

## **Social cohesion in diverse communities**

*Maria Hudson, Joan Phillips, Kathryn Ray and Helen Barnes*

**This report explores relationships between new and established communities in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods.**

Ethnic difference and community relationships are under greater scrutiny following the 2001 disturbances in the North of England and the 'war on terror'. A high-profile policy response has been the promotion of social cohesion.

The study takes a critical look at the meaning of social cohesion for new and established residents in Moss Side in Manchester and North Tottenham in the London Borough of Haringey. It describes patterns of neighbourhood diversity and residents' accounts of social interaction, within their own ethnic groups and across others. The report considers whether ethnic difference is a source of neighbourhood tensions, and the meaning of community and belonging. It draws on resident and service provider accounts to show the factors that hinder or promote social cohesion and gives recommendations for policy and practice.



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As ever, responsibility for the content and conclusions of the report rests solely with the authors.



# 1 Introduction

This project began in the context of evidence of both persistent and new forms of discrimination against ethnic minorities in British society and their ongoing and evolving socio-economic disadvantage. The 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center and the US-led 'war on terrorism', followed by the 7 July London bombings, seemed to have led to an increase in hostility towards Muslim communities, while the media's vilification of asylum seekers and the Government's concern to outline the 'rights and duties' of immigrants had also, arguably, created a new mood of public anxiety about both new and established minority ethnic communities. Recent research had suggested that concern about the scale and pace of diversification in Britain was not confined to the white British population but also found among ethnic minorities (Mumford and Power, 2003).

Following the disturbances in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford in the summer of 2001, investigations into these events suggested tensions between different ethnic groups were a prominent causal factor (Home Office Community Cohesion Unit, 2002). In this context, community relationships have come under greater scrutiny, with particular emphasis on the role of ethnicity and race. Social interactions and relationships in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, particularly where there are clear patterns of residential segregation, have been presented as problematic. The Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality has spoken of how British cities are 'sleepwalking to segregation' (Phillips, 2005). He presents a stark picture of ethnic groups either living residentially separated lives with their 'own kind' (termed 'hard spatial segregation') or inhabiting separate social and cultural worlds (termed 'soft segregation').

The aftermath of the 2001 disturbances generated an emphasis in policy on the need to promote 'social (and community) cohesion'. The promotion of a stronger sense of community along with greater community involvement, particularly in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, is an important strand of current government thinking, infusing policy and strategy across a range of departments. The Government's sustainable communities strategy identifies 'a sense of community identity and belonging', along with 'tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs' as requisites for sustainable communities (ODPM, 2005). The Home Office race equality and social cohesion strategy, moreover, draws attention to the importance of developing this 'sense of common belonging' within ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, and of fostering among residents 'an inclusive sense of British identity alongside their other cultural identities' (Home Office, 2004). There is a suggestion in this policy debate that a sense of community

belonging is best developed at the neighbourhood level, and indeed 'neighbourhood' and 'community' are generally assumed to coincide and are often talked about interchangeably.

Alongside the focus on social and community cohesion, a twin element of government policy towards ethnic minorities has been the emphasis on 'managed migration', as seen in the British Government's White Paper on immigration *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (Home Office, 2002). This has contributed to the marking out of the boundaries of inclusion, of who can 'belong' to the nation. As Sales (2005) notes, inclusion is reserved for those deemed 'deserving'— by virtue of their skills or ability to meet strict criteria for refugee status – while more rigid exclusion is proposed for the 'undeserving'. Roger Zetter and colleagues (2006) have discussed how government policy that deters and restricts entry on the one hand, yet promotes cohesion and integration of migrant communities on the other, gives contradictory and conflicting messages about national belonging.

The meaning of social cohesion is contested. The literature broadly emphasises two principal elements to the concept: 'the reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion' and 'the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties' (Berger-Schmitt, 2000, p. 28). This was adopted by the research team as a working definition. Our approach was mindful of a growing consensus that community relations are formed within highly localised settings (Amin, 2002; Mumford and Power, 2003) and that the new mood of public anxiety about both new and established minority ethnic groups seemed to be exacerbated in contexts where there were greater pressures on public resources, especially in large, highly diverse cities. This, and a lack of contemporary research on community relationships in diverse areas where people from different ethnic groups were living side by side, influenced the way in which the research team gathered evidence. We were concerned that there might be an overemphasis on the problems of residential segregation to the exclusion of the complex dynamics of separation and interaction in highly diverse neighbourhoods. A key concern was also how appropriate it was for there to be a primary policy focus on ethnicity as the most significant social division resulting in problems of social cohesion.

We sought to develop a better understanding of social interactions and relationships within and between groups in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, in which residents from different backgrounds were living side by side. Building a picture from the accounts that local people gave of their experiences, perceptions and feelings, the research team aimed to explore neighbourhood inter-ethnic contacts and relationships. The team sought to take a critical look at the meaning of social cohesion and the factors hindering and promoting it. Our investigation was wide-ranging and included exploration of the contact residents had with their own and

with other ethnic groups in their everyday lives: at home, at work and in their leisure activities. We also explored how residents felt about living in ethnically mixed areas, what 'community' meant to them, in theory and in practice, and the contours of their identity. Through this we hoped to gain an understanding of the range of factors that helped shape neighbourhood social relations. It was also important to understand the role of local social contexts, and to this end we were also interested in the work of local agencies that might have a bearing on social relationships at a neighbourhood level. We wanted to examine how the activities and services of local agencies and resource contexts played a role in shaping community relationships.

## **The research design**

The research took place in two ethnically diverse neighbourhoods: Moss Side in Manchester and North Tottenham in North London (Haringey). It is a study based on qualitative research methods, which aim to explore experiences and relationships in depth, rather than to provide a representative picture. Data were collected during four research stages, from March 2005 to February 2006. The first stage involved discussion groups with representatives from community and voluntary organisations and service providers in each area. These explored issues of diversity and equality and related policy and practice in the neighbourhoods, to enable the research team to get a better feel for the local context.

The second stage, from spring through to late autumn 2005, involved depth interviews with 30 residents in each area. We aimed to interview a sample of residents, which would facilitate exploration of relationships within and between heterogeneous new and established communities, rather than be representative of ethnic diversity in the areas. Interviews were thus sought with adults from white British, black Caribbean and Somali backgrounds. We also included individuals of multiple heritage who had parentage from one of these three groups. Our aim was to recruit diverse participants who varied in terms of gender, age, household composition, employment status, length of time in the neighbourhood and the country, and extent of participation in community activities and organisations.

Within each area, the respondents were recruited from a variety of local organisations and public spaces (bars, sports centre, etc.) as well as through snowballing from other interviewees. Community interpreters provided support for interviews with Somalis, over half of whom had English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs, while members of the research team with white British and black Caribbean heritage carried out interviews with people from those ethnic groups. Some geographical clustering of respondents from each ethnic group was

sought, to facilitate exploration of the degree and nature of localised contact between ethnic groups living in close residential proximity. This was easier to achieve in Moss Side where the Somali community was more concentrated and visible compared with North Tottenham where the population was more dispersed. Four youth discussion groups were held to provide young people and children with some voice in the research – three in Manchester and one in London. The achieved sample characteristics are summarised in the Appendix.

Themes explored with residents included:

- likes and dislikes about living in the area
- feelings about living in a diverse neighbourhood
- social networks and interactions within and between different ethnic groups
- involvement and participation in neighbourhood and community life
- views on local services
- identities, belonging and attachment.

After some preliminary data analysis, a further round of interviews was conducted with key informants, with whom issues and concerns raised by residents might be explored. These were drawn from community and voluntary organisations and service providers, including from projects working to foster good community relationships. Finally, feedback workshops to which all research participants were invited were held. The workshops aimed to provide local people with an opportunity to discuss and comment on emerging findings.

## The content and structure of the report

Chapter 2 describes some of the main features of the local area contexts for the fieldwork in Moss Side and North Tottenham, setting the scene for what is to follow.

Chapter 3 focuses on neighbourhood diversity and social interactions. It outlines the migration and residential histories of the residents that we interviewed in both areas, before turning to an exploration of the social networks that residents had (within and across ethnic groups) in their everyday lives. It also examines the factors that can inhibit interaction between different ethnic groups and how residents perceived the

ethnic diversity of their neighbourhoods. Finally, it poses the question of whether social interaction with other ethnic groups matters to our residents.

Chapter 4 is concerned with taking a closer look at neighbourhood relationships and tensions, an area that has been at the forefront of policy concerns. Examining the accounts of residents, the chapter explores tensions in neighbourhood relationships, drawing out the sources of those tensions, and considers the range of factors that help shape social relations in the neighbourhood. A central theme in this chapter is the degree to which ethnic difference is a source of tensions.

Chapter 5 takes a close look at issues of identity, community and belonging. This chapter begins with an examination of what 'community' means to the residents and the range of communities that residents from the three ethnic groups felt that they belonged to. It then explores attachment to the neighbourhood, considering why residents wanted to remain in or move out of the area, 'push' and 'pull' factors, and how this related to the community/ies that they are part of.

Chapter 6 reviews the kinds of neighbourhood activities our residents participated in and why; and whether the examples of community participation that emerged crossed ethnic and other boundaries. It considers why a wider range of residents do not get involved in 'mainstream' activities such as tenants' and residents' associations. It then turns to an exploration of the representation and resource base of new communities, and how residents and service providers feel about culturally specific service provision compared with culturally mixed service provision. A central theme here is why movements towards more mixed provision are throwing up a number of challenges.

Chapter 7 begins to take stock of the research findings. It explores the meaning of social cohesion in our two areas, revisiting the lived experiences of our residents, drawing on themes in earlier chapters. It also explores the meaning of social cohesion for service providers trying to meet the evolving needs of residents. The chapter ends with a consideration of the innovative work that is taking place in Moss Side and North Tottenham, where a range of work is in progress linked to the promotion of social cohesion in practice.

Chapter 8 concludes with an assessment of the key factors hindering and promoting social cohesion. It considers how appropriate it is for the policy debate around social cohesion to focus on ethnic diversity. Finally, drawing on a consultation with local organisations that participated in the research, it considers what can be done at both the national and local levels to make a difference to the quality of everyday life in ethnically diverse (and economically deprived) communities.

## 2 The neighbourhoods

In this chapter we sketch some of the main features of the local contexts in which the research was undertaken. Taking each fieldwork area in turn, we review migration and ethnic composition, the local economy and regeneration initiatives, patterns of poverty and deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour, the nature of the voluntary sector and recent initiatives to tackle inequality. As will be seen, across these themes there are strong similarities between the two areas.

### Moss Side (Manchester)

#### Migration and ethnic composition

The ethnic group composition of Moss Side from the 2001 Census is given in Table 1. As can be seen, black and ethnic minorities make up just over 50 per cent of the population in the ward. Local policymakers and service providers, however, maintain

**Table 1 Ethnic composition of Moss Side and Northumberland Park**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Moss Side (%)</b>	<b>Northumberland Park (%)</b>
<i>White British</i>	40.4	28.9
Of which born in UK	97.5	93.1
<i>White Irish</i>	4.7	3.7
Of which born in UK	22.5	33.1
<i>Other white</i>	3.2	14.9
Of which born in UK	19.7	17.1
<i>Black Caribbean</i>	16.8	18.1
Of which born in UK	41.4	56.6
<i>Black African</i>	11.4	17.3
Of which born in UK	20.5	33.3
<i>Black other</i>	3.7	2.5
Of which born in UK	80.0	77.3
<i>Mixed white and black Caribbean</i>	3.8	2.2
Of which born in UK	94.2	86.5
<i>Asian (all)</i>	9.4	6.3
Of which born in UK	44.9	41.8
<i>Chinese</i>	1.5	0.8
Of which born in UK	25.9	16.7
<i>Other ethnic group</i>	1.5	2.3
Of which born in UK	13.9	24.1
<i>Other mixed</i>	3.6	3.1
Of which born in UK	74.0	49.9
<i>All people born in UK</i>	64.4	55.3

that this figure is an underestimate because of the undercounting of primarily young men in inner-city areas. Moreover, given that the black and minority ethnic population has a younger age structure than the white British population, the percentage of black and ethnic minorities among the younger age groups will be higher. The black and minority ethnic population is composed primarily of individuals from black Caribbean and black African groups, with the former being slightly more numerous.

Many of those in the black African category are likely to be Somalis who have increased in numbers in Manchester over recent years. Accurate figures for the Somali population are difficult to come by. The Census records 1,225 Somalis living in Manchester, 781 of whom live in Moss Side (comprising 1.7 per cent of the population of Moss Side). However, this records only those born in Somalia, thus excluding those born in the UK or elsewhere. The figure is disputed by local Somali organisations, which provide widely differing estimates of numbers, thus suggesting the need for research that provides a more accurate estimate.<sup>1</sup> Moss Side is known both locally and nationally in the popular imagination as a centre for the black Caribbean community, and Moss Side has the largest concentration of black Caribbeans in Greater Manchester. When the black Caribbean community migrated to the UK in large numbers in the 1950s and 1960s, Moss Side was already a reception area for migrants to the city and was dominated by cheap boarding houses (Taylor *et al.*, 1996). Prior to the Caribbeans, Moss Side had seen waves of Jewish and Irish migration. It became a centre for black Caribbean life and culture with the establishment of shops, social clubs and music venues, and became notorious in 1981 as a site of the riots that swept a number of British cities.

Over recent years, the population of Moss Side and other Inner Manchester areas has started to become more ethnically diverse, partly because of the increasing settlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the city, which is related to the introduction of asylum-seeker dispersal in 2000. Somalis have constituted a large number of these refugee arrivals, fleeing ongoing civil war in Somalia. In a 2004–05 audit of languages, Somali was the third most frequently spoken language (excluding English) in Manchester schools and Somali speakers showed a 46 per cent increase since 2002–03 and a 17-fold increase since 1990 (Manchester City Council, 2005). There is significant diversity within the Somali population in Manchester, with a number of Somalis coming to the UK from an EU country where they had first claimed asylum (mostly the Netherlands or Scandinavia), or from other African countries, as well as directly from Somalia. In Manchester, Somalis have settled predominantly in Moss Side and its surrounding areas, with the establishment of community structures (shops, community organisations) and the size of the community attracting more to the area.

### Local economy and regeneration

Moss Side lies approximately one mile south of Manchester city centre along an arterial road running from the centre to the South Manchester suburbs and the airport. It is bordered to the east by the university district with two large higher education institutions, a science park and major teaching hospitals. It is within easy reach of the city centre and has good transport links to the airport. Private sector employers in the area include a brewery and a large superstore, both of which have a commitment to employing local labour. Despite this, Moss Side remains an area of high unemployment and deprivation, and one of the major challenges for the local authority and its partners is to ensure that local people can benefit from the new employment opportunities being created in the city.

Moss Side has seen substantial regeneration activity. Neighbouring Hulme was subject to an almost complete rebuilding between 1992 and 1997, and Capital Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget money has been used to extend regeneration activity into Moss Side. Shops on the main Princess Road have been redeveloped and a new 'high street' shopping area established on a site between Hulme and Moss Side. Money has also gone into social and economic regeneration, with the flagship Millennium Powerhouse, a multifunction resource centre for young people, being a visible symbol of this. Current regeneration activity centres around the redevelopment of the Maine Road stadium, formerly Manchester City's football ground. Four-hundred-and-fifty new homes are being built, with 15 per cent being set aside as 'affordable housing'. There are also plans to create social infrastructure, such as a school and health centre, on the site and to create agreements with contractors to employ local labour in construction.

### Poverty and deprivation

Moss Side has high levels of unemployment and poverty. It is in the 1 per cent of most deprived wards in the country and falls below national, regional and city averages on economic indicators. The 2001 Census records 54 per cent of the population as economically active (although a large proportion of the inactive are students), with an unemployment rate of nearly 17 per cent, well above the city average of 9 per cent. Problems of unemployment are particularly acute among the Somalis (as for the Somali population nationally). A 2004 city council briefing identified problems in ascertaining accurate figures, but made reference to a 1994 survey of Somalis in Manchester, which showed unemployment among Somalis of working age to stand at 47 per cent (Manchester City Council, 2004). This figure is complicated, however, by the fact that many respondents would have been asylum

seekers who were unable to work until a decision had been made on their asylum application.

Moss Side is divided by the main Princess Road, with traditional, terraced, back-to-back housing on the east side ('old Moss Side') and 1960s' homes built by the local authority on the west side, comprising the Alexandra Park estate. There is a large social housing sector in the ward, covering over 50 per cent of the population, divided between council and housing association stock. Owner-occupation stands at just 24 per cent. In the recent past, Moss Side social housing had suffered from low occupancy, especially on Alexandra Park, but recently, in the wake of regeneration activity in neighbouring Hulme and modernisation of the housing stock in Moss Side, the area has become very popular, creating a squeeze on housing supply. Properties in the central postcode area are now selling for an average of £87,000, a substantial increase from five years ago. There is a concern among some residents, though, that new homes being built in the neighbourhood are priced at a level beyond the means of most local people and will be bought up by developers as 'buy-to-let' homes. Pressure on housing stock is also related to the high numbers of refugees settling in the area, with much new-build social housing going to refugees (who predominate in homeless families' accommodation). A very small amount of council housing in Moss Side (17 of the 1,000 council-owned homes) is reserved for asylum-seeker accommodation provided through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

There are several primary schools, two secondary schools, a sixth form college and several adult education institutes in the area. A problem for the schools is the transience of the population; one local primary school cited a 40 per cent turnover (that is, pupils who have not been in the school throughout all the primary years). The number of languages spoken in local schools ranges from 30 to 50. In 2003, a city academy run by a church-based educational charity, took over a 'failing' local high school and has succeeded in increasing enrolment and reducing truancy levels. Educational attainment by ethnicity is still an issue, particularly for black Caribbean boys – as nationally – and there is rising concern about low attainment among Somali children, boys in particular.

### **Crime and anti-social behaviour**

Moss Side became notorious in the early 1990s as a centre of gang and gun crime, with sensationalist media reporting making comparisons with South Central Los Angeles and other US 'black ghettos'. As Taylor and colleagues (1996) argue, such stories were a gross over-exaggeration of the actual extent of gun crime. Moreover, since a peak in 2000, gun crime in the police division has fallen and is

no longer centred around the Alexandra Park estate. Nonetheless, while the rates for most crimes are similar to the rest of the police division (covering Inner South Manchester), there is still a higher level of gun and gang-related crime in Moss Side, as well as high levels of street robbery (partly explained by the high numbers of young people in the area who are the disproportionate perpetrators and victims of 'muggings').

Relations between the community and the police have improved since earlier times, with the black voluntary sector in Moss Side actively involved in police advisory and monitoring groups. Recent tensions have centred around anti-terrorism operations in the area, one of which resulted in disquiet within the Somali community and, during the course of this research, there were some tensions between Somali and black Caribbean youths, which seemed to centre around accusations of racist attacks on Somali women, causing the police to hold a series of community meetings. Overt tensions had calmed by the end of the summer.

### **Voluntary sector**

There is a strong community and voluntary sector in the Moss Side area, with some well-established tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs) that are routinely engaged for community consultation purposes by many local service providers. However, there are some concerns about the representativeness of these organisations, particularly the under-representation of newer communities. Aside from the TRAs there is an array of other groups, including a thriving black and minority ethnic voluntary sector. Many organisations and initiatives are organised through the churches, including some of the long-established organisations such as Hideaway (for youth) and Moss Side Community Outreach Project. Carisma is a networking organisation, which was established in 2002 to work with young people to prevent gang violence, but which also acts as an umbrella structure for service providers to link to other voluntary and community groups.

The Somali community has established a range of community organisations in the Moss Side area, mostly providing advice and signposting to other agencies and services, assistance with translation, and often supplementary schools and youth activities. There are also a number of Somali women's organisations. There is a refugee support network in the area, which provides training and support, and aids capacity building in the refugee voluntary sector. The range of Somali organisations in the area partly reflects diversity within the Somali community (for example, there are organisations for Somalilanders, the Bravanese and the Arlaadi community); however, there has been some concern on the part of service providers over

the representativeness of these organisations, and the city council has recently established a Somali Forum with representatives from eight different community organisations, which it is hoped will become the main mechanism of consultation with the Somali community for service providers.

Given the national agenda of community engagement in local service provision, an array of structures have been put in place by the city council and other statutory sector providers to consult and engage with the community, including monthly ward performance meetings, local action partnerships around crime and disorder issues, and a steering group for the local regeneration plan, among others.

### **Recent initiatives to tackle inequality**

The Manchester Community Strategy provides a strategy to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Manchester and its communities over a ten-year period. It is delivered through the local strategic partnership and its thematic groups, with input from the voluntary sector. The recently developed strategy for 2006–15 has a focus on developing neighbourhoods where people choose to live; helping people to reach their full potential through education and employment; and fostering mutual respect, and individual and collective self-esteem.

Agenda 2010 was initiated in 2000 to tackle racism and racial discrimination in Manchester over a ten-year period, and consists of partnership between public institutions, the voluntary sector and black and minority ethnic communities. Its priorities are employment, education, crime and disorder, and health and social care.

## **North Tottenham (London Borough of Haringey)**

### **Migration and ethnic composition**

The London Borough of Haringey has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country, reflected in the almost 200 languages being spoken. Almost half of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. As in other parts of London, there has been an influx of asylum seekers and refugees into Haringey, with a concentration in the east of the borough (where North Tottenham is situated). Table 1 earlier in this chapter shows the ethnic composition of the Northumberland Park

ward in North Tottenham.<sup>2</sup> White British residents constitute less than a third of the total population in the ward, compared to around two-fifths in Moss Side. Black and minority ethnic populations form the majority of the ward population, with fairly even proportions of black Caribbeans and black Africans who are the largest black and minority ethnic groups.

As in Moss Side, while a substantial wave of economically driven Caribbean migration to Tottenham took place in the 1950s and 1960s, the bulk of Somali migration has taken place in the last 15 years, with 78 per cent of all Somalis in the UK now living in the capital. The 2001 Census indicates that there were 882 Somalis living in North Tottenham in 2001 (1.4 per cent of the population), although there are problems with the reliability of the data, as mentioned earlier. The Somalis in Tottenham are a more geographically dispersed and less 'visible' community compared with Moss Side, where, as seen above, comparable numbers of Somalis were living in a more concentrated area. In the chapters to follow this will be seen to be a salient difference between the two areas. There are also large Turkish, Greek Cypriot and Kurdish communities in North Tottenham and these populations, as well as a greater number of migrants from Central and Eastern European countries, are likely to explain the more sizeable 'white other' population seen in the census data, compared with Moss Side.

### Local economy and regeneration

In Haringey, as in other parts of the country, employment in manufacturing has declined in recent decades. Both the Haringey and Tottenham economies consist predominantly of small employers, and black businesses are concentrated in Tottenham and other parts of the east of the borough. Over 90 per cent of workplaces in the borough employ 24 people or less (PACEC, 2003). The main areas of local employment are service sector: retail and wholesale distribution and the public sector.

From 2000 to 2006, a Single Regeneration Budget programme has been in operation in the east of the borough, including the ward of Northumberland Park. This scheme, 'Joining Up Northumberland Park', has consisted of four elements: 'open door to employment', aiming to improve educational performance, increase access to jobs and enable people to reach their potential; 'organising the neighbourhood', which has sought to support and improve service delivery and provide a longer-term approach to regeneration; developing opportunities for young people; and tackling problems of poor physical environment and crime. These themes are designed to work collectively towards the establishment of 'a thriving community where people want to live, work,

study and succeed' (WMEC, 2005). Regeneration efforts have included the building of a Neighbourhood Resource Centre, which houses a variety of service providers including Sure Start, a teenage pregnancy project and neighbourhood wardens.

### **Poverty and deprivation**

Haringey is one of the most deprived districts in England, albeit there is significant inequality between the east and west of the borough. Members of disadvantaged groups, particularly black and ethnic minorities, are over-represented in the poorest parts of the borough. In the east, there is higher unemployment and people have fewer qualifications. Northumberland Park is among the top 5 per cent of deprived wards in the country and is a priority area under the Haringey Employment Partnership's Employment and Skills Strategy. At 19.4 per cent, Northumberland Park has the highest rate of unemployment of all wards in London. Many residents have been described as having 'a long distance to travel' before they can secure long-term employment (WMEC, 2005).

Both new and established communities in Tottenham are finding it difficult to get their housing needs met, in a context of very high house prices and rents and the limited availability of social housing, a theme familiar across London and the South East where owning a home is reported to be beyond the reach of first-time buyers on average incomes. There is an insufficient supply of affordable housing, with homelessness, long waits on rehousing waiting lists, problems of overcrowding including in temporary accommodation and low standards among private sector landlords. As in Manchester, a lack of larger family accommodation is having a differential impact on large Somali families. There is concern among some service providers about inward migration of asylum seekers and refugees from other boroughs because of the greater size of Haringey's private rented sector, which acts as a 'pull' factor into the area.

Over half of pupils in schools in Haringey speak English as a second language. There are several primary schools and a community secondary school in the Northumberland Park ward. The population of the community school reflects the growth in the presence of refugee children in the area. As in Manchester, there are concerns about the impact of transience on the social and economic well-being of refugee children, and some questioning of the adequacy of resources to support them. Both black Caribbean boys and white working-class boys are also felt to be underachieving.

### **Crime and anti-social behaviour**

Crime and anti-social behaviour is seen by the local authority as a major concern for residents and businesses in the area. There are particular concerns around youth crime, including drugs-related crime and gang activity. A Youth Crime Reduction Strategy utilises partnership working to support young people through better education and training, while the generation of a wider choice of employment and business opportunities is also seen as integral to the approach (Haringey Council, 2003). More community wardens and Neighbourhood Watch schemes are being encouraged, and the number and role of wardens has been expanded within the 'Joining Up Northumberland Park' programme. Haringey Peace Alliance, a partnership of community and statutory groups working together to reduce crime and the fear of crime in the community, has been in operation for over five years and there has been wide-ranging support for its work.

### **Voluntary sector**

Haringey has a vibrant voluntary and community sector, and a range of structures have been developed to foster inter-community connections and to enhance its voice. The main function of Haringey Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO) is to capacity build in the sector, which involves work with black and minority ethnic communities and encouragement of partnership working. Haringey Community Empowerment Network (HARCEN) is charged with providing voice to disadvantaged and marginalised groups and with helping to form new organisations. The Race Equality Joint Consultative Committee (REJCC) is the main channel via which the local authority engages with minority ethnic communities. It aims to provide minority ethnic groups (through their representatives) to high-level access to the Council and its executive. There are a variety of Somali organisations operating across London. The Al-Hijra Community Association and the Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Organisation are among those with a presence in North Tottenham. The Al-Hijra Community Association provides services to meet the needs of Somali children of all ages and their families. The Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Organisation is located in a centre that houses a range of voluntary and community organisations. It works with Somali men, women, children and youths, providing advice and support to newly arrived Somalis and those who have been in the area for some time but who continue to struggle to access services. A Somali Forum has been established recently to bring together different Somali organisations in the borough and to provide a 'united front' to service providers.

Haringey's structures for neighbourhood participation and involvement are in a period of transition. While there are tenants' and residents' associations, and they continue to be seen by the local authority as an important vehicle for residents to receive information and get involved, area assemblies are also being introduced borough-wide. Support for area assemblies and local networks of residents and community groups is seen as important in the development of civic pride, as outlined in the borough's Community Strategy (Haringey Council, 2003). 'Joining Up Northumberland Park' also has a resident-led board that works to improve the area. As in Manchester, there are concerns about the lack of participation by new communities, including Somalis, in a range of resident forums.

### **Recent initiatives to tackle inequality**

Local strategic partnerships are recent structures geared towards tackling key issues for local people. They are charged with developing community strategies using a 'joined-up' approach. HAVCO, HARCEN and the REJCC are among the wide-ranging membership of Haringey's local strategic partnership. The partnership produced the Haringey Community Strategy, which seeks to measurably improve the quality of life for people in the borough. Its priorities are to improve services, to narrow the gap between the east and the west of Haringey, to create safer communities, to improve the environment, and to raise achievement in education and create opportunities for life-long success (Haringey Council, 2003). The partnership also believes that 'some national government policies, such as policy on asylum seekers, the right to buy and environmental enforcement powers, impact negatively on neighbourhood renewal', and sees part of its remit as seeking changes to those powers (Haringey Strategic Partnership, 2002). A community cohesion project has been developed in Haringey and a key outcome of this has been to share understanding within the local authority and its partners about community cohesion and the barriers to cohesion locally in Haringey. During 2005, several community cohesion conferences that brought together a range of voluntary and statutory sector organisations were held in the borough.

### 3 Neighbourhood diversity and social interactions

This chapter explores the following questions.

- What contact do Moss Side and North Tottenham residents have with people from different ethnic groups in their everyday lives?
- What factors can inhibit interaction between different ethnic groups where people are living side by side?
- How do residents perceive the ethnic diversity of their neighbourhoods?
- Does the social interaction of different ethnic groups matter to residents?

In this chapter, we begin to explore the interactions between new and established communities in the two fieldwork areas. As seen in the opening chapter, concerns have been expressed that British society is 'drifting towards residential segregation' with people from different ethnic and religious communities becoming strangers to each other. It is argued that different ethnic groups are inhabiting different social and cultural worlds, with some communities being marginalised from the mainstream (Phillips, 2005). Policy responses to these concerns have often focused on minimising residential segregation between different ethnic groups. In this chapter, however, we focus on interactions between people of diverse background living in proximity with one another in the same neighbourhoods.

#### Migration and residential histories

Residents from white British, black Caribbean and Somali ethnic groups were chosen as a main focus for the research to contribute to better understanding of social relationships across 'black' and 'white', and new and established communities. Many of the black Caribbean residents interviewed are 'second-generation' individuals, born in the UK and living in and around their neighbourhoods for over 20 years. There is also a good representation of 'first-generation' respondents born in the Caribbean, most of whom have been living in their neighbourhood for many years, but a few who are more recent arrivals. A smaller number of 'third-generation' individuals with Caribbean-born grandparents were also interviewed. A range of

different Caribbean islands are represented in terms of respondents' or their parents and grandparents' heritage. A greater proportion of interviewees had a Jamaican heritage, reflecting the predominance of Jamaicans within the black Caribbean population in the UK. There are also a small number of individuals of multiple heritage – for example, black Jamaican and East African, white British and black Jamaican, Grenadian and Ghanaian, and black Jamaican and Barbadian.

The Somali interviewees varied in the length of time they had been in the UK. One was second generation, born in the UK, and a further two (respondents in their 20s) migrated to Britain at a young age. A small number had been in the country for five to ten years, while the majority had been in the UK for five years or less. Many had left Somalia because of the civil conflict, were Somali by ethnic origin and had secured refugee status in the UK. A few of the sample were 'twice migrants' having migrated from Somalia to another country, in Europe or Africa, prior to coming to the UK. For example, Abshir was born in Somalia in the early 1970s; he fled to Kenya as a young boy in the 1990s, and finally came to England as a young man a decade later. Jameelah had arrived in Holland as a refugee ten years ago, subsequently moving to Manchester four years later.

The majority of the white British sample were born in the area and had lived there all their lives, although some had lived elsewhere at different points and then returned. A smaller number had moved to the area, although no one had lived in their area for less than five years overall. In terms of ethnic group, most people described themselves as white British or white English, although a few had Scottish, Welsh or Irish heritage.

Several of the residents interviewed, in both areas, were of multiple heritage, thus straddling the boundaries of the three main ethnic groups (and reflecting the artificiality of such boundaries). For example, they included a resident born in the UK to white British and Somali parents, and others born to white British and black Caribbean parents. Some of the respondents also had children of multiple heritage, including two white British women with children from relationships with black Caribbean men.

### **Everyday interactions**

Each of our interviewees was asked to outline what they did in a typical day in order to try to gauge their use of local spaces and places of interaction. Activities related to life course heavily shaped the nature of those accounts – for example, being in

paid work, having young children, or being older and housebound. Following our interviewees' accounts of their typical day, they were probed further on their social networks (including family, friends, neighbours and colleagues) and asked about the ethnic diversity of those networks. Their accounts showed that everyday interactions were shaped by a range of interacting factors such as age, gender, life course and migration histories, as well as ethnicity. Some common patterns are explored below.

### Interactions and networks

#### *Younger people*

Across both areas, younger people (aged 34 and under) tended to have more ethnically mixed friendship groups. Numerous examples were provided of social contact across ethnicities taking place in schools, colleges, nurseries, playgroups and leisure activities. Residents also gave accounts of a diverse mix of children, their own and others, playing together on local streets as well as friends visiting each other's homes. On the whole, these cross-ethnic interactions seemed to be associated with more positive attitudes towards diversity.

There were accounts of a generational shift in interactions between groups and attitudes to diversity, for the most part from black Caribbean residents. For example, Alisha in Tottenham described how in days gone by she had not been welcome at the homes of her white friends, but that this had been changing:

When I was younger I had white friends and we wouldn't be allowed to go round their house, their parents didn't really like black people, but now it's like, you know, they're more accepted, that's what they see every day, they see black people every day now.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Ollie, a young black Caribbean man in Moss Side, also spoke of greater social interaction across ethnic groups among his generation than for his parents:

My Asian guy's coming round with his daughter and his wife and he's eating jerk chicken at my barbeque, same when I to his, you know what I mean? And whatever racists in their family and my family has to just love it cos we're sorting it out, do you know what I mean? Our kids are as well now, and it's slowly getting sorted.

(Ollie, black Caribbean man, 20s, Moss Side)

Other respondents indicated instances of white British and black Caribbeans sharing social spaces, such as the following account of people drinking in the same pub:

You see more black people hanging with white people, and vice versa.  
One local pub used to have mostly black people in it, and now it's mixed  
and everyone just, they all get along.  
(Taisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Moss Side)

There were also, however, contrasting accounts, indicating a more complex picture than a whole-scale shift in experiences and outlook. For example a black teenager in Tottenham spoke of how her father would not want her to have and bring home a white partner, while a young black Caribbean woman spoke of how, while she had a boyfriend who was black African, she disliked Somalis.

Young male interviewees (in their 20s) often mentioned how sports activities, such as playing football, brought them into contact with other minority ethnic groups. For example Charlie, a white British man in his 20s, spoke of having primarily white social networks, but regularly played football with blacks, whites, Asians and Somalis. Similarly Ed described how the only sign that he could see of people in the neighbourhood doing things together was young people from different ethnic backgrounds spontaneously coming together to play football.

Music also seemed to bring a diverse range of people together, generating what one community activist described as 'communities of musicians'. There were examples of young people (primarily men) trying to develop music projects and businesses, sometimes using their homes as a base for meetings. Such networks could be diverse with Somali, black Caribbean and white British involvement.

### *Recently arrived Somali men and women*

Somali respondents, particularly those who were more recently arrived, tended to have social networks that were centred on the home or on the local Somali community. Many also had other relatives in the areas in which they were living. Their, on the whole, less diverse networks and patterns of interaction also show a gendered division, with the Somali men citing more involvement in the broader Somali community in the neighbourhood. This took place primarily through activities organised by the mosque or Somali community organisations. There was also heterogeneity in patterns of interaction, though. For example, Zakaria, a Somali man in his 50s with ESOL needs, who had been in the UK for five years, living with his wife, children and extended family, had extensive networks among the Somali

community in London. He paid frequent visits to nieces and nephews in various parts of London to give advice and support. He is also engaged in Somali community issues via the mosque and a Somali community centre, and was involved in cross-community dialogue following the 7 July London bombings. He had also made connections with neighbours and described how a group of Somali, Turkish and Indian families supported each other by taking it in turns to do the school run for their children. However, his insecure employment as a security guard had not resulted in the development of any workplace social networks. In contrast, in Moss Side, an unemployed Somali man in his 30s, also with ESOL needs, recounted how he spent much of his time in cafes chewing khat<sup>1</sup> with other Somali men and had very limited local social networks outside of the Somali community.

The accounts of social networks and interactions given by Somali women suggested that women, again particularly those more recently arrived and with ESOL needs, tended to be more restricted than men in their activities, with daily lives revolving around taking children to and from school, visiting parks, shopping for food, and perhaps visiting locally based family or friends (all Somali). Some also cited problems with accessing mainstream information and services, and some were dependent on male relatives to interact in the local neighbourhood beyond the Somali community. Again, however, there were differences. Fardawsa, a Somali lone parent in Tottenham who had been in the UK for almost ten years and lived with her sister and family, had limited social networks. She reported that she was often too busy to go to the mosque, stop and chat to people in the park or go to ESOL classes, and cited an inability to speak English as limiting her interactions outside the Somali community. While her child plays with the children of her Turkish and Caribbean neighbours, her own relationship to them was limited to saying hello. However, another Somali lone parent in Tottenham, who had been in the UK for slightly less time than Fardawsa, had more diverse networks through going to the mosque, chatting with people in the park, taking courses and getting involved in voluntary work.

### *Women with children and home-centred networks*

On the whole lone parents tended to be more localised in their use of the neighbourhoods because of caring responsibilities, and they often had family-centred networks based around relatives living nearby. In terms of contact with other ethnic groups, one young black Caribbean mother had long-standing diverse friendship networks from school, reinforcing the picture of mixed networks among the young. Childcare settings also provided a potential venue for interactions across ethnic groups; however, some respondents commented that such interaction was mostly casual. For example, Zoe said of the parent and toddler drop-in that she attended:

When I go to the drop-in, I think cos my other two friends, they're black, so we tend to sort of like, we don't mean to, but cos we know each other, we sit down in one corner, and then you've got the Turkish people that sit round one corner. So we don't deliberately try to segregate ourself, but sometimes that's the way it works out. But then now and again you find, you know, we all sit down together in one room, anyway, and have tea and coffee.

(Zoe, black Caribbean woman, 30s, Tottenham)

Similarly Amy, a white British woman attending the same group, said that she found it difficult to interact because of language barriers:

I mean I always try to, but most of, like the Turkish ones, they don't actually know any English, you know.

(Amy, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

This suggestion of casual interaction rather than the development of deeper ties is reinforced by the comments of Waris, a Somali mother in Moss Side, who lacked strong Somali social networks and although she attended a mixed parents and toddlers group and could converse in English, found it impossible to develop relationships outside her community. She said:

I don't know what to talk about, what's interesting them, what they want to talk about, [*or*] if it's something wrong with me.

(Waris, Somali woman, 30s, Moss Side)

### *Paid work and voluntary work*

Participation in either paid work or voluntary work tended to lead to more diverse social networks across age ranges, gender and ethnic group, albeit depending on the nature of the occupation or activity. This again tended to be associated with more positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity. For example, since arriving in Manchester six years ago, and through voluntary work and then paid work, Jameelah, a Somali lone parent in her 30s, had built up a network of colleagues and service users from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including Somali, black Caribbean and Pakistani. Similarly, Faye, a white British woman in her 30s who works as a childminder, spoke of 'a real mix of different children' in the childcare settings that she uses and her own commitment to 'embrace everybody's culture' through her work. Ollie, a black Caribbean man in Moss Side, spoke at length of how, by interacting with Asian people through his work, he began to recognise and address some of his stereotypical perceptions, discovering Asians to be 'just as friendly and open as me'.

### *Older people*

Among older people (aged 55 and over) interactions with neighbours and family emerged as important. Moreover, neighbourhood interactions took on even greater importance for those lacking family contacts. For these respondents, social networks were usually dominated by longer-standing neighbours, which meant that their networks tended to be less ethnically diverse than younger residents. However, there was also significant interaction between longer-established ethnic minorities (such as black Caribbeans) and the white British population.

Older people, particularly the white British, when asked about local interactions, often talked of neighbourhood decline (explored further in Chapters 4 and 5), linking this to a decline in local social interactions. For example, Elizabeth spoke of how there used to be a variety of shops on one of the main streets in her Tottenham neighbourhood but their decline had led to a sense of loss of neighbourliness and community:

You go to the supermarket and there's no, you know, you've got two minutes to get your stuff and talking to the cashier, whereas, you know, Mrs Jones would know that, 'Oh, how's mum today?' You know, you've lost, you do lose community with all these, this so-called progress, you lose your community.

(Elizabeth, white British woman, 50s, Tottenham)

There were some dissenting voices from this story of decline in neighbourliness, however. Enid, an older woman, again in the Tottenham area, spoke of how she still chats to people in the street and has close relations with black, white British and Irish neighbours, who also run errands and do shopping for her:

Quite honestly, it hasn't changed a lot over the years, people are still friendly, and they still talk.

(Enid, white British woman, 80s, Tottenham)

Several examples also emerged of older people's use of the local area being influenced by their sense of safety. For example, a retired Caribbean woman in Moss Side talked of taking a regular early morning walk in the park rather than using it during the daytime when it was perceived to be less safe.

### Do residents want to live near their own ethnic group?

Residents from all three ethnic groups expressed some desire to live near to others who were 'like' them, albeit in slightly different ways. Black Caribbeans (and some younger Somalis) spoke of feeling 'comfortable' in their neighbourhood and more insulated from racial abuse because of the ethnic and cultural diversity among residents:

I've been to other areas and that and the way people look at you and that ... the fact that you don't get stared at [*here*] because you're black or because you're Asian or something, like it's a completely different area so. (Hannah, multiple heritage woman, 20s, Moss Side)

Somali respondents were more likely to make reference to the importance of culturally specific institutions (such as shops and mosques) and to others who spoke their language in making them feel comfortable in an area. This is also reflected in existing research, which shows that refugee and asylum-seeking communities are attracted to areas where there is pre-existing settlement and structures of support (Robinson and Reeve, 2006). Service providers in Moss Side also described how for some time Somalis had wanted to be housed in the area rather than in other parts of Manchester because of the presence of kin and community facilities. The family and community-centred networks of Somali interviewees, in both areas, also reinforced this theme.

For some of the white British respondents, however, the extent of ethnic diversity in the area made them feel uncomfortable, which was related to a sense that they had become 'displaced' by other ethnic groups and were in a 'minority'. The sense of discomfort among white British respondents was more pronounced in the Tottenham area than in Moss Side, perhaps because the white British population is smaller in the former, although there was some expression of concern about white British residents moving out of Moss Side also:

People will want to get out, and people that's been here years and years, they want to go, so it will just become an area I think of ethnic, coloured people, I don't think there'll be an awful lot of white people in it at all. (Julia, white British woman, 50s, Moss Side)

The relationship between ethnic identities and attachment to the neighbourhood is addressed further in Chapter 5.

### Factors inhibiting everyday interactions

Respondents in the study reflected on the reasons for a lack of social interaction between people of different ethnic groups and between new and established communities. Similar themes emerged in Moss Side and Tottenham, including willingness to mix and make people feel welcome, language and communication, cultural and ethnic identity, and racial stereotyping and harassment.

#### *Willingness to mix and make newcomers feel welcome*

Long-standing residents often placed the onus on newcomers to mix more with the existing population. Sometimes this was tinged with an implicit racism and a distaste for interacting with newcomers, as with Emily, a white British woman in Tottenham, who commented:

I wouldn't like to get together with the new people because they're all different nationalities and they've got a different way of looking at things.  
(Emily, white British woman, 60s, Tottenham)

However, the majority of people expressed a desire to interact, albeit they felt that it was down to the newcomers to 'make the first move'. A number of respondents who were active in tenants' and residents' associations or other groups told us that new communities had been invited to their meetings through, for example, leaflets, sometimes translated into appropriate languages, but that nothing had come of it. Geraldine, an older Caribbean woman in Moss Side, for example, described how Somalis were reluctant to attend her over-50s' group, although she felt that people of all faiths were welcome and had been invited. Some respondents acknowledged that more could be done by long-standing residents, however. This was apparent in the comments of Stella, a black Caribbean woman in Moss Side, who stressed the importance of extending 'community spirit' to newcomers, arguing that 'a divided community is a weak community'. However, in general, there seemed to be a lack of awareness among long-standing residents about some of the obstacles that might be facing Somalis and other new communities in attending such events and little enthusiasm for thinking more creatively about the format of events to facilitate inclusion. Some of the Somali community leaders also stressed the need to challenge negative perceptions about interacting with other residents on the part of the Somalis too. The issues of the barriers to community participation are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Another issue was that crime and nuisance was a central concern for residents in each of the areas. There was much concern voiced about crime, particularly around drug, gun and gang crime, and personal experiences of crime were widespread. This led to some residents feeling unsafe when walking around the area, particularly at night, and this affected their behaviour to the extent that they would either use or avoid particular routes at particular times. Examples emerged, across people of all ages and groups, whose use of the local area was influenced by a sense of safety. As well as constraining respondents' use of local space, the fear of crime affected their social relationships in the local area. Many respondents across the areas and ethnic groups shared the sentiments of Matt, a white British man, who felt that at the 'end of the day you won't get into no trouble if you keep yourself to yourself'.

### *Language and communication*

Across the groups, language was commonly signalled as a potential barrier to social interaction, often alongside the viewpoint that newcomers 'did not want to mix'. Somali respondents emphasised the impact of not being able to speak or understand English and several interviewees were attending ESOL classes. The communication barrier was also sometimes said to be related to cultural norms. In particular, the issue of cultural norms surrounding Somali women's interaction with non-Somalis was raised by some respondents. One Somali man described how cultural norms surrounding Somali women's interaction with strangers could be interpreted as women being 'standoffish'. The complex dynamics that could be involved here are exemplified in the example of a Somali woman in Tottenham who wanted her children to play outside but was being prevented by her white British neighbour's use of the space for plants. She was reluctant to approach her neighbour over this, she said, out of 'respect' and to avoid generating an argument.

### *Cultural and ethnic identity*

While respondents tended to say that cultural exchange was a positive feature of living in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood, cultural traditions associated with different ethnic backgrounds were also cited as a barrier to interaction. For example, there were many references to the British pub culture being alien to the Muslim faith and issues raised around appropriate food preparation (i.e. availability of halal food). Family structures were also felt to discourage cross-group interaction, with the Somali (and sometimes other minority ethnic communities) described as having bigger families and being more family oriented than the white British. Linked to this were perceptions of a primarily 'home-focused' role for Somali women.

Somali respondents' perspectives on barriers to interaction reinforced some of these themes, with religion and culture again viewed as barriers to interaction. Sooyaan, a Somali man in Tottenham, noted:

People do act differently on the basis of the differences of their cultural backgrounds, and that's what made it easier for me to make friends from the Somali community.

(Sooyaan, Somali man, 30s, Tottenham)

Henry, a white British man in his 60s, spoke of there being 'no connection between the different communities on the estate' in which he and his family were living. Many interviewees also felt that frequenting pubs was in contradiction to the laws of Islam and pointed to this as a factor impacting on interaction in mixed local social spaces. In addition, many also cited the fact they could not eat with their neighbours because their food preparation was not halal. However there were exceptions to this in both areas. Samatar (40s) and Luqmaan (60s), two first-generation Somali men in Moss Side, perceived no conflict between what they described as an English pub culture and Islam, and met their black Caribbean and white friends in pubs to drink coke and play pool.

As noted above, there appeared to be more diverse networks among younger Somalis, particularly those who had been raised in the UK. In Tottenham, a young Somali man, who had spent most of his life in the UK, had a black Caribbean girlfriend and a child of multiple heritage; while a young woman emphasised that Somali youth behaved similarly to other youth, going to parties and having girl or boyfriends, though she felt that the wider Somali community closed their ears to this. Nonetheless, some young Somali men in Moss Side spoke of leading 'double lives' and interacting outside of the community only to a certain degree. Again, religion and culture are cited by them as important dynamics:

Most Somalians lead double lives, there's their life in Moss Side with the Somali community, then there's a life outside Moss Side when they've got friends that are not Somalians, they're Asian friends, they're white friends, but they come back to Moss Side and ... the reason why they don't merge, because like our culture, the fact that we've got a different religion, we merge to a certain level and that's it.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

*Racial stereotyping and harassment*

Some overt signs of racial stereotyping and intolerance, such as verbal abuse and aggression, emerged in respondent accounts of everyday neighbourhood life. There were references by Somalis in both areas to first-hand experiences of crime and some felt that these might be racially provoked. For example, in Tottenham, a Somali woman, whose sister had recently had her mobile phone stolen, felt that such crime was targeted particularly at Somali women:

I don't know why but they feel like the Somali women have got money in their bags, and you can't go out at night-time, so we don't go out at night-time.

(Amina, Somali woman, 30s, Tottenham)

A Somali man also referred to witnessing a Somali woman being harassed for wearing the hijab.

It was particularly in Moss Side, rather than Tottenham, however, where we heard stark narratives of Somalis feeling unwelcome in the area, and a number of respondents recounted experiences of harassment and racially motivated crime. As suggested in Chapter 2, this may be related to the 'visibility' of the Somali population in the Moss Side area, which is more residentially concentrated than in Tottenham, and is seen as the principal new community residing in the area. As we explore further in the next chapter, the Somalis in particular were the target of 'racialised resentment' expressed by existing residents in Moss Side, whereas in Tottenham this was targeted at a wider range of new arrivals, including diverse migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The accounts of racial abuse from Somalis in Moss Side were also related to the timing of our fieldwork, which took place during a period of heightened tension between the communities in Moss Side. The immediate trigger seemed to be a perception that young (mainly black Caribbean) men were harassing Somali women, which resulted in wider aggression between black Caribbean and Somali young men. While the police were unable to find any Somali women willing to come forward and report any racially motivated attacks, a number of the Somali women interviewed cited personal experience of harassment.

On the whole, Somali respondents did not attribute such negative experiences to the aftermath of the 11 September and the 7 July bombings. However, these events were clearly having an impact on perceptions of what it was like to live in the areas. A Somali man who was a community activist referred to a widespread perception that Muslims were terrorists, with this viewpoint being fuelled by the media:

Here Muslims are perceived to be terrorists, this is after the September 11th ... Muslims are not terrorists, Muslims do not condone terrorism or violence, but unfortunately there is nothing they can do about it because it is the media that is stereotyping it.

(Samatar, Somali man, 60s, Moss Side)

Confirming such stereotyping, one of the white British interviewees in Moss Side made an association between the Somali community and terrorism:

And you know what you get as well, because half these terrorists are Somalians as well and that.

(Irene, white British woman, 50s, Moss Side)

Other research has also raised concerns about the role of the media in fuelling racial harassment, including both negative reporting about Muslims in the wake of the bombings, as well as more general negative coverage of refugees and asylum seekers (van Dijk, 1999; Bhavnani *et al.*, 2005; IPPR, 2005).

Other groups could also feel on the receiving end of stereotyping and sometimes harassment. For example, some white British respondents in Tottenham in particular referred to receiving abuse from young black men. One man commented:

... my son got attacked by blacks ... my daughter's been threatened, eyeballed, that was just a couple of weeks ago, it was carnival day, and it's getting worse.

(Paul, white British man, 50s, Tottenham)

### **Does social interaction between different ethnic groups matter?**

There is a range of research that suggests an erosion of difference between black Caribbean and white British communities in the UK, reflected in residential patterns and in rising rates of intermarriage between the two groups (Modood *et al.*, 1997; Peach, 1998). This was reflected in comments made by residents in our two neighbourhoods. In Moss Side, where for many years the black Caribbean population had been the most visible black population in the area, there were numerous references to how black Caribbean and white British populations had become more 'integrated' over time. Both Caribbean and white respondents referred to integration taking place through intermarriage, noting a growth in the numbers of people of mixed heritage:

So do you think there's any tension between the white people and the Caribbeans?

No because there's so much interaction, you know, intermarriage.  
(Charles, white British man, 70s, Moss Side)

Such developments were also linked to changing 'mindsets', of both the white British population and the black Caribbean population:

The mindset of black males of my age is changing, it's been changing since they're born in England, but it's the new ones coming *[from the]* Caribbean, they're still in that stigma of, white people this and that.  
(Ollie, black Caribbean man, 20s, Moss Side)

One white British lone parent had recently moved back to Moss Side, both so that her child could get to know his black Caribbean father and relatives if he wanted to, and because she felt that he would feel more 'secure' about his identity in an ethnically diverse environment.

The picture was not one of complete harmony, however, with some respondents – both black and white, in mixed relationships or with children of multiple heritage – referring to being at the receiving end of negative comments about their inter-ethnic partnerships. Moreover, as we discuss at greater length in the next chapter, there were also accounts from black Caribbean respondents of continuing racial discrimination and disadvantage, which suggests that, despite widespread social interaction between black and white individuals, racial difference has an enduring significance in terms of differential life chances.

While the picture of interactions between black Caribbeans and the white population is mostly one of convergence, there was a different picture conveyed of interactions between Somalis and others in the neighbourhood. Somalis – on the whole, albeit with the exceptions detailed earlier – were more segregated in their interactions and relationships. This was for the variety of reasons already outlined, including 'newness' and lack of fluency in English, perceptions of cultural barriers on both sides, and racial abuse and hostility. This suggests a complex picture of inter-ethnic relations and solidarities, which challenges any simple black–white dualism (see Bhavnani, 2001).

This situation elicited a mix of responses from residents. On the one hand, when asked about the good and bad things relating to living in a diverse neighbourhood, it was striking that the majority of respondents, across both fieldwork areas and

all ethnic groups, ages and genders, viewed diversity positively. Living in a diverse neighbourhood was thought to result in greater exposure to different ethnic cultures, which would potentially lead to greater tolerance and understanding. This was reflected in the comments of Liibaan, a young Somali man with a child of multiple heritage:

What I want in my life, especially for my daughter, I don't want her to think, you know, just in a box ... you know where you're coming from, but know what's in front of me as well. If we live in Somalia maybe my attitude would be different because everyone's Somalian.  
(Liibaan, Somali man, 20s, Tottenham)

Conversely, people felt that a lack of knowledge and understanding of people from different ethnic backgrounds, resulting from limited interaction, would foster intolerance and fuel racism.

At the same time, however, when asked about the limited interaction between people from different ethnic backgrounds in the neighbourhood, respondents by and large did not see this as problematic. Implicit in many respondents' narratives was a lack of concrete imperative for people from different backgrounds to have more contact, and a frequent comment was that different ethnic groups 'do get on all right together' even if they have little contact. This reflected the limited shared use of public spaces across ethnic groups because of differences in lifestyle or material opportunities – for example, limited employment opportunities preventing interactions in the workplace. However, this laissez-faire attitude about separation seemed to be sometimes related to a lack of awareness regarding the barriers that might be facing Somalis and other new communities in using shared public spaces and facilities, as evidenced in the frequent comment that new communities 'don't want to mix'. The case of Waris, the Somali woman mentioned earlier who was finding it hard to relate to other mothers at her parents and toddlers group, suggests that not all of the 'separation' of new communities was self-initiated and that limited interaction could be associated with individuals and communities feeling a sense of isolation and anxiety about making connections with people from different backgrounds.

Limited cross-ethnic social interaction can also have negative consequences at the neighbourhood level, since it means that, when tensions do develop, there are unlikely to be existing trusted channels of communication by which such issues can be dissipated. The next chapter takes a closer look at some of those tensions in the neighbourhoods and the dynamics underpinning them.

## Summary

- Drawing on the accounts of residents of Moss Side and Tottenham, this chapter has painted a picture of greater social mixing between black Caribbean and white British residents in everyday life than occurred in the past, reinforcing the evidence presented elsewhere of closer relationships between these two communities. Somalis, however, are relative newcomers to the Moss Side and Tottenham areas, which is reflected in their fewer social connections outside of their own community. There are exceptions to this, however. In particular, young Somalis raised in the UK were more likely to be mixing with people from different ethnic backgrounds than the older first generation of Somalis.
- Black Caribbean and white British long-term residents tended to place the onus on Somalis to mix, rather than proactively trying to make newcomers to the area feel welcome. There was sometimes a lack of understanding of possible barriers to Somalis' participation in shared public spaces and events, and a tendency to blame a lack of interaction on the newcomers' 'self-segregation'.
- A variety of factors can inhibit inter-ethnic contact despite shared residence in a neighbourhood. These include an unwillingness to mix because of a combination of racist attitudes, apathy and fears of crime in the immediate neighbourhood; language and communication barriers; perceived cultural barriers related to ethnic identities; and racial stereotyping and harassment. These issues are also exacerbated by a lack of shared use of public space because of differences in lifestyle or because of material opportunities, for example where limited employment opportunities prevent interaction in the workplace.
- Somalis felt increasingly uncomfortable amidst a growth in racial harassment. This was felt by some to have been fuelled by the events of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005, exacerbated by associations between 'Muslims' and 'terrorism' in the media. However, there were also local circumstances in Manchester, where tensions between communities had heightened during the course of the research, which generated stark accounts of racial hostility and abuse, prompting some Somalis to wish to leave the area.
- The everyday interactions of our residents show that spatial proximity in terms of shared residence in a neighbourhood does not automatically result in social interactions across culturally diverse groups. This calls into question the emphasis in community cohesion policy on the importance of residential segregation in limiting social cohesion. The complex picture of separation and interaction we have presented also challenges the appropriateness of perceiving racism

as a black–white dichotomy and calls into question any assumption of ‘black’ solidarities.

## 4 Neighbourhood relationships and tensions

This chapter explores the following questions.

- What is the range of factors that help shape social relations in the neighbourhood?
- What are the sources of tension?
- To what extent is ethnic difference a primary source of neighbourhood tensions?

Policy debate around social cohesion has tended to focus on ethnic diversity and to present relations between different ethnic groups as the main source of tensions within neighbourhoods. However, previous research has revealed the ways in which racial and ethnic disadvantage and identities are cross-cut by other factors such as class, gender, culture and religion, age and generation (e.g. Back, 1996; Brah, 1996; Modood *et al.*, 1997). In this chapter we look at tensions in community relationships in our two neighbourhoods, the extent to which these were expressed as and perceived to be about racial and ethnic difference, and the extent to which they were interrelated with other factors.

An issue that arose prominently in the interviews with residents was the intertwining of racial tensions with material factors, such as access to employment opportunities and to housing. This is hardly new, as Rex and Moore's (1967) classic study in Birmingham in the 1960s has shown. However, given changes in the welfare state and the increasing scale of immigration into Britain in more recent decades, these issues have acquired a new salience as well as new interpretations. The importance of the allocation of housing as a factor underpinning 'racialised resentment' expressed towards newcomers aligns this research with the findings of Geoff Dench and his colleagues (2006) in their study in the East End of London, which similarly argues that the distribution of welfare state benefits, including social housing, has become a key arena for inter-ethnic conflict. However, in our two neighbourhoods, conflicts were expressed, not only in terms of relations between ethnic groups, but also in terms of other factors, most notably age and generation. This suggests that social and community cohesion is not just or even primarily about ethnic tensions.

## Racialised accounts and neighbourhood tensions

### Housing

Issues of access to housing and the allocation of housing featured prominently in residents' accounts of life in the two areas, and in some instances were a focus for expressions of hostility to newcomers, who were often perceived to be getting more than their 'fair share' of this resource. Such accounts should be seen in the broader context of changes in the housing market, including insufficient supply of social housing and the escalating cost of housing, which was pricing those on lower incomes (and even middle incomes in London) out of the market (see Hamnett, 2003). This was reflected in our residents' accounts, which conveyed an overall sense of constraint on choice and competition over a limited stock of housing. In the Tottenham area in particular, concern was expressed by or for young people over the fact that they were forced to stay within the parental home and were unable to establish independent households. Alisha, a young woman in Tottenham commented:

My name has been on the housing list since I was 16 ... I'm not earning that much money that I could go out there and buy a property, because the way things are with the property ladder now young people can't afford to buy a property ... I've been to the council a lot of times and they always tell me the same thing. Because you work you'll have to get something off a private landlord, or you have to fall into one of their particular categories.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Her comments convey both the lack of options felt by young people as well as a sense of resentment that those who are seemingly less 'deserving' (i.e. those not working) are the most likely to acquire scarce resources. This sentiment is explored further later in the chapter.

For the Somali community, most of whom had arrived in the UK as asylum seekers, the issue of constraints on housing choice was particularly marked. Jameelah, a Somali woman living in Manchester, commented:

I don't have a choice, to choose any house, because I was homeless for a long time, 18 months with two children, I was pregnant ... I live in hostel, and then I live after that with my [*relative*], her house is two bedrooms and overcrowding, she got four children herself ... and this is the first house I got.

(Jameelah, Somali woman, 30s, Moss Side)

The issue of overcrowding was commonly experienced by Somali residents in both areas. For example, a Somali man in Manchester described his two-bedroom flat as 'satisfactory accommodation' (compared to the one-bedroom property he was allocated initially), despite the fact that he lived there with his pregnant wife and four children. Ironically, such levels of overcrowding sometimes fed into negative racial stereotypes among long-standing (mainly white British) residents about the 'social standards' among newly arrived communities.

In Tottenham, there was a pervasive concern among residents about overcrowding in the area, and a particular concern that new private housing developments, intended to encourage more socially mixed housing, were being bought as 'buy-to-let' properties and subsequently rented back to council tenants for whom the accommodation was inappropriate. One respondent commented:

I don't think anybody really wants to see loads of flats. You know ... they're bought for the wrong reasons, people go off and buy them as an investment now, rent them out to the council for homeless people, you've got families jammed into these flats, no gardens, no facilities.  
(Jane, white British woman, 40s, Tottenham)

While the respondent here criticises the council housing policy, others associate the problem with the numbers of new migrants and asylum seekers housed in the borough. For example, Alisha cited above stated:

I see a lot of Kosovans in the area ... for me I think it bothers me because I've been trying to get a flat for a long time and all they ever tell you is there is no houses in the area, but there are, because if you can see new people coming in all the time there is something there.  
(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

In Moss Side there were similar concerns about new housing developments pricing local people out of the market:

... it's just like they're stuffing people in the flats ... one house £135,000  
... no one around here is going to be able to afford that.  
(Ed, black Caribbean, man, 20s, Moss Side)

These concerns among residents about lack of access to housing fed into perceptions that new communities were monopolising scarce housing resources, particularly council housing and newly built housing association properties that were perceived to be of high quality. Taisha, a young Caribbean woman in Moss Side living in homeless accommodation, stated:

The thing that gets me is that the Somalians they come over here, they get houses like that straightaway, get satellites, they get anything straightaway, and we have to go out and work for it, struggle and fight just to get what you want.

(Taisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Moss Side)

Similar comments came from Julia, an older white British woman who was in private rented accommodation, which she perceived to be of low quality, particularly in relation to the newer housing association properties:

Now what it is, is they just come in from wherever and there's a ready-made house, furnished, up to a standard which I even can't get, and I was born in this country.

(Julia, white British woman, 50s, Moss Side)

Here there is clear narrative about 'entitlement', that is who should be entitled to receive resources from the State and on what basis. Julia's comments point to a pervasive sentiment that 'entitlement' is related to being 'born and bred' in the UK. Another variant on this theme was an account of entitlement based around the idea of being 'deserving' through contributing to the country by the virtue of 'hard work'. This was a narrative that could, at times, unite both 'indigenous' white British and long-standing minority ethnic residents against more newly arrived communities, and it was conveyed in our research by both black Caribbean and white British respondents. It can be seen above in Taisha's comments that, while Somalis get houses straightaway, 'we have to go out and work for it' and in Alisha's comments that '[the council] don't help people that work'.

It is notable that, in Moss Side, these sentiments about new communities getting 'more than their fair share' were directed squarely at Somalis, who were the most 'visible' new community in the area. In Tottenham, there was similar racialised resentment expressed but towards a broader range of new communities, particularly but not exclusively refugees and asylum seekers, who were deemed not to 'contribute' through 'hard work'. This is seen above in Alisha's comments about 'Kosovans' unfairly receiving housing resources. Paul, another Tottenham resident, states:

I think the Somalians are fine ... because they're not abusive, they're not aggressive ... they're always out on the street, especially on nights like this, but they're fine because half of them don't drink because they're Muslim.

(Paul, white British man, 50s, Tottenham)

He contrasts the 'non-aggressive' Somalis to the 'pissed Poles', who he finds a 'nuisance'. Significantly, it is the fact that they do not contribute economically that he criticises, again revealing the narrative of entitlement based on economic contribution:

... the bone we have with this group of Poles is they don't work, most Poles work and work very hard, but it's the others who don't work.

### Employment

Employment was another area in which perceptions about the inequality of opportunities often took a racialised form. However, these perceptions should be seen in the context of economic changes, which have seen the decline of manufacturing industry and hence a decline in employment opportunities particularly for working-class and lower-qualified men. Older white British residents who had lived in the areas all their lives made reference to this former age of more plentiful opportunities:

When I was a young fella they had all the factories in Trafford Park where you could take your apprenticeships ... they'd take semi-skilled workers, labourers, that sort of thing, but now there doesn't seem to be that around, there's not the manufacturing.

(Henry, white British man, 60s, Moss Side)

There was also unease expressed by older respondents about how the decline in manufacturing was impacting on the employment possibilities for the younger generation. Co-existing with this concern about decent employment opportunities for the young, however, was an equally strongly expressed concern around young people lacking an appropriate 'work ethic'. This was expressed to some extent by residents in all three ethnic groups, although there was a particular concern among black Caribbean respondents about the extent to which young black men were not taking up employment and training opportunities but were taking illegal routes to make money:

I'm concerned [*that*] a lot of the black guys don't have any ambition, they don't want a trade because they can make easier money on the street corner ... it's too hard for them and that's the problem ... after one or two weeks they get fed up because they've got to get their hands dirty, and they don't want to, they just want easy money.

(Nick, black Caribbean man, 40s, Tottenham)

This particular narrative highlights the interplay of ethnic divisions and tensions with those of age, which is discussed further later in this chapter.

Several respondents, across both areas, made reference to racial and ethnic differences in terms of access to employment opportunities. The persistence of racism limiting the job opportunities was a recurring theme, particularly voiced by the black Caribbean respondents. One respondent in Manchester stated:

Black boys have got to try twice as hard to get so far because it can't be as easy as a white guy or a white kid to get a job, I don't know why, but it's just how it is ... you'll have a white kid that can mess about in school and all that and don't really care, the same as a black kid, and the black kids aren't stupid because he'll see the white guy walk into a job and he'll think, 'Why is that?'

(Ed, black Caribbean man, 20s, Moss Side)

These accounts of continuing racial discrimination and disadvantage limiting the employment opportunities for black people complicate the picture presented in Chapter 3 of increasing interaction and integration between white British and black Caribbean communities. It suggests that, despite widespread social interaction, there are persistent forms of discrimination that highlight the continuing significance of racial difference for life chances.

High rates of unemployment among the Somali community, and particularly among Somali men, was a concern raised by Somali respondents in both areas. One Somali man in Tottenham stated:

I think overall life is getting harder here, unemployment is high ... I think there is no resource or maybe too many people chasing every single job available here.

(Sooyaan, Somali man, 30s, Tottenham)

Concerns were also expressed by both community workers and young Somali women that khat use<sup>1</sup> was contributing to unemployment among Somali husbands and fathers. Lack of government action on the issue was seen by one youth worker as signalling a lack of interest in Somali needs and opportunity structures.

Immigration status, khat use, along with ESOL needs and a lack of recognition of overseas qualifications were also raised as barriers for Somali employment. This relates to increasing concerns that have been raised about the employment conditions of migrant workers more generally (Holgate 2005; PSI, 2006). Zakaria, a

Somali man in his 50s living in Tottenham, spoke graphically about feeling exploited by the employment agency that had found him work in a warehouse:

I work eight hours a day in four days but we are robbed by the agencies as we all work through an agency, mostly [*people*] from Nigeria, Ghana, etc. they provide the transport and deduct more from the salary and we live with struggle.

(Zakaria, Somali man, 40s, Tottenham)

A Somali man in Manchester emphasised that even those who were in skilled jobs in Somalia were unable to obtain well-paid work in the UK:

Whenever they go for work, the only work they do is unskilled work ... manual work ...cleaning work ... we have taxi drivers who should never be taxi drivers, we were well off in Somalia.

(Samatar, Somali man, 60s, Moss Side)

However, somewhat paradoxically, there was also some resentment expressed by residents from established communities conveying a perception that the Somali community had monopolised local business opportunities. This perception was particularly expressed in the Moss Side area, where the Somalis as a community were, as noted earlier, somewhat more 'visible' as the predominant new minority in the area. Evidence of Somali-owned businesses, including shops and cafes, on some of the streets in Moss Side was seen by some of the white British female respondents, in particular, as a visible sign of the decline in the economic fortunes of the area, especially since there had been a decline in traditional (British-owned) shops, which had thrived in the 1960s and 1970s. 'Successful' Somali businesses were also popularly cited as an explanation for some of the hostility that residents felt existed between the black Caribbean and Somali communities in Moss Side. For instance, in a discussion group, a young Somali man stated:

The reason why there's jealousy yeah, Somalis are coming here yeah, there's a Jamaican guy I was talking to, you know what he said, he goes, ten years ago, yeah, Claremont Road, only drug dealers used to stand there, nobody used to stand there apart from drug dealers, people were scared to walk on that street, now, you know, like the shops that are opened by the Somalis are live, vibrant, businesses, you know.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

A black Caribbean respondent spoke of similar resentment that he had come across in the Caribbean community, this time addressed towards successful Asian

businesses. Again, this signalled a sense of frustration that arose from a feeling of relative deprivation.

### Quality of the physical environment

The quality of the physical environment was another important issue in respondents' accounts of their quality of life in the two neighbourhoods. Once again, this was an area where racialised resentment around newcomers was sometimes expressed. Concerns around litter, the dumping of rubbish, the quality of amenities such as parks and play areas, and the availability of 'green spaces' were all commented on. For some residents, mainly older residents from white British and black Caribbean backgrounds, the 'look' of the area was very important and related to their sense of pride in the neighbourhood. Reflecting this, a Caribbean woman in Manchester commented:

I am willing to try and do my best to have my property look neat and tidy ... so I expect other people to as well ... then we'd have an area where people aren't going to [say], 'Well Moss Side is scruffy, it's litter, it's this, it's that'.

(Marisha, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

This concern about the quality of the physical environment was embedded for many residents in a story of neighbourhood decline. However, the sense of physical decline was quite localised, reflecting fine-grained differentiations within the areas in the condition of the physical environment. For example, one resident living in an owner-occupied house in a street of Victorian terraces in Tottenham refers to the place as a 'nice residential area'. Residents on a nearby council estate, however, had much more negative views of their environment and narrated a pronounced story of decline. An older white British couple, who had lived in their flat since the estate was first built in the 1960s and who had moved there with a sense of optimism, expressed a strong sense of physical decline in the environment and felt 'let down' by the council.

The sense of physical decline was explained by some respondents in terms of newer residents not making the effort to look after their environs, which formed part of a broader story told by some residents about a decline of social standards in society. This was heard most commonly in relation to young people, as discussed further below. However, it was also heard in relation to discussions of cleanliness of the neighbourhood. Two residents on the council estate referred to previously spoke about this in almost identical terms, describing how, in the past, people 'used to care'

and had 'a lot of respect for the community'. Some, although not all, respondents talked about this physical decline in racialised ways, suggesting that it was new communities that were causing the slip in standards, with the implication that this was related to different 'social standards' and in particular to a lower standard of environmental hygiene.

Underlying some of this talk about environmental standards was an implicit argument that new communities should conform to existing norms regarding social behaviour – to 'the way things are done round here'. In some interviews, there were specific references to 'rules and regulations' being flouted by new arrivals to the area, while, in other cases, the contravention of standards was more implicit. Some white British female interviewees talked about this issue in gendered ways, making reference to inappropriate sexual behaviour among immigrant men. One stated:

You'll find guys from ethnic minorities will be quite sexually explicit and – you find, normally, generally guys that are from ethnic minorities that are born here are a little bit more, you know, westernised, you know, they've got more of an understanding of other cultures, [*the others*] just assume because you're English and you're white that you're a prostitute.  
(Katie, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Some of the discussions about the physical environment also suggested conflicts over the use of space – for example, different understandings of how particular spaces should be used, when and by whom. This was particularly evident in conflicts around children playing in the streets or in backyards, which was often viewed as a 'nuisance' by older residents and sometimes presented in terms of differences in cultural norms of acceptable behaviour. For example, a white British woman in Manchester complained about Somali children 'harassing' her by kicking their football against the wall of her house, and commented that they could go to the park instead. However, a Somali respondent in the same neighbourhood felt that she could not let her children play in the park because they were harassed by older children and therefore she had to keep them near to her house. Another example is a white British man in Tottenham who complains about 'asylum seekers' coming into the pub where he regularly drinks, monopolising the space in the bar and flouting what he perceives to be the norms of acceptable behaviour by not buying a drink. Assertions about the need for newcomers to conform, in tidiness, sexual conduct as well as drinking, reflect perceptions of the contours of working-class respectability and 'Englishness'.

### Understanding 'racialised resentment'

We have used the term 'racialised resentment' to refer to the way that everyday neighbourhood grievances, primarily around the distribution of material resources, were sometimes manifested in negative attitudes among residents towards racial minorities, and particularly to new refugee and migrant communities. Such understandings were not universally expressed but were commonplace in the residents' narratives and suggest a 'common-sense racism' that links neighbourhood problems to the arrival of new communities. It is important to note that this contrasted with the generally positive view expressed by residents about neighbourhood diversity when they were asked directly about this issue, as described in the last chapter. Attitudes towards ethnic diversity therefore, may be contradictory (see Rattansi, 1992). For example, residents might say that ethnic diversity is 'a good thing' but then go on to say that Somalis, for example, seem to be getting the best housing. Similarly, residents' views on living with diversity sometimes distinguished particular ethnic groups as the source of neighbourhood problems, while expressing positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups.

Dench and colleagues' (2006) work in the East End of London stresses the material context underpinning these expressions of racialised resentment – for example, they point to resentment around changing welfare entitlements that are no longer based on contribution but rather on need, and thus thought by the white working-class community to unduly benefit newly arriving communities. They also note that, within the context of their research, interviewees who had better material resources, such as higher qualifications and thus the ability to move out of their neighbourhoods, were able to take 'a more impersonal and principled view of the areas' problems' rather than blaming new arrivals. The material we have described in this chapter shows that the local context of material resources is clearly an important factor underpinning attitudes in our two neighbourhoods. There was also a tendency for resentments to be expressed primarily by those in a situation of financial hardship and feeling a sense of entrapment in their current situation.

However, in understanding why resentment is targeted largely at ethnic minorities, and new arrivals in particular, it is also important to draw attention to the role of negative media coverage around asylum seekers. This seemed to be reflected in the comments of some of our respondents who made a distinction between earlier waves of migrants who came to the UK to work and newer communities who took 'handouts'. As noted in the previous chapter, this suggests that the media can thus form part of a practice of 'elite racism', circulating negative ideas about asylum seekers and new migrants. Bhavnani *et al.*'s (2005) discussion of 'elite' and 'situated' racisms suggests that individuals do not simply repeat media stories about asylum

seekers but incorporate these ideas into their everyday lives and understandings of their local situations. Thus racisms will be expressed differently in different local neighbourhoods and at different times, as well as varying between men and women, people of different ages, etc. In the next section, we explore the issue of age and generation, which emerged as an important factor in shaping neighbourhood social relations, with young people sometimes at the receiving end of particular hostility.

## **Young people and neighbourhood relationships**

### **Intergenerational divisions**

As we have suggested a number of times, tensions within the two neighbourhoods were not simply about ethnic divisions but were also cross-cut by other factors. Particularly apparent were divisions around generation and age. Many residents in both areas, and across all ethnic groups, expressed concern about the behaviour of youths and their prospects for the future. A recurring theme was the complaint about young people 'hanging around' on the streets, getting up to 'no good', as in the comments of this young woman in Manchester:

The things that I don't like, it's the kids between the ages of ten upwards, there's nothing for them to do, so they're always just on the street either robbing people, fighting people, breaking into houses and things like that.  
(Taisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Moss Side)

There were numerous accounts of young people, both girls and boys, being engaged in crime and nuisance. Respondents on one Tottenham estate spoke of how a group of 20 to 30 young people regularly gathered in a children's play area at night. Beginning to congregate as soon as school finished, they reportedly damaged cars, mugged people and threw stones at passers-by. One older respondent described asking them to keep the noise down and receiving verbal abuse:

I used to, in the past I used to call out to 'em, one o'clock in the morning, I was like, 'Look, do you mind moving?' Or 'just keep it down'. Oh, well, the language you got, and they shout all the more!  
(Harry, white British man, 70s, Tottenham)

As well as the references to criminal activity, several respondents referred to finding clusters of young people intimidating, something that clearly relates to broader media coverage about youth, and young men in particular (see McDowell, 2003). An older

black Caribbean woman in Moss Side was not alone in referring to 'hooded boys' as frightening.

A lack of 'respect' on the part of young people was also a recurring theme in residents' accounts. For example, one black Caribbean mother, a fairly recent arrival to the area, spoke of how:

... the respect and everything, all that has gone out of the window, you know children no longer have regard for anyone.  
(Lucy, black Caribbean woman, 30s, Moss Side)

It was notable that either 'new ethnic communities' and/ or 'youth' in general were often blamed by residents, both for a decline in the strong 'work ethic' that was said to have been apparent among previous generations and for a lack of respect for the physical fabric of the neighbourhood. However, interestingly, in discussions with young people, some similar concerns and criticisms about those who did not 'respect' the neighbourhood were made. For example, in a mixed discussion group of black Caribbean, white British and Somali children and teenagers, participants spoke with one voice about their dislike of young people dropping litter on the streets, the lack of 'respect' that it showed for the local area, and the bad impression that it gave to visitors and newcomers:

*Black Caribbean:* Nobody drops litter on my road. If they drop it, they pick it up and put it in the bin. I think there's too much rubbish around and it's disgusting ... My friends drop litter outside their house.

*Interviewer:* So what does that say about people who live in Moss Side?

*Black Caribbean:* I don't know, that they don't care. If I was someone coming from another area they would think like that they don't really respect their community, it's your area you should keep it clean.

*Somali:* It's just making like, say if someone comes from a different country it's just making it like Moss Side is a community and you don't treat it with respect. I admit that I drop litter and I think it's wrong, but I do go back and pick it up.

*Black Caribbean:* The way people treat the community you think, what the heck, why should we try? No other person is doing it so ...

(Mixed youth discussion group, Moss Side)

Therefore some of the concerns of residents transcended age and generation, even while some older residents were pointing the finger at young people as the cause of the problems.

In other discussions with young people in the research, the issue of the stereotyping and labelling of youth came to the fore, and some young people felt that they were receiving a bad press. For example, one young Somali man (in his 20s) spoke of the way that he and his friends were stereotyped by the police on the basis of their youth and race, which manifested itself in visible symbols such as their clothes:

The police, they judge you straightaway ... they can just look at you and they won't see what you're doing, they just see what, like the wrong side of you ... they think they see a typical, another Somalian boy, you know, up to no good, they don't see what I'm doing or what I was doing, they just see I was wearing a hat, his trousers are like that, T-shirts are like that, just gotta question him, or let's go stop him in his car.

(Liibaan, Somali man, 20s, Tottenham)

Furthermore, in a Tottenham discussion group made up of young black Caribbean women (in their teens and 20s), participants expressed the view that the issue of gangs is overblown in the media, a negative consequence of which is how they are perceived as young people, while also noting the complexity of the issues involved in gang membership. They talked about how young black men in the area were like 'little kids' who wanted to feel important, thus raising issues of young men's struggle for recognition:

I wouldn't call them gangs ...

*[One group of young people]* they think they're big.

Don't want to get caught up in that foolishness.

Everyone hangs with their own crowd but they do mix together, it's all about who you hang with, who you roll on the street with.

(Black Caribbean youth discussion group, Tottenham)

However, the reality of gang violence for young people was also brought home by one participant in the group who reported that she had been to four funerals linked to gun crime in the past year.

### Inter-ethnic tensions among young people

Part of the concern with youth 'nuisance' expressed by respondents was about inter-ethnic tensions. Young people's relations, particularly those of young men, were seen by many as the 'front line' of neighbourhood ethnic tensions. However the picture presented is a very complex one. As suggested in the previous chapter, as a general rule, young people had more ethnically mixed social networks and positive attitudes towards diversity. However it was also apparent that some of the disputes between young people (men in the main) took racialised forms. One respondent in Tottenham commented that, while young people from different ethnic groups generally hung out quite amiably with one another, when they fought, this ran along racial lines. The main line of tension was reported to be between Turkish and Kurdish youth on one side and black Caribbean on the other. In Moss Side, as mentioned in Chapter 2, tensions between Somali and black Caribbean boys resulted in a number of violent incidents during the course of our fieldwork, prompting police activity and a number of community meetings to calm tensions. These examples suggest, as other research has also argued, that the expression of 'situated racism' is intertwined with other identities, such as young people's gender identities, which often take a territorialised expression (Back, 1996; Alexander, 2000).

There were conflicting ways of interpreting inter-ethnic tensions between young people among our respondents. Some downplayed the ethnic difference and attributed the aggression to masculinity and typical 'boys' behaviour', as was the case with this Somali mother referring to a fight she had witnessed between Somali and black Caribbean boys in the local park:

Something like that happens on and off, I think because they are young you know, but people are making it a big fuss, I think it happens everywhere, whether they are here or there, in Somalia, the young. People are not supposed to take it seriously, they are just teenagers, they just don't know what they are doing or what they are fighting about.  
(Waris, Somali woman, 30s, Moss Side)

Others felt that the hostility between black Caribbean and Somali boys reflected underlying tensions and negative attitudes within the two communities. There are undoubtedly elements of both at play; however it was clear that, while tensions

between young men often took a racialised form, this did not necessarily reflect enduring hostilities between groups. As other research has argued, youth relationships tend to exhibit complex and shifting patterns of alliances and hostilities between different ethnic groups (Back, 1996; Mac an Ghail, 1999; Alexander, 2000). This was reflected in the conflicting accounts we heard from informants. One man who worked with young people in Tottenham stated categorically that there were no tensions between pupils from different ethnic groups in the local school:

You don't have your black Afro-Caribbeans there, your Kurds there, and this, and that, or your Turks there, the school, if you went to the school would prove that to you straightaway ... the schools, particularly these schools are good, they integrate well ... the kids like, you know, don't care what colour.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

Another man who worked in the same school had an opposite opinion:

*[There's]* a massive hatred between the Caribbeans and the Turks with the kids, it's in the schools, they hate each other, there have been several massive fights and stuff.

(Paul, white British man, 50s, Tottenham)

The complexity of the relationships, and the interplay between ethnicity and gender and class, are evident in the following comments from a key informant in Moss Side talking about the difficulties Somali boys in the area have faced fitting into local peer cultures:

Young Somali men I think are in quite a difficult position in the area because ... Somali girls are not allowed out, Somali lads are out till quite late at night, they are not as well accepted by the local community because they are new, they invariably don't have a lot of money because invariably they're in quite an impoverished community, they find it very difficult to get girlfriends, and they tend to not be as accepted, so it's one of the things we noticed in terms of gangs, there's quite a bit of information that Somali lads are not as well accepted into black gangs in the area because they're Somalis.

(Key informant, Manchester)

Similar accounts of exclusion from local peer cultures were given by Somali teenage boys in a discussion group. One participant stated:

I come here in 1990, yeah, used to go [*local*] primary school, he's telling me straightaway, 'Go back to where you come from' – and these are the black Caribbean – 'Go back to where you come from'.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

The gendered nature of these dynamics is also evident from the very different ways in which the Somali boys and girls spoke about these issues in a discussion group. The Somali boys spoke of the need to defend 'their community' and 'their women' from attack by black Caribbean boys, even while acknowledging that the latter were a small minority:

Our mothers don't feel safe outside in their own community ... I don't think it's the whole West Indian community, it's a group of thugs.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

In this context, the young men also spoke of the importance of racial solidarity and 'sticking up for each other':

That's my brother, he's a Muslim, he's a Somalian, he's my brother, yeh?

The Somali girls spoke much more in terms of their desire to work together to improve the circumstances of Somali youth as a whole, but also to mix more with young people from other backgrounds. These differences are explored further in Chapter 6. These accounts of neighbourhood relationships are suggestive of the complexity of inter- and intra-youth and intergenerational tensions and divisions.

## Summary

- We have shown in this chapter that, while there were tensions between residents in the neighbourhoods, which commonly took a racialised form, these mostly had material underpinnings around struggles for resources such as employment and housing. A perception of the 'unfairness' of the distribution or allocation of such resources pervaded many accounts.
- The contours of this resentment are reminiscent of an ongoing discourse on the 'deserving and undeserving' poor (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992). Insofar as there were issues of disadvantage and unfulfilled housing and employment aspirations facing all groups, albeit not equally, these accounts symbolise 'victims' blaming 'victims'. Our groups did not appear to be dwelling on the potential for

class solidarity across the experience of poverty. Rather, among established communities, there was a preoccupation with norms and standards perceived to conform with working-class 'respectability'.

- It is not inevitable that struggles over resources will result in hostility towards groups perceived to be culturally different. However, it is likely that the relative lack of interaction between new communities and others, as described in Chapter 3, will exacerbate such feelings, while the media also has a key role to play in fuelling negative attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. This was reflected in our interviews in the common sentiment that those who did not contribute economically were 'first in the queue' for state resources. This was a sentiment that sometimes united long-standing communities (of different ethnicities) against the newly arrived.
- Tensions and divisions within neighbourhoods did not simply coalesce around ethnic lines, however, and intergenerational tensions and age-related divisions were particularly prominent in both of the neighbourhoods. It was striking that the narrative of 'slipping social standards' was applied (by some respondents) not only to new communities but also often to young people (of all communities). This suggests that intergenerational tensions are at least as significant as cultural and ethnic divisions in militating against social cohesion.
- There was also an interplay between ethnicity and age, with young people's relations seen by many as the 'front line' of neighbourhood ethnic tensions. However, the diverse accounts we heard suggested a changing pattern of divisions and alliances between young people of different ethnic groups, with gender and issues of poverty playing an important complicating role. It is to the complexities of identity, community and belonging that we turn in the next chapter.

## 5 Identity, community and belonging

This chapter explores the following questions.

- What does 'community' mean to the residents we interviewed in Moss Side and North Tottenham?
- What is the range of communities that residents from the three ethnic groups feel that they belong to?
- Why do residents want to remain in or move out of the area and how does this relate to the community/ies they are part of?

As noted in Chapter 1, government agendas on sustainable communities, race equality and social cohesion are implying that a sense of community belonging is best developed at the neighbourhood level, and indeed 'neighbourhood' and 'community' are generally assumed to coincide and are often talked about interchangeably. A wide range of research in recent years across the social sciences, however, has in different ways questioned whether 'neighbourhood' and 'community' are one and the same thing, drawing attention either to the changing significance of local ties and attachments in an era of globalisation or to the range of ethnic, national and religious attachments and 'imagined communities' that individuals may feel part of (see, for example, Eade, 1994; Blokland, 2003). Critical assessments of the community cohesion policy agenda have also questioned the appropriateness of promoting shared identities and values in today's multicultural and diverse society, prompting some disquiet about a return to 'assimilationism', especially given the wider questioning of multiculturalism in some sections of the media and policy (Amin, 2002; Lewis and Neal, 2005). In this chapter, we engage with this debate by exploring what the term 'community' meant to respondents and the plurality of different communities that they felt part of or attached to. We begin by looking at respondents' understandings of 'community', including their attachment to a local neighbourhood community, as well as to racial, ethnic, religious or cultural communities. Then we consider the salience of these attachments for their plans to stay or remain in the neighbourhood.

## Residents' understandings of 'community'

### Neighbourhood as community

'Community' is a notoriously fuzzy concept (Mercer, 1996) with a multitude of meanings. Place-based communities, however, are one dominant way in which community is defined, in both policy circles and in residents' accounts. This section explores the extent to which residents saw their neighbourhood as a community and whether this was significant to them.

#### *The importance of social interaction*

Being part of a local community was suggested by most people to require some form of social interaction with others living locally, although respondents differed in the extent and depth of social interaction they felt necessary to constitute a community. Criteria ranged from simply acknowledging other residents on the street, to the presence of deeper social ties exemplified by people socialising together or helping one another out, to more formal participation in community events and activities.

People also varied quite markedly in their assessments of whether community existed around them. To some extent, this reflected the extent of respondents' own social interactions and networks, with respondents describing their own 'personal communities' of contacts and relationships (Pahl and Spencer, 2003). The boundaries of local community were also drawn by respondents in different ways, resulting in a multitude of small communities within any one neighbourhood. In Moss Side, for example, residents often drew distinctions between the 'old Moss Side', the terraced houses on the east side of Princess Parkway, and the 'Alexandra Park estate' across the road. However smaller communities were also described consisting of only small groups of streets. In Tottenham, likewise, a community might stretch only to a single street or block of flats. One young woman in Tottenham, who lived on the same street where she had grown up and had family living nearby, described a strong sense of local community with dense social networks, but which extended only as far as her street:

I mean everybody's really friendly, you can walk down the road and the neighbours will always say hello, people will stop you and ask you how you are, and I find that a lot of the people who ... tend to live here or have lived here for a long time, like we have, so they've seen me grow up or,

you know, they know my family ... so I think at times there can be quite a community spirit within Tottenham, but it's obviously just the area that I live in.

(Rachel, multiple heritage woman, 20s, Tottenham)

In contrast, a resident living in a block of flats nearby described a very different picture within what can be described as her 'micro'-community:

Us and the woman next door have been here 22 years, never once have either my mum or her been in each other's house and had a cup of tea or anything.

(Amy, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

The picture was thus one of considerable unevenness within the two neighbourhoods, with respondents making reference to the extent of interaction within very localised areas. Only in certain contexts did the notion of community stretch further to encompass the whole neighbourhood, for example when talking about participation in formal neighbourhood events or activities.

### *The importance of stability*

The extent of stability in neighbourhood populations was thought by respondents to be important to the presence of community. Long-term residents often suggested that the local community encompassed only those who had been in the area a long time, among whom stronger social relations had developed. For older residents who had grown up in their neighbourhoods, particularly the older white British residents, this was often couched in terms of a story of community decline and a nostalgia for the past. These comments of an older white British man in Moss Side are typical in discussing the increase in transience he has experienced on his street:

But a lot of the older residents have left, people have bought property, people have bought them and kind of rented them off or selling them off, out of the residents when I came here 25 years ago, there's probably only three families left, four families left.

Of the new residents he said:

They don't seem to ever put roots down.

(Henry, white British man, 60s, Moss Side)

These accounts reflect broader changes in housing and labour markets that have impacted on the stability of traditional working-class neighbourhoods. However, assessments of local stability or transience again varied within the two areas, and seemed to be quite localised and related to housing type and tenure.

Narratives of community decline can also be seen to be romanticising the past as a way of criticising changes in the present. This is particularly apparent where residents link the increase in transience to changing social behaviour. Some respondents, for example, suggested that respect for the physical fabric of the neighbourhood had declined alongside the increasing transience of populations, while other respondents linked the decline of stable communities to the erosion of a 'work ethic', which was said to have united communities in the past. Thus, in these instances, neighbourhoods and communities were portrayed as being in moral decline. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the features of these stories of community decline was that they were sometimes explicitly racialised, with falling social standards linked to the arrival of people of different races and cultures.

### *The value of local community*

Across the sample, the vast majority of respondents felt that the presence of 'community' in their neighbourhood was positive; however, they differed in the extent to which this was a concern to them. On one end of this spectrum of opinion were those who saw community participation – in the sense of day-to-day interactions – as a moral or ethical practice. This was evident in the views of Stella, a black Caribbean woman who lived in Moss Side, who stated:

You can't live somewhere and cut yourself off, it wouldn't make sense, everybody needs somebody ... it's part of life, it's part of growth, you have to be part of a community, you have to make the effort, you can't cut yourself off ... it is very, very much a part of a natural thing of life to be part of a community, yeah ... you have to make yourself be part of one.  
(Stella, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

This is a very strong statement of the importance of local community both morally and emotionally. More commonly, though, respondents valued community for a mix of both emotional and practical benefits, for example knowing that there were people to rely on in emergencies. A common sentiment was that having a 'sense of community' would generate a safer local environment because people would be 'keeping an eye out' for one another. This was often conveyed by parents who spoke about the value of building neighbourly relations in order that a collective watch might be kept on

children's behaviour. This was stated by a young mother in Tottenham when she was asked about whether it was important to have a sense of community:

It would be nicer, you'd feel a bit safer, wouldn't you? And you'd be alright sending your kids out and knowing that there is people who do care for 'em.

(Amy, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Not everyone valued local community ties however. Some of those less concerned about the presence of community in their neighbourhoods were younger respondents who described social networks or personal communities not based on the neighbourhood, such as work-based, leisure-based or friendship networks, as more important to them than a sense of local community. These were usually single respondents however and, as noted earlier, those with children, including young parents, tended to value local community more highly. A small number of (female) respondents also talked about the double-edged nature of local community, which included a feeling of being watched and having their behaviour monitored. For example, one white British woman countered the general opinion by saying that what she valued about Tottenham was its lack of community, in the sense that there were no shared norms of social behaviour that she had to adhere to. Thus differences of opinion on the value of local community were related mainly to age and life-course factors, but were also influenced by duration of residence and the extent of local social relationships, as well as more idiosyncratic factors relating to individual biography and culture.

### **Ethnic communities and identities**

In addition to the neighbourhood as a community, respondents also felt attached to other kinds of communities based on ties of culture, ethnicity, religion or race. Sometimes these were place-based communities (for example, 'the local Somali community') but they could also be 'imagined' communities (Anderson, 1983) that were not linked to concrete places (for example, 'the black community'). In this section, we explore these attachments among the Somali, black Caribbean and white British residents in turn. The analysis shows that within each of these groups the residents had diverse and sometimes overlapping identities, highlighting that these ethnic categorisations are not fixed. Those residents of multiple heritage also straddled these categories and added a further layer of complexity to the diverse picture presented.

*Somali identities*

The majority of Somali respondents in interviews identified with a ‘Somali community’. Sometimes this referred to the local Somali community in the neighbourhood, which for many Somalis, as described in Chapter 3, made up the majority of their local social interactions, particularly for those with limited English or who had more recently arrived in the UK. However, Somalis also made reference to the Somali community in the wider city – Manchester or London, to the Somali community in the UK, as well as to a transnational Somali community. These different boundaries of the community depended partly on the context of what was being said, but their importance to different individuals also related to the extent of their social ties and connections across these spaces. For example, as described in Chapter 3, a number of the Somalis had lived in different cities since coming to the UK, while a number had also arrived in the UK via third countries, sometimes in the European Union, and thus they had family and friendship ties and connections within and across countries, encouraging identification with a UK-wide or a transnational Somali community.

The Somali community and identity was usually defined by Somalis by contrasting it culturally to Britishness or Englishness. Apart from second-generation respondents, there was a consensus among most of those we spoke with regarding the principal elements of their cultural identity. It included language, dress and food, as well as family structures and family relationships such as a respect for elders. Islam was presented by most respondents as an integral element of this cultural package too, although there were differences in the degree of observance between respondents. Discussions of cultural identity were also gendered, in that the behaviour or appearance of women was often cited, by both Somalis and non-Somalis, as an example of the Somalis’ cultural difference.

In contrast to this, those Somali respondents who had been born or raised in Britain engaged more openly in debating Somali cultural identity and its significance for them. These accounts were less likely to suggest that Somali and British cultures were inimical to one another. Some rejected certain aspects of their cultural heritage, while maintaining a Somali identity. For example, one young woman who had come to the UK as a child told us that Somali and British identities were not mutually exclusive and that she was adept at balancing the two:

*[You can] really keep your culture and your religion and still interact with the other societies, and still balance both of them up, I personally, I’ve been doing it in my whole life, anyone can do it, you know who you are as a Somalian.*

(Butaaco, Somali woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Some young Somalis also spoke of British or regional Somali identities. For example, in a discussion group of young Somali men in Moss Side, participants asserted a 'Somali Mancunian' identity, which was used by them to make a political claim for local resources. This is evident in the following statement:

This is where we go, this is where we live ... we've all been to *[local]* primary school, or whatever, *[local]* high school, this is our local area, we want a building in our local area.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

Such negotiations around cultural practices and identity also took a gendered form. For example, young Somali women in a discussion group in Moss Side expressed critical views about the young men's adoption of what they saw as 'British' (male) sexual behaviour patterns. Thus, while a first-generation–second-generation divide in discussion of Somali identity was evident, this was not as simple as a one-way movement towards assimilation into British culture, but a more complex process of negotiation. This will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6 of the report, which looks at processes of community participation.

### *Black Caribbean identities*

The black Caribbean respondents were more diverse than the Somalis in their discussions of community and identity. It was common for identification to be expressed with a variety of different but overlapping ethnic communities, such as a black British community, a transnational Caribbean community and specific Caribbean island communities. There was also variation according to generation and the amount of time spent in the UK. For example, island identities were most significant for those recently arrived. Nonetheless, family connections in the Caribbean maintained the salience of island ties for a number of respondents born in the UK too. Furthermore, ties to extended family members in other countries such as the USA and Canada encouraged identification with a transnational Caribbean community spanning different countries.

Most black Caribbean respondents made reference to the 'black community' in Britain as something they identified with; however this had a variety of different meanings for respondents. One common way in which it was used was in discussions of experiences of racism in Britain, suggesting that many respondents identified on some level with an 'imagined' black British community that was defined partly in opposition to racial oppression. A more concrete local black community was also spoken of by some respondents, including by Stella, a Moss Side resident whose

parents came to the area in the 1950s. She talks of a local black community emerging out of the shared hardships of settlement that promoted mutual assistance and strong social bonds:

Basically a load of our parents came over at the same time, we used to live in little tenements ... like your mum, your dad, your sister, your brother-in-law, and other family living together basically in one space, so we all grew up quite close, we didn't have much, like I said our parents came over, and they came over to find work ... that's how we were brought up.

(Stella, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

In the case of Stella, many of the Caribbean families she knew from her childhood had stayed in the neighbourhood and she continued to experience a strong sense of local community. However, other black Caribbean respondents lamented what they saw as the perceived weakness of the black community, aspiring to a community that was more organised and could engage in successful community action. In this context, the black community was sometimes contrasted to other communities such as the Asian community who were perceived to be more organised. Alisha commented:

Black people ... don't think, 'OK I've got this ... if we pull together and we did this we could both have the same thing', they don't look at it like that, they just think, 'Oh I want more than that person'. So I mean I don't, I've never ever thought that black people have a community.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Supporting this aspiration to a stronger black community, a number of black Caribbean respondents spoke of a desire to put something 'back into their community' and, as described in the next chapter, many were in fact engaging in significant community action, both within 'the black community' and within a more broadly defined local community.

The black community, then, was a common point of identification among black Caribbean respondents, but it was a complex notion with diverse meanings and flexible boundaries. Depending on context, it might include the black African population – for example, when making reference to experiences of racism – or it could be confined just to those of Caribbean descent, such as when referring to common experiences of settlement. Reference to the local black community also overlapped with other understandings of local community, for example stories of the economic hardship of the Caribbeans might be interwoven with the experiences

of other communities, such as the white British and the Irish communities, while a desire to 'put something back into the community' could refer either to the black community or to a broader disadvantaged neighbourhood community. Significantly, however, the black community our respondents spoke of rarely explicitly encompassed the Somali community. This was something that young Somalis pointed out to us, as can be seen in the exchange below, which comes from a discussion group in Moss Side:

- Interviewer:* What stops people from going to the [youth club]?
- They're not 'our people' at the [youth club].
- They will not see us as 'black' people, they will say, 'You're Somalian get out of here', you know what I mean?
- They say, 'you're not black', they might not mean it, some of them might not mean it, you know, they'll have a joke, but some do mean it.
- Ask any of these kids that are out here, 'Are Somalis black?' 'No, they're Somalian'.
- Interviewer:* So what does that mean that you're not black?
- You should go and talk to them and ask them, Why do you think they're not black?
- They think we're Asians!
- That's true that, that's cos we're Muslims.

(Somali youth discussion group, Moss Side)

While the young Somalis here suggest that the principal factor in their exclusion from a shared black identity is their religion, accounts from others in the neighbourhood suggest a complex interweaving of factors, including greater poverty among the Somalis, which have variable effects depending on context. It should also be noted that, despite these strong assertions from Somalis of their exclusion from 'the black community', the same participants said that they had social networks that cross-cut different racial and ethnic groups, including friendships with black Caribbeans

in the neighbourhood. This suggests that a distinction needs to be made between everyday situated identities and affinities, which are likely to be extremely fluid, and the conscious use of identifications to achieve particular goals, which are likely to be more fixed (see Eade, 1994; Back, 1996). The above discussion can be seen as an example of the use of more fixed identities to achieve a particular goal, given the context of the discussion about the local youth club, which, as discussed in the next chapter, has become something of a focus for young Somali complaints about the fairness of service provision in Moss Side.

### *White British identities*

The white British respondents were the least likely to explicitly identify themselves as part of a racial or ethnic community. This reflects the findings of other research suggesting that whiteness is seen as the norm and naturalised, so that it is not seen as an ethnic category or as possessing any cultural traits, in contrast to ethnic minorities (see Frankenberg, 1993; Bhavnani *et al.*, 2005).

When they were asked directly about their ethnic identification, white British respondents tended to say that they were English (or Scottish, Welsh or Irish – discussed further below). Moreover, this often led to assertions, particularly from older respondents, that Englishness was under threat, either from the presence of ethnic minorities, or more commonly from what might be termed ‘political correctness’. A common sentiment, for example, was that categories such as ‘British’ or ‘European’ were being imposed on people:

I’m white, white English, I’m fed up, over the years, of filling these forms in, you know, I mean, what are we now? UK European aren’t we?  
(Martin, white British man, 50s, Tottenham)

While white British respondents rarely openly identified themselves as part of a white community, their accounts nonetheless often implied a sense of affinity with a white community. This was evident in a widely expressed concern about the dwindling presence of white people in their neighbourhoods. Often this was couched in terms of a discussion of ‘who is the minority?’, which mocked what were seen as ‘politically correct’ terms like ‘minority ethnic’.

It’s just funny how, basically, the people sit there and say, we’re the minority. If you look at us, we are the minority, now, aren’t we? And, I don’t know ... but it does make me angry when they say about them being a

minority and look what they've got to go through and everything. Do one day of our life!

(Amy, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

These comments and others like them indicate a feeling of displacement by some white British residents, based on an implicit sense of 'white entitlement' to the neighbourhood space. This was also connected for some respondents with a feeling of discrimination regarding the additional 'help' perceived to be given by the State to 'ethnic minorities'. This was expressed to some extent in both neighbourhoods, but more so in Tottenham, where there was a sense of anxiety felt by many white British respondents about being part of a diminishing white minority.

However, white British people also often shifted between talking about their affinity with a local white population and with a local neighbourhood community that was more encompassing, including also settled ethnic minorities such as black Caribbeans and Asians. This is reflected in the comments of Charles, an older white British resident in Moss Side:

People have been coming into Moss Side for a long, long time, like I said about the Sikh community, 60 years established here, you see. So we're used to seeing people come in, and sort of join the community.

(Charles, white British man, 70s, Moss Side)

Furthermore, some of the (particularly younger) white British respondents expressed some unease about identifying with Britishness or Englishness because they felt these labels were often used in an exclusionary or even racist way. This was the case with a young white British woman in Moss Side who said that she would prefer to identify herself as a Moss Sider or a Mancunian, since she felt that these were more inclusive identities than that of 'English':

I do feel English, but as I say ... I don't think I would identify with that full stop, I'd say it is, I feel more sort of multicultural ... I just identify with being like from Moss Side really, and to be part of a community and part of a whole package of people. So I don't really, I wouldn't really say, Oh I'm English and I'm getting, sort of, you know my St George's Cross out, and flying the flag.

(Faye, white British woman, 30s, Moss Side)

Those with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritages (who were small in number in our sample) were more likely than the English to express an overt pride in their heritage. Enid, an older woman who had been born and raised in Tottenham, with an Irish mother, stated:

I will always say that I'm more Irish than English ... I love mixing with the Irish ... I think Irish people are a very friendly people, and very helpful too.  
(Enid, white British woman, 80s, Moss Side)

She described Ireland as a 'mythic' homeland, which she dreamed of 'returning' to, but which she felt was not a practical possibility for her given her age. Another respondent with Irish and Welsh heritage also spoke of attachment to both these sides of his heritage, nurtured through, for example, participation in Irish cultural activities as a child. However, he also spoke of a shared identity with the local black Caribbean population in Moss Side, both by making parallels between experiences of anti-Irish and anti-black racism in Manchester, as well as through emphasising shared social and cultural activities:

We had our own problems in Moss Side, people putting pigs' trotters on the door in about 1968 when the first bombs went off, so you know ... I mean even as a little kid I was used to trying the food, you know, you'd go in the house and they'd give you food, and you know it sounds like a stereotype, but they give you rice and peas ... and then the music as well, because that's my big affinity really is music, because the calypso songs that people used to play in the houses that I visited and my friends, and their parents would play soca and calypso.  
(Mark, white British man, 40s, Moss Side)

Thus both black Caribbean and white British residents expressed a range of identities, which were sometimes exclusive of one another and at other times entwined together.

## **Attachment to the neighbourhood and future residential plans**

In this section, we explore our residents' thoughts and plans about whether they wanted to stay in their neighbourhoods in the future and the extent to which this related to their sense of belonging to different communities.

### **Attachments to neighbourhood: white British and black Caribbean**

Among the white British and black Caribbean respondents, there was a good deal of consensus around the factors prompting people to think about or desire to leave their current neighbourhood. The most common reasons given were related to the

quality of the physical environment, such as noise, a desire for more space or more generally a 'better' environment. Many respondents talked about a desire – although rarely a plan – to move to 'the countryside' or at least to suburbs surrounding the city, which were perceived to be more peaceful and spacious. Crime was another key factor that was entwined with such desires to move out of the city. A sense that opportunities were better elsewhere was also expressed by some respondents, often by parents who were concerned that their children should grow up in a different environment. Their concerns linked fears about crime and their children getting involved in gangs with concerns about educational standards and whether they were 'doing the best' for their children. A small number of black Caribbean respondents also spoke of a desire to move out of their current neighbourhoods – and sometimes out of the country – related to a perception that their opportunities were limited by racial discrimination. For many, however, desires to leave the neighbourhood were linked to a more general sentiment that a move out of 'the inner city' was an aspiration and would constitute a 'step up'. The following comments from two young respondents in Tottenham are typical:

I like living in my area, I wouldn't live the rest of my life in this area, but I would like to move on, and live somewhere else.  
(Jaric, black Caribbean man, 20s Tottenham)

Just like move somewhere better.  
(Felix, black Caribbean man, late teens, Tottenham)

As already stated, the majority of respondents who expressed a desire to move on did not have concrete plans in place to do so. One of the reasons for this was that a number of residents felt 'trapped' in their current residence because of financial constraints. This was expressed by residents of different ages and in both areas, although more so in Tottenham, no doubt because of higher house prices in London and the South East of England.

However residents' desires to move away were also often combined with strong attachments to the area, leading to feelings of ambivalence. Central in the factors prompting people to want to stay in their neighbourhoods were attachments to kin and to friends who lived locally. Sometimes this was also related to a perception that 'community' in the sense of everyday interactions among residents, as discussed earlier, would be sacrificed with moving to a different area. This might be because of the resulting separation from locally based social networks or because of a perception that 'strong' communities were few and far between in today's world. This sentiment is expressed by Julia, a white British woman in her 50s who had lived in

Moss Side all her life and who had strong networks of neighbours. She said:

I think what it is, if I moved somewhere else now – I can always go out of here, and you think, ‘Ooh I feel a little fed up today, I’ll go and whatever’, but I’ll bump into [*friend*], and she’ll have a grumble or whatever, and then I’ll bump into somebody else and they’re alright, so by the end of it all, at least you’ve spoke to some people during the day, I don’t think that’d happen if you went somewhere else.

(Julia, white British woman, 50s, Moss Side)

In addition to ties to kin, many respondents expressed a sense of attachment to their neighbourhood based on a sense of ‘familiarity’ stemming from habitual use. This sense of familiarity often engendered a feeling of security, with residents saying that they felt safer in their own rather than in other neighbourhoods because it was ‘what they knew’, regardless of the ‘real’ risks of crime. Familiarity also generated an emotional attachment to the neighbourhood as ‘home’, as in the following comments:

This is the only place I’ve ever known and where I’ve lived, and so for me it’s just home, and I think you know when I do move out I still want to live around here because it’s what I know.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

I think it’s because I’ve lived here most of my life, I’ve been and I’ve come back.

(Irene, white British woman, 40s, Moss Side)

While white British and black Caribbean respondents mostly concurred on the reasons for staying in the neighbourhood or moving elsewhere, different individuals weighed them up in particular ways. Age and life course were important here, with younger respondents, on the whole, being more likely to have plans in place to move elsewhere or to be thinking about doing so, while older respondents and those who had lived in their neighbourhoods all their lives were more likely to be contemplating staying. As would be expected, economic opportunities were more important to those of working age, while older respondents were more concerned about neighbourhood social ties, and parents were particularly concerned about opportunities for their children. However, there were also exceptions to this, for example younger people who couldn’t imagine living anywhere else and older people wishing to retire out of the city or out of the country.

### Attachments to neighbourhood: Somali

The responses of Somalis were a little different from the other residents because of their mostly shorter length of time resident in the neighbourhoods and the nature of their arrival. A majority of Somalis, with the exception of those born or raised in the UK, had desires to return to Somalia in the future when the political situation permitted; however, given the unpredictability of the situation, there were no firm plans in place for when this would be. Moreover, a number of Somalis, particularly those who had been in the UK for some time, expressed a sense of attachment to their current neighbourhood alongside their attachment to Somalia. For example, Sooyaan, a Somali man who had been living around North London for 14 years, stated:

Tottenham is my home, it is where I live and I am happy here. I feel that I belong to Somalia but I like here too.

(Sooyaan, Somali man, 30s, Tottenham)

Zakaria, a Somali man who had been in North London for five years, made similar comments:

When I am using transportation I pass all other parts of London and come here in Tottenham as it's my place ... I came to know the people and the people knows me here in Tottenham as I am adopted to it and I feel it like home.

(Zakaria, Somali man, 40s, Tottenham)

Given that most had arrived as refugees from a war-torn Somalia, discussions of 'opportunities' and of 'better environments' took a different slant than among other residents, and a number of Somalis mentioned the opportunities available to them in the UK as reasons for staying. Amina, for example, a Somali lone mother with a disabled child, remarked that she felt that the UK was a more positive place to live for her son than Somalia, both in terms of medical care and in terms of attitudes to disability. However, like the black Caribbean and white British residents, a number of Somalis also commented on crime in their neighbourhoods, and there was some concern about racial harassment and abuse, particularly in Moss Side, given the incidents discussed in Chapter 3. A Somali lone parent in Moss Side with three school-aged children talked about her wish to move to another UK city where she had family connections in order to escape what she saw as an unsafe neighbourhood:

I have to do everything so I can keep it safe for *[the children]*. So, I don't know really, I don't know, it's hard for me, I can't afford now to go and move out of Manchester, but I will try, that's now my plan to go somewhere safe ... I want to move, I don't know how we can get the house but I want to move ... *[to one of]* the three cities my family are.  
(Jameelah, Somali woman, 30s, Moss Side)

Among the smaller number of Somalis interviewed who were born or raised in the UK, attachments to the area and reasons for moving or staying were similar to the black Caribbean and white British residents. For example, Kulmiye, born in Britain to Somali and white British parents, expressed a similar emotional attachment to Moss Side as his home:

I wouldn't leave because you know this is the place I know, I mean I was four years of age when I was living there, just across the road, you know ... so no matter where I go I still come back, you know, here ... I went to Canada and as I told you to Dubai, I went to Somalia and I am still happy in Moss Side, you see this is my place and there is no way I can leave this place.  
(Kulmiye, multiple heritage man, 40s, Moss Side)

### **Attachments to neighbourhood and belonging to community/ies**

Identities to different communities (e.g. ethnic communities or the neighbourhood as a community) played a role in shaping attachments to the neighbourhood and future plans, alongside other 'quality of life' factors, such as employment and educational opportunities, crime, green spaces, quality of housing and so on. A sense of community in the neighbourhood was a key factor tying some people to their neighbourhoods, as seen in the comments of Julia, above. Conversely, it was a perceived absence of community that prompted a desire to leave for others – for example, Katie, with plans to move abroad to a European country in the future, said:

I don't like the fact that I am separated and that, I don't like the fact that, I don't know, I like to feel like I belong, and I don't feel like I belong at all.  
(Katie, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

With other residents, however, their attachments to place were not based on feelings of belonging to a local community but more on simple familiarity with an area – for example, Will commented:

Because I was born and bred in this area, yeah, when I moved back to West London I didn't really like it, that's why I came back down here, you know, so ... it's just cos I missed, it was lifestyle I guess, I don't know what it was to tell you the truth, I don't know, I just missed the place.

(Will, black Caribbean man, 20s, Tottenham)

Some residents who had lived in several different areas felt that they did not 'belong' to any particular local neighbourhood, but this did not prompt them to feel uncomfortable or to want to move. For example, Jane states:

I wouldn't say 'belong', but no I'm happy here you know, I don't particularly want, well I actually really don't want to move, you know.

(Jane, white British woman, 40s, Tottenham)

Attachments to ethnic communities had variable impacts on desires to stay in the neighbourhood or move elsewhere. As noted earlier, many Somalis expressed a desire to return to Somalia, while some Caribbeans born outside the UK also expressed a desire to eventually return to their birthplace, which was associated with a strong emotional attachment to somewhere else as 'home'. A number of the Caribbean respondents also talked about desires to move in the future to other countries such as the USA or Canada, to which they were linked via transnational kinship or friendship ties. However attachments to ethnic communities could also reinforce attachments to the local neighbourhood. For example, Somalis made reference to the importance of culturally specific institutions (shops, mosques) and others who spoke their language, while black Caribbeans (and some younger Somalis) spoke of feeling more insulated from racial abuse in a diverse neighbourhood.

### **Ambivalent attachments**

A number of respondents expressed feelings of ambivalence, both being emotionally attached to the local area and perceiving greater opportunities or safety elsewhere. For example, a young Somali man who came to the UK as a child and who had a partner and baby spoke of feeling 'at home' in Tottenham, but also expressed a desire to move to a more wealthy neighbouring area, which was perceived as safer:

If you got a baby or something, you're best going over there cos you're not going to find yourself in trouble or, I mean you would get some people staring at you funny or looking at you, but that's OK compared to being beaten up or being robbed.

(Liibaan, Somali man, 20s, Tottenham)

The young man's statement shows the way in which he saw his neighbourhood, not only as a 'comfortable' place related to the presence of other ethnic minorities, but also, paradoxically, as an unsafe space with high crime and limited opportunities. Likewise, Hilary, a white British woman, wanted her (multiple heritage) son to grow up in a multicultural neighbourhood like Moss Side but also feared that she was denying him better life chances elsewhere. While economic and other opportunities were often cited by residents as a 'push' factor in leaving the neighbourhood, some respondents also described wanting to stay in order to help build or to contribute in some way to the well-being of the local community.

Ambivalence in local area attachment also surfaced in discussions about the media reputation of both places. While personal experiences of crime were widespread, there was also a pervasive concern among residents about the unfairness of the areas' reputations in terms of crime and the way that this might contribute to the labelling of residents. A young woman in Tottenham commented:

I think that when something happens in another area ... if someone died in Enfield, if someone read about it they'd look at the fact that, 'Oh someone died', they wouldn't look at, 'Oh someone died in Enfield'. If someone dies in Tottenham, it's like, 'Somebody got shot in Tottenham' or, 'Someone's died in Tottenham', they don't just look at the fact that that person's dead and someone's killed them, they look at the fact that it happened in Tottenham, that's a bad area that was expected.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

## Summary

- Respondents were mostly in agreement that a sense of local 'community' was a good thing, although it held different combinations of moral, emotional and practical significance for different individuals.
- Many respondents aspired to having more 'sense of community' in their neighbourhoods and there was a pervasive feeling that the neighbourhood *ought* to be 'a community'. A common story among older residents was the decline of the tight-knit communities that had existed in the past. While idealising the past, this also reflects labour and housing market changes that have led to increased transience in neighbourhood populations.
- Reflecting this, community tended to exist only in small pockets within the neighbourhoods, with residents identifying with and interacting within a multitude

of small communities, based around a small group of streets or a few blocks on an estate, often where populations were the most stable.

- In addition to the neighbourhood community, respondents felt attached to other kinds of communities based on ties of culture, ethnicity, religion or race. Individuals' attachments to these communities were multiple and overlapping rather than exclusive, as well as shifting according to context.
- Attachments to the local neighbourhood and plans to stay or leave were informed by a complex mix of emotional and material factors. Crime, noise and lack of opportunities were widely cited as 'push' factors and social ties as 'pull' factors; however individuals weighed these up differently, with age and life course playing a significant role. Many expressed ambivalent attitudes, emotionally attached to the neighbourhood but drawn to greater opportunities elsewhere.
- While the presence of ethnic diversity was cited by many respondents as a barrier to a broader sense of community, the reality was more complex. Ethnic identities were cross-cut by age, life-course position and length of time in the neighbourhood in promoting attachments to the neighbourhood and the local community. While there was some concern that a fear of 'losing culture' among the Somalis was inhibiting broader-based interactions, there was evidence of a broader range of identities among second-generation Somalis. Across the sample, a range of ethnic, cultural and religious attachments that did not prohibit a sense of identification with or belonging to the local area were expressed.
- Given the fluid and contextual nature of identities, it is highly unlikely that a sense of common neighbourhood community would be the principal point of identification for residents in multi-ethnic – or indeed any – neighbourhoods.

## 6 Community involvement and participation

This chapter considers the following questions.

- What kinds of neighbourhood activities do our residents participate in and why?
- Do these examples of community participation cross ethnic and other boundaries? How patterned by characteristics such as gender and age are they?
- Why do most neighbourhood residents not get involved in tenants' and residents' associations?
- How do residents and service providers feel about culturally specific service provision (e.g. youth services for Somali youths) compared with culturally mixed provision (e.g. youth services for all)?

Alongside a stronger sense of community, current thinking on community and social cohesion has emphasised the importance of developing a sense of neighbourhood involvement and more inclusive provision of services. In Chapter 5, we suggested that community involvement and participation might be an expression of attachment and commitment to the neighbourhood, but also to ethnic communities. Cross-ethnic community involvement in tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs) and cross-ethnic use of services is being encouraged in community strategies in both our two areas. Local tenants' and residents' groups can be seen as part of a more formal attempt to make contemporary urban policy more inclusive, accountable and empowering of marginalised groups, though there are concerns that a redistribution of resources needs to take place to facilitate this (Perrons and Skyers, 2003). There are also concerns about the white working class with the Home Office White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (Home Office, 2002) noting an alienation of white working-class communities from the political process. Community development has been described as in part a process of supporting work that focuses on issues that can promote cohesion, finding and facilitating connections so that communities can form their own organisations, as well as being represented on a range of partnerships and coalitions (Gilchrist, 2004b). Involvement and participation in community and voluntary organisations specific to ethnic groups can be seen by residents as a way of having more of a say in the pursuit of a fairer share of neighbourhood resources. Community and project work promoting race equality has for some time sought to meet the perceived needs of communities by developing

provision that supplements or provides an alternative to mainstream provision (Ben-Tovim *et al.*, 1992). In this chapter, we take a closer look at the patterns of involvement and participation being undertaken by our residents, the relationship between community participation and a sense of neighbourhood identity, and the association of community with place. We then broaden the discussion to consider issues and challenges raised by movements to introduce greater cross-community provision of services.

### **Patterns of community involvement and participation**

In this section, we explore our residents' accounts of their involvement in community and neighbourhood activities. Across our sample, community activity appeared higher among black Caribbean than among white British respondents. Community activity was also high for Somali respondents and also more culturally specific. These broad patterns of involvement and participation that emerged across the sample are summarised in Table 2.

#### **Tenants' and residents' association activity**

Formal types of participation for some of our white British and black Caribbean interviewees included tenants' and residents' associations, with several doing unpaid work. Respondents described the range of neighbourhood issues discussed at the meetings, particularly the need to improve the physical environment, and they presented the neighbourhood as important to their sense of community. Their participation was most often reported as crossing the ethnic boundaries of established communities.

While white British and black Caribbean respondents usually said that Somalis were not active in associations, there were some exceptions that emerged among our Tottenham interviewees. This included a Somali man, resident in the UK for 13 years, who felt he had changed over time and like other Somalis had taken a bit of the 'lifestyle of this country without realising it'. In theory at least, association meetings provided the potential for cross-community involvement and engagement between neighbours, elected representatives and paid officials who might typically attend to talk about environmental and housing issues. As will be explored in more detail, attendance at these meetings was limited largely to older residents from established communities and there were concerns about the lack of young people attending or willing to take on posts within the associations.

**Table 2 Community involvement and participation across residents interviewed**

Ethnic group	Patterns of community involvement and participation	Public spaces of local involvement and participation: Moss Side	Public spaces of local involvement and participation: Tottenham
Black Caribbean	<p>A range of types of involvement and participation, with slight over-representation of respondents engaged in voluntary work who can be described as community activists. Several interviewees involved in socially/community-oriented paid work, e.g. social enterprise, schools, trying to get music project off the ground. Only women cited involvement in parenting and childcare projects and faith groups.</p>	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings (includes organisation of social events)                      Tenants' liaison panel/committee with housing provider                      Carnival (organisation – unpaid work/attendance)                      Faith group/churches (e.g. Catholic church, including church-based over-50s' club)</p>	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings                      Sure Start organised social events (barbecues, parties)                      Carnival (organisation/attendance)                      Faith group/churches (e.g. Pentecostal church, which holds barbecues and regular youth social nights)                      Radio forums (not only Tottenham based)</p>
Somali	<p>Types of involvement and participation often culturally/Somali specific. Also some involvement in community-oriented paid work, e.g. voluntary organisation, younger interviewee involvement in music projects. More activity among Somali men, particularly around the mosque, but exceptions among women, particularly around links to Sure Start.</p>	<p>Youth projects                      Parenting project/childcare organisations                      Attendance at Town Hall and other council venues for meetings                      West Indian Sports and Social Club                      Community radio</p>	<p>Faith group/mosque (including community meetings and activities for children)                      Meetings and events at Somali community and voluntary organisations                      Somali women's groups                      Voluntary work with Sure Start                      Youth centre                      Community-based radio</p>

(Continued)

**Table 2 Community involvement and participation across residents interviewed (continued)**

Ethnic group	Patterns of community involvement and participation	Public spaces of local involvement and participation: Moss Side	Public spaces of local involvement and participation: Tottenham
White British	<p>A range of types of involvement and participation. Fairly even representation of people involved and not involved in the community.</p> <p>Less reference to faith groups as a form of activity. Some voluntary work, e.g. at a school, for a pub charity and community-oriented work, e.g. community outreach.</p>	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings (and questionnaire on how to improve the area)</p> <p>Irish Centre (Social Club)</p> <p>West Indian Sports and Social Club (Christmas party)</p> <p>Carnival</p> <p>Childminders meet/connect through Sure Start</p> <p>Attendance at Town Hall and other council venues for meetings</p>	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings (and questionnaire on how to improve the area)</p> <p>Irish Cultural and Community Centre (luncheon club for older people)</p> <p>Conservative Club</p>
Multiple heritage	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings, involvement in music project</p>	<p>Tenants' and residents' association meetings (includes organisation of social events)</p>	<p>Involvement in music project</p>

The majority of the white British people we interviewed were not engaged in any kind of community activity. An exception among the women was Faye, self-employed and involved in several local organisations through this paid work, who felt that there was a good strong community spirit in the area and who had begun to go to resident association ('community') meetings. Her motivation for getting involved came from wanting to see improvements in the neighbourhood, particularly the physical environment. In the past she 'couldn't have cared less', but this had seemingly become 'more and more important' to her when she had become a homeowner. Faye was engaging with local councillors on neighbourhood issues and emphasised the importance of being willing to make the first step in encouraging a sense of community.

### **Parenting and childcare projects**

In both Moss Side and Tottenham we met black Caribbean, Somali and multiple-heritage women who were undertaking unpaid work for community-based parenting and childcare projects. Much of this activity involved organisations crossing ethnic boundaries, though Somali women tended to be working with other Somali women. These women, lone parents as well as partnered, were among the residents who valued community more highly (see Chapter 5) and all had a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and wanted to remain living there. The community action that characterised their everyday lives reinforces other research evidence documenting the involvement of minority ethnic women in capacity building at a grass-roots level (Mirza, 2003). Several women spoke of how their participation allowed them to feel that they had an impact on support for parents in the neighbourhood and they expressed a strong desire to make the area a better place to live in. Marisha, whose involvement in voluntary work showed her strong sense of community, displayed her enthusiasm for and commitment to her parenting project thus:

It looks at the family's relationship with the community at large and actually has things built into it to increase community involvement so you know, if you've got sort of like 20 families in a block and you get 12 of them to do this training, the other eight are going to be pulled in because they are going to be looking around their immediate area to pull people into, to start organising themselves, to create because the course begins with people visualising the sort of community they want to live in and they can set about actually making that happen.

(Marisha, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

There were signs that the racial harassment being experienced by some Somalis in Moss Side was eroding the commitment of some to building a future in the area. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Jameelah, who had a history of significant community action, was so distressed by the racial harassment of Somalis that she wanted to move her family out of the area.

### **Community radio and ‘communities of musicians’**

Community radio is a form of involvement and participation in both areas, and this research yielded examples of both local women and young people’s engagement with this medium. Marisha spoke of the potential for local radio to communicate the needs of various ethnic communities, by facilitating the involvement of a range of people. She was among a group of women pushing for this development:

So that’s something else that I’m doing with a group as well, we’re looking to try and get a radio station over there as well so we’re only looking to get those longer-term licences and therefore we’ll be looking to bring people in, not just African, not just Caribbean but you know every other ethnicity around here and get the age range and everything. You know try and work with the schools and get the kids to produce some programmes, maybe not presenting them live but pre-recorded. We’ve kind of tested it out at different stations, it works. There’s a group of women who want to do this, there’s a group of women that can get this going.

(Marisha, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

Some black Caribbean and Somali youths in Tottenham, while not attending forums such as TRAs, were forging their own forms of ‘community’ involvement and participation through radio. One young Somali man described how once a week there were topical debates, which had included ethnicity and religion. As noted in Chapter 3, there were also several examples of young people in both areas forming informal communities through music. These had an emphasis on self-help and created a sense of ownership for the diverse range of young people involved.

### **Faith involvement and cross-community co-operation**

A recent study of faith communities and social capital reported on how faith communities are developing local, regional and national frameworks connecting faiths with both each other and secular organisations, but the potential that they have for making a contribution to mutual understanding and community development

has yet to be fulfilled (Furbey *et al.*, 2006). Faith group involvement was important to a range of residents and was particularly prevalent among Somalis. While our Somali interviewees were less likely than our more established communities to attend TRA meetings, they contributed to involvement in voluntary activity in other ways. Involvement with mosques provided a space, not only for worship, but also for socialising, for community meetings with Muslims including Somalis and for a forum in which to engage with a wider range of people and organisations in the area, crossing ethnic boundaries. For example, one Somali man, Sooyaan, spoke of how the mosque provided an opportunity to talk about issues relating to Somali communities in Somalia and the UK. Zakaria, a particularly active Somali man who had been in the UK for six years and who felt that Tottenham had come to feel like his home, spent all his free time in the mosque and was involved in a residents' association and an organisation for older Somalis living in the area. Following the 7 July bombings in London, Zakaria gave advice to a Pakistani man belonging to his mosque who was experiencing harassment and collaborated with the residents' association to defuse tensions. He explained:

There was a young Pakistani guy who was a bit frustrated, has been given a hard time by the communities, so we gave him advice and we inform the people both black and white communities that this boy has got nothing to do with thing ... after the advice we inform both sides how they are mistaken and everybody forgiven, black, white and Arabs and Somalis, and the problem solved.

(Zakaria, Somali man, 40s, Tottenham)

Less mention of faith involvement occurred among the white British residents, one or two of whom indicated that they were not attending churches in Moss Side because of their domination by black Caribbeans, so reinforcing perceptions of displacement outlined in Chapter 5. At least among the black Caribbeans who we interviewed, faith involvement seemed to be gendered, with women alone participating in the neighbourhood in this way. There were signs that some of this activity crossed ethnic boundaries, for example a retired black Caribbean woman's involvement in a multi-faith over-50s' club in Moss Side. However, while age – being over 50 – was signalled as a criterion for involvement, Somalis were not attending the club.

### **Somali community and voluntary organisations**

Both Somali men and women chose to get involved in and draw on the services of a range of community, voluntary and faith-based organisations operating in their neighbourhoods and the wider area. They were often motivated by a perception

of poor access to services as well as a sense of belonging that arose from the interaction that involvement afforded with other Somalis. As noted in Chapter 2, while in both areas there were prominent organisations, there were also many smaller organisations engaging with different sections of the Somali community. Some Somalis such as Sooyaan (38-year-old man) felt that this kind of activity provided a platform from which Somalis could have their say. However, there were signs that young Somalis, at least in Moss Side, and women in both areas, were trying to develop their own forms of community participation, with positive results.

In the context of tensions between Somali and black Caribbean youths in Moss Side, a Somali Action for Youth Group had been formed by young Somalis. Supported by a Somali community worker, large numbers of young Somali men, including some of our discussion group participants, met with councillors to voice their concerns about a range of issues that they felt directly affected them, including education, youth services, the police and employment opportunities. The young men emphasised at the outset that they saw themselves as young Mancunians with a Somali heritage and with a right to expect their fair share of local services, and that they wanted the meeting to lead to action. A number of action points arose from this meeting of self-defined Mancunian Somali youths self-organising and taking collective action to improve conditions. Ward councillors were endeavouring to maintain contact and work in partnership with other agencies to fully engage with their concerns.

In both areas, the emergence of Somali women's groups – some established, others fledgling – reflected a desire for women to come together more informally to socialise, but also more formally to articulate and pursue greater recognition of their needs, abilities and interests. Women active in these groups conveyed a sense that more general Somali organisations did not always effectively articulate their views, concerns and aspirations. In Moss Side, young Somali women were also articulating their views and self-organising, not to pursue 'youth' or 'women's' interests, but issues that they felt should be of concern to the wider community, for example education and khat use. We return to these themes later in this chapter.

### **Cultural celebrations**

Residents made fairly frequent references to carnival as an event participated in by a cross-section of people living in the area, particularly by black Caribbean residents, men and women, young and older, but also by white British residents in Moss Side. One Tottenham resident spoke of over 100 ethnic groups coming together for carnival:

That's the only time they would, they come together, you know the carnival is when everyone attends, Tottenham carnival, they all come up.  
(Will, black Caribbean man, 20s, Tottenham)

There was a notable absence of reference to carnival by the Somali residents that we interviewed, young and old. Carnival organisational activity was concentrated among black Caribbean residents, among whom it has historically and culturally been located. An example of Somalis building cultural bridges towards the end of the fieldwork was embodied in a Somali women's group in Moss Side planning a showcase of Somali culture, including clothes and cuisine at the carnival. This was to be the first event of its kind in the area and it was hoped that it would raise cross-cultural awareness and social contact.

## **Reasons for non-participation in tenants' and residents' associations**

In both areas, initiatives were under way to develop neighbourhood management in order to make services more responsive to local needs. As briefly outlined in Chapter 2, in each area there is a tenants' and residents' association structure, which provides an opportunity for residents both to gain information about local issues and to get involved. When we asked our residents in Moss Side and Tottenham what brought different communities together, one or two said that concerns about neighbourhood crime and the physical environment had done so. However, most struggled to answer or implied that there was an absence of activities that brought a cross-section of ethnic communities together in the name of improving the neighbourhood. A typical response came from the following Tottenham resident:

No I don't think they do things together. I mean it's just like, for example ... all the trouble that's going on like within like these estates now, and people moan but no one will really do anything about it. Like get together as a community and think well no you know, we're going to like write a letter to someone you know that can help us, or you know get together to see what we could do or who we could talk to. They don't, I mean even the association there's loads of people that live around here and you can count on one hand the people that attend the meetings, they don't really attend. But I think as well people get fed up as well, and they think to themselves well they're not going to do anything about it.  
(Natalie, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Tottenham)

While some of our interviewees were active in TRAs, most people were not. Reasons given for this lack of involvement revealed a profound scepticism as to whether these neighbourhood organisations could lead to tangible change that addressed people's concerns. The sentiments 'no one listens' and 'what's the point of saying anything if nothing will be done', always the same people 'speaking up and taking over' were frequently expressed by white British, black Caribbean and multiple-heritage respondents, both men and women of different ages, across both areas. Those not attending TRAs were less likely to know who their councillors were. Echoing commentaries indicating alienation among disadvantaged groups (Gilchrist, 2004b, p. 21), disillusionment in the ability of central and local government to make a tangible difference to everyday lives was a recurring theme. There were some variations on this theme with several interviewees making reference to a lack of information about local events, being preoccupied with day-to-day survival and feeling that they contributed through their socially oriented paid work. Some respondents seemed to lack the inclination to come together to discuss issues of concern to them or were just too busy to get involved because they were working shifts and full time, as in the case of Natalie:

... the busy life that we have where we go to work, we come home, we do this, we do that. By the time you've gone to bed it's work again, I don't think you really have time to think about it.

(Natalie, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Tottenham)

Another respondent conveyed her frustration thus:

People sit there moaning about the state of the estate. And then you go to the clean-up, the neighbourhood meeting and nobody's turned up – though we've printed off 5,000 leaflets so it's not like they don't know about it.

(Amy, white British woman, 20s, Tottenham)

However, there was also some awareness of and praise for community activists, for example from the following young Caribbean woman who had given up her own voluntary work in a local school because of the shift-work patterns and culture of long working hours in her job:

I know there is one man and a lady and they try their best to do a lot for the young kids, like the man he will just put flyers up around the place like we're going to have a football match or whatever, you know they do try to do a lot. And there's another lady that gets involved with it.

(Alisha, black Caribbean woman, 20s, Tottenham)

Influences on community participation were wide-ranging. In addition to a sense of powerlessness, issues of awareness, time pressures and residents' perspectives reflected the role of age, ethnicity and gender identities in orientations to participating in TRAs.

### **Age and community participation**

The profile of residents attending TRA meetings tended to be older and generally they were more concerned about the community. Both older and younger attendees were clearly concerned about the profile of those getting involved. This was particularly the case for black Caribbean respondents. For example, a black Caribbean woman in her 30s said:

I think people in Moss Side need to get out, you know, and let the voices be heard and, you know, try to tackle, you know, the issues in the area but it's not happening.

(Lucy, black Caribbean woman, 30s, Moss Side)

In both areas, black Caribbeans who were actively involved in the community were concerned about the lack of community participation by black Caribbean youths and were anxious about where the next generation of activists would come from. In Moss Side this was sometimes expressed as a problem of 'youth ambition', a lack of unpaid as well as paid work ethic but also in terms of the loss of a sense of community that involved extended family networks:

Going back, the community was a lot more tighter. A lot more community feel and a lot more community spirit. I'm talking, like, in the early in the late seventies, eighties towards the end of the eighties it started to get that gang culture where the drugs and the guns started to come into the area. And ... that's where things started to change, and started to lose that community spirit.

(Trevor, black Caribbean man, 40s, Moss Side)

Younger people were among those who questioned the point of attending meetings, and our young white British, black Caribbean and Somali interviewees also questioned how comfortable they would feel and how relevant the meetings were to them at their age and current life course stage. The organisation of meetings was signalled as somewhat intimidating. A white British man in his early 20s who had been to a residents' association meeting in Moss Side said he would have felt more comfortable if there had been small-group discussion rather than having to talk in

front of everyone. He also found it boring, explaining: 'There's nothing there to really keep you there. It's just a load of talk and no action.' Class was also a significant factor in participating in these meetings:

It's more educated people and people with an agenda that are gonna benefit from the meeting. So ... not really a good cross-section of people there. It feels like they're making decisions and everyone else just lives with it.

(David, white British man, 20s, Moss Side)

Felix, an 18-year-old Caribbean man living in Tottenham, knew little about residents' association meetings. He felt, not only that he had no business to attend, but also that he would be vulnerable because of both his age and ethnicity, a perception of societal stereotyping being likely if he entered the public space of TRAs:

Cos I'm young and, not just that. It's like, because I'm so young, the older people might think I'm one of those people who do all those kind of bad things ... It's not that I don't feel welcome. It's just that ... I kinda ... feel like unease about what people ... think about me, just cos of image and age. Sometimes the race, but ... But it's the way people think these days anyway.

(Felix, black Caribbean man, late teens, Tottenham)

A white British man in his early 20s in Moss Side and a Somali woman of a similar age in Tottenham reinforced this viewpoint that TRAs were for older adults. The Somali woman felt that she lacked motivation and was in a state of transition as she tried to find her way in the world:

... because I am going through what I think a stage of life where I am going from my young adulthood so I don't know what direction I am going.

(Butaaco, Somali woman, 20s, Tottenham)

White British young people in the study seemed particularly at the margins of neighbourhood activities. White British and other voices implied a need for more creative thinking on younger people's involvement in mainstream forums – perhaps with the introduction of small-group discussions into residents' association meetings or by making links with broader youth structures and building connections with more informal forms of involvement. Emerging examples of creative thinking in this area are presented in Chapter 7.

**Gender and community participation**

Gender proved significant with respect to involvement in TRA meetings. Older women, who were more concerned about the community generally, were the most frequent participants in TRA meetings. Younger women had issues around the relevance of meetings as well as their timing. Childcare concerns came to the fore, sometimes interacting with other strands of identity. Several service providers raised issues of cultures of childcare in the Somali community. Warsan, a Somali woman, described how her husband attended residents' association meetings, while, because she had small children to care for and ESOL needs, she did not. Both black Caribbean and Somali lone parents gave the timing of meetings as a reason for non-attendance. Fardawsa, a Somali lone parent in Tottenham, was unaware of association meetings. While she sometimes attended meetings in the Somali community, this activity was curtailed by childcare needs, her status as a lone parent impacting on her involvement. Lone parents who were engaged in voluntary work were also struggling, such as a black Caribbean lone parent living near by who found the timing of meetings incompatible with childcare responsibilities, but who had social networks that allowed her to get feedback from the meetings from a neighbour, so she felt a connection to the issues. Marisha, who had a heavy voluntary workload, was often unable to attend evening events and felt that councils needed to be more aware of the need for formal or informal care and consider the scope to reimbursement costs. As a lone parent on benefits she could not afford to pay for babysitters in order to attend meetings and she expressed concern about women's silent voices:

... there appears to be quite a large number of single-parent families, female-headed single-parent families, and I think there's a lot of silent voices because of that, a lot of silent people not having their say, who are not contributing to the community in that way because they can't because something very practical is preventing that.

(Marisha, black Caribbean woman, 40s, Moss Side)

While these were not the only reasons for non-participation, there needs to be engagement with the timing of meetings and childcare needs, and cultures of childcare, to help address these issues and perhaps experimentation with taking TRA meetings to childcare organisations.

### Ethnicity and community participation

Ethnic and cultural identity also shaped patterns of involvement. We saw in Chapter 3 that, in both areas, some residents were trying to get newcomers involved in TRA meetings. For example, leaflets were being printed off in a variety of languages to raise awareness and make people feel welcome. Yet still efforts did not seem to be yielding higher turnouts of Somalis at meetings in Moss Side, or of the longer-standing Asian residents. For some, group participation in ethnic-specific community institutions was an expression of how they defined themselves, their cultural and ethnic identity, and where they perceived support to be likely. For example, the Somali woman in Tottenham who regularly attended activities in her mosque, but not residents' association meetings, raised issues of feeling more confident about participation if other Somali families were present:

... the only organisation I belong to is the Somali community and because mostly they support us and reassure us with the problem we got and we discuss things like the difficulties we met, at the moment I have no other ... in the [*residents' association*] meetings mostly I don't consider going because I feel like they're not talking something important and other Somali families do not go as well.

(Amina, Somali woman, 30s, Tottenham)

However, a young Somali woman in Tottenham was sceptical, from her community observations, of whether Somalis got involved with issues pertaining to the wider neighbourhood and painted a picture of a community trying to grapple with its own priorities:

I don't know about other ethnics but the Somalis don't bother, when there is neighbourhood watches and meetings you never see them attend not this ... they think it's just waste of time. The only thing they deal with is if it's in their household if they are suffering in their house then they will go and see the council.

(Butaaco, Somali woman, 20s, Tottenham)

TRA members have tried to make contact with newcomers through the production of leaflets in different languages. The emphasis seems to have been on contacting residents among these ethnic groups rather than community leaders. Given the greater involvement of Somali residents in Somali organisations, there may be benefits in making contact with community leaders and perhaps taking some TRA meetings to Somali organisations to encourage engagement.

## The representation and resource base of new communities

In local struggles for racial equality it takes new communities time to build up a representation base. Several key informants, including Somali voluntary sector workers, felt that a time lag between the arrival of a new group and when they would have representation was inevitable. While some groups might get established quite quickly, others might find it more difficult. Somalis were presented as a group facing particular challenges in the context, not only of arrival and settlement, but also of the historical and cultural background of lack of government and difference in civil society back in Somalia. For example one key informant noted:

It must be incredibly hard for people to make that kind of transition and understand how you fit into the structures. And that's how you effect political change.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

A Manchester-based Somali community leader was among several key informants concurring with this view when he spoke of how established ethnic communities had more understanding and awareness of what was going on. There are black Caribbean councillors in Moss Side and Tottenham, but Somalis are notable by their absence. Steps are being taken to facilitate greater consultation and engagement with the Somali community, particularly in Moss Side as noted in Chapter 2. In Moss Side, councillors have promoted and supported the development of a Somali Forum with representatives from eight different Somali organisations. This was set up in the context of organisations independently voicing their concerns. It is hoped that the Somali Forum, which now involves the largest eight organisations, will eventually be the main mechanism for service provider consultation with the Somali community.

In Haringey, an array of mechanisms were evolving to facilitate community voice, including the Haringey Community Empowerment Network, which, as described in Chapter 2, was formed to provide voice to disadvantaged and marginalised groups, and help to form new organisations that might facilitate this. One aim as structures evolved was to ensure that Somali groups had representation in key structures working alongside other BME groups. A concern in this process was that the borough's structure for facilitating BME representation at a strategic policy level on the REJCC (also described in Chapter 2) was being inhibited by the inadequate resource base among BME communities, as well as a tendency for groups to pursue ethnic-specific interests. However, one discussion group participant described how Somalis were not well connected, listened to or invited to consultations, and questioned the local authority's awareness of and sensitivity to Somali culture and needs. This respondent was clearly frustrated when saying that:

... some groups are equal and some are more equal than others – it's about who they ask.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

Somalis in Tottenham are more dispersed and have a less well-developed community infrastructure compared with Moss Side, and there are concerns from a community organisation responsible for capacity building and the promotion of partnership working that some Somali groups are unwilling to work with each other. However, similarly to Manchester, a Somali Forum had been established after the close of the Fieldwork period, to provide a platform for expressing the Somali community's concerns to the local authority and other service providers.

Members of 'established' minority ethnic communities did not always feel that they had a strong representational base. Several younger black Caribbean and multiple-heritage interviewees spoke enviously of a perceived ability of Asians and Somalis to pool resources for the good of 'their community', implying a need for 'the black community' in Britain to engage in more collective action in order to address perceived community problems such as the issue of opportunities for black young men:

They actually have their own community where they do their things, the shops and that, they tend to use their own, not just their own shops but they tend to use the businesses around the area. They're a bit more like the Asian people as well, they work more together with each other.

(Hannah, multiple-heritage woman, 20s, Moss Side)

I think there could be a lot more things for the young black kids, if the black community pulled together they could make things available for their young generation, but they don't do that.

(Alisha, black Caribbean female, 20s, Tottenham)

Their perceptions reinforce the concerns of older black Caribbean activists that there is a malaise among the younger generation of black Caribbeans in Britain, as do the concerns of this fairly recent arrival, resident in Moss Side:

I am not somebody who can live in a community and don't be a part of it. The more I see myself living in Moss Side, the more the community is not becoming a community for people like me who want to do something with people, which has nothing to do with money, all it has to do with: I want to show an interest, have some motivation and ambition. And the community is *not* presenting that kind of atmosphere for me.

(Malik, black Caribbean man, 40s, Moss Side)

### **Culturally specific 'or' culturally mixed community centres?**

Early discussion groups in the areas showed ongoing demand among community and voluntary organisations for access to resources to develop and maintain buildings. The distribution of resources was an issue around which a degree of resentment was evident. This was the case particularly, though not exclusively, for different sections of the Somali community. With requests for buildings being made in both areas, the respective local authorities felt that there were insufficient resources to accommodate all demands. Emphasis was being placed on shared provision and the encouragement of different groups to work in partnership. A voluntary sector key informant in Tottenham articulated the importance of community buildings thus:

We like to think that the community buildings are building blocks for the community where people can get together even though they are all kind of focused on their own activities.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

A council key informant expressed concern that, though having an Asian Centre, a Cypriot Centre, a Chinese Centre, an Irish Centre, an Afro-Caribbean Centre and a Caribbean Senior Citizens' Centre, this approach was not sustainable in the long term:

We don't have a building for every group. Communities are being encouraged to open up their facilities, but some have seen it as a threat. While some have staked a political claim to retaining their own space, others need support in making a gradual transition.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

A range of communities, including Somalis and black Caribbeans, were concerned about gaining or holding onto separate community buildings. A black Caribbean member of a Tottenham discussion group, who was angered by community centre rent increases, showed signs of distributive tensions when she spoke of how black Caribbeans felt they were being 'pushed out' and Somalis were being 'well looked after'. Of the white British respondents, it was young people who were more likely to say that they did not have their own spaces.

The distinctive weight given by Somali residents to ethnic-specific community organisation and provision of services reflects the context of settlement and patterns of disadvantage among Somalis, as well as cultural identities. Somali key informants based in community institutions spoke of an ongoing need for separate provision, rather more so in Tottenham than Moss Side. For example, at a discussion group

in Tottenham, a Somali community leader described how the council was unaware of Somali numbers in the borough, and the needs of those Somalis, which meant that Somalis were missing out on services. This claim for separate provision can be interpreted as being about communities staking a claim in their localities and putting down roots – that is, about recognition of presence and needs as well as representation.

Somali community workers in Moss Side and Tottenham signalled the support gap that they were filling and how, given more resources, they could expand their activities. Service provision is wide-ranging. It includes the provision of information and guidance on issues such as housing and health, advocacy and interpreting support, running or signposting to ESOL classes, helping parents and their children find their way around the education system, and addressing issues of underachievement and the development and maintenance of Somali youth facilities. Although Somali key informants in both areas felt that these services were important, and indeed outlined them, they were critical of the insularity of Somalis. Two Somali key informants based in community organisations, one in Tottenham and one in Manchester, had slightly different perspectives on the way forward. A Tottenham respondent implied that Somalis needed to make more material progress before they could place less emphasis on Somali organisations. A Manchester respondent felt that Somalis, though in need of support, were placing too much emphasis on these institutions as a place to socialise. Rather they needed to progress, by using Somali organisations solely as a place to facilitate access to mainstream services and opportunities. Critical of Somali reticence to lose their culture, this respondent presented their fears as misguided.

In both areas, there have been movements to larger community centres providing spaces for a multitude of community groups. In Tottenham, the Selby Centre houses a range of community and voluntary organisations, including the Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Organisation. Early in 2006, the Windrush Millennium Centre opened in Moss Side under the auspices of the Moss Side and Hulme Community Development Trust. Somaliland has been among several community (and statutory) organisations that have taken residence there, maintaining a separate identity amidst a multitude of organisations and ethnic groups. This represents a move to intermixing, providing an opportunity for community groups to be in close proximity and potentially presenting greater opportunities for connections to be made between them. More attention to common interests may need to be encouraged, a process of institutions finding commonalities across collectivities (Phoenix, 1998). This is a theme that will be explored further in the next chapter.

### **Culturally specific 'or' culturally mixed youth provision?**

Youth provision was also an area in which discussion was taking place around issues of culturally specific or integrated provision in Moss Side and Tottenham. Embodied in this discussion were local authority aspirations for greater integrated provision of services, mirroring the move to larger, all-encompassing community centres. In Tottenham, a new youth centre was nearing completion at the time of fieldwork and discussion was beginning to take place around how this might operate to be a place where all youth would feel welcome. A key informant in a Somali organisation, which organises its own youth provision for Somalis, feels strongly that children and youths prefer to come together with others from Somali backgrounds, citing discrimination and specific support needs as a reason. Its separate provision for boys and girls is oversubscribed. In Moss Side, there had already been some movement down the road to integration with the development of the Millennium Powerhouse (see Chapter 2) but some tensions were apparent. The importance of community organisations for young people should not be underestimated. Take this quote from a young black Caribbean man in Moss Side, reflecting on what it meant to him to have a space that he identified with and to which he felt a sense of belonging:

... growing up we had the Hideaway, that's where we were when parents weren't there, all the kids and family would go there and just all grew up, just like in the same circle growing up all the way through and family events we'd all get together and we all had a good time so I'd see it as a family and community place.

(Ed, black Caribbean man, 20s, Moss Side)

Tensions between Caribbean and Somali youth were evident in accounts of a lack of Somali access to the Powerhouse Millennium youth centre and a sense of exclusion from an ostensibly shared youth space. The accounts were suggestive of ongoing struggles over access to, and the distribution of, 'community'-based resources, but also the complexity of dynamics in movements to integration. In one discussion group involving black Caribbean and Somali children/youths using this centre, there were accounts of a harmonious shared use of the space. However, other Somali youths who no longer used the centre presented a very different picture – for example, of feeling unwelcome and having their identities and area attachment challenged, in spite of feeling like they belonged to the area:

You can't go into the [*youth*] centre, it's basically a majority, people say it's for everyone, but if you actually look at it it's West Indian, the majority, 99 per cent it's West Indians that go there, there might be one or two white, black, Somali whatever you wanna say but ... we've grown up in

the community here yeah, and this [*community centre, based in a house*] is the only place we've got, they've got the West Indian centre, the [*youth centre*], they're not 'our people' at the [*youth centre*]; they will not see us as 'black' people, they will say, you're Somalian get out of here, you know what I mean? ... We've got no facilities, we've got nothing, that's what we need innit, this is where we live ... we've all been [*local schools*], this is our local area, we want a building in our local area ... One or two Somalis will go there but we're not welcome, You don't feel comfortable. If it kicks off in there we will get the blame.

(Somali youth discussion group, male, Moss Side)

The teenage girls noted that they had withdrawn from the Powerhouse because of inter-ethnic youth tensions. Male and female perspectives reveal gender differences in solutions. While young males were making a political claim for separate provision, young females were emphasising that they wanted mixed provision, access to and involvement in the mainstream. They wanted to set an example for other Somali youths by being seen to use the Powerhouse and felt that the younger West Indians needed to be made to understand their entitlement to do so:

It's just a matter of making them understand we are the same people in the same sort of position. We should be kinda joining together rather than separating and being against each other ... We don't want to seem like Somali youth coming together, we want to be like youth coming together.

(Somali youth discussion group, female, Moss Side)

A community worker particularly in support of this momentum felt that all Somali youths should be using the Powerhouse and getting on with a process of greater mixing. However, youths generally perceived older members of the Somali community as quite unsupportive in this difficult climate, indicating that they were getting more response to their calls for greater recognition and action from 'outside'. For example, a meeting had taken place with councillors to explore their concerns. Somali teenage girls spoke of how they had wanted to put on a show in Moss Side for the Somali community to celebrate and share their cultural traditions and backgrounds with other groups. Their idea had been rejected by older community members who were described as more focused on services for elders and scared that the youths were challenging traditions, including around mixing of the genders. The girls wanted to acquire the skills to run youth activities, to find funds for this. Such aspirations reflected how both girls and boys shared a perception that they needed to be proactive in addressing their concerns over opportunities for education, training and sports activities for youths, and for accessing resources, and they were beginning to press for collective action. Forming a youth committee within the Somali

organisation, with greater membership among the girls than the boys, their actions show at least some youth momentum for integration that reflected the greater youth orientations to intermixing presented earlier in this report (see Chapter 3).

## **Summary**

- Our residents were engaged in a wide variety of community activities. Some of these crossed ethnic boundaries and the contours of involvement were patterned by gender, age and faith – for example, women from new and established communities doing voluntary work for childcare and parenting projects, and both older men and women from established communities attending tenants’ and residents’ associations. Faith-organisation activity led to opportunities for new and established communities to interact and make social and political connections, for example in Somali cross-community action after 9/11 and 7/7.
- Respondents involved in participatory activities tended to have a strong sense of wanting to make their neighbourhoods a better place to live in. Undertaking formal community participation was one of the few contexts in which people identified with the whole neighbourhood as a community.
- TRAs provide an opportunity for neighbourhood residents to come together and discuss issues pertinent to everyday lives, part of the local social infrastructure that can help create a sense of wider community, but these forums are not fully reflective of neighbourhood diversity. This reflects a sense of alienation from, rather than ownership of, TRAs and a degree of disillusionment with central and local government. There is also a range of other factors indicative of a need for more creative thinking around the practicalities of engaging women, younger people and minority ethnic groups in these structures.
- Movements to secure more culturally mixed service provision are in part resource driven, material constraints being in the foreground in each area. However, our examples of community centre and youth provision indicate struggles for intermixing, and resistance to it, at a grass-roots level.
- Pressure for separate provision of community buildings appears to be as much about claims for recognition of presence and needs of groups as representation. This pressure is apparent from ‘established’ black Caribbeans as well as more newly arrived Somalis, particularly in Tottenham.

- Within processes of negotiation of community boundaries, community access and claims to be distinct, there are signs of differing perspectives and orientations among young and older Somalis, and young and older black Caribbeans, as well as gender differences among young Somalis. This is perhaps unsurprising in the context of the range of ethnic attachments explored in the previous chapter, and particularly the broader range of identities of second-generation Somalis. Efforts to generate more mixed involvement and provision need to be mindful of the different levels at which any change must be negotiated, and the complexity of sentiment and actual and perceived needs on the ground.

# 7 The meaning and practice of social cohesion

This chapter considers the following questions.

- What is the meaning of social cohesion for the service providers trying to meet the needs of residents and how does this relate to the lived experiences of residents?
- What activities are taking place to try to promote social cohesion in practice?

The chapter explores what the concept of social cohesion meant to residents and local service providers in the statutory and voluntary sectors in the two areas. It then goes on to consider some of the initiatives under way in each area to promote or impact on social cohesion. Some examples of innovative work in each area are also provided.

## Understandings of social cohesion in Tottenham and Moss Side

Social – or community – cohesion, the two terms were often used interchangeably, was mostly defined by local policymakers and statutory sector service providers in our two areas as the presence of ‘harmonious’ relations between different communities – defined by culture, ethnicity or religion – living together in an area. However there were differences in definitions proffered, which ranged from communities ‘rubbing along together’, to communities sharing a strong place-based identity, for example as a ‘Mancunian’. Voluntary sector key informants were generally less familiar and comfortable with the term social cohesion and were less likely to use it as part of their work, and some expressed a concern that it was ‘jargon’. Nonetheless their understandings of what it might mean and how their work related to the concept were similar to those in the statutory sector. Some respondents, again in both areas, also widened the concept from a focus on ethnic differences to thinking about the quality of community relationships more generally.

### Ethnic diversity and residential segregation

While ethnic diversity in the neighbourhoods was positively valued by many residents, there were some signs of a lack of willingness to interact (Chapter 3), plus instances of racialised resentment, intergenerational tensions and inter-ethnic conflict (Chapter 4). Many key informants working at a grass-roots level, including councillors, in the two areas were aware of these tensions and spoke of the need to improve community relationships. However, from both areas, local authority key informants in particular expressed a view that the picture of inter-ethnic relations was relatively positive. In Manchester, key informants often contrasted the city to places such as Burnley, Oldham and Bradford that had experienced racial disturbances in the summer of 2001. In Tottenham, the situation was contrasted to the overt interracial conflict that was seen in the 1980s.

There were a number of reasons given for this. Key informants in Tottenham spoke of the importance of an ethos of multiculturalism, valuing diversity and 'mutual respect' across communities. Key informants in Manchester also spoke of a city that is 'tolerant' and 'proud of its diversity'. It was also suggested that council policies around race equality in the past had resulted in better social cohesion today. It was seen in the previous chapter that, in Manchester, proactive work had been undertaken with Somali communities, both to try to provide more opportunities for them to articulate their social situation and needs, and to foster ongoing work to develop and deliver services. Voluntary sector key informants also pointed to the role of struggles by black and minority ethnic communities in the past to have their needs recognised in local service provision, which had improved the situation for newly arriving communities today.

Key informants in both areas felt an important factor inhibiting the development of overt racial tensions was the ethnic composition of the areas. The presence of a range of different ethnic groups in close residential proximity, without the dominance of any one group, was said to promote tolerance and inhibit overt conflict. For example, a council key informant in Manchester stated:

... Oldham, where, you know, you get this massive concentration of two groups, you know, I've met white people from Oldham who, I think if they lived in Manchester would be slightly more tolerant, you know, I have to call them racist to be quite blunt ... I think we haven't, still haven't got that critical mass of separation in Moss Side, or indeed anywhere else in the city.

(Key informant, Manchester)

A council key informant in Tottenham made similar comments:

The vast majority of Haringey don't have problems with race any more. We live in a completely multiracial ... you walk around the streets and you can see basically, visually, the mixture, you know, that is around. I don't ... I almost don't think there is a dominant group in this borough ... there are parts where the white people may be in the minority. In the schools they *are* the minority. It isn't the same level of resentment that you would find 20 years ago, for example, and neither the same levels of tension ... we've worked on alerting ourselves, quite early on, on things like ... the threat against the Muslims right now.  
(Key informant, Haringey)

To an extent these comments reflect the dominant policy discourse that it is residential segregation between different ethnic communities that is at the root of problems of social cohesion, or at least of the eruption of overt inter-ethnic tensions and violence. However our data suggest that, even where a variety of ethnic groups are living side by side, there may be barriers to social interaction that can breed or exacerbate racial stereotypes and tensions. This is particularly the case where there are conflicts over material resources. Local triggers can result in this spilling over into conflictual situations, as happened (in a relatively minor way) between black Caribbean and Somali youths in Moss Side during our fieldwork. Furthermore, the negative impact of the New York and London bombings and the 'war on terror' on the experiences of Somalis in the two areas suggests a need for caution about the story of (relatively) 'harmonious' relationships between the different ethnic groups in the two case study areas.

Key informants in both areas, it should be noted, were aware of racism and racialised resentment, and emphasised the importance of active work to tackle material disadvantage as well as to improve community relationships, particularly in terms of regeneration activity and community strategies.

### **Economic disadvantage and exclusion**

Key informants in both areas felt that economic disadvantage was a major factor militating against social cohesion. It was argued that communities with fewer economic and social resources were less likely to be able to cope successfully with an influx of new (and culturally distinct) communities. In so doing, key informants supported the argument made in Chapter 4 that racialised resentment is underpinned in large measure by a sense of relative deprivation. Conflicts over

key resources such as housing, education and employment, in the context of mutual ignorance and misunderstanding between culturally distinct populations, were seen as likely to lead to tensions and problems with social cohesion.

In Manchester, the relative lack of economic progress of the black Caribbean community, as well as a strong identification with Moss Side as the centre of the black community, was felt to result in tensions between the black Caribbean and Somali communities in particular. Some Somali community leaders in Manchester also made reference to the prevalence of criminal activity in Moss Side, related to economic disadvantage, which also inhibited positive feelings towards integration on the part of the Somali community.

In Tottenham, deprivation and inequality were seen as playing a major role in driving social division, with the class 'polarisation' between the east and west of the borough widely cited as an example of lack of cohesion. In this respect, some key informants suggested that class and income inequality was a more legitimate subject of social cohesion debate than ethnicity. One stated:

If you live in an intensely multicultural area, multiculturalism is not the big issue any more ... being broke is the everyday issue.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

It has been a longstanding priority in Haringey to narrow the gap between east and west, though key informants also voiced the argument that policies need to be developed to empower people in the east of the borough to 'develop themselves'.

### **The desirability of social interaction**

While the importance of material resources was a recurring theme, most key informant definitions of social cohesion made reference to the desirability of social interaction between different ethnic communities, stressing its potentially positive influence on social relationships. Echoing the accounts of local residents, service providers pointed to the cultural distinction of the Somali population as posing greater challenges of social cohesion. The rural background of many Somali refugees, in addition to the difference in cultural heritage, was also raised as an issue. Key informants commonly made reference to 'ignorance' or 'misunderstanding' on the part of the existing populations about the cultural traditions of the new communities. It was suggested that these might be challenged if there were established forums or spaces for members of different communities to come together. However, it was noted that this was not easy to achieve and needed to be done sensitively. Several respondents

referred to the need to find issues that people from different ethnic backgrounds could work on in a co-operative way, focusing on common interests rather than divisions. Some voluntary sector respondents also emphasised the importance of developing sustainable relationships that would outlive initiatives inevitably based on short-term funding. Some key informants also stressed the importance of recognising and addressing intergenerational fears and tensions, cultivating respect across the generations and acknowledging the salience of multiple identities for community relationships.

Perspectives of Somali community workers and activists on how best to develop social ties across communities were varied. Some Somali key informants presented social cohesion, in terms of wider contact and deeper social interaction, as a somewhat impossible dream. Some informants talked about issues of resources – for example, one questioned how Somalis and established communities could be ‘socially open to each other’ when there was so little support and resources for new arrivals. Another respondent maintained that little ‘integration’ would take place until Somalis were integrated into the employment structure. Other Somali key informants spoke of Somali determination to avoid any dilution of their culture as a barrier to social interaction and, in Moss Side, reference was made to stereotypes on the part of Somalis about the black Caribbean community.

Echoing Gilchrist (2004a), a number of respondents across the areas emphasised that tensions and problems are an inevitable part of everyday life in inner-urban neighbourhoods and that the crucial issue for cohesion is having collective mechanisms for developing solutions to problems. An advantage of this approach is that it can foster collective ownership of neighbourhood problems and challenges. There were a number of initiatives already under way in both areas that brought people from different communities together and these are discussed later in the chapter.

### **Residential stability and place-based identity**

In both areas, there were concerns about residential stability and transience, and its implications for community relationships. Community and voluntary sector participants in discussion groups in Tottenham, for example, felt transience to be one of the key challenges facing the borough:

Transient communities are not interested in the long-term future of the borough. They are here for a six months’ lease – they are not interested in the future of the borough because they won’t be here. Once people feel

that they can stand on their own, they choose to move on, like a seedling transplanting.

Part of the problem is transience – people move out as soon as they can if they get a job, move up the ladder, don't want children growing up there, don't want to use local schools.

(Key informant, Tottenham)

It was seen as important to address the underlying reasons why some members of new and established communities are not putting down longer-term roots in the area. One council key informant in Haringey suggested a multiplicity of factors for creating stable, cohesive communities, which included: developing good schools that allow parents to fulfil their aspirations for their children; improving housing and employment prospects; and recognising that the 'statutory authorities have a duty to foster a good relationship between neighbourhood and community'. This chimes with the reasons respondents gave us for wanting to remain in or leave the areas, as discussed in Chapter 5. In both areas, crime, noise and lack of opportunities were widely cited as 'push' factors and social ties as 'pull' factors; however, individuals weighed these up differently, with age and life course playing a significant role.

Analysis undertaken by Haringey Council, using 2001 census ward data and the 2004 Index of Deprivation on residential mobility and deprivation, questions whether transience in an area is linked to deprivation *per se* (Haringey Council, 2004). The correlation between deprivation and mobility is not shown to be very strong, since high-income residents in the more affluent west of the borough have a higher rate of mobility than those living in the more deprived east. This suggests the complexity of the relationship between transience, deprivation and social cohesion. It is likely that, in disadvantaged areas where individuals have fewer economic resources and rely more heavily on publicly provided services, population transience causes or exacerbates problems in the planning, resourcing and delivering of those services. However, residential mobility (across classes) is likely to shape the patterns of local neighbourhood social networks and thus impact on social cohesion.

In Manchester, some key informant respondents felt that social cohesion involved not just interactions across communities but also the development of a place-based identity that could be embraced by all residents in a neighbourhood, regardless of cultural heritage. It was not suggested that this identity should be exclusive of other identities and attachments, indeed the valuing of diverse cultural traditions was also seen as an important element of social cohesion. Nonetheless it was felt that the development among residents of a sense of 'themselves as one community' would promote a sense of attachment to the area, and facilitate shared use of

resources and more collective community participation. This understanding of community cohesion was articulated mainly by local authority respondents, who were keen to highlight the benefits of a shared 'Mancunian' identity in the city. A recent manifestation of this is the 'Mancunian Agreement' – the idea of a shared set of principles between people and their city – which it is pursuing at the neighbourhood level. Some Somali voluntary sector representatives, however, also shared the sentiment that it was important to develop a sense of attachment to place in order to facilitate integration and cohesion. It was suggested by one respondent that the Somali community needed to start seeing Manchester as its 'home' in order for further progress on cohesion and social inclusion to occur. As seen earlier, some of the younger Somalis that we met in discussion groups or at interview already do stake a claim to Manchester as their home.

### **Promoting 'social cohesion' in Moss Side**

Most of the key informants had not instigated a specific area of work around 'social cohesion' in response to the central government agenda but saw it as part of their work anyway, although it might have previously been defined in different ways, for example as race equality, social inclusion, community capacity building or promoting sustainable communities. Social cohesion was seen to occupy a similar terrain to these existing terms. Given this, most respondents were positive about the concept of social cohesion as they understood it, although one respondent, working in the area of race equality, expressed fears that the social cohesion agenda could dilute concerns about racial discrimination and barriers, and could be co-opted by those with an assimilationist agenda.

Given the definitions of social cohesion discussed above, which emphasise the importance of both cultural misunderstandings and prejudice, as well as material disadvantage, the scope of initiatives that potentially impact on social cohesion is very wide ranging. Here a selection of initiatives, based primarily in the Moss Side area, are highlighted. They include initiatives promoting the inclusion or integration of the Somali community; forums for community members (across ethnic lines) to come together to articulate needs, discuss problems and/or debate solutions; and initiatives promoting connections and relationships within communities and/or community capacity building.

Initiatives addressing broader issues of economic disadvantage and social exclusion, including around educational attainment, employability and the provision of jobs, also impact on social cohesion as defined above. Given the material underpinning

of community tensions identified by many local service providers, the issue of 'getting the messages out' or providing more accurate information about fairness in the provision of services and resources across the different communities was stressed by many of the key informant respondents as significant in promoting social cohesion. It is necessary, however, to think about appropriate and effective ways in which this can be done, since, as the earlier debates about racism in the 1980s showed, simple information provision may not be effective in combating deeply held assumptions, particularly if the source of the information is not trusted (Rattansi, 1992). Creative ways of challenging myths are needed.

The Somali community in Moss Side has been proactive in developing community organisations to meet its needs and through these organisations pushing for recognition among local policymakers and service providers. As we saw in Chapter 6, these developments have seen a positive response from local councillors and a Somali Forum with representatives from eight different community organisations, mostly based around the Moss Side and Rusholme area, had recently been established, chaired by a representative from Manchester Council for Community Relations. It was hoped that this forum would become the established mechanism for a range of service providers to consult with the Somali community in Manchester. This addressed concerns on the part of some service providers about who to consult with, given what was sometimes seen as a bewildering array of Somali organisations, as well as concerns about their representativeness.

In addition to this forum, providers in a range of service areas, as well as Somali organisations, had initiated projects and programmes aimed at the integration or inclusion of the Somali community. Two such examples are profiled in Boxes 1 and 2.

### **Box 1 Manchester Adult Education Service**

An adult education centre in Moss Side had developed a number of initiatives to facilitate access to their services among the Somali community. A bilingual support worker from the centre had done successful outreach work with a Somali women's organisation to encourage participation in ESOL classes at the centre. A further scheme had then been established in association with Sure Start and the women's organisation to provide supported progression onto other courses at the centre. ESOL learners were provided with a mentor to discuss career aspirations, which resulted in some women enrolling on childcare courses at the college with the aim of becoming childminders.

*(Continued)*

Another project involved the provision of family literacy and numeracy courses in conjunction with another Somali organisation. The courses involved men, women and children learning together. Tutors worked with community staff to deliver the courses, thus contributing to capacity building in the Somali organisation. Subsequently, a member of the organisation secured a post as a tutor at the adult education centre, teaching a numeracy course for Somali men in the evenings and addressing the low turnout of men for courses running during the day.

### **Box 2 Voice Project**

*The Voice Project* was based at a further education college in the city and was supported for two years with funding from partner organisations in the field of education, training and employment. It employed a Somali worker to develop training and work placement opportunities for young people in the Somali community. At the time of the research, the project had young people in placements with the BBC, ITV, the city council and a couple of other private companies. The project also assisted young people in job application and interviewing skills, and arranged Job Fairs in the community.

Other examples of local initiatives include the following.

- In housing: a major social housing provider in the area had a support scheme for refugees, which was staffed by a Somali and included assistance with tenancy issues (e.g. managing rent payments), as well as with accessing other services, such as Jobcentre Plus, schools and health services.
- In education: a primary school in the area had been instrumental in developing a more effective refugee induction programme, which included engagement with parents, with signposting to other services where needed. The school had also developed the 'Safe Haven', a safe and inclusive space in the school for specialist language acquisition work and for the use of home languages.
- In children's services: the Sure Start local group had worked with a Somali community organisation to establish a summer play scheme for children of different ages, which was opened up to the whole community and which facilitated interaction between Somali parents and others in the community.

There was concern expressed by many of the service provider respondents about the inclusivity of consultation mechanisms and about traditional channels of consultation (e.g. through tenants' and residents' associations) not being reflective of the diversity within communities. To varying degrees, statutory and other service providers had developed a range of mechanisms for consulting with residents, which were aimed at greater inclusiveness. These could provide a forum not only for residents' views to be expressed but also for community tensions and issues to be aired. A small selection are discussed below.

- Greater Manchester Police: police–community relations in Moss Side were felt to have improved through the development of mechanisms for community consultation and participation. These include two independent advisory groups (IAGs), one for Moss Side focused around gang and gun crime issues, and one for the Metropolitan Division with representation from councillors and from community organisations, which advise on and monitor police operations. This can be effective in promoting understanding across communities and challenging assumptions about differential levels of policing. There is also a local action partnership at the neighbourhood level, which brings together the police, the local authority, community safety officers and community representatives. It focuses on crime and disorder issues, and residents can raise concerns about policing.
- Mosscares Housing: one of the largest housing associations in the area, Mosscares has a tenants' panel for representing the tenants' views. The panel consists of 15 people, 12 elected by tenants and three co-opted to ensure better representativeness. Three of the panel sit on the Mosscares Board. Each year there is an annual meeting of all tenants, with the theme for the forthcoming event as 'communities living in harmony'. Efforts to engage young people have included recording the tenants' newsletter on CD using the facilities of a local youth club.
- Manchester City Council Children and Young People's services have developed a number of innovative ways of encouraging the participation of young people in consultations around services. A number of young people themselves have been trained to canvass the views of young people and feed these back to the department. Consultations around extended schools' provision pioneered creative methods of meaningful consultation with children working in small groups alongside senior officers.
- Manchester Council for Community Relations (MCCR): towards the end of the fieldwork for this report MCCR had received funding to support work bringing together black Caribbean and Somali youths in Moss Side.

Three projects working to strengthen community relationships and capacity build in the Moss Side area – Carisma, Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities and Hideaway – are described in Boxes 3 to 5 below.

### **Box 3 Carisma (Community Alliance for Renewal, Inner South Manchester Area)**

Carisma is a community umbrella grouping, which was established in 2002 following a community demonstration protesting gun and gang violence. The organisation aims to improve the life chances of young people through working with the whole community. Young people, including former gang members, are on its core group. Members are involved in a variety of activities with young people, children and families, including involvement in the police IAG and Manchester Multi-agency Gang Strategy. Carisma co-ordinates the annual Peace Week, which last year included a lantern parade, with artists working with children across communities in schools, churches, mosques and youth groups. Carisma also hosts the ‘street pastors’, a group of volunteers who regularly go out in Moss Side at weekends from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m., talking to people, defusing tensions, constituting a safe unarmed presence and bringing the church ‘onto the streets’. The development of strong relationships with the youth in the area allow the street pastors to mediate between the police and the community, and to work with young people and their families to provide positive alternatives to gang violence.

### **Box 4 Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities**

This programme, developed by the Race Equality Unit (REU), is a parenting programme aimed particularly at black and minority ethnic communities, as well as others traditionally excluded from mainstream parenting support. The programme stresses the importance of the social and economic context of parenting, the role of family culture and traditions in parenting, and community development and support. Rather than prescribing parenting methods, it provides a safe space for participants to discuss and reflect on issues and concerns. The organisation works in conjunction with local voluntary sector organisations and statutory agencies for programme delivery, encouraging partnership working and developing community capacity. Trained facilitators deliver the programme with support from the REU, and participants are encouraged to train to become facilitators themselves, thus encouraging self-reliance. In Moss Side, Somali, white British and black Caribbean parents have

*(Continued)*

been engaged with the programme. At the time of fieldwork its work was being extended to Tottenham where there have been a couple of programmes run to date through Sure Start and through the Ethiopian Community Centre and the Refugee Council, all with diverse communities.

### **Box 5 Hideaway**

The Hideaway Youth Project has just celebrated its 40th birthday and has been established in Moss Side since 1966. Its role has been to provide education and activities in the community for children and young people. It has run a number of projects over the years including a project for young people excluded from school and a project for 16–19 year olds not in education, employment or training, providing positive routes back into education. It has recently secured Lottery funding for work with young women aged 13–19 around sexual violence and confidence building. It has also received funding from the Football Foundation for a project to work with Somali and black Caribbean young men, diverting them from drugs, crime and gangs, using football and sport as a way of engagement, and designed to build cross-community connections in the light of the tensions described elsewhere in the report. Hideaway emphasises the value of local youth having ownership of their own, community-based, shared space.

## **Promoting ‘social cohesion’ in Tottenham**

By early 2005, when the fieldwork for this project had got under way, Haringey Council had begun to discuss a programme of work aiming to consolidate and strengthen its community cohesion agenda. Intercommunity and cultural issues were seen as a key dimension that the community cohesion agenda should embrace, but there was also a perception of the salience of intergenerational issues and deprivation. One key informant perceived a shift in government policy from multiculturalism to community cohesion as focusing on the negative rather than the positive side of multiculturalism, presenting ethnic difference as problematic.

A need to address tensions and work at maintaining good intercommunity relationships, so keeping tensions at bay, was seen as essential. The area and wider borough of which it is part has a range of forums for all community members to come together to share information, raise awareness of needs, and discuss problems and how they might be addressed. As seen in the previous chapter, some of the issues arising in lack of inclusive involvement in tenants’ and residents’ associations in

both areas signal the importance of not treating people as a homogeneous mass in searching for solutions, acknowledging as well as valuing difference. There is awareness of this issue in the council and some creative thinking is occurring around area assemblies. For example, one assembly wanted a discussion about crime. To avoid a meeting that consisted of adults complaining about young people, a local school was contacted and groups of children came to the assembly meeting to give a presentation on crime and get the discussion started. The children talked about how they were victims of crime and the fear they felt when they came out of school, and the nature of the debate was therefore very different to what it might have been.

As in Manchester a range of initiatives are centred on promoting connections and relationships between and within communities at a grass-roots level. These include the Haringey Peace Alliance's activities in mobilising cross-community engagement in tackling crime (Box 6). The Alliance's work was cited by several key informants as the best example of different communities, particularly faith communities, being brought together, with the momentum being maintained, at least in part, through common interest in the core issue of crime. Recent cross-community activity raising funds for the tsunami appeal was presented as an example of what might be achieved by voluntary and community organisations involved in Haringey's Race Equality Consultative Committee. While, as noted in Chapter 2, this structure aims to enhance the voice of the voluntary sector at a strategic level, we saw in Chapter 2 that the adequacy of organisations' resource base for this level of involvement is being questioned. In this context, and amidst a tendency for some black and minority ethnic organisations to pursue individual interests or not get involved in the committee at all, finding grounded areas of common interest to work on is seen by some as a way forward.

### **Box 6 Haringey Peace Alliance**

The Haringey Peace Alliance began as an informal discussion among faith groups in the community about drug use and violent crime. This engagement was subsequently extended to include local politicians, the police and residents of all ages. In July 2001 it was eventually formalised as a partnership of community and statutory groups to work together to reduce crime and the fear of crime in the community. In September 2001 the Alliance organised the first Week of Peace, which was aimed at celebrating the diversity of cultures in Haringey. The Peace Alliance promotes the empowerment of communities in a number of ways, including encouraging them to address key issues, motivating them by securing adequate funding and support, promoting relevant initiatives

*(Continued)*

and sharing of best-practice ideas, working with agencies and trying to restore a sense of ownership and civic pride. It runs Haringey's Community Safety Forum and its breakfast meetings have been well supported, bringing together community representatives, faith leaders, schools, voluntary organisations, statutory officers and businesses. It works with victims and families of victims of crime as well as young people to reduce crime in communities. An underlying principle is to seek to empower all communities to own the agenda for change.

Youth projects are a key focus of activity in Tottenham. For example, the Insight Programme (Box 7) has been working with Turkish and black Caribbean youths in schools, responding to conflict between the two by using one-to-one, group and partnership-working approaches. On the whole, the Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Organisation emphasised that lack of funding was hindering its activities, with many of its day-to-day services oversubscribed, but the organisation described how it ensured that Somali youths are represented on wider youth structures in the borough. It valued the making of these connections, though, as seen in Chapter 6, felt that Somali youths preferred to be with other Somalis rather than in integrated provision. The Aspire Youth Project, part of the Joining Up Northumberland Park programme, has developed several strands of work (Box 8). Work with and by children and youths has generated a holistic perspective on the promotion of good community relationships. A key informant commented that, whatever background children came from, they wanted results in terms of improved skills, employment and income. Health care, education, housing, discrimination, value systems and confidence and self-esteem are seen as being among the factors having 'a ripple effect' on prospects for achieving those results. Aspire participants have been encouraged to build and own projects, acquiring *and applying* skills along the way and celebrating their achievements. Aspire has tapped into a variety of other initiatives to pursue its goals – for example, 'Soul in the City', which brought young people from faith groups around the world into Northumberland Park, working with local youths and faith groups to improve the environment. Aspire has also worked in partnership with a local over-50s' club in its intergenerational programme.

### **Box 7 The Insight Programme**

The Insight Programme is based around White Hart Lane and Northumberland Park. It was developed in the context of tensions between black Caribbean and Turkish youth, and a perception of a lack of engagement with Turkish youth. One strand of its work has involved one-to-one counselling with school-age youth. A second strand has brought together young people in schools through group development work, often with a focus on engaging 'ringleaders'. Young people have been given the space to talk with each other, with a facilitator present to 'play devil's advocate'. Additional activities have included getting parents more involved in school life and partnership working between a range of agencies, involving schools, the youth offending service and police.

### **Box 8 The Aspire Youth Project**

The Aspire Youth Project is part of a six-year regeneration programme that includes the Northumberland Park ward of Tottenham. The project aims to provide a local space for all young people in Northumberland Park and has a key role in meeting the youth engagement aims of the programme. There are many strands to provision.

- *Education and training*: developing an after-school club and educational visits – for example, introducing young people to theatre.
- *Self-organisation and responsibility*: young people setting up their own projects, including music, dance and sports activities.
- *Intergenerational programme*: bringing older people from a local over-50s' club and young people from Aspire together, breaking down barriers and fostering better understanding.
- *Environmental issues*: increasing young people's awareness of the environment and providing access to hands-on opportunities to improve it.

Recognition of young people's achievements has been seen as important for both them and the wider community, and a showcase event was held at a local school with an audience of families, friends, teachers and community workers, and members of the over-50s' club.

Most of the young people who have got involved in the project thus far are from a black Caribbean background. A challenge for the project is to secure ongoing funding and continue its work through outreach to a wider range of young people.

In Chapter 3, we explored how, in both areas, there is greater mixing between black Caribbean and white British residents in everyday life than occurred in the past. This reinforces the evidence presented elsewhere of closer relationships between these two communities, while Somalis are relative newcomers to the Moss Side and Tottenham areas and they (as well as their black Caribbean and white British neighbours) convey a sense of more separate living. We also saw that there were exceptions to this. In particular, young Somalis born and bred in the UK were more likely to be mixing with people from different ethnic backgrounds than the older first generation of Somalis. In this context, it might be argued that some youth projects are tapping into something positive that is not far below the surface of youth relationships in everyday life. However, creative work may be needed to nurture cross-community connections that are not artificial and can be sustained. For example, the Aspire project representative, from a black Caribbean background, felt that, while the work of Aspire was innovative, there was a lot more scope to engage Somali youths and that this might require the support of a Somali outreach worker who could work with parents as well as young people.

Innovative work is also being undertaken with women and children from new communities. The Living Under One Sun project has been taking forward the simple idea of people coming together to cook with each other, facilitating interaction and encouraging greater cross-cultural understanding in a women-only space (Box 9). They have also been developing skills that might help facilitate yet wider interactions in the community and a stepping stone towards labour market engagement. Key informants involved with most of these projects raised issues of short-term funding and resources available in terms of the scale of work that they could be doing. Resource issues for Aspire and Living Under One Sun were particularly salient as regeneration funding draws to a close. Extending the range of groups involved and acting on lessons learnt were at the forefront of project workers' minds. For Aspire the issue is one of outreach to new communities and getting girls more involved, as much of its work has been with black Caribbean young men. For example, it has struggled to extend the benefits of the project to Somali youth. Although young Somali boys developed a football project, it was difficult to sustain as they moved out of the area. For Living Under One Sun the challenge is a need to engage with established communities. Although this was not an aim of its work with women and children, it feels like the next natural step.

### **Box 9 Living Under One Sun**

The Living Under One Sun project was formed out of collaboration between Haringey Play Association, a voluntary sector organisation, and Joining Up Northumberland Park (JUNP). The project aims to encourage children and families from different cultural backgrounds to meet through the medium of cooking and sharing food. The project has engaged with Kosovan, Albanian, Turkish and Kurdish, Latin American, Somali and West African communities.

The first group of women targeted were Kosovan and Albanian women who were invited into the JUNP Neighbourhood Resource Centre for an event themed around cooking. These women then suggested inviting the Turkish/Kurdish and Kosovan/Albanian women and children. There was subsequently a Latin American event and at the time of fieldwork a Somali event was being planned. The project is reported to have brought neighbours from different communities into contact with each other and has also facilitated women's involvement in training sessions: food hygiene, first aid and children's face painting. It is hoped that women will eventually use these skills in community events, which may eventually lead to paid employment.

While the focus is on encouraging new communities to come into the centre, a challenge for the project is to get established black Caribbean and white British families involved. With a rapid growth in participation in these events, because of women's interest, the project has also run into capacity issues.

## **Summary**

- Exploring the meaning of social cohesion with key informants prompted discussion of ethnic diversity and residential segregation, economic disadvantage and exclusion, the desirability of social interaction, residential stability and place-based identity.
- It is striking that, in both areas, key informants feel that a lack of residential segregation and greater ethnic diversity are part of the favourable circumstances that have prevented the emergence of overt interracial conflict. However, there has also been work geared towards promoting good community relationships and regeneration, which may have been contributory factors.
- Community and social cohesion is a cross-cutting issue. Partnership working is taking place in both areas, often embodied in community strategies. To effectively

promote cohesion, service providers and community and voluntary organisations present an ongoing need for multi-agency working, for example between Jobcentre Plus, the health sector, local councils and police forces.

- A variety of projects, at least in part seeking to erode barriers to interaction between men and women, young people from different ethnic groups and older and younger people, have been in operation. They reinforce the potential benefits to community relationships of connections being made between people at a grass-roots level. These projects also signal the importance of multi-agency approaches to promote creative ways of working that respond to local contexts and people's needs, and create sustainable outcomes. Experience has shown the need to engage with established as well as new communities.

## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

- What factors hinder or promote social cohesion?
- How appropriate is it for policy debate around social cohesion to focus on ethnic diversity?
- Does the policy debate on social cohesion need to be reframed?
- What can be done to make a difference to the quality of everyday life in diverse and deprived communities?

At the time of writing, a new independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion has been set up. This new commission, which is to be based in the Department for Communities and Local Government, has a remit to explore how communities across the country can be empowered to improve cohesion and tackle extremism. The analysis of social cohesion in our two case study areas reinforces the importance of the twin elements of social cohesion that we identified in Chapter 1 – eroding disparities, inequalities and social exclusion on the one hand, and nurturing the social infrastructure of neighbourhoods, social relations, interactions and ties on the other. As Gilchrist (2004b) has argued, it is unrealistic to conceive of social cohesion in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods as the absence of conflict. Instead a cohesive neighbourhood is one where there exists ‘a collective ability to manage the shifting array of tensions and disagreements among diverse communities’. This suggests that promoting positive social relationships across ethnicity (and other forms of difference) and tackling the barriers that inhibit interactions, as well as developing social spaces and forums for the management of conflict, is vitally important. However, social cohesion must also be underpinned by the amelioration of material poverty and disadvantage, which has implications for the life opportunities of current and future generations. Our findings suggest that, to a great extent, patterns of interaction across, as well as tensions between, different ethnic groups are shaped in large measure by material resources. This supports recent understandings of social inclusion, which has been defined widely to include the capacity to purchase goods and services, to participate in economically or socially valuable activities, to be involved in local or national decision making, and to be integrated with family, friends and community (Burchardt *et al.*, 2002).

## Material inequality and neighbourhood relationships

The research has shown that residents across ethnic groups generally saw living in a diverse multi-ethnic neighbourhood as positive. However, where there were tensions between residents that took a racialised form, these mostly had material underpinnings around struggles for resources such as employment, housing and the physical infrastructure of the neighbourhood (Chapter 4). In particular, there was a perception among some residents in existing communities (both white British and black Caribbean) that newly arriving groups were receiving more favourable treatment from local service providers than others, particularly in the context of housing allocations. The quality of employment opportunities was also seen by many as a fundamental cause of poverty, as a contributor to local crime rates, particularly among young people, and as fuelling tensions between groups. Given that there were examples of material disadvantage and unfulfilled housing and employment aspirations facing all three of the ethnic groups included in the research, albeit they did not face these issues equally, these racialised accounts can be seen as ‘victims’ blaming ‘victims’.

Struggles over resources need not inevitably result in hostility from existing residents towards new groups perceived to be culturally different. Such feelings are, however, likely to be exacerbated by a relative lack of interaction between new communities and others, while the media also has a key role to play in fuelling negative attitudes towards new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Residents’ accounts reflected the way that media stories about asylum seekers were incorporated into everyday lives and understandings of local situations (Bhavnani *et al.*, 2005). For example, resentment towards refugees and asylum seekers was evident in the arguments of established residents who felt that those who did not ‘contribute’ economically were ‘first in the queue’ for state resources. Such sentiments sometimes united long-standing communities of different ethnic groups (for example, in the context of this study, white British and black Caribbean) against the newly arrived (Chapter 4). Moreover, some Somali respondents in the study were feeling increasingly uncomfortable amidst a growth in racial harassment. This was felt by some to have been fuelled by the events of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005, exacerbated by associations between ‘Muslims’ and ‘terrorism’ in the media. These dynamics challenge the appropriateness of perceiving racism as a black–white dichotomy and call into question any simple assumption of ‘black’ solidarities.

## **Residential stability and sustainable communities**

There has been much debate about the importance of residential stability in promoting sustainable communities, but the key issue is not stability per se but other issues that matter to sustainability. Service providers in Manchester and Haringey were concerned that new communities were arriving on an unplanned basis, compounding issues of overcrowding and making it more difficult for them to provide appropriate support to new as well as established communities (Chapter 7). However, there is a need for caution that discussion of these issues does not conflate transience with new (migrant/refugee) communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, preliminary research on transience undertaken by Haringey Council shows that migration patterns are more complex than this, implying high levels of transience among higher-income residents too.

It was also common for residents to equate strong communities with stable communities. A common story among older residents, particularly the white working class, for example, was the decline of the 'tight-knit' communities that had existed in the past. This was often linked by residents to a decline in the physical fabric of the neighbourhood, a sentiment that was often racialised, with the suggestion that new communities had little 'respect' for the area. However, while visible evidence of the presence of new communities in businesses, shops, cafes, community organisations and places of worship was seen by some existing residents as a sign of the decline in the economic fortunes of the area, it also signalled the way in which the arrival of new communities into an area can inject new energy and vitality.

While the views of older residents reveal a nostalgia for the past, they also embody a response to the labour and housing market changes that have led to increased transience in neighbourhood populations. This is not solely about the ethnic composition of neighbourhoods, however. Change in neighbourhood populations in the two case study areas also included a degree of 'gentrification', with long-standing residents expressing resentment of 'professionals' who were able to afford properties in the area that were beyond their reach. Previous research on residential segregation suggests that deprivation has to fall to a certain point before local housing markets begin to take off and attract into the area high-skilled individuals and private sector capital in order for the area to thrive, which is suggested to generate 'virtuous circles' for other residents (Meen *et al.*, 2005). However, while the in-migration of higher-income residents may be of benefit for the development of mixed-tenure communities, this is not necessarily so for longer-term residents' sense of community or material opportunities, at least in the short term.

Research suggests that low-income households tend to be trapped in ‘the worst’ locations, whereas high-income households can more easily escape (Meen *et al.*, 2005). However, the research revealed diversity among the residents in Moss Side and North Tottenham regarding their attachments to the neighbourhood, and their plans to stay or leave were informed by a complex mix of emotional and material factors. Crime, noise and lack of material opportunities were widely cited as ‘push’ factors and social ties as ‘pull’ factors; however, individuals weighed these up differently, with age and life course playing a significant role. Many also expressed ambivalent attitudes, since they were emotionally attached to the neighbourhood and community but drawn to greater opportunities elsewhere. Furthermore, while expressing concern about unemployment and crime, they are also concerned that the media unfairly perpetuates negative and stereotypical messages that stigmatise them. While some ‘pull’ characteristics of place signify the neighbourhood as a ‘safe haven’ for some minority ethnic individuals, other ‘push’ characteristics signify the neighbourhood as a place where they feel ‘trapped’.

### **The role of community infrastructure**

Community infrastructure also has a bearing on the sustainability of communities. Within both of the case study areas, there were moves among local service providers away from culturally specific provision for different ethnic communities towards more mixed provision. This is in part resource driven and was meeting with some resistance from communities on the ground, suggesting ongoing struggles over access to, and the distribution of, ‘community’-based resources, as well as the complexity of dynamics in movements towards more culturally mixed (‘integrated’) provision. The weight given by Somali residents to the importance of ethnic-specific community organisations reflects patterns of disadvantage among Somalis, inadequate access to local services, the expression of cultural and ethnic identities, and struggles over local political representation.

Ethnic-specific community infrastructure was overlaid by a variety of other community activities that cross-cut ethnicity and other social differences. For example, community organisations in the two areas were engaged in work that forged connections across different groups (for example, older and younger people and young people from different ethnic backgrounds) at a grass-roots level. Project staff felt that this was helping to foster positive engagements and relationships but that there was scope for a great deal more work on the ground. Faith organisation activity has also led to opportunities for new and established communities to interact, with notable examples of Somalis pressing for inter-ethnic community action to address

tensions raised by the events of 9/11 and 7/7. Moreover many of the residents interviewed were engaged in a wide variety of community activities, some of which crossed ethnic boundaries – for example, women (from all communities) who were involved in neighbourhood-based childcare and parenting projects, and residents (mainly older and from established communities) attending tenants' and residents' associations. The latter provide an opportunity for residents to come together and discuss issues pertinent to everyday lives, and as such are part of the local social infrastructure that can help create a sense of wider community. However these forums were not fully reflective of neighbourhood diversity.

### **Does the policy debate on social cohesion need to be reframed?**

These issues of material inequality and neighbourhood relationships, residential stability and sustainable communities, and the role of community infrastructure convey the complex dimensions of social cohesion. The debate on social cohesion needs to be reframed if government at the national and local levels is to effectively engage with the complexity that is embedded in the everyday dynamics of neighbourhood relationships. This reframing has three elements.

- First, we suggest that there is an overemphasis on residential segregation to the exclusion of the complex dynamics of separation/interaction in highly diverse neighbourhoods.
- Second, the primary focus on ethnicity as the most salient social division resulting in problems of social cohesion is problematic and needs to be rethought.
- Third, the emphasis in social cohesion policy on promoting shared British and/or local neighbourhood identity is too simplistic in the light of individuals' multiple and shifting attachments.

As noted earlier in the report, concerns have been expressed that British society is 'drifting towards residential segregation', with people from different ethnic and religious communities becoming strangers to each other. It is argued that different ethnic groups are inhabiting different social and cultural worlds – some communities being marginalised from the mainstream. Policy responses to these concerns have often focused on minimising residential segregation between different ethnic groups. The everyday interactions of our residents in Moss Side and North Tottenham, however, show that spatial proximity in terms of shared residence in a neighbourhood

does not necessarily result in social interaction across cultural diversity. The reality was a complex picture of partial segregation co-existing with practical accommodation of difference and everyday social mixing. Practically all residents we spoke with expressed positive sentiments about living in a diverse neighbourhood in terms of the benefits of learning about other cultures and reducing fear and wariness of people from different cultural backgrounds to themselves.

Our evidence shows, in the main, greater social interaction between black Caribbean and white British residents than occurred in the past, but with more limited social interaction between these existing communities and the more recently arrived Somalis. However, the shape of people's everyday interactions was influenced by a range of interacting factors including age, gender, life course and migration histories, as well as ethnicity. In particular, younger people and those who had been in the neighbourhood (or the country) for longer were more likely to have more mixed social networks, while Somalis' interactions with the broader community were influenced strongly by gender. For example, the accounts of social networks and interactions given by Somali women suggested that those who had recently arrived and had ESOL needs tended to be more restricted in their activities than men. More generally, while sports, music and employment all provided sites for interactions across communities, barriers included language issues, perceptions of cultural difference/ stereotyping, unemployment (preventing workplace mixing) and fears of crime and/or racial harassment.

Earlier we argued that tensions in neighbourhoods around the distribution of material resources were often racialised, in particular with established communities expressing resentment towards newcomers who were perceived to be getting more or better resources. However, importantly, tensions in the neighbourhoods did not simply run along ethnic lines. Age- and generation-related divisions were also particularly prominent in both Moss Side and North Tottenham, and must be seen to be at least as significant as cultural and ethnic divisions in inhibiting the development of neighbourhood social cohesion. It was striking that accounts of a lack of 'respect' for the neighbourhood and an absence of a 'work ethic' were applied, not only to new refugee and asylum-seeking communities, but also often to young people (of all communities). There was also an interplay between ethnicity and age (as well as gender) – for example some white British residents expressed particular antipathy towards young black men, reflecting the complexity of racial attitudes. Recent research suggests that negative attitudes towards older or younger people do not seem difficult to shift. Rather, part of the problem with 'two-way ageism' is 'simply a lack of contact' (Pain, 2005, citing Young People Now, 2005). However, age-related divisions and concerns about 'the youth' have a very long history. Furthermore, many residents felt that tensions between ethnic groups were played

out in conflicts between young people. However, the diverse accounts we heard from and about young people suggested that youth relationships were highly complex. Patterns of divisions and alliances between young people of different ethnic groups were constantly changing, with gender and issues of poverty playing an important complicating role.

Recent policy agendas have emphasised the importance of developing a shared sense of belonging either to the nation or, at the neighbourhood level, as an important element of social cohesion. Our findings show that many established residents aspired to have more 'sense of community', felt that the neighbourhood *ought* to be a community and often thought that the presence of new communities was inhibiting this. However the reality was more complex than this. Respondents were attached to multiple and overlapping communities based on ties of place, culture, ethnicity, religion or race. These identities were cross-cut by age, life-course position and length of time in the neighbourhood in influencing attachments to the neighbourhood and to the local community. In practice, 'strong' communities with established patterns of interaction tended to exist only in small pockets, based around, for example, a small group of streets or a few blocks on an estate. Moreover, given the fluid and contextual nature of identities, it is unlikely that a sense of common neighbourhood community would be the main point of identification for residents in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Rather an identification with the whole neighbourhood as a community was relevant only in certain contexts – for example, when undertaking formal community participation or when the neighbourhood was perceived to be under threat (for example, from media reporting). The appropriateness of promoting shared identities as a panacea for social cohesion in today's multicultural and diverse society must be questioned. Difference needs to be recognised and understood, not least by policymakers and service providers.

### Recommendations from the research

To make a difference to the everyday lives of ordinary residents living in Moss Side and Tottenham, action is required at the national and local levels. The following action points might be considered and are pertinent to other parts of the country as well as to the areas that have been the focus of this study. They reflect consultation with Manchester City Council and the London Borough of Haringey, which have engaged with the research findings and fed into the recommendations for future action.

The recommendations that follow consider the need to engage with the underlying causes of tensions as well as symptoms. As we have argued through this report,

it is necessary to keep in mind – and address – the material factors that threaten social cohesion, as well as promoting policies that foster interaction and engagement across diverse communities, and provide spaces where the inevitable tensions and conflicts that spring from everyday life in diverse and deprived neighbourhoods can be managed and resolved.

### **Allocation of resources**

As we have shown, social housing provision and its allocation is one of the main focal points for resident disquiet over the distribution of local resources, which can lead to inter-ethnic tensions. Respondents expressed concern about their own housing circumstances, as well as the prospects for the younger generation. There is scope for local authorities, in our areas as well as in other parts of the country, to explore the development of groups made up of representatives of key agencies in the housing arena to look at social housing provision and allocation policy at local and national levels, particularly in relation to the effects of housing policies on the sustainability of socially cohesive communities. This needs to include consideration of funding and supply.

Evidence from the Somali communities in this research reveals a high incidence of unemployment in spite of visible small business activity. As well as contributing directly to poverty and diminishing family well-being, this exacerbates the social segregation of the Somali community, given that workplaces can constitute a potential space for interaction across communities. Work is being undertaken at a national level to address the employment rate gap between ethnic minorities and the national average (see, for example, Ethnic Minority Employment Taskforce, 2004; Barnes *et al.*, 2005). Our findings suggest a need for more targeted interventions at the local level to ensure that Somali populations are able to benefit, for example from jobs created through regeneration activity. More support should also be given to innovative projects that work with Somali women to undertake ‘small steps’ that may result in labour market participation.

### **Residential stability and population transience**

While population transience is associated not only with new migrant and refugee communities, the research has shown that high population turnover, in the context of material deprivation, leads to considerable challenges for service providers, with concern expressed particularly in relation to the impacts on the educational achievement of refugee children. This may be partly addressed by developing

better systems for anticipating and planning for the in- and out-migration of asylum-seeking and refugee communities in local areas. However there are also issues around whether the support needs of transient families are adequately resourced. The impact of transience on communities needs to be investigated at the local level, particularly in terms of the impact on the education of young people, on housing and on unemployment rates in communities. This investigation needs to be mindful of the overall resource implications of supporting transient refugee families. It is an issue that should also be explored by the new Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

There is a lack of clarity about the number of Somali residents in the case study neighbourhoods, as well as in the UK more widely, with concern about the accuracy of census figures. Somali community organisations and local authorities are concerned that this information is necessary to inform their work. Local service providers might address this by supporting small studies set up to provide more detailed and accurate information about the size of Somali (and other newly arrived) communities, which could be shared across pertinent partnerships.

### **Fostering social relationships between people in different ethnic and cultural communities**

Where conflictual relationships between ethnic communities are evident, there are signs that the encouragement of social contact between groups can contribute to the collective 'working through' of problems, thus diminishing the potential for conflict. Making connections between different groups at a grass-roots level can help to foster such positive engagements and the negotiation of differences (Gilchrist, 2004a). There is work already being undertaken on this front in both areas, as well as more widely (see Bhavnani *et al.*, 2005, pp. 159–60), however there are issues around the scale of this work as compared with potential beneficiaries. There are also recurring themes in the voluntary and community sectors around short-term project funding that make it difficult to plan ahead, learn and grow, an all too familiar theme (e.g. Ellis and Latif, 2006; Gilchrist, 2004a; Chouhan and Lusane, 2004). While young people are often seen as being at the forefront of neighbourhood tensions and thus targeted in this work, there is a need to work with older people too to address age-related divisions. Support needs to be provided to innovative projects that build connections across a range of differences (ethnicity as well as age) and attention needs to be paid to continuity of funding and capacity building for projects where there is an ongoing and evolving need. Such projects might usefully be localised but there is also scope for collaboration across geographical areas to facilitate learning and adaptation to local need. Funding might be supplied by a range of statutory sources as well as larger charitable funders.

Local authorities have a duty to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups, under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. There is scope for local authorities, perhaps working in partnership with other organisations, to develop local performance indicators that determine accountability at a local level. These should include progress towards social cohesion, including measures of processes and outcomes. Attention should be paid to the issue of who is taking responsibility for monitoring social cohesion issues at a ward level, including an assessment of the role played by local councillors and the MP.

Local authorities need to develop creative ways of challenging misperceptions about 'unfairness' in the allocation of resources (e.g. housing) and to this end community consultation and engagement has a vital part to play. Previous research suggests that simple information provision may not be effective in combating deeply held assumptions, particularly if the source of the information is not trusted. Trusted sources of information need to be explored and worked with in partnership to combat misperceptions. There needs to be more sharing of good practice in projects that challenge deeply held racist assumptions. Mechanisms for this might include full exploitation of the scope for the Local Government Association and the Commission for Racial Equality (and subsequently the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights due to start operating in autumn 2007) to work in partnership with local authorities across the country to maximise the sharing of good practice.

### **The importance of partnership working**

There is a great deal of partnership working taking place in each of the areas that we explored that reflects a holistic understanding of the diverse range of factors that feed into the climate of community relationships. As community cohesion is a cross-cutting issue, bringing together community and voluntary organisations with public and private sector agencies (such as education, Jobcentre Plus, health providers, the police and employers) in partnership working is of fundamental importance. Partnerships in these areas, and around the country, have an ongoing role to play in tackling social cohesion, ever mindful of evolving local circumstances. They can operate as challengers of national and local policies that impact adversely on social cohesion and as such are facilitators of social cohesion.

**Culturally specific and culturally mixed provision of services**

The research reveals the complexity of local dynamics in movements towards 'integrated' service provision, with ongoing struggles within and across communities regarding access to, and the distribution of, 'community'-based resources. Particular issues were raised in each of the case study areas that may have significance beyond their boundaries.

A challenge for diverse areas is that of ensuring that youth provision is accessible (and seen to be accessible) to all sections of the community. Where there are identifiable difficulties, as emerged most starkly in Moss Side, working groups might usefully be established to investigate this issue. Membership of such groups should include representatives from the youth resources in the area (for example, young people and staff from the Powerhouse in Moss Side), as well as voluntary sector groups and senior council officers. Such groups should explore the pros and cons of culturally specific and mixed youth provision, examples of which were explored in this report. Action research would provide a useful supplement to this process, identifying opportunities and pitfalls that could be shared across local authorities around the country.

In both areas, community organisations play an important role in signposting people onto provision. While, in Moss Side, the Somali community is relatively concentrated and well served by community organisations, and there have been moves to create a Somali Forum as a focal point for engagement and representation, the Somali community in Haringey is more dispersed and has a less well-developed community infrastructure, and some Somali groups are unwilling to work with each other although an overarching Somali Forum has recently been established. Perhaps areas grappling with these issues need to expand the scope of inter- and intra-community contacts that their Somali (and similarly placed) communities have, which may help with practical activities such as community outreach and signposting of services. For example, Haringey Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations might promote more co-operation among Somali groups and capacity build, encouraging partnership working within and across communities.

Research has recently been published around the role of faith groups and social capital (Furbey *et al.*, 2006), and there are signs of this being an important process in both North Tottenham and Moss Side as well as other parts of the country. The issue of how faith groups and multi-faith forums can influence social cohesion needs to be explored in local contexts. There is a need for further research, at a local level, into the impact of faith group forums on the social cohesion agenda and this needs to be disseminated nationally to share good practice.

# Notes

## Chapter 2

- 1 National figures are disputed also. For example, the 2001 Census records around 43,000 Somalis living in the UK, while estimates from other sources have suggested greater numbers than those living in London alone (Harris, 2004).
- 2 Northumberland Park ward is in North Tottenham in the east of the borough. The largest concentration of our interviews took place in this ward, although some interviews were also carried out in surrounding wards. Given a similar ethnic composition of these surrounding wards, only the figures for Northumberland Park are given.

## Chapter 3

- 1 Khat is a plant whose leaves are chewed for its stimulant effect and concerns have been raised about its impact on mental and physical health (for a discussion see Patel *et al.*, 2005).

## Chapter 4

- 1 See Chapter 3, note 1 above.

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## Appendix: Characteristics of 60 residents interviewed across the areas

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Household</b>	<b>Economic status</b>
Black Caribbean	Slightly more women than men	A range of ages, albeit with an over-representation of those in younger age brackets (20s, 30s and 40s)	Predominance of single-person households and lone parents, but also couple households, with and without children, and extended family households	Most respondents in employment, but also economically inactive in receipt of benefits, retired persons and students
Somali	Equal mix of women and men	A range of ages, with over-representation of younger people (in their 30s and 40s)	Predominance of households comprising a couple with children or an extended family unit, but also with a representation of lone parents, couples without children and single-person households	A mix of those in employment and those not in work, with many of the non-employed women looking after family and the non-employed men either on income support or unable to work because of their immigration status. Retired people and people doing voluntary work
White British	Slightly more men than women	A range of different ages, with a slight under-representation of people in their 30s and 40s	Predominant household types represented are single-person households and extended family households, although there are also lone-parent households and couple households with and without children	The majority of the sample is in employment, although there are also a number of individuals who are retired or are economically inactive in receipt of benefits, and one unemployed person