was the first person to whom Kareena had disclosed her early experiences . In the future, when working with clients, I aim to place increased importance upon monitoring my own anxieties, and how they may negatively be affecting therapeutic interventions.

2.2 The therapeutic progress

By session six, Kareena had a good understanding of the cognitive model of social phobia. She was able to identify the negative thinking and safety behaviours that were exacerbating and maintaining her difficulties. She had begun to challenge her negative thinking by finding evidence to counteract it. For example, she could acknowledge that she was a good mother, a loving wife and was able to run the daily chores of the household effectively. These factors challenged her beliefs of being "dysfunctional", "pathetic" and a "failure".

Furthermore, we discussed the reality of her belief that she was revealing everything about her past through her presentation in public. This form of negative thinking was addressed in two parts. Firstly, we devised a list of possible alternative suggestions others may come to in order to explain her behaviour. For example, people may have thought she was shy, she did not wish to talk to people, she was tired etc. Secondly, we discussed her fears about people actually finding out about her past and how she believed they would perceive her. Again, her beliefs were that other people would think she was "faulty" and "dysfunctional". I gently challenged this negative thinking and together we formed some alternative beliefs. These alternative beliefs suggested others may perceive her as "brave", "resourceful" and "courageous" for having successfully survived her early experiences and also to now have her own children whom she loved very much.

By session eight, it was evident that Kareena had reduced some of the anxiety she used to experience whilst collecting her children from school and during shopping trips. However, I became concerned that we would not be able to complete all stages of the graded exposure within the timeframe we had together. Hence, Kareena would need to continue with the work by herself once therapy had terminated. These concerns seemed to be part of a theme that ran through my work with Kareena and was demonstrated within supervision sessions. This theme consisted of Kareena evoking parental feelings within me which caused me to take on too much responsibility within the therapeutic relationship.

Reflecting upon the therapeutic progress, I felt I had equipped Kareena with the tools necessary for her to complete the graded exposure exercises on her own once therapy had terminated. Additionally, this would also be complying with one of the goals of CBT which is for the client to eventually become their own therapist (Curven et al., 2000). Similar to a parent needing to allow their child to leave the family home and become independent, I, too, needed to allow Kareena to leave therapy and start the journey as her own therapist. However, although Kareena had been successful in reducing some of her anxiety, I still felt that she was carrying a lot of distress regarding early relationships and experiences.

As therapy progressed my role in the relationship was evolving. Initially, I felt my role was to facilitate a relationship within which Kareena could comfortably disclose. I also believed my role was to increase her awareness regarding her difficulties and provide her with the tools in order to reduce them. However, as time went on and we began working towards an ending, my role developed into one which consisted of empowering Kareena and encouraging her to continue to progress and recover without my assistance. I did this through gently challenging certain beliefs regarding her ability to function without therapy. Trower et al. (1988) suggest that clients may have two main concerns with the ending of therapy. Firstly, they fear whether they will be able to work in a CBT framework without the assistance of the therapist. Secondly, they believe that they will need the therapist for emotional support. I was particularly mindful of these factors when working with Kareena, due to the dependency issues that were raised early on in therapy. Thus I made a point of beginning an open discussion around the ending of therapy from session six onwards. With my gradual

withdrawal, I saw Kareena evolve from presenting as highly dependent to becoming more confident in her own resources and strengths.

2.3 Making use of supervision

It was apparent that Kareena was aware I was from a similar cultural background to her own. For I noted, on some occasions she made comments such as *"you must know what I mean"* or *"you know how it is"* when referring to certain practices or beliefs held within her family or community. I discussed, with my supervisor, the possible impact my cultural orientation may have on the therapeutic process and our relationship. We noted that on one hand, it may aid Kareena's disclosure within the sessions, as she may feel I would have a better understanding of the material she was bringing. However, on the other hand, she may see me as a part of the South Asian community in which she has been prohibited from disclosing information. Also we discussed that I needed to be mindful of any assumptions I may make about her experiences due to the knowledge I had with regard to her cultural background. I had to ensure that my perception of her experiences was not contaminated by my own.

My supervisor agreed that, since Kareena was acknowledging my similar cultural orientation, it might be beneficial to ask her how (if at all) she felt it affected the therapeutic relationship. In this way, I would be developing a collaborative relationship which promotes a transparent environment where information can be shared (Dryden & Feltham, 1994). Kareena's response indicated that she did not feel my cultural orientation negatively impacted upon her disclosure practices within therapy. She felt disclosure was difficult for her irrespective of the recipient's cultural orientation.

SECTION 3: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

3.1 The future

At the start of therapy my supervisor and I did discuss the possibility of referring Kareena on to longer term services. Near the end of therapy, I asked Kareena how she felt with regard to the future. Kareena replied that she was "more open with having therapy in the future". However, currently she did not want to pursue any further

therapy and wanted to concentrate upon what she had learnt over the last few weeks. She also stated that discussing aspects of her past in therapy made her feel comfortable with disclosing more to her husband. I agreed with Kareena and thought it was important for her to continue to address her current difficulties independently, as this would promote belief in her capabilities.

3.2 What I learnt about psychotherapeutic practice and theory

Practising in a CBT model has allowed me to appreciate that it is a very rich form of therapy which can be tailored to suit the needs and pace of the individual client. To work effectively within this model, the therapist has to interweave several tasks at once. These tasks consist of formulating the cognitive conceptualisation and conducting an assessment, collecting information from the client's past and present in order to test hypotheses and tailoring the therapy to suit each individual client's needs (Beck, 1995). I have learnt that CBT cannot be practised in a prescribed fashion; one needs to be flexible within this approach. I feel this can be seen in my work with Kareena, where I believe therapy did not follow a conventional format. For example, the assessment was not carried out in the first session, as it was felt other factors were more pressing, i.e., putting Kareena at ease and developing the therapeutic relationship. Another factor of therapy that was adapted in order to address Kareena's needs was the ending of therapy. Due to Kareena's presentation of dependency, I felt it was important to start the dialogue of ending from session six. However, with another client, where dependency is not an issue, talk of an ending may not start so early.

I felt it was beyond the remit of the approach I was working within to further discuss the feelings of dependency displayed by Kareena, and the subsequent nurturing response this evoked within me. Perhaps if I was working within a different model, I would have opened up a dialogue about what was being experienced within the room by Kareena and myself. I did wonder if the relationship that was being enacted within the room mirrored early relationships Kareena had experienced. I did sense that Kareena was deeply troubled by these early relationships and would have benefitted from a deeper exploration of them. However, as I was working within a cognitive behavioural model, I did not feel there was room for me to explore these dynamics. As Westbrook et al. (2007) state, the cognitive behavioural approach is a present-

focussed therapy. Over the sessions, I found Kareena had become familiar with the cognitive behavioural style I had adopted. Furthermore, she had assimilated some of the CBT tools and techniques, and they were successfully helping her to manage her difficulties. Thus, I think if I had altered the therapeutic style, it would have disrupted the relationship I was attempting to develop, and would have been detrimental to Kareena's recovery.

My work with Kareena has heightened my awareness regarding how the successful delivery of CBT is not just a matter of delivering techniques to the client. In order for the delivery of techniques to be successful, it has to be equally balanced with developing and maintaining a therapeutic relationship with the client throughout therapy (Dryden & Feltham, 1994). This study demonstrates how maintaining the therapeutic relationship with Kareena was a key factor in promoting her disclosure. Without Kareena disclosing her difficulties, it would have been impossible for me to work with her. Working with Kareena has highlighted to me the importance of maintaining a therapeutic relationship in order to facilitate the client's disclosure and essentially aid their recovery.

3.3 Learning from the case about myself as a therapist

Working with Kareena, I was made aware of the limitations inherent in practising a present-focussed therapy. This realisation holds implications for my future practice as a counselling psychologist. I would like to continue working within a cognitive behavioural model, as I can see the benefits of this approach. However I would also like to explore integrating analytic approaches into my work.

Supervision was a very important aspect of my work with Kareena. Working with Kareena, I felt my expectations and requirements of supervision were developing. On previous occasions, I had attended supervision hoping to find the answers to some of the issues I was facing within my client work. However, whilst working with Kareena, I found that supervision evolved into a collaborative process and relationship. My supervisor allowed me to lead the process of therapy with Kareena, and this enhanced my confidence and independence as a therapist. Thus the supervisory relationship mirrored the therapeutic aim of facilitating Kareena's evolution from a state of dependency into one of confidence and independence.

Through my work with Kareena, I have been reminded that clients can evoke many emotions and feelings within me which can both aid and also hinder the therapeutic relationship and the client's recovery. In this context, emotions and feelings are seen as perceptions of patterned changes within the body. When these perceptions are conscious and are felt, they are described as feelings. Alternatively, when these perceptions are unconscious they are described as emotions (Prenz, 2005). I have learnt the importance of becoming aware of these perceptions so that they can be felt in appropriate places such as within supervision or amongst peers. I now further appreciate that the therapeutic relationship is a human interaction, and it is natural to experience these many emotions and feelings. Lacking reflection and denying such perceptions can be detrimental to the therapeutic relationship and client. It is the acknowledgement and awareness of these perceptions that promotes good practice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: FLYER FOR INITIAL RESEARCH STUDY.

Are you a second-generation South Asian woman, born in the UK, whose parents were born in the Indian subcontinent, and have you experienced a sexual assault in your adult years?

The experiences of second-generation Asian women who have been sexually assaulted in their adult years (18+) is an area that is little researched. It is important that more is known about the complexities of this issue, i.e. in what way, (if at all) has being Asian impacted upon your experience, so that better support can be provided. If you have been assaulted, and also are a second-generation Asian woman with parents born in the Indian subcontinent, I would really like to hear about your experience.

Your participation will involve you answering a short questionnaire and an interview lasting up to an hour, where you will be given the opportunity to talk about your experience. If you would feel more comfortable in providing me with a written account of your experience as opposed to attending an interview, please contact me, and we can make arrangements for this to occur.

If you agree to participate, your confidentiality and anonymity will be assured and you will have the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any point.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed, it is important for their own well-being and protection for participants to ensure that:

- They are not currently in a relationship where they are experiencing any form of sexual assault.
- They are not currently depressed, having any suicidal tendencies, receiving trauma counselling or receiving treatment for a psychiatric condition.
- A sufficient amount of time has passed between the last sexual assault and the interview. Usually there will be a gap of at least six months between the last assault and interview.

If you fulfil the above criteria and you would like to share your experience I would be glad to hear from you.

This research is part of a doctoral study undertaken at City University, London.

My contact details are as follows:

Rashmi Kalra, Counselling Psychologist In-Training

Tel:
Email:

Supervised by Delia Danchev, Chartered Counselling Psychologist, City University, London.

Email:

APPENDIX 2: RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Are you a second-generation South Asian woman, born in the UK, whose parents were born in the Indian subcontinent? Would you be interested in participating in a piece of research that is investigating disclosure processes within the South Asian family and community?

The lives of second-generation South Asian women and their experiences of living within their families and communities is an area that is little researched. It is important that more is known about how South Asian women experience communicating to their families and communities on a variety of issues. This in turn can help services better understand the cultural and familial factors which affect the lives of the South Asian women they work with.

Your participation will involve you answering a short questionnaire and an interview lasting up to an hour, where you will be given the opportunity to talk about your experience. The interview will be audiotaped and I will ask your permission to do this.

If you agree to participate, your confidentiality and anonymity will be assured and you will have the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any point.

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic being discussed, it is important for your own well-being and protection that you ensure:

- You are not currently involved in any experience which is causing significant distress and is affecting your mental health.
- You are not currently depressed, having any suicidal tendencies, receiving trauma counselling or receiving treatment for a psychiatric condition.

If you fulfil the above criteria and you would like to share your experiences I would be glad to hear from you.

This research is part of a doctoral study undertaken at City University, London.

My contact details are as follows:

Rashmi Kalra, Counselling Psychologist In-Training

Tel:
Email:

Supervised by Delia Danchev, Chartered Counselling Psychologist, City University, London.

Email:

I am aware that we know each other in a different context, but please do not feel obliged to participate in my research because of this. If you do decide not to participate in my research, no explanation will be required and I will not be raising

this topic with you again. Alternatively, if you decide to participate in my research, unless you wish to do so, your participation and the content of the interview will not be raised if I happen to see you again.

If you would like any further information about my research area or what would be required of you if you do decide to participate, please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Yours sincerely

Rashmi Kalra
Counselling Psychologist in Training

APPENDIX 3: BACKGROUND QUESTIONS ASKED BEFORE INTERVIEW

Before we begin the interview, I would like to ask you some basic details (i.e., your age, education level, occupation, your parents' place of birth), and your religious orientation and culture.

The information that you give **will not** be used to identify you, as the research is confidential. However, if you do not wish to answer some of the following questions, please don't feel you have to.

1. How old are you? ( ) years

2. What is your highest level of education qualification?

(Tick the appropriate answer)

None ______
GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s) ______
A-Levels(s) ______
Diploma (HND, SRN, etc.) ______
Degree ______
Postgraduate degree/diploma ______

3. What is your current occupation (or if you are no longer/not currently working, what was your last occupation?)

____

4 What religious orientation do you/your family subscribe to? I.e., Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity etc.

____

5. How religious would you say that you were on a scale of 1–10, where 0 represents not at all and 10 represents extremely religious.

______

6. How religious would you say your family was on a scale of 1–10, where 0 represents not at all and 10 represents extremely religious.

____

7. How would you define your culture in a couple of statements?

____
____
____
____
____
____

8. How important is culture to you on a scale of 0–10, where 0 represents no importance and 10 represents extremely important?

____

9. How important would you say culture was to your family on a scale of 0–10, where 0 represents not at all and 10 represents extremely important?

____

10. What is your current marital status?
(Tick the appropriate box)

Single ________

Married ________

Divorced/Separated ________

11. Do you have any children?
(Tick the appropriate box)

Yes ________ How many children do you have? ________

No ________

If you would like to comment on any thoughts or feelings raised from completing this questionnaire, please use the space below.

____

____

____

____

____

____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions

APPENDIX 4: CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

AYESHA

Age: *26*

Highest level of education: *Postgraduate degree/diploma*

Current Occupation: *Public sector*

Religious Orientation: *Islam*

Individual's level of religiosity from 0–10: *3*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Family's level of religiosity from 0–10: *7*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Defining culture: *"Mixture of being British and Persian/Asian but more so a western British culture due to upbringing and environmental factors."*

Importance individual places on culture: 5
(0 = no importance, 10 = extremely important)

Importance family places on culture: 9

Marital status: *Single*

No. of children: *No*

AHILYA

Age: *25*

Highest level of education: *Postgraduate degree/diploma*

Current Occupation: *Student*

Religious Orientation: *Sikhism*

Individual's level of religiosity from 0-10: *6*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Family's level of religiosity from 0-10: *8*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Defining culture: *"Being Asian in a Western country and being able to mix the two or be part of both systems. Following traditions from Sikhism, India and England, e.g. Vaisakhi, Christmas and Holi. Being part of an extended family."*

Importance individual places on culture: *8*
(0 = no importance, 10 = extremely important)

Importance family places on culture: *8*

Marital status: *Single*

No. of children: *0*

<u>NUSRAT</u>

Age: *25*

Highest level of education: *A-Levels*

Current Occupation: *Solicitor's clerk*

Religious Orientation: *Islam*

Individual's level of religiosity from 0-10: *3*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Family's level of religiosity from 0-10: *5*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Defining culture: *"The culture I came from is Bangladeshi, and as I have grown up in Britain I also feel culturally British."*

Importance individual places on culture: *5*
(0 = no importance, 10 = extremely important)

Importance family places on culture: *8*

Marital status: *Single*

No. of children: *0*

<u>SIMRAN</u>

Age: *24*

Highest level of education: *Postgraduate degree/Diploma*

Current Occupation: *Substance misuse counsellor*

Religious Orientation: *Sikhism*

Individual's level of religiosity from 0-10: *5*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Family's level of religiosity from 0-10: *8*
(0 = not at all religious, 10 = extremely religious)

Defining culture: *"I am Punjabi. I would class myself as British East African Indian."*

Importance individual places on culture: *7*
(0 = no importance, 10 = extremely important)

Importance family places on culture: *9*

Marital status: *Single*

No. of children: *No*

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

It is anticipated that most of these questions will be answered during the course of the interview without the interviewer having to ask them directly. Thus the interview will be of a semi-structured nature.

The questions I will be asking you today are about your experiences of disclosure within your family.

- **Could you please tell me about the nature of the things that you are comfortable or find easy disclosing with your family?**
- **You've told me about some of the things that you would be comfortable in disclosing, could you now tell me about the nature of some of the things that you would not find comfortable in disclosing with your family?**
- **What distinguishes the things you are comfortable in disclosing with your family to the things that you are uncomfortable in disclosing?**
- **Could you tell me about a specific experience that you found difficult in disclosing to your family?**
- **Could you tell me about a specific experience, where you consciously made a decision not to disclose something to your family?**
- **With regard to this experience, since you weren't able to disclose to your family, were there any other people in your life or avenues that you could disclose this to and gain support/help from etc?**
- **How much importance do you place on being able to disclose within your family?**
- **How do you think being Asian and coming from an Asian family has affected your experience of disclosure within your family?**
- **Do you think your experiences of disclosure in your family will affect how you are with your future family?**
- **What are your family's views about disclosing outside of the family?**
- **What are your views about disclosing outside of the family?**
- **Do you have similar experiences with regard to disclosure in the wider Asian community, as you do with your family?**
- **Is there anything more that you would like to share about your experience of disclosure that has not been covered already?**

APPENDIX 6: INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. I am a counselling psychologist in training and as part of my doctoral research I have chosen to look at disclosure within Asian families as experienced by second-generation Asian women. The Asian family is an area that is little researched; therefore it is important that more is known about the complexities of being part of an Asian network in order to increase awareness, and also provide better support to those that may require it.

Your participation will involve you answering some background questions, and an interview lasting up to an hour. Within the interview you will be given the opportunity to talk about your experience.

If you agree to participate, your confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured and your consent to participate can be withdrawn at any point.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed, it is important for your own well-being and protection that:

you are not currently depressed, having any suicidal tendencies, receiving trauma counselling, or receiving treatment for a psychiatric condition.

The interview may raise some thoughts, emotions, feelings, memories etc. regarding your experiences, either during the interview or after, that you would like to discuss further. At the end of the interview, you will be given a list of contact details for possible avenues of support should you wish to contact them in the future.

Thank you again for participating in my research.

APPENDIX 7: LIST OF AGENCIES PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Relate website on www.relate.org.uk. **Relate specialises in relationship counselling, family life and sex therapy.** The service offers face to face or telephone counselling. To find out more about their services you can call them on 08451 30 40 16.

Cruise Bereavement Service. Visit website on www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Helpline: 0844 477 9400.

Asian Women's Counselling Service
Asian Health Agency, Rotunda Youth and Community Centre
Northampton Avenue
Slough
SL1 3BP
020 8570 6568

Asian Family Counselling Service
Suite 51
Windmill Place
2-4 Southhall Lane
Middlesex
UB2 5NL

Kiran Asian Women's Aid
PO Box 899
London
E11 1AA
020 8558 1986

Naz Project London
Palingswick House
241 King Street
London
W6 9LP
020 8741 1879

Newham Asian Women's Project
661 Barking Road
Plaistow
London
E13 9EX
020 8552 5524

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road
Middlesex
UB1 3BL
020 8571 9595

TAWCS: The Asian Women's Counselling Service
Neal's Corner
Suite 10
2 Bath Road
Hounslow
TW3 3HJ
020 8570 6568

Visit the British Psychological Society (BPS) homepage (www.bps.org.uk/home-page.cfm) to find a Psychologist in your chosen geographical area and/or with a particular speciality.

Visit the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) homepage (www.bacp.co.uk) to find a therapist in your chosen geographical area and/or with a particular speciality.

Visit your GP and request to be referred to local counselling services.

APPENDIX 8: CONSENT FORM

I consent to participate in this research project investigating ***disclosure within Asian families as experienced by second-generation unmarried Asian women, born in the UK with origins in the Indian sub-continent.*** The research has been conducted by ***Rashmi Kalra,*** a Counselling Psychologist in training studying in the Department of Psychology, at City University, and supervised by Delia Danchev who can be contacted via e-mail at .... The research will be conducted according to the Code of Conduct and Ethical principles of the British Psychological Society.

I understand that the only requirement will be for me to answer some background questions and an interview. In total this should take approximately 60 minutes.

I understand that I can refuse to answer any of the questions asked during the interview if I request to do so.

I understand that during the course of the interview, I can ask for the interview and tape to be stopped at any point in time and resume only when I feel comfortable to do so.

I understand that the results of this research will be coded in such a manner that my identity, and the identity of any other person or organisation I mention will not be disclosed. In addition, I also understand that the purpose of this research is to examine groups of people and not one particular individual.

I understand that the research may be published in psychological journals and/or reported to scientific bodies but that I will remain unidentified if the above should occur.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw my consent and participation at any time.

If I have any questions regarding my contribution in this project then I can contact the researcher on the details provided below:

Mobile:

E-mail:

Signed (Participant): --------------------------------

Name (Block Capitals): -------------------------------- Date: -----------------

Signed (Researcher) --------------------------------

Name (Block Capitals) -------------------------------- Date: -----------------

APPENDIX 9: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT ON USE OF AUDIO TAPES

This is an agreement in order to clarify the aspects of confidentiality with regards to the audio tapes that will be used by ***Rashmi Kalra*** for the purposes of her psychological research.

The following agreement has been devised with regards to the Code of Conduct and the Ethical principles of the British Psychological Society.

I give Rashmi Kalra permission to tape the interview that I will give for the purposes of her research on condition that:

- My permission may be withdrawn at any time
- The tapes will only be heard and analysed by Rashmi Kalra
- The tapes and transcripts will be securely stored and destroyed after the thesis has been examined.

I have read, understand and agree to the above conditions:

Signed (Research Participant): --

Name (Block Capitals): --

Date: ----------------------

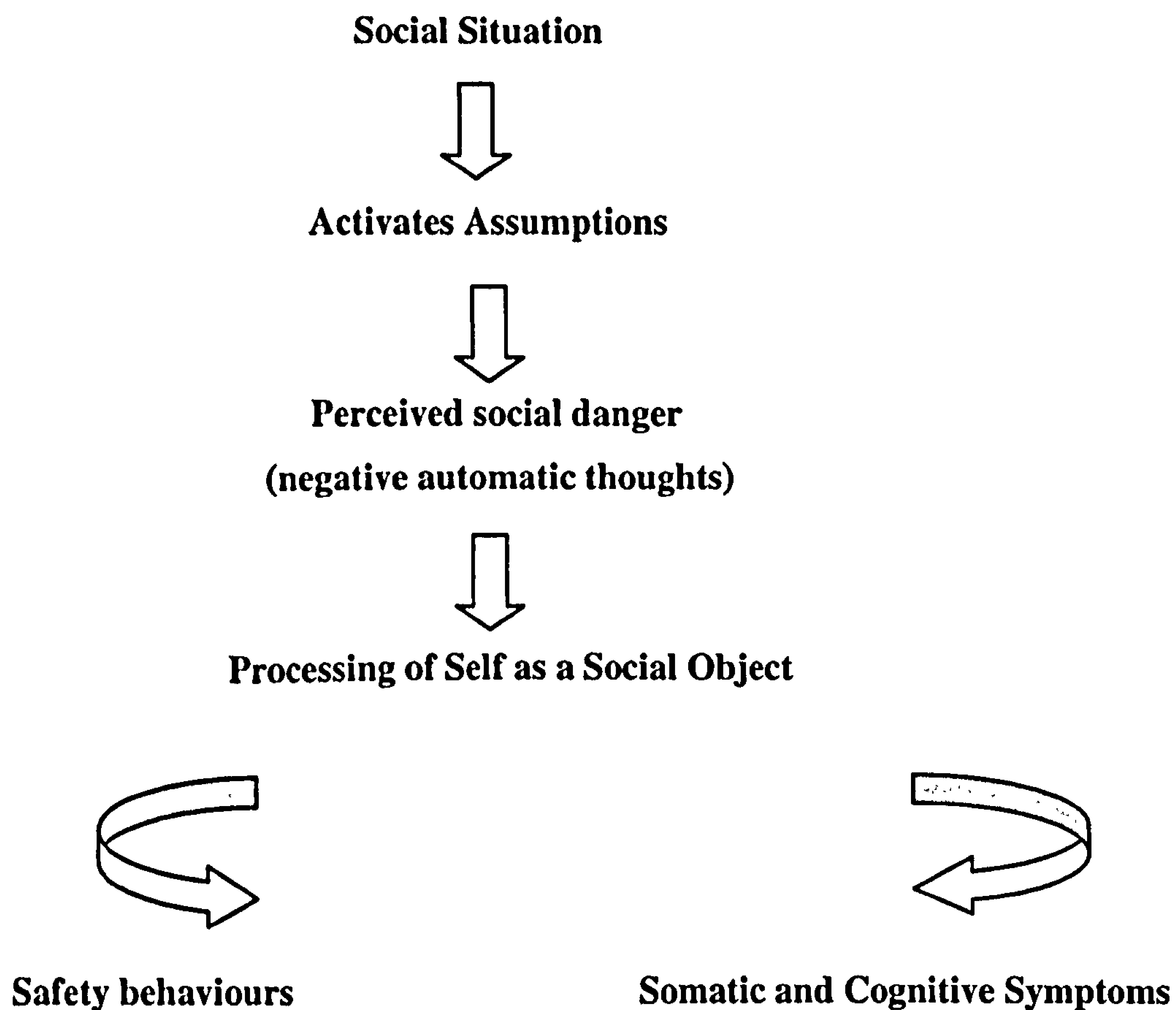
Signed (Researcher): --

Name (Block Capitals) --

Date: ---------------------

APPENDIX 10: WELLS AND CLARKE'S (1997) MODEL OF SOCIAL PHOBIA

Below is an illustration of Wells and Clarke's (1997) model of social phobia which was used to aid understanding of Kareena's condition and guide therapeutic intervention.



The above model (Wells & Clark, 1997) demonstrates that when an individual suffering from social phobia enters a feared social situation, assumptions concerning potential performance failure, and the consequences of demonstrating anxiety symptoms, are activated. This leads to a perceived social danger which is manifested as assumptions or negative automatic thoughts. Negative automatic thoughts are accompanied by anxiety activation, which is evident in somatic and cognitive symptoms. These symptoms themselves are prone to negative appraisal and can be interpreted as evidence of social failure and humiliation by the individual. In an attempt to conceal or reduce the amount of anxiety experienced, safety behaviours are

employed; however, these behaviours actually maintain the problem experienced by the individual.