

Connecting with New Asian Communities: BBC local radio 1967-1990

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Leicester
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
September 2019**

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Abstract

This thesis challenges the existing literature which argues that the BBC displayed an ambivalence towards programming for ethnic communities in the 1970s and 1980s. This previously hidden history of Asian programming on BBC local radio reveals output of significance and weight. It highlights the fact that the BBC was not a monolithic organisation, rather a number of divisions competing for influence and budget, and as Asian programming brought neither it was pushed to the periphery. In this free space Asian programming on BBC local radio grew from ninety minutes a week in 1968 to ninety hours a week by 1990 as innovative and creative station managers expanded and adjusted their programming to meet the changing needs and challenges of the South Asian diaspora in England. Drawing on archive recordings located during this research has allowed a richer understanding of the sound and production of this programming. It is possible to hear the inter-generational friction as programmes both reflect the interests of a young British educated second generation and the importance of cultural reinforcement demanded by first generation immigrants. The crucial role of BBC Radio Leicester from the launch of its daily Asian programmes in 1976 through to the Midlands Asian Network in 1989 is reflected as a case study in this history. The programming in Leicester was demonstrably successful in audience terms and was part of the social glue that bound the new Asian communities to the city. There is a growing literature on how local radio can build social cohesion and BBC Radio Leicester is an early exemplar of this. The development of Asian programming on BBC local radio was driven by the independence of station managers who took radical policy decisions to get programming on air; a creative freedom that has policy implications for BBC local radio today.

Audio Presentation

The attached CD contains a 50 minute audio presentation. It includes some of the ‘on-air’ outreach work carried out during this project, sample clips of BBC local radio Asian programming from the 1970s and 1980s uncovered through this outreach and short excerpts from some of the oral history interviews featured in this thesis.

If you are unable to play the audio CD please email imm51@leicester.ac.uk for a digital file.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to place on record my gratitude for the exceptional support of Associate Professor Sally Horrocks as my main supervisor at the University of Leicester. Sally has steered me from mature undergraduate student, through my masters to this PhD thesis with patience and understanding as I morphed from journalist to historian. Professor Gavin Schaffer at the University of Birmingham has been an outstanding second supervisor, offering challenging critiques of my work and inspiring me to go further and dig deeper into new territory. I'd also like to thank Professor Helen Wood of Lancaster University who was part of the supervision time whilst here at Leicester and made invaluable contributions. This PhD research was supported by funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. The training and support structures of the M4C were an enormous help to this project.

I have been struck by how generously former Asian programme presenters and BBC staff have been with their time, commitment and interest in the project. All have my grateful thanks and I hope they feel I have done justice to the important contribution they made to radio history in Britain. However, I must highlight the contribution of Owen Bentley, former manager of BBC Radio Leicester and Head of Radio for BBC in the Midlands who generously gave me his time and access to his private archive. I would also like to put on record my appreciation to Kamlesh Purohit, a former *Six O'clock Show* presenter and currently Assistant Editor at BBC Radio Leicester. Kamlesh was instrumental in setting up an outreach event featuring a live broadcast of a recreation of the *Six O'clock Show* in front of a large and appreciative audience which emphasised the feeling of the warmth with which this programme is still regarded.

Finally, I'd like to thank my family for having great patience with me during the trials and tribulations of this research and writing of this thesis. I must have seemed to have been living in the 1970s and 1980s, but at least my wife Helen now knows who Lata Mangeshkar is.

Liam McCarthy
September 2019.

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Abbreviations

BBC Related

APAC	Asian Programmes Advisory Committee
APU	Asian Programmes Unit
BBC WAC	BBC Written Archive Centre
BoG	Board of Governors
CER	Controller English Regions
CLR	Controller BBC local radio
CR4	Controller BBC Radio 4
DG	Director General
DGMLR	Deputy General Manager Local Radio
DPA	Director of Public Affairs
GMLR	General Manager Local Radio
HLRD	Head of Local Radio Development
IPU	Immigrants Programme Unit
MD Tel	Managing Director Television
MDR	Managing Director Radio
TX	Transmission

Miscellaneous

AM	Medium Wave or MW (Transmitter)
CRC	Community Relations Commission
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
EMOHA	East Midlands Oral History Archive
FM	Frequency Modulation or VHF (Transmitter)
ILR	Independent Local Radio
MACE	Media Archive for Central England
RA	Radio Authority
ROLL&R	Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Chapter 1 Introduction, Literature Review and Research Methods.

This thesis will examine how in the 1970s and 1980s a little studied part of the BBC managed to effectively and demonstrably connect with growing Asian communities in England.¹ As central BBC policy makers designed strategies to address the evolving multicultural nature of the UK, independent managers in BBC local radio developed innovative and popular programming with and for local Asian communities. In the existing literature about the BBC, local radio is portrayed as a ‘fringe’ activity of the corporation and rarely features prominently in BBC history, yet this thesis argues it changed the organisation fundamentally. BBC local radio gave the BBC a front door on high streets in England and produced programme schedules very different from the existing radio networks; schedules that needed local people to become broadcasters. Through these new stations a raft of ‘outsiders’ joined the BBC through the recruitment of local people from different talent pools to the existing BBC staff. Frank Gillard the Managing Director of BBC Radio launched BBC local radio in 1967 as ‘the people’s radio’ in part to ‘democratise the microphone’.² Gillard was also viewed as an outsider and revolutionised BBC radio in the 1960s, including his introduction of BBC local radio; as Hendy argues he ‘pitted himself against the dead hand of the centre’.³

Audience research for the thirtieth anniversary of BBC local radio in 1997 revealed that it extended the reach of BBC radio by adding three million listeners each week who never heard any other BBC radio channels – therefore making the BBC more widely accessible.⁴ By the 1990s BBC local radio was accounting for almost one fifth of the BBC’s spend on radio (18.6 percent) and was producing three quarters (74.3 percent) of all BBC domestic radio output.⁵ This was hardly a fringe activity. However, from lobbying against it by senior network radio managers during the Annan Committee hearings to the more recent Delivering Quality First (DQF) initiative BBC local radio has never been able to view itself

¹ Asian in the context of this study refers to people of South Asian heritage from the Indian Subcontinent and East Africa. This is consistent with the ‘editorial shorthand’ used by the BBC.

² Oral History Interview, Michael Barton, (D.o.B. 20 July 1931), Interviewed Suffolk, 25 June 2018.

³ See, H. Chignell, *Public Issue Radio: Talks, News and Current Affairs in the Twentieth Century*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, 2011), p.84.

⁴ D. Seymour, L. McCarthy & A. Ormsby, *BBC Local Radio - 2000: A Review for a New Era*, BBC English Regions internal staff report distributed to all BBC Local Radio Staff, pp. 36-37. Authors Copy.

⁵ BBC Annual Report 1990/1, (London: BBC, 1991): Total domestic BBC Radio Hours, 214,755 p.a., of which BBC local radio hours, 159,633 p.a. (74.3%); Total domestic BBC Network Radio spend, £226m, of which BBC local radio spend £42.2m (18.6%).

as integral to the BBC's remit.⁶ This has given BBC local radio staff an 'us and them' mentality with regard to the rest of the corporation stemming from continual arguments at the centre which suggest the funding for local radio as unsustainable.⁷ It is within this context of being BBC 'outsiders' that some stations built up strong connections with local Asian communities and used the evidence of strong audience figures to try and squeeze more money for programmes from an ambivalent BBC.

This thesis argues that the best Asian programming in BBC local radio was driven by a small number of innovative and creative managers taking advantage of technological advances and regulatory change. These managers acknowledged that the Asian diaspora was growing and should to be seen as part of the local audience rather than an 'immigrant problem'. They also recognised a changing programme need from one of first-generation immigrants with a desire for cultural reinforcement to a British born and/or British educated second generation who wanted more from the BBC. This is best reflected by the stories of the volunteer pioneer presenters from local Asian communities who by breaking into the BBC made it possible for a second generation to see broadcasting as a potential career. BBC local radio is recognised for bringing a whole raft of broadcasters from local communities such as Desmond Lynam and Jill Dando to national prominence, it is less recognised for doing the same through its Asian programming providing a new way into the BBC for current television presenters such as news anchor Rita Chakrabarti and film director Gurinder Chadha (*Bend it like Beckham*, *The Viceroy's House*, *Blinded by the Light*).⁸ BBC local radio played an important part in connecting the BBC with Asian communities in England between 1967 and 1990. Unlike network radio and television, it broadcast in mother tongue languages such as Urdu and Bengali, rather than Hindustani with its colonial baggage, acknowledging the natural languages of the Asian diaspora in Britain. The role of BBC local radio in this field is a relatively hidden one, rarely featuring in the existing literature which suggests the BBC was slow in reaching out to Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities – and remains so to this day.⁹

⁶ BBC WAC File R78/1/388/1 BBC Management, Meeting between BBC Chairman and Network Radio Managers, Television Centre, 22 June 1978; P. Foster, BBC Local Radio: Has the BBC scored an own goal with its cuts plan, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/dec/11/bbc-local-radio-cuts> (Accessed 22 June 2019).

⁷ Chignell, *Public Issue Radio*, p.93

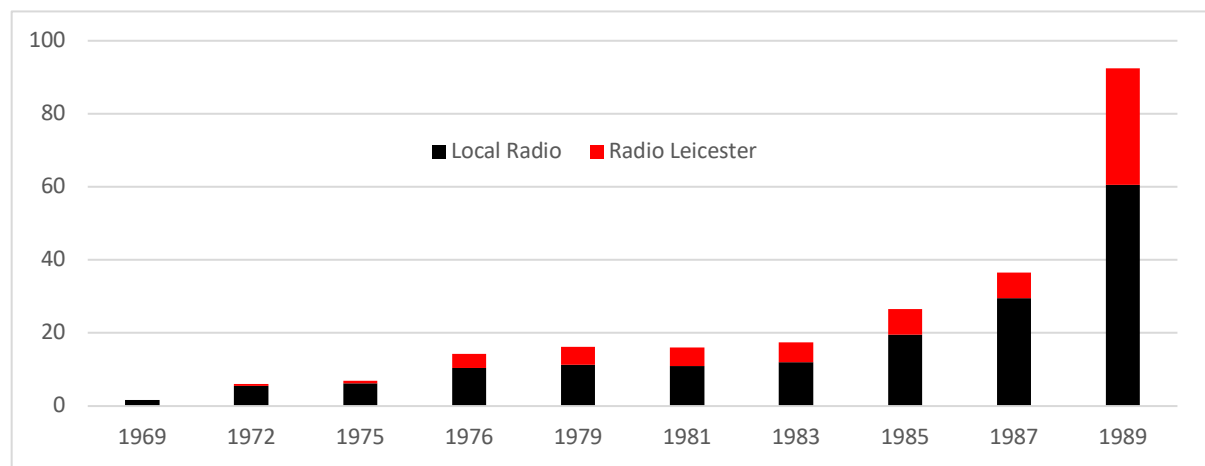
⁸ Memos re; funding in BBC Radio WM File, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

⁹ For one of the latest expositions on the diversity record of the BBC, see; A. Hirsch, *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging*, (Vintage; London, 2018), pp. 221-224,

The ‘book-ends’ of this research, 1967 and 1990, lay between the launch of BBC local radio in Leicester in 1967 through to the Broadcasting Act of 1990, which enabled BAME communities to set up and run ethnically targeted commercial radio stations. Today centrally defined service licences for BBC local radio set out a range of programme commitments such as speech to music ratios and the need to reflect the diversity of communities they serve.¹⁰ However, between 1967 and 1990 the programme and editorial strategies of BBC local radio stations were determined locally by fiercely independent station managers. These managers were free to develop their stations to match local conditions and some pushed the boundaries in Asian programming, driving change in the organisation that led in 1989 to the establishment of the BBC Asian Network in Leicester.

This thesis reveals that there was no master plan within the BBC for addressing the needs of local Asian communities and differing strategies, programmes styles and hours of output were adopted across the country. This research has charted the development of Asian programming to track the changes over time in broadcast hours, the languages used for presentation and the transmitters used for broadcasting.¹¹

Figure 1-1 HOURS OF BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMMES.



Source; BBC WAC and Radio Times. See Appendix One.

¹⁰ BBC local radio ‘Service Licence’, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/service_licences/radio/2016/localradio_apr16.pdf (Accessed 10 June 2019).

¹¹ See Appendix One – BBC local radio Asian programming tables, p. 223.

The chart above shows how a weekly total of an hour and forty-five minutes of Asian programming on three stations in 1969 rose to 93 hours a week on fifteen stations by 1990. However, this research has highlighted the huge contribution of BBC Radio Leicester, which by 1990 was producing a third of all BBC local radio Asian programming.

In its early days BBC local radio was effectively a publisher of volunteer led Asian ‘access’ radio programmes which in many cases were produced with local community relations councils. These programmes were presented in Hindustani, Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali, South Asian languages not understood by local BBC staff, and like the underserved communities themselves were placed at the margins of the schedules. By the mid 1970s there was a switch on some stations, under protest from local Asian communities, to English language presentation and a slow adoption by most stations of active production and ownership of the programmes. This study contends that it was the development of a five-nights a week programme at BBC Radio Leicester in 1976 that was the start of ‘British Asian’ radio. It was a further nine years until the second daily service was launched by BBC Radio Leeds in 1985 and thirteen years before the third took to the air at BBC Radio WM in Birmingham in 1989.

The period of this study includes one of the most challenging phases of race relations in post war Britain. It witnessed the rise of an ugly racism built on fear of black and Asian immigration, driven by political, social and media narratives of a country under siege.¹² From the mid 1960s growing Asian immigration from East Africa, and particularly Kenya, prompted press, political and public pressure on the Labour government to introduce new immigration controls. These were enacted in 1968 with the express aim of reducing non-white immigration to the UK. By 1971 the Heath government facing the same pressures introduced a further Immigration Act. This increasingly tighter immigration legislation has been criticised as a method of keeping out ‘undesirable outsiders’ and part of the ‘racialisation’ of immigration and the ‘institutionalisation of racism’.¹³ The expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 and the arrival of 28,000 of them in Britain continued to feed the media narrative of immigrants as a problem. In the 1980s inner city riots across England

¹² See C. Husband & J.M. Chouhan, ‘Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain’, in T. A. Van Dijk, (Ed.), *Discourse and Communication: New Approaches to Analysis of Mass Media*, (New York; Gruyter, 1985), p. 274.

¹³ J. Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries in the City*, (Ashgate; Abingdon, 2008), p. 16.

forced the authorities to face up to claims of institutional racism across society. However, no clear evidence has emerged to suggest that local radio stations saw addressing the issue of race relations through Asian programming as part of their remit – except in Leicester. The link between race relations, social cohesion and the development of Asian programmes will be therefore be examined throughout this thesis using BBC Radio Leicester as a case study.

The rapidity of the growth of the Asian population in Leicester which grew to account for one fifth of the population by 1983 was the fastest transformation of local demographics through Asian immigration in Britain.¹⁴ BBC Radio Leicester was slow in launching an Asian programme, taking almost three years from going on air in November 1967 to September 1970 to belatedly recognise the substantial increase in the local Asian population. In addition to studying the developing Asian programming on BBC Radio Leicester there is a significant archive of news documentary programmes which covered immigration issues in the city. Before 1976 these recordings show that the station reflected the contemporary media and political narrative that portrayed immigration as a problem. Consequently, Leicester will provide a pivotal case study as it moved from being perceived by the national press in 1972 as ‘the most racist city in Britain’ to being hailed as a model of multiculturalism by the 1990s.¹⁵ This thesis argues that by launching an accessible daily Asian programme presented in English BBC Radio Leicester provides an early example of how local radio can play a part in fostering social cohesion.

This research adds to the understanding of the wider BBC, the role of BBC local radio within the corporation and how the local nature of the service was key to connecting with Asian communities. In so doing it highlights the fact that the BBC is not a single monolithic organisation but a series of divisions in which Asian programming was not nationally seen as a priority and pushed out to local radio. There is a relevance today in this work as broadcasters – particularly in BBC local radio – continue to try to integrate the concerns, interests and issues of minorities in their broadcast areas into day to day programming. The independence of BBC local radio station managers in the 1970s and 1980s allowed them to experiment with programming to reach out to BAME communities in a way that present

¹⁴ Leicester Council for Community Relations, *Immigration to Leicester*, (Leicester, 1980) & Leicester City Council, *The Survey of Leicester 1983*, (Leicester, 1984).

¹⁵ V. Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, (Leicester; Leicester University Press, 1989), p. 54.

day rigidly formatted stations are less able to do. Recent developments in opening up creative avenues for BBC local radio station managers are therefore to be welcomed as a vehicle that may create new local programme innovations and connections, especially with BAME communities that some local stations were reaching so well in the past.¹⁶ Understanding how BBC local radio connected with Asian communities changes the overall perception of the BBC in this field.

BBC local radio has always struggled for funding within the confines of the BBC and when Independent Local Radio (ILR) began in 1973 it was apparent that there was also little money to be made in commercial local radio, indeed rapid new investment was needed to support early companies such as Capital Radio and LBC.¹⁷ As part of their public service commitments some ILR stations did provide programmes for local Asian communities but this was significant in volume only in Leicester and Bradford, most offered short weekly programmes. A consolidation of licences in ILR, an industry response that has its roots in the 1990 Broadcasting Act which removed many public service obligations from ILR, reached its remorseless climax in the spring of 2019 when commercial local radio in England began to broadcast nationally made programming featuring only local advertising and minimal local news content.¹⁸ Approaching the 2020s BBC local radio now stands out as the only relatively sustainably funded and locally delivered radio service in England, joined in a local radio ecology of 500 Ofcom radio licences, of which just five commercial stations and sixteen community stations serve local Asian communities. Therefore, examining the connections that were made – or not made – between BBC local radio and local Asian communities in the 1970s and 1980s is important in establishing how the BBC responded to its own public service remit, and how it might do so again in the future.

¹⁶ DG Speech to BBC local radio staff, Coventry, 9 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2017/tony-hall-local-radio>, (Accessed 11 June 2013).

¹⁷ T. Stoller, *Sounds of Your Life: The History of Independent Radio in the UK*, (Libbey; New Barnet, 2010), p. 64.

¹⁸ J. Waterson, 'Scores of UK radio stations to lose local programmes', *The Guardian*, 26 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/feb/26/scores-of-uk-radio-stations-to-lose-local-programmes> (Accessed 29 May 2019).

Research Questions

The key research questions focus on BBC local radio and the wider BBC in general before focussing on BBC Radio Leicester as a case study.

1. How did BBC local radio stations connect with local Asian communities and were they influenced by the wider BBC and its developing policies in this area?
2. How did BBC local radio stations reflect both the growth in the Asian diaspora and generational friction within it?
3. How did BBC Radio Leicester become a dominant force in Asian programming and in what ways might this have played a part in the social cohesion of the city?
4. What are the lessons for present day programme makers from the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s?

1.1 The existing literature.

The existing media and social histories together with the history of the Asian diaspora in Britain will be considered in locating this research within the existing literature. A study of the literature suggests that centrally the BBC displayed an ambivalent view of Asian audiences in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, while for their part ethnic minority audiences felt the corporation was not for them and offered them little value for money.¹⁹ This thesis will therefore argue that the innovations in Asian programming in BBC local radio challenge this current narrative, accentuating the point that the BBC was not a monolithic organisation but has many strands within its own corporate history.

The general literature on the BBC has little in volume or understanding about BBC local radio or its Asian programming and this study will bring fresh evidence of the importance of this programming to the media history. By placing these programme developments firmly in the racially charged, toxic political and social atmosphere of the period it will also add new depth to migration history, particularly in relation to Leicester. That these gaps exist in the current historiography is confirmed by Hesmondhalgh and Saha who suggest

¹⁹ BBC Regional Broadcasting, *Programme Strategy Review; England*, BBC 1994 (Authors Copy). See also G. Born, *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*, (London, Vintage, 2005), p. 10.

that the combined study of race, ethnicity and media is ‘relatively miniscule’ and that this is still a relatively marginal field.²⁰

Media Histories

Most general surveys of British media history include the development of BBC local radio from the first test recordings by the BBC for the Pilkington Committee in 1962 through to the launch of the service in Leicester in 1967. BBC local radio was only launched through the persistence of Frank Gillard, the BBC’s Managing Director of Radio, who persuaded Pilkington to listen to tapes of closed circuit ‘broadcasts’ of sample programming in the early 1960s.²¹ Once on air it was far from certain that it would survive, an academic study of the first experimental stations by Wells and West argued that the stations lacked a clarity of purpose.²² Wells and West might have had a greater influence on local radio had their paper been published before the BBC was given the go ahead to set up a chain of twenty stations – the debate had already moved on by the time of its publication in 1972. The financial instability of BBC local radio within the BBC is highlighted by Crisell, a situation bought about by financing local radio out of existing BBC budgets which were already stretched by rising inflation rates and technical innovations such as the introduction of colour television.²³ Briggs also notes the financial issues facing BBC local radio and writing in 1975 suggested that this should point the corporation to the development of regional rather local radio broadcasting.²⁴ As it turned out Briggs was correct and today the BBC has 40 county stations in England against almost 500 local and community stations licensed by Ofcom.²⁵ From its earliest days BBC local radio was dogged by fierce lobbying against it from the local newspaper industry, free market politicians - two pirate radio broadcasters became Conservative MPs – and the commercial radio lobby.²⁶

²⁰ D.Hesmondhalgh & A. Saha, ‘Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production’, *Popular Communication; The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 11.3, 2013, p.192.

²¹ See; M. Linfoot, ‘BBC Experiments in Local Broadcasting 1961-62’, *Media History*, 25.3, 2019, pp. 324-335.

²² A. Wells & J. West, *Local Radio and the Community: Final Report*, (Leicester; Centre for Mass Communication Research, 1972).

²³ A. Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, (New York; Routledge, 2006), pp. 142-144.

²⁴ A. Briggs, ‘Local and Regional in Northern Sound Broadcasting’, *Northern History*, 10:1, (1975), pp. 165-187.

²⁵ Licence details via Ofcom Website, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/look-up-radio-station-details>, (Accessed 3 June 2019).

²⁶ G Starkey, *Local Radio, Going Global*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, 2011), p. 19.

Briggs tackles the subject of local radio through the prism of the central management of the BBC and he has nothing to say about minority programming.²⁷ He had little understanding or interest in local radio as revealed in an unpublished section of an oral history interview recorded by David Hendy;

I was not greatly keen, to tell you the truth, on local radio. I can't say that it was a very powerful influence on me.²⁸

Much of what is written about local radio is written from the perspective of community radio and concentrates on developments in London. In this field Lewis and Booth, writing in 1989 examine the difficulty faced by BBC Radio London and how the BBC failed to grasp the opportunities offered by community experiments in the capital to broadcast to ethnic audiences.²⁹ Lewis and Booth also point out that as the BBC made budget reductions such as the 25 percent programme cuts of 1979 and the ten percent cuts of 1988/9 they disproportionately hit BBC local radio and in turn ethnic programming.³⁰ This study will emphasise the credit due to a small number of BBC local stations which protected Asian programming from these cuts by cross subsidising it from their shrinking overall budgets.

BBC local radio was not the first to broadcast domestic Asian programming. Nevertheless, as part of his study of multiculturalism on British television from 1960-1980 Schaffer highlights the important role of BBC local radio in this important area of programming. Domestic Asian programming on the BBC began in 1965 following meetings hosted by Director General Hugh Carleton Greene with representatives of the West Indian and Indian / Pakistani communities to assess the need for targeted programming on the BBC. Schaffer points out that these meetings were prompted by the government, which also provided the BBC with a list of invitees.³¹ In contrast BBC documents suggest that the meetings were fully BBC affairs and imply that the corporation was responsible for this engagement with

²⁷ A. Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume 5: Competition*, (Oxford University Press; Oxford, 1995).

²⁸ See M. Linfoot, *A History of BBC local radio in England; 1960-1980*, PhD Thesis, University of Westminster, p. 34.

²⁹ P.M. Lewis & J. Booth, *The Invisible Medium: Public, Commercial and Community Radio*, (Macmillan; London, 1989), pp. 97-98.

³⁰ Lewis and Booth, *Invisible Medium*, p. 96.

³¹ G. Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960 – 1980*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 27-28.

ethnic communities.³² As a result of these meetings programming on radio and television aimed at Britain's growing Asian communities was established through a new Immigrants Programmes Unit in Birmingham. Why Birmingham? Schaffer reveals the suggestion by David Gretton, the Indian born first Head of the Unit, that it was because the immigrant concentrations were in London, Birmingham and West Yorkshire.³³ This early decision goes to the heart of the BBC's attitude to Asian audiences. Half of the potential audience lived in and around London and therefore the capital was the logical home for the unit, close to both the largest Asian communities and the BBC's specialist broadcasters in the South Asian services of the BBC World Service; yet it was placed away from the centre of the BBC and any major influence it might have had. Similar arguments re-occurred in 2016 when the BBC proposed that its new Diversity Centre be based in Birmingham commentators pointed out that 'its staff will be far removed from the BBC's centre of power, from their own communities and 98% of television production'.³⁴

Placing the programming of the Immigrants Programme Unit and the interests of its audience at the margins of the schedules early on a Sunday morning is also indicative of the priority the BBC gave to the needs of minorities. The marginalising of Asian programming – and by inference Asian communities – by some parts of the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s is highlighted by Tsagarousianou, who argues that before the 1990s public service broadcasting institutions;

'did not deem it necessary to adopt an empathetic standpoint and to address members of ethnic communities as citizens with particular communication needs, interests and rights'³⁵

While the work of the Immigrants Programme Unit is well documented, BBC local radio and its Asian programming is under-represented in the existing literature. A recent PhD by Gloria Khamkar offers a general survey of Asian radio in Britain covering the period from 1960 – 2004. Khamkar highlights the importance of BBC local radio but argues that it was

³² BBC WAC, File R34/1303/2 Policy: Immigrants, G. Hynes, Programmes for Immigrants, BBC Working Paper 1969.

³³ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, p. 36.

³⁴ S. Albury, The BBC's diversity strategy is not good enough, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/may/04/the-bbcs-diversity-strategy-is-not-good-enough> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

³⁵ R. Tsagarousianou, Ethnic Community Media, Community Identity and Citizenship in Contemporary Britain, in W. Jankowski & O. Prehn, *Community Media in the Information Age; Perspectives and Prospects*, (Cresskill, N.J.; Hampton Press, 2002), p.216.

the later arrival of incremental and community radio stations that began to fulfil the demand for Asian radio.³⁶ Mitchell contends that the demands for ethnic community media stemmed from the dissatisfaction of ethnic communities with ‘a lack of representation on mainstream media’ through ‘poorly funded-off peak slots for programmes made by volunteers or seconded producers’ in BBC local radio.³⁷ Tsagarousianou similarly argues that the British media was ‘slow to respond the changing composition of the British population’ and points to the ‘ghetto’ slots on BBC Radio London as reasons why ethnic communities in London suffered from ‘perceived marginalization’.³⁸

Throughout the existing literature a lack of a quantitative context militates against some of the arguments of media historians who have analysed existing studies. A London bias has evolved and can be traced back to analysis of local London stations by the Local Radio Workshop (LRW), a collection of disparate groups who combined to lobby for community radio in the capital. The work of the LRW is rightly recognised for highlighting the lack of minority issues across the output of the existing London stations – but it naturally has a London rather than a national focus.³⁹ A less studied report on the Community Control of Local Radio was carried out for the Council of Europe in 1976 by media scholar Peter Lewis. Lewis studied BBC Radio Bristol and noted that it produced an Asian programme ‘at the specific request of the local community’ but makes the point that BBC local radio is not community radio, and as ‘the BBC gives the service, and could take it away at any time’. Indeed, this did happen in Bristol in the 1980s when the Asian programme was dropped, shining a light on the independence of local station managers.⁴⁰

The editorial freedom enjoyed by BBC local radio managers was not fully recognised or understood in the literature before Matthew Linfoot’s study into the beginning of the service.⁴¹ The independence of station managers in the first decades of local radio allowed them to develop a whole range of locally relevant Asian programming in a variety of languages that the BBC’s Immigrant Programme Unit as a national service did not have

³⁶ G. Khamkar, *The Evolution of British Asian Radio in England: 1960 – 2004*, PhD Thesis, Bournemouth University, http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/29335/1/KHAMKAR%2C%20Gloria_Ph.D._2016.pdf, (Accessed 23 May 2018).

³⁷ C. Mitchell, *Voicing the Community: Participation and Change*, in R. Brunt & R. Cere, (Eds.), *Postcolonial Media in Britain*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Macmillan, 2011), p. 57.

³⁸ Tsagarousianou, *Ethnic Community Media*, p. 216.

³⁹ Local Radio Workshop, *Nothing Local About It: London’s Local Radio*, (Comedia; London, 1982).

⁴⁰ P. M. Lewis, *Community Control of Local Radio*, (Council of Europe; Strasbourg, 1976), pp. 11-14.

⁴¹ M. Linfoot, *A History of BBC local radio*, p. 271.

the airtime to offer. It also gave them the freedom to drop this programming if they wished as happened in London, Bristol and Blackburn. Today in radio there is much talk of ‘personality’ presenters, however between 1967 – 1990 Linfoot suggests it might be more pertinent to regard the prevailing ‘personality’ in local radio as that of the station manager. While this ensured that no two BBC local radio stations sounded the same this editorial independence proved to be both a strength and a weakness in terms of Asian programming.

During the 1970s the biggest threat to BBC local radio came from the Annan Committee on Broadcasting.⁴² Set up during the Wilson government Stoller argues that Annan represented the ‘high water mark for the social market philosophy of broadcasting’.⁴³ In terms of the BBC and Asian broadcasting the Annan debate in the existing literature is confined to television and the interaction of the Immigrants Programme Unit and its Advisory Committee (IPAC). Schaffer argues that the BBC ignored calls for new daytime programme targeted at Asian women until IPAC submitted its evidence to Annan, revealing how out of touch the BBC appeared to its Asian audiences.⁴⁴ Among the Annan recommendations was the placing of all local radio in Britain under a new authority with a phrase that hit at the heart of the argument about the place of local radio within the BBC;

We doubt whether local radio can ever have the claim upon BBC resources it should have if it is to be given the attention it needs most of us think local radio should be in the hands of an Authority which has local radio as its prime responsibility.⁴⁵

However, on the return of the Conservatives in 1979 many of the Annan recommendations were ignored including the setting up of a local radio authority and the BBC retained control of its local stations. Indeed, as Starkey argues the free market broadcasting lobby had ‘their true friends back in government’ and Mrs. Thatcher went on to allow the expansion of commercial radio and a limited expansion by the BBC of its local radio service.⁴⁶

⁴² N. Annan, *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, (HMSO; London, 1977).

⁴³ T. Stoller, *The Sounds of Your Life: The History of Independent Radio in the UK*, (John Libbey; New Barnet, 2010), p.3.

⁴⁴ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁵ Annan Report, p.89.

⁴⁶ G. Starkey, *Local Radio, Going Global*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke 2011), p. 57.

There is an important strand in the literature that deals with Television and ethnic minorities which argues that the BBC not only marginalised ethnic audiences, but also ethnic staff within the organisation. Having worked for BBC Asian programmes Sarita Malik is well placed to address questions around ‘deep-seated inferential racism’ within the corporation.⁴⁷ Anamik Saha points to the continuing lack of a consistent base of BAME staff in the British public service media and how programming featuring BAME content is still marginalised in the schedules.⁴⁸ There is a limited recognition in other strands of media literature about the connection with ethnic communities on local radio. Husband and Chauhan writing in 1985 develop four themes, firstly, discussion on the status of ethnic communities – viewed as immigrant and separate by a white media; secondly, around the clustering of communities and the creation of local cultural facilities (cinemas etc.), thirdly, the lack of production values, speech content and resourcing for ‘ethnic programmes’; and fourthly, how white media professionals grouped communities together as in ‘something for all Asians and all African-Caribbean’s’ without acknowledging the differences between them.⁴⁹ Also writing in the early 1980s, Page catches the mood of the period as broadcasters expressed concern about how to serve these new and growing communities.⁵⁰ Page begins with the challenge that had been set by Annan to broadcasters about the new multi-racial Britain and discusses television, BBC network and local radio and ILR provision. On local radio Page outlines the range of languages broadcast on BBC local radio but makes no great claims about 1976 and the switch to English, although he argues this should be the way to proceed in the long term. Page argues that local radio, both BBC and ILR, was ‘ill equipped’ to produce Asian programmes because of the lack of language expertise on stations.⁵¹ This is something that exercised BBC management as the switch to English language presentation by some stations in the mid 1970s shows.

A more recent article by Browne highlights the point that though BBC local radio, and later ILR, provided some programming in languages other than English for local ethnic

⁴⁷ S. Malik, *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television*, (Sage; London, 2002), p. 69.

⁴⁸ A. Saha, ‘Scheduling Race’, in S. Malik & D. M. Newton, (Eds.), *Adjusting the Contrast: British Television and Constructs of Race*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2017).

⁴⁹ C. Husband & J. Chauhan, ‘Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain’, in T. Van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse and Communication: New Approaches to the Analysis of Media Discourse and Communication*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985).

⁵⁰ D. Page, ‘Broadcasting to Britain’s Asian Minorities’, *India International Centre Quarterly*, 10.2, (1983), pp. 161-173.

⁵¹ D. Page, ‘Broadcasting to Britain’s Asian Minorities’.

communities there was no set pattern to the provision.⁵² Browne argues the programmes were not co-ordinated, mandatory or linked to each other and were broadcast at inconvenient times in the broadcast day. He notes that though local people from ethnic communities worked on these programmes they were ‘subject to BBC and ILR control in terms of programme content’.⁵³ In a British broadcast context this last argument is an obvious one, even though the programmes were heavily music based the speech content needed to conform to broadcast law, but Browne confirms the independence of station managers and the marginality of some of the programmes.

In Leicester, home of the largest proportion of South Asian communities in a BBC local radio transmission area, Marett highlighted the ‘quality and extent of coverage by local radio’ of the Asian community in the late 1980s and the consciousness among Ugandan Asians of the ‘power of the media’ in the city.⁵⁴ Khamkar highlights the city as being a strong case study through which to contrast how other BBC local radio stations and the BBC in general tried to connect with local Asian communities.⁵⁵ With the exception of Schaffer in his general survey *Vision of a Nation*, in which he marks out the Asian programmes on BBC Radio Leicester as significant audience pulling project, and the work by Khamkar, little of substance has been written about the role of BBC Radio Leicester in Asian programming. Schaffer is strong on the arguments about the use of Asian languages that dogged the BBC through the Immigrants (and then Asian) Programmes Advisory Committee (APAC) and particularly on the switch from mother-tongue languages to English at BBC Radios Leicester and London in 1976.⁵⁶ Contemporary CRE research by Anwar in 1978 in Leicester showed that up to two thirds of a one thousand strong research sample regularly tuned into the daily *Six O’clock Show* on BBC Radio Leicester and indicates the rapid demographic change in Leicester in which 28 per cent of those sampled for the study had lived in the city for under 5 years.⁵⁷ The work by Schaffer, Khamkar and

⁵² D. Browne, ‘Speaking Up: A brief history of minority languages and the electronic media worldwide’, in M. Cormack & N. Hourigan (Eds.), *Minority Language Media: Concepts, critiques and case studies*, (Multilingual Matters; New York, 2007), pp. 107-132.

⁵³ Browne, *Speaking Up*, p. 112.

⁵⁴ V. Marett, ‘Resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Leicester’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6.3 (1993), p. 257. (248-259)

⁵⁵ G. Khamkar, ‘A Post-War History of Radio for the Asian Community in Leicester’, in I. Franklin, H. Chignell & K. Skoog, (Eds.), *Regional Aesthetics: Mapping UK Media Cultures*, (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 157- 168.

⁵⁶ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, p. 51.

⁵⁷ M. Anwar, *Who Tunes into What? A Report on Ethnic Minority Broadcasting*, (CRE; London, 1978).

Anwar therefore marks out Leicester as being worthy of a case study running through this thesis.

Newer academic work into community media has shown how effective radio can be in reaching out to minorities – something that was high on the list of objectives of the Asian programmes on BBC Radio Leicester. A policy study for the European Union has highlighted the role of community media in improving the social inclusion and political participation of marginal communities.⁵⁸ How community radio can play a part in improving social cohesion and combating extremism is today a recognised part of Government policy in licensing new radio stations in the UK through the Community Radio Fund administered by Ofcom. The Community Media Association champions the work of over 250 community radio stations across the UK in their ‘astoundingly important and brave work to heal divided communities and tackle extremism’.⁵⁹

The South Asian Diaspora and the Media

By the late 1970s it was clear that the South Asian diaspora in was not only growing in size but changing dynamically in terms of the origin of immigration to Britain and the increasingly younger demographic structure of Asian communities across England. The Commission for Racial Equality set up in in 1976 published valuable research and background material in the areas of ethnic populations and broadcasting. Its quantitative and qualitative studies informed academics who were tracking and analysing the changing nature of multi-cultural Britain. The CRE constantly lobbied broadcasters and government about programming and employment issues. For example, in its response to the government white paper drawn up after the Annan report it lobbied for more ethnic broadcasting, the opportunity for creating ethnic radio stations and highlighted Anwar’s research work into listening to Asian programmes on BBC Radio Leicester;

The Commission hopes that the needs of ethnic minorities will not be overlooked by the Government when deciding the location of future local radio stations. Research in this field as reported in *Who Tunes into What* has shown that where they exist, local ethnic minority

⁵⁸ Bellardi et al, *Spaces of Inclusion: An explorative study on the needs of refugees and migrants in the domain of media communication and on responses by community media*, Council of Europe Report, DGI (2018) 01, p.11.

⁵⁹ A. Bawden, ‘Community Radio breaks down barriers between faith, gender and sexuality’, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/21/community-radio-stations-digital-future-volunteers> (Accessed, 11 June 2018).,

radio programmes are primary sources of information and entertainment and satisfy some of the cultural needs of ethnic minority communities.⁶⁰

CRE studies provided important statistical data for this study. The Asian diaspora in Britain grew more than tenfold to reach 1,500,000 by the time of the 1991 census.⁶¹ Therefore, how BBC local radio stations reflected – or did not reflect - this change in their areas is critical to understanding the importance to which managers gave Asian programme provision. With no effective ethnicity statistics available until after the 1991 census a combining of existing research is required to come up with realistic estimates for the 1970s and 1980s. Key documents include statistical work by the CRE, information on births by the Registrar General and contemporary analysis by local authorities.⁶² Parekh makes the case for understanding the three phases of post-war South Asian immigration to Britain and the need to be mindful of the differences between Asian communities; ‘they belong to different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and bring with them different fears and historical memories’.⁶³ Parekh also argues that the lack of understanding of these differing backgrounds is a failure by the media in engaging with these communities;

The deep political divisions of the subcontinent predictably get reproduced among South Asians in Britain and militate against close friendships and even mutual co-operation. This may partly explain why, despite recent attempts, they have not yet thrown up a single successful common newspaper or journal, let alone a common national organisation or national spokesman. Local radio stations [ILR], to which three times as many South Asians listen than they do to the BBC, and the increasingly popular Zee TV are beginning to build bridges, but their impact is limited.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ CRE, *Broadcasting in a Multi-Racial Society: CRE Response to the White Paper on Broadcasting*, (CRE; London, 1979), p. 3.

⁶¹ See, C. Peach, ‘South Asian migration and settlement in Great Britain, 1951–2001’, *Contemporary South Asia*, 15:2 (2006), pp. 133-146, and Business in the Community, *Race for Opportunity*, fact sheet, February 1994, https://race.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/paper_1_rfo_business_development_activities_of_ethnic_minorities_in_gb_paper_1_population_of_ethnic_minorities_in_great_britain.pdf (accessed 29 October 2018).

⁶² CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain; Statistical Background*, (CRE: London, 1974); CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain; Statistical Background*, (CRE; London, 1978); CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Information on the Pattern of Settlement*, (CRE; London, 1985); Leicester City Council, *The Survey of Leicester: 1983*, (Leicester: Leicester City Council, 1984); A. Matin, *Facts and Figures about Commonwealth Immigrants*, (Community Relations Commission; London, 1974); ONS, Birth Statistics; 1969 – 1974 (ONS; London, 1975); ONS, Birth Statistics; 1974 – 1985, (ONS; London, 1986); E. Krausz, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*, (Granada; London, 1972); J. Martin & G. Singh, *Asian Leicester*, (Sutton Publishing; Stroud, 2002).

⁶³ B. Parekh, ‘South Asians in Britain’, *History Today*, 47.9 (1997), p.65

⁶⁴ Parekh, *South Asian*, p.66.

This study argues that identity within the Asian diaspora became more important as an issue for BBC local radio in the 1980s expressed through a desire for more language programming, more news about the subcontinent and a growing inter-generational friction. In this respect the study by Marie Gillespie in Southall was critical in alerting me to potential examples of the generational split in the programming policies in BBC local radio.⁶⁵ Similarly Schaffer highlights an increasingly vociferous youth lobby within the Asian communities that targeted the BBC's network programmes for Asians as being 'too old' and unable to connect with younger Asians.⁶⁶ The lobbying for more language programming by BBC local radio also reflected this generational split within the diaspora as first generation immigrants regarded language provision as important in reinforcing cultural identity within their communities.⁶⁷

As early as the 1960s academics tried to study prejudice in Britain; in 1965 Hill found that only ten percent of the population could be described as 'truly tolerant and without prejudice'.⁶⁸ By the 1980s Gilroy argues that matters had improved little.⁶⁹ Reports by the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976 and again in 1981 tracked racial attitudes in Britain, which by the 1980s the CRE argued were hardening - though this might be due to the fieldwork in the later report being conducted after the 1981 inner city riots.⁷⁰ In 1994 Ainley conducted a study of black and Asian journalists in Britain and found them under-represented in what she still termed as the 'white media', pointing to racial discrimination as the major source of the problem.⁷¹ Later work by Alia and Bull brings recruitment by the media into journalistic and production roles into perspective and has strong arguments on the under-representation of ethnic minorities in media workforces. It quotes a 2004 study of local newspapers in England with poor ethnic employment ratios in their newsrooms; (*Leicester Mercury* 4 out of 120; *Bradford Telegraph* and *Argus* 2 out of 65 and the *Oldham Chronicle* 1 out of 34).⁷² Alia and Bull ask the pertinent question about how these publications could effectively engage with the large proportion of ethnic

⁶⁵ M. Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, (London; Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁶ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, p. 48.

⁶⁷ P. Scannel, 'Authenticity and Experience', *Discourse Studies*, (2001), 3, pp. 405-411.

⁶⁸ C. S. Hill, *How Colour Prejudiced is Britain?* (London; Gollancz, 1965), p. 240.

⁶⁹ P. Gilroy, *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack*, (London; Routledge, 1992).

⁷⁰ CRE, *Some of my best friends ... A Report on Race Relations Attitudes*, (London: CRE, 1976); CRE, *Race Relations in 1981: An Attitude Survey*, (CRE; London, 1981).

⁷¹ B. Ainley, *Blacks and Asians in the British Media; An Investigation of Discrimination*, (LSE; London, 1994), p.125.

⁷² V. Alia & S. Bull, *Media and Ethnic Minorities*, (Edinburgh University Press; Edinburgh, 2005), p.10.

minorities in their editorial areas. This is an argument that could be made in relation to the BBC and begs the question, did the early adoption of Asian programming feed into the recruitment policies and practices of BBC local radio and was it tracked?

There is a range of work which concentrates directly on race and the media; for example, Hartmann and Husband studied how the media helped to formulate 'white' beliefs about immigrants to Britain. Downing and Husband compare racial attitudes in the media in Britain and other countries, notably the United States. Husband as early as 1975, whilst still teaching at the University of Leicester, offers a critical look at how the 'white media' ignores 'black Britain'.⁷³ Work by Troyna compares reporting on race by BBC Radio Leicester, BBC Radio Manchester, Piccadilly Radio, the *Leicester Mercury* and the *Manchester Evening News* in 1979, finding that all of these media outlets struggled to adjust their news output to the new realities on the ground, particularly in relation to the National Front.⁷⁴ The CRE were again strong in their lobbying and research in this field arguing that the media had a role to play in tackling prejudice and providing balance in its reporting.⁷⁵ The arrival in Britain of Ugandan Asians in 1972 and in particular to Leicester is the subject of research by Eames into ITV coverage of the event nationally and locally. This shows a compassionate view of the plight of the 'refugees' in the national news but rather more critical coverage of the immigrant problem locally.⁷⁶

There is little in the existing literature about BBC local radio and how it tried to cope with the rapid mass migration, presenting a gap in the literature around the connections made by BBC local radio stations with growing Asian communities in the 1970s and 1980s. How local stations in many cases proved to be more adept at these connections than the wider BBC will be analysed comparatively across local stations through the prism of BBC Radio Leicester as a case study. It will add to the overall picture of the BBC in this period.

⁷³ P. Hartmann & Charles Husband, *Racism and the Mass Media*, (London; Davis-Pointer, 1974); J. Downing & C. Husband, *Representing Race: Racisms, Ethnicities and Media*, (London; Sage, 2005); C. Husband (Ed.), *White Britain, Black Media; A Critical Look at the Role of the Media in Race Relations Today*, (London; Arrow, 1974).

⁷⁴ B. Troyna, *Public Awareness and the Media; A Study of Reporting on Race*, (CRE; London, 1981).

⁷⁵ CRE, *Reporting on Race: The Role and Responsibility of the Press in Reporting on Race Relations*, (London: CRE, 1977); C. Jones, *Race and the Media: Thirty Years' Misunderstanding*, (CRE; London, 1982).

⁷⁶ F. Eames, 'ITV and the Ugandan Migration: A history of regional / national news archives', *Media History*, 15:4 (2009), pp. 439-469.

1.2 My positionality in this study.

Having grown up in Leicester and lived in the city for my entire life, I have both a natural affinity to my hometown and an interest as a historian in how it has changed in the post war years. I began my broadcasting career at BBC Radio Leicester in the late 1970s as a freelance on the youth programme, moving to a staff post at the station in 1982 as a station assistant. From the late 1980s I then worked across the BBC in various roles, including Head of BBC Local Radio Training in London, and Managing Editor of BBC Radios Sheffield and Nottingham. I was appointed as Managing Editor of BBC Radio Leicester in 1996 through until 2004. I am very much aware that there might be a conflict of interest or that I might be accused of ‘over playing’ the role of BBC Radio Leicester in the development of Asian programming and the position of BBC local radio within the BBC. Setting out on this research I have therefore been careful to ensure that the widest possible range of sources and evidence have been used to build up the story of Asian programming on BBC local radio.

I was surprised by the pivotal role of BBC Radio Leicester and have come to understand that it is a story about the agency of individuals within the organisation rather than individual stations. It is why the tables I have developed showing the hours of Asian programming broadcast by individual stations throughout this period is important as it adds weight and substance to the fundamental part played by BBC Radio Leicester. My role across the BBC in training has given me a unique set of contacts across the BBC and a strong grasp of where to look and what areas to examine to bring this story to life. I retired from the BBC in 2008 and have embarked on academic study. My undergraduate work on the rise and fall of the National Front in Leicester in the 1970s and my MRes study on the American ‘race riots’ in Leicester in 1944 have both added academic rigour to my journalistic curiosity. I feel therefore uniquely qualified to tackle this under researched area of media history and add new depth to the existing social history. I have a similar positionality to that of Tony Stoller, a former ILR Managing Director and IBA / RA regulator, as he put together his important history of Independent Radio in the UK.⁷⁷ Being close to the history can be both a weakness and a strength, but if the weaknesses are recognised it can provide a unique insight into the history.

⁷⁷ T. Stoller, *Sounds of Your Life*.

1.3 Sources used in this study.

This study has used a range of written archives, both public and private, to bring the widest range of material to this research. Some, like the small archives in BBC local radio stations, are rarely if ever tapped and others are held privately by former BBC staff. I believe that my positionality in this study has given me some unique opportunities to capture these sources. I am acutely aware that using a breadth of sources was important; the BBC material reflects the BBC's perspective in terms of what it decided was important to archive. Therefore, balancing the BBC material with oral histories and archival material from other sources has been an important part of this study. For example, the fact that none of the senior management – or indeed the programme makers - involved in developing and running Asian programming have yet been interviewed by the BBC oral history project adds a little to the understanding of the value the corporation placed on this programming.

Nevertheless, the BBC Written Archive Centre in Berkshire has been a vital source of original material and access was granted to later BBC material up to 1990 – although some parts were redacted by the archivists. Having worked in BBC local radio I was aware of the widest range of files, many not used by previous studies, that could reveal new information relevant to this study. These included the files of the Local Radio Advisory Councils and the bi-weekly BBC News and Current Affairs meetings which proved to be extremely useful. It was also possible by cross referencing programme billings in the *Radio Times*, copies of which are retained at the archive, and filed responses from BBC local radio managers to build up the first schedule of the development of Asian programmes across the period from 1968 to 1990. These schedules provide one of the building blocks to the thesis against which to track Asian programming across time and across England.

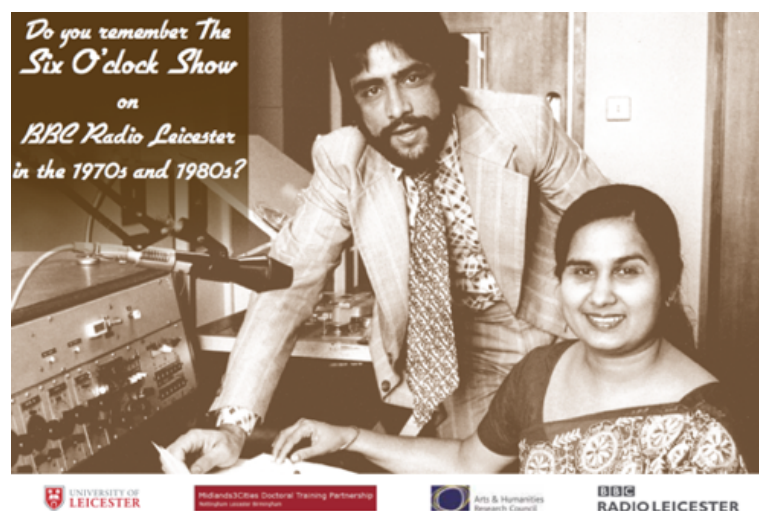
Local record offices in Leicester, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire proved invaluable for both background material, files and recordings deposited by BBC local radio stations and Community Relations Councils. The MACE archive (Media Archive of Central England) at the University of Lincoln was an important source of film material from the period, some of which had not been viewed for over 35 years and was digitised for this project. The Special Collections archive of the University of Leicester provided strong material from the papers of Professor James Dyos, the first chair of the BBC Radio Leicester Local Broadcasting Council, and the papers of David Campton, writer of *Kahani Apni Apni*, an

eighty part Asian ‘soap opera’ broadcast on BBC Radio Leicester in the 1980s. The University of Leicester also holds the *Leicester Mercury* cuttings archive, which was a significant source in identifying social and editorial changes over time in the city.

I was indebted to many of the people I interviewed who had kept small personal archives of recordings, photographs and documents that have added greatly to the range of material for this study. Owen Bentley had retained a set of relevant files from the 1980s which had been rejected by the BBC WAC – these should in due course be archived by the BBC, or the Special Collections archive at the University of Leicester.

The small archives at BBC Radios Derby, Leeds, Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield were valuable in providing copies of old radio station magazines which featured copy and photographs of Asian programmes and presenters. At BBC Radio Leicester I found a complete set of black and white negatives shot for the publicity surrounding the launch of the *Six-Fifteen* programme in October 1976. One image in particular, featuring Don Kotak and Mira Trivedi was used in postcards placed in libraries, community centres and places of worship in Leicester in an effort to both publicise the project and attract former listeners for interview.

Figure 1-2 POST CARD FOR THE AUDIENCE PROJECT



Previous studies have concentrated on the available written material, files from the BBC WAC and oral history interviews. However, I felt it was important to try and capture the sound of BBC local radio and its Asian programmes through archive recordings. This has

proved to be a difficult task, but I have nevertheless been able to pull together a collection of some 20 hours of nearly 50 different clips and complete programmes from the 1970s and 1980s. These were mainly located in the private collections of the programme presenters interviewed for this project. The ‘sound’ and ‘feel’ of these recordings is placed throughout this thesis, revealing the programme techniques, content and production methods used at the time. Where the programmes were presented in South Asian languages I have been assisted in translation and editorial evaluation by Hisam Mukaddam a veteran journalist who worked at BBC Radio Leicester and the BBC Asian Network.

1.4 Oral Histories.

Oral history forms an important part of this study and ethics approval was granted by the University of Leicester to record a series of interviews with key players from the period. This included capturing the memories of Asian presenters and producers to ensure their voices are included in this important history. Thirty-two interviews were carried out across England with contributions spread across both gender and religion to gather the widest possible range of contributions.

The interviews with BBC staff and Asian programme presenters revealed common themes, from the assumption that Asian programming was underfunded, placed on the margins of the schedules and that some Asian staff faced both racism and tokenism. These themes have been tested against the evidence in the written archive; for example, the suggestions of racism at BBC Radio Leicester are confirmed by a case of racial abuse in the minutes of a Union / Management liaison meeting in the early 1980s. In any event the subjective experience of the interviewees make an important contribution to this study. My broadcast experience was useful in conducting these particular interviews, according to Thompson a good background knowledge of the working routines and environment of the participants is an important factor in getting a strong interview.⁷⁸ My detailed knowledge of the production and management processes in BBC local radio gained the confidence of the participants, who were able to speak in greater depth about the subject, knowing that I understood the broadcast environment in which they operated. However, I recognise that

⁷⁸ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, (Oxford University Press; Oxford, 2000), p. 224.

this might also be a weakness as both interviewer and interviewee make assumptions about the depth of knowledge each has, and some things may be left unsaid.

Only limited formal audience surveys were undertaken into listening to Asian programming in the 1970s and 1980s. Two crucial studies at BBC Radio Leicester in 1977 and 1985 showed that up to nine out of ten members the local Asian population tuned into the station's Asian programmes. Interviewing members of the audience to the programmes at BBC Radio Leicester for this project was more problematic, people were recruited through the outreach and dissemination work set out below, but all were 'self-selecting' participants and therefore positive towards the programme. As Dhoest suggests interviews with former audience members are not about precise memories of programmes more about the 'lived experience' and the importance of media 'in daily life'.⁷⁹ The aim in these interviews was therefore to add depth to the quantitative evidence available in the existing audience research and to try and capture how they listened - usually in family groups - and what the programme brought to their daily life in Leicester.

1.5 Broadcast Dissemination and Outreach.

An important part of this research has been to reach out to the Asian communities in England. This has been done through interviews on the surviving Asian programmes on BBC local radio and through newspaper appeals for 'lost' programme recordings. This had the effect of engaging the present Asian programme presenters in both BBC local radio and ILR in the project and they in turn searched for early presenters from their stations and old recordings from private sources. On Sunday 19 November 2017 I was interviewed live on the Asian programmes of ten BBC local radio stations;

- BBC Radio Bristol – with Radio Gloucestershire and BBC Wiltshire
- BBC Radio Derby
- BBC Radio Nottingham
- BBC Radio Manchester – with BBC Radio Lancashire
- BBC Radio Northampton
- BBC Radio Leeds
- BBC Radio Sheffield

⁷⁹ A. Dhoest, 'Audience retrospection as a source of historiography: Oral history interviews on early television experiences', *European Journal of Communication*, 30.1, (2015), pp. 64-78.

These interviews were important and provided important contacts for the early pioneer presenters, and their privately held recordings.

Six O'clock Show Live! and an Asian Programme Exhibition.

These two events were conceived to build on the dissemination of my work to the Asian community in Leicester and deliver the following outcomes;

- to find memories of the *Six O'clock Show* from former listeners to the programme;
- connect former staff from the programme with the wider history and context of the show;
- reach current listeners to the radio station with the social and media history surrounding the development of this programme and immigration particularly in the 1970s.

Funding for the event and exhibition came from the University of Leicester, the Midlands4Cities consortium and the BBC. In the run up to the event a five-part series, *The Patel's of Belgrave*, was broadcast on the BBC Radio Leicester breakfast show at 7.55 each morning (23 – 27 April 2018). The series told the story of a fictional family living in Leicester in the 1970s. Each piece made use of my PhD research and audio archive material I had found. I worked with the writer to build up a picture of the potential life of each family member which he then took as a basis for scripts. It drew on a recording of *Kahani Apni Apni* a soap opera of the daily life of the Patel family in Leicester first broadcast in 1983.

A trailer was run on the station from 23-27 April using archive material to 'plug' the live event on 29 April. The stations RAJAR listening figures suggest this will have been heard by up to 168,000 listeners during the broadcast week. In addition, Kamlesh Purohit, the Assistant Editor of BBC Radio Leicester, joined me on the *628 Show* on Sabras Radio on 23 April. Presenter Kash Kumar, who it turned out was a former listener to the *Six O'clock Show*, gave us around 20 minutes of airtime in which we were able to 'plug' the live event to the stations predominantly Asian audience.

The ‘*Six O’clock Show Live!*’ event was held from 6 o’clock on Sunday 29 April 2018. It was broadcast live from the BBC Leicester Open Centre in front of an audience of 120 former listeners and featured interviews with presenters and listeners to the programme from the 1970s and 1980s. Former presenters included Don Kotak, Vijay Sharma, Rabia Raza and Mike Allbut from the original late 1970s line up. They made valuable contributions to the live programme which enhanced the oral history interviews I have recorded with them.

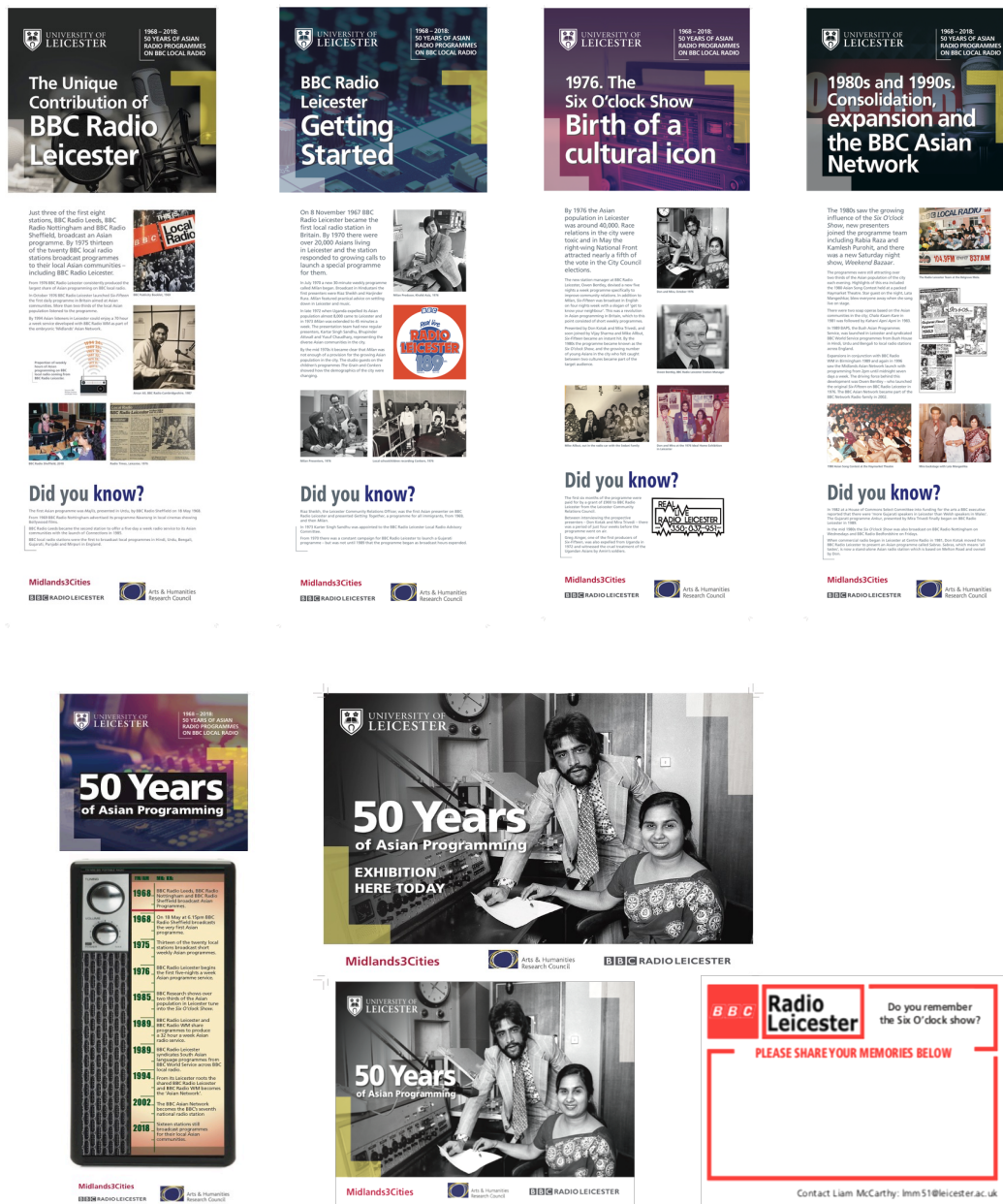
Figure 1-3 FORMER BBC LEICESTER PRESENTERS AT ‘SIX O’CLOCK SHOW LIVE!’



Left to right; Mike Allbut, Rabia Raza, Kamlesh Purohit, Vijay Sharma, Don Kotak

An exhibition was opened at the event and stayed open for the following week. This comprised of video, audio and printed material. The video used archive footage from the radio station in the 1980s, audio and photographs of the 1980 Asian Song Contest at the Haymarket theatre in Leicester and two MACE (Media Archive of Central England) films about BBC Leicester’s Asian programmes. There was also a listening post playing audio streams of a complete 1977 *Six O’clock Show* and a 1987 *Weekend Bazaar*.

Figure 1-4 SAMPLE 50th EXHIBITION BOARDS, BANNERS & POSTCARDS.



The printed material focussed on a series of seven boards which put the contribution of BBC Radio Leicester into the wider context of 50 years of Asian Broadcasting on BBC local radio. Material gathered at this event is in the chapters about BBC Radio Leicester in this thesis. The exhibition to mark fifty years of Asian programming ran in the BBC reception for two separate weeks with the second showing to capture the audience invited to a BBC public event on Jubilee Square, just outside the BBC building on 15 September 2018. The BBC event was designed to mark five decades of Asian Life in Leicester and was inspired by the research for this project. It centred around an outdoor cinema showing

of *Jadoo* an Asian comedy film shot in Leicester and featured a stage show in which some of my research was turned into interpretive dance.⁸⁰ An example of the stage show included the sequence below on racism in Leicester and the rise of the National Front.

Figure 1-5 NUPUR ARTS INTERPRETIVE DANCE.



BBC Radio Leicester

The festival was well attended, and formal credits were given to the M4C, AHRC, and the University of Leicester, it was funded by the BBC and the Arts Council.

Figure 1-6 BBC ASIAN LIFE FESTIVAL 2018



BBC Radio Leicester

⁸⁰ Trailer for *Jadoo*, filmed in Belgrave in Leicester in 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG148sGqlvA> (Accessed 12 July 2019).

As a result of this study BBC local radio stations have become more aware of their own history in the story of British Asian Radio and BBC Radio Leeds and BBC Radio Sheffield broadcast their own special anniversary programmes as a direct response to this research. I believe this outreach was critical to the project. It brought a new understanding of how vital this programming was in the 1970s and 1980s. There was a feeling of this history being ignored and there was a recognition by people I interviewed that at last ‘their history’ was being told. This was especially so as in the BBC local radio fiftieth celebrations in 2017 ethnic programming was largely ignored. As a former BBC station manager, I felt that for the first time I understood how this programming made a difference to communities and individuals, in many cases helping them to feel confident in their identity and their place in British society.

1.6 The Thesis Format.

A thematic approach to this thesis would have relied on chronology in each chapter on for example, the South Asian diaspora, technology or programmes. Therefore, the thesis is written in a chronological format tracking the demonstrable and clear changes over time in terms of programme development, technology and the Asian communities across England.

1. **1965–1975; A decade of ‘Reithian’ paternalism.** This chapter argues that as BBC local radio began its Asian programming it did so as a marginal activity. With little money and staffing the first stations managers effectively outsourced these programmes to Community Relations Councils. This lack of BBC ‘ownership’ left the programmes on the margins of the schedules and the radio stations, matching how Asian communities themselves were regarded in British society at this time.
2. **1976; Kick Starting British Asian Radio in Leicester.** A set of circumstances unique to Leicester in 1976 combined leading to the launch of Britain’s first daily Asian programme. This chapter analyses these factors and argues that this programme aimed at both improving community relations and reaching out to a young second generation was the starting point for British Asian radio.

3. **1976–1984: Policy, programmes and Asian communities disconnected.** This chapter analyses the disconnect between developing BBC policy on ethnic minorities and what happened on air. I argue that though this was a period of stasis in the hours of programming, questions of identity within Asian communities came to the fore through the issue of the choice of language of programme presentation.
4. **1985-1990; Technology, Identity and Regional Divergence.** In this period new technology and changes in regulation allowed BBC local radio managers to increase the number of hours of programming available. A new regional management structure for BBC local radio revealed considerable further divergence in Asian programming across England and the rise of second-generation presenters keen to assert their identity as young British and Asian.
5. **1989; Super serving the Asian communities of Leicester.** This final part of the Leicester case study explores the super-serving of the Asian community in Leicester by the existing media. Led by BBC Radio Leicester the local media began to view the Asian communities as consumers rather than ‘problematic immigrants’, helping to build social cohesion in the city.
6. **Conclusion.** The conclusion argues that BBC local radio built significant connections between the BBC and Asian communities which changes the perception of the BBC in this period. It argues that the independence of BBC managers meant they were able to both recognise and support the needs of a young British Asians, and that this independence still has relevance in the BBC today. I also argue that BBC Radio Leicester was an early exemplar of the radio station as a player in the field of social cohesion.

1.7 Conclusion

This thesis brings new understanding to the story of the development of British Asian radio through the work of BBC local radio. It is a story of individuals in the BBC that drove this programming forward, often against the grain of opinion and practice within the corporation. By comparing and contrasting Asian programming across BBC local radio it has marked out the crucial role played by BBC Radio Leicester and highlights the potential

for local radio stations to influence social cohesion in their localities. In the 1980s BBC local radio switched Asian programmes to medium wave transmitters as a way of decreasing simulcasting on scarce transmitter frequencies and it became possible to listen to some BBC local radio stations on FM without hearing any Asian programming. This accentuated the problem of how to integrate programme content affecting minority communities into sharp focus, no more so than in Leicester with its extensive Asian programme offering on medium wave. This problem, which has become an ongoing issue right across the BBC to this day, was faced first in BBC local radio and encompassed staffing, recruitment, training, editorial and management policies.

A little over fifty years on from the first Asian programme on BBC local Radio at Sheffield in May 1968 the question of how to integrate the interests and concerns of Asian communities across Britain into the daytime schedules of BBC local radio is still a live issue. Understanding how BBC local radio – or some of the stations at least – managed to connect with Asian communities in the 1970s and 1980s has lessons for the present day, around recruitment, training and tackling diversity.

Chapter 2 1965 – 1975: A decade of ‘Reithian’ paternalism.

The roots of ethnic minority programming on the BBC’s domestic radio services can be traced back to July 1965 and two conferences with immigrant groups chaired by the Director General, Sir Hugh Carleton Greene. The conferences were hosted by the BBC at the request of the Wilson government and aimed at assessing how broadcasting could assist the integration of immigrants to Britain. Staff from the Ministry of Economic Affairs provided the guest lists which included 161 representatives of community organisations and the High Commissioners of India, Pakistan and the Caribbean Islands.¹ The first meeting was attended by representatives of Indian and Pakistani organisations in Britain and the second by delegates from the West Indian communities. The outcomes of the meetings were markedly different, showing a ‘strong desire for special programmes for Asians in this country’ which was not matched by the delegates to the ‘West Indian’ meeting which felt ‘no wish to have special programmes for themselves’ but sought better representation on air.² This latter result held back broadcasting to black communities in Britain for almost two decades while the BBC focused ‘their pro-integration efforts almost exclusively on Asian immigrants’.³ The launch of BBC local radio in 1967 and the programming that it developed for ‘immigrants’ took its lead from the Immigrants Programme Unit and its exclusively Asian programming set up in Birmingham as a result of those meetings in July 1965.

This chapter will assess how the BBC addressed the question of serving the growing Asian communities in the period from 1965 when the first national ‘Asian’ programme on the Home Service began. It will include the launch of the first eight experimental BBC local radio stations between 1967 and 1970 through to the establishment of the twenty licence fee funded local radio stations by 1975. It will argue that the radio programme *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* (Make Yourself at Home) presented in Hindustani on the BBC Home Service in October 1965 set the tone for an ‘unofficial’ policy of Asian programming on BBC local radio through to 1975. This policy was based on what Saha

¹ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*: pp. 26-27.

² BBC WAC File R4/93/1, Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, BBC Memorandum, *Broadcasting and Racial Minorities*, November 1975, p.1.

³ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, p. 35.

has argued were paternalistic ‘Reithian’ values of public service held by the corporation.⁴ The first BBC local radio Asian programmes developed in a piecemeal fashion across the stations and by 1975 BBC local radio was collectively broadcasting thirteen short Asian radio programmes in England, producing a total of seven hours of output each week on eleven local stations.⁵

This chapter will therefore address five key areas, firstly, how developing BBC Policy provided a loose framework for the new BBC local radio stations; secondly, how the need for Asian programming was assessed across the country; thirdly, argue that many stations effectively ‘contracted out’ this programming as ‘access programmes’ through Community Relations Officers; fourthly, that this meant the role of the Asian pioneer presenters lacked critical editorial direction; and fifthly, uses BBC Radio Leicester as a case study to capture the social and political dynamics of the period.

2.1 Existing BBC Policy

Within weeks of the conferences of July 1965 the BBC set up an Immigrants Programmes Unit (IPU) in Birmingham, supported by an Immigrants Programmes Advisory Committee drawn from those who attended the meetings including the High Commissioners of India and Pakistan. The delicate balancing act between representing immigrants from India and Pakistan was thrown into focus before the first programmes were broadcast when the two countries went to war over the disputed territory of Kashmir in September 1965.⁶ The Unit was set up in Birmingham even though the BBC’s own figures showed the majority of Indian and Pakistani immigrants lived in London.⁷ Based in Birmingham the new unit was separated from the BBC’s decision-making processes and the controllers of BBC Television and Radio who commissioned programmes and controlled the budgets. This was to prove to be a continuing problem for the unit. Media historian Anamik Saha contends that the continuing marginalisation of programming that represent black and Asian life is over fifty years later still a factor constraining the work of black and Asian cultural producers.⁸ An example of this includes the 2016 decision by

⁴ A. Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries*, (Polity; London, 2018), p.103.

⁵ Analysis of the *Radio Times* and BBC WAC sources – see Appendix One.

⁶ See; R. Brines, *The Indo-Pakistan Conflict*, (Pall Mall; London 1968).

⁷ R. Hooper, *Colour in Britain*, (BBC; London, 1965), p.17.

⁸ A. Saha, Scheduling Race, in S. Malik & D.M. Newton, *Adjusting the Contrast: British Television and Constructs of Race*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2017), p. 66.

the BBC to place its new 'Centre of Excellence for Diversity' in Birmingham, this attracted criticism from commentators who argued 'its staff will be far removed from the centre of power, from their own communities and from 98% of TV production'.⁹ However, the backing of the DG in 1965 in setting up the Immigrants Programme Unit at least ensured that money was carved from the existing television and radio budgets to fund it – although there were constant pleas for more funds from the unit. For example, in 1976 management in Birmingham unsuccessfully sought permission from the Director of Public Affairs to seek external funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation or the European Commission to support the output of the unit.¹⁰

The IPU launched its thirty-minute weekly radio programme *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* on the BBC Home Service in October 1965 at 8.10 am on Sunday mornings. Malik describes these programmes as 'classic public service broadcasts'.¹¹ The producer, David Gretton, who had been born in British India, outlined the aims of the programme in the *Radio Times*;

This service will make no attempt to 'integrate' its audience; though to the extent they are willing to 'assimilate' we shall be on their side. We hope to serve them, and we shall not be ashamed to entertain them as well.¹²

Malik argues that this suggestion by Gretton shows that the BBC was not at ease with the assimilationist agenda that this new narrowcasting to Asian communities offered.¹³ In a radio interview to publicise the programme Gretton casually highlighted the paternalistic nature of the BBC's response to the Broadcasting House meetings and the setting up of the Immigrants Programme Unit;

All our contacts so far have been with educated, English speaking, Indians and Pakistanis in this country, they all welcome it, they say this is just what's needed and in fact why didn't you get on with it sooner. And they say that never before has there been this real

⁹ S. Albury, The BBC's diversity strategy is not good enough, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/may/04/the-bbcs-diversity-strategy-is-not-good-enough>, (Accessed 4 July 2019).

¹⁰ BBC WAC, File R34 / 1303 / 2, Policy: Immigrants, Letter from J. Grist, C.E.R., to K. Lamb, DPA, 27 August 1976,

¹¹ S. Malik, *Representing black Britain: A History of Black and Asian Images on British Television*, (Sage; London, 2002), p.57

¹² *Radio Times*, 7 October 1965.

¹³ S. Malik, *Representing black Britain*, p.57

attempt to meet the illiterate, and they often are illiterate, Indian and Pakistani industrial workers and meet his needs.¹⁴

The programme was produced in a basic Hindustani which the *Radio Times* assured its readers;

... can be understood (even if it is not used in daily speech) by nearly all the immigrants who have come and are coming to this country from India and Pakistan.¹⁵

However, the language choice was to prove problematic to Asian communities, the BBC's production staff and listeners to the BBC Home Service.¹⁶ Of the '1,652 languages and dialects in the subcontinent' the BBC argued that Hindustani was 'the nearest approach to a "lingua Indica"'.¹⁷ Hindustani had colonial links as the language of the British Raj; civil servants and army staff took written Hindustani exams before their appointment to roles in British India. Hindustani failed to take off across India - apart from a 'basic street language of around 500 words' - and as a common language it was an illusion.¹⁸ Yet it was this basic language that the BBC argued would 'enable the maximum possible network communication to take place'.¹⁹ The five main languages from the Indian subcontinent spoken in Britain were (in alphabetical order) Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu and the BBC's choice of Hindustani had little to offer some speakers of these languages. This policy decision on language was the cause of ongoing correspondence from Asian listeners and viewers, many arguing that other languages such as Bengali, Punjabi or Gujarati should feature. One letter from 1974 in the BBC's files suggested Hindustani 'should have died with the departure of the British Army for which it was created'.²⁰ The irritation of BBC managers about constant lobbying on the language issue is evident in the files of the Immigrant Programmes Unit. John Grist, then Acting Controller of English Regions in Birmingham and editorially responsible for the output of the IPU, wrote to the Controllers of BBC Radio and

¹⁴ BBC News Interview, David Gretton, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/people-nation-empire/make-yourself-at-home>, (Accessed 3 July 2019).

¹⁵ *Radio Times*, 7 October 1965. D. Gretton, 'Programmes for Immigrants from India and Pakistan', see History of the BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0354c03> (Accessed 11 January 2018).

¹⁶ For example, see Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, pp. 36-38.

¹⁷ BBC Memorandum, Broadcasting and Racial Minorities, p.3.

¹⁸ A. Safidi, *The Colonial Construction of Hindustani: 1800-1947*, (PhD Thesis), p.200. See https://research.gold.ac.uk/8026/1/History_thesis_Safadi.pdf (Accessed 11 January 2018).

¹⁹ BBC, 'Broadcasting and Racial Minorities', p.4.

²⁰ BBC WAC File, R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ, Minorities Programmes, Letter from the *Mancunian Indian* news sheet to Controller, BBC local Radio, 31 July 1974.

Television, who had expressed some ongoing hesitation to him about hosting these programmes on their networks;

I have been talking to some of my chums in the Race Relations business and they suggest we might create an almighty stink if we bailed out of the Immigrants programme at present. Although I have a great sympathy with those that have to cope with the tedious problems created by the multiplicity of languages and the irascibility of that particular type of humanity, all of my instincts are at present to stick with the status quo. It might be possible on a first step to deal with the radio programme but CR4 [Controller Radio 4], like myself, believes we should proceed with caution.²¹

This memorandum highlights the prevalent perception in the British media in this period that immigrants were a problem and the staff within the BBC reflected that view. It also reinforced the view among Asian communities that colonial attitudes still prevailed. As Charles Husband noted in 1975;

To be a black resident of this country is to be subject to a continuous assault on your integrity. Your presence in this country is signalled to you as being unreal since the news media refuse to see you as a citizen, but as an immigrant.²²

This was a view echoed by Dipak Nandy, a future Chair of the BBC's Asian Programmes Advisory Committee. Writing to the BBC in 1965 as Chair of the Leicester Campaign for Race Equality, Nandy pointed out that the BBC had suffered a 'failure of nerve' by not tackling race relations issues in anything other than a neutral manner and therefore allowing 'myths and untruths' to go unquestioned.²³ Before *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* went on air the BBC rather proved Nandy's point as a proposed 'newsletter' feature of topical news events was dropped from the programme for fear it could prove to be controversial and divisive, instead a menu of music, education and language instruction was agreed upon.²⁴ This policy set the tone for BBC local radio programming, some of which also spurned controversial local and international news topics through into the 1980s and beyond.

²¹ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from John Grist to MD. Tel., MDR, GMLR & others, Immigrants Programme Unit, 22 February 1972.

²² C. Husband, 'Racism in Society and the Mass Media', in C. Husband (Ed.), *White Media and Black Britain: A Critical Look at the Role of the Media in Race Relations Today*, (Arrow; London, 1975), p.27.

²³ BBC WAC File, N25/175/1, Immigrants Programmes – General, Letter from the Leicester Campaign for Race Equality to the BBC, 'Race Relations and the BBC', July 1965.

²⁴ See, D. Newton, *Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2011). p. 122.

When the BBC was given the go-ahead by the government to set up licence fee funded local radio stations successive Controllers of BBC Radio Four campaigned to have *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* removed from the network, proposing to pass the responsibility for producing Asian radio to the local stations. The BBC Local Radio Headquarters unit was first alerted to this by discussions in the Programme Review Board (PRB) of 22 April 1970 in which Network Departments in London had suggested switching the programme to local radio 'as soon as they were all in operation' and agreed 'no time should be lost in approaching the different BBC Local Radio Advisory Councils about the proposal'.²⁵ Within a fortnight on 11 May, Patrick Beech, the Controller of English Regions and responsible for the Immigrant Programmes Unit was arguing the counter case to DPA summing up his opposition to the move in four key points; *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* was a national DG led commitment to immigrant communities; a centrally produced mandatory programme would dilute the editorial independence of local radio managers; it would be too costly to fund local programmes of the same quality; and, the BBC's Immigrant Programmes Advisory Council (IPAC) would be difficult to persuade. A second attempt to prepare the ground was made in 1972 by Controller Radio 4 who wrote to the Controller of English Regions (CER) arguing;

The programme was launched as an emergency measure on Radio 4 to fill the gap until the wave of immigrants who got in before the door was shut had learned enough English. Enough time has now elapsed for that to have happened, but I would not propose with any conviction that we drop the programme completely. We could not afford to look like we had lost interest in this important cause. However, there are good practical reasons for a change of outlet.²⁶

Interestingly this letter had begun by suggesting CER was 'the keeper of the BBC's conscience on immigrant programmes' by inference removing all responsibility from the networks in London and emphasising the marginal nature of this output. The argument for dropping the programme was based on the irritation it caused to white listeners after transmitter changes;

²⁵ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from Patrick Beech, CER; to HLRD; 'Immigrant Programmes on Local Radio', 5 May 1970,.

²⁶ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from CR4 to CER, 'Programmes For Immigrants', 11 May 1972,

So those listeners in the South and West who have been spared the programme so far because there are so few immigrants there will, for the first time be deprived, on mw, of their religious programme and given Indian pop records instead.²⁷

In an attempt to slowly kill the programme, *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiyi* was next moved to an earlier Sunday morning timeslot of 7.15 am, which the BBC noted 'is admittedly a less convenient, though not impossible hour'.²⁸ This was a step in trying to make the programme less attractive to Asian listeners and therefore easier to drop, although this took successive Controllers until the 1980s to achieve.

In November 1975, when submitting its evidence on 'Broadcasting and Racial Minorities' to the Annan Committee, the BBC was still highlighting the 1965 meetings as part of its evidence that it was at the forefront in this area of broadcasting.²⁹ This submission highlighted the role of BBC local radio and the wide range of languages used in Asian programming across the country and the BBC argued that local radio should be the proper place for Asian programming.³⁰ This argument now had some merit and was reflected in the range of programming and languages used by BBC local radio in its Asian programming by the mid 1970s. BBC local radio station managers flexed their editorial independence early on by producing programmes in Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu, although Hindustani was still the dominant choice of presentation language. What this question of where the responsibility for Asian broadcasting should lie shows that the BBC is not a monolithic organisation but made up of a constantly changing mix of 'divisions' in news, television, radio and regional broadcasting competing for funding and editorial advantage against each other.

The developing BBC policy on Asian programming offered BBC local radio station managers a common 'BBC language' of Hindustani with which to resist lobbying for other languages, and a speech policy which avoided controversial inter-community topics. How they chose to deploy this policy is discussed below.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ BBC Memorandum, Broadcasting and Racial Minorities, p.4.

²⁹ BBC Memorandum, Broadcasting and Racial Minorities, p.4.

³⁰ Ibid., p.5.

2.2 BBC local radio: Assessing the ‘local’ need for Asian programming.

The BBC gave local station managers complete autonomy over programme policies for their areas when the eight new ‘experimental’ stations were set up in 1967 and 1968. Station managers were to decide if they should provide programmes targeted at ethnic minorities, including the growing Asian communities. The lack of reliable and demonstrable statistical information on the demographics of local Asian communities and on-going immigration made it almost impossible for station managers to base their programming on anything but the flimsiest of evidence, as confirmed by Michael Barton, the station manager at BBC Radio Sheffield at its launch in 1967;

‘Before we went on air I had probably three or four months, not much more, to get to know the community as best I could. It involved me, and other members of staff going to talk to audiences, and one of those areas was the whole field of immigrant communities’.³¹

As part of these consultations Barton met Ali Rasul, the Community Relations Officer working for Sheffield City Council;

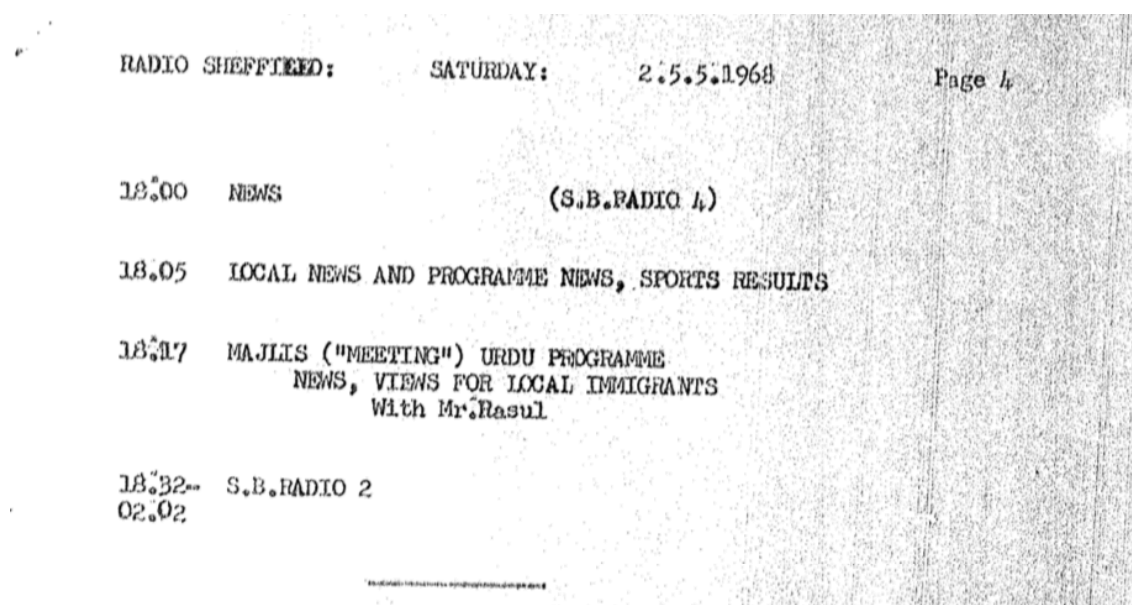
‘He told me that one of the problems we have is language and their English is very poor or in some cases with the older generation non-existent. That persuaded me that we should do a programme, not every day, but at the weekend in Urdu and later Bengali’.³²

Based on that discussion BBC Radio Sheffield became the first BBC local radio station to broadcast a programme targeted at Asian communities. Barton also became the first BBC local radio manager to decide to broadcast in Urdu rather than Hindustani, the BBC’s choice of language for network Asian programmes. This is first indication of the complete independence of station managers to make programme decisions for their areas and it was something that Barton protected when he became Controller of BBC local radio in the 1970s. The programme was launched on Saturday 18 May 1968 but was not given a proper name, *Majlis* which translates as Meeting until the following week. Ali Rasul went on to present the programme until 1979.

³¹ OHI, Michael Barton, (D.o.B. 20 July 1931), interviewed Suffolk, 25 June 2018.

³² OHI, Michael Barton.

Figure 2-1 BBC RADIO SHEFFIELD BROADCAST LOG 25 MAY 1968



RADIO SHEFFIELD:	SATURDAY:	25.5.1968	Page 4
18.00	NEWS	(S.B. RADIO 4)	
18.05	LOCAL NEWS AND PROGRAMME NEWS, SPORTS RESULTS		
18.17	MAJLIS ("MEETING") URDU PROGRAMME NEWS, VIEWS FOR LOCAL IMMIGRANTS With Mr. Rasul		
18.32- 02.02	S.B. RADIO 2		

BBC Written Archive, PasB's Local Radio (Programmes as Broadcast)

The experience of Michael Barton in Sheffield was replicated across the other BBC local radio stations. In the early 1970s there was a dearth of local demographic data on ethnicity and managers often had to take decisions on journalistic instinct. The archives of the Nottingham Community Relations Council show that even in the 1980s BBC local radio HQ was still trying to build up a detailed picture of ethnicity in local radio areas. The archive contains a letter from the BBC's Asian Programmes Officer, Vernon Corea, thanking the CRC for information provided on Asian communities in Nottingham;

This is to convey our appreciation for your kind co-operation towards gathering information about Asians in your area. We do understand that no accurate statistics are available, but the data you have provided will help us to work out an accurate picture.³³

To establish the best possible data that station managers could have had access to this study has used data from the 1971 census on the birthplace of immigrants living across local areas in England and statistics on the birthplace of new mothers produced by the Registrar General between 1969 and 1975. This shows the potential Asian audience in

³³ Nottinghamshire Archives, File, DD/CR/295/2 Broadcasting, Local Radio; Vernon Corea, BBC Asian Programmes Officer, letter to Nottingham CRC, 12 February 1981,.

each of the eleven radio station areas producing Asian programming.³⁴ This information is set out on the table below showing firstly the number of potential Asian listeners, and secondly their proportion of the local population.

Table 2-1 BBC LOCAL RADIO – POTENTIAL AUDIENCES 1975

Rank	Radio Station	Population	Rank	Radio Station	% of Population
1	London	301,237	1	Leicester	9.2
2	Birmingham	88,186	2	Birmingham	8.0
3	Leeds	29,610	3	Blackburn	7.6
4	Leicester	26,209	4	Leeds	4.0
5	Manchester	21,584	5	London	4.0
6	Medway	12,454	6	Manchester	4.0
7	Nottingham	8,072	7	Derby	3.6
8	Derby	7,874	8	Nottingham	2.7
9	Blackburn	7,755	9	Oxford	2.7
10	Sheffield	7,388	10	Sheffield	1.3
11	Oxford	2,884	11	Medway	0.9

*Sources: CRC, CRE, Registrar General.*³⁵

These figures are still severely flawed as they do not include any new arrivals to the country after the 1971 census, which rules out the impact of the Uganda crisis and the arrival of 28,608 Asians from Uganda in Britain in late 1972.³⁶ This is particularly so for Leicester as it does not reflect the 10,500 Ugandan Asians who came to live in the city after 1972, many arriving from across the country to be with family members already in the city.³⁷ A local TV report on the rise of the National Front in the city in 1976 suggested the figure for Asians in Leicester was as high as 40,000.³⁸

However, the figures do highlight that in any quantitative data on the estimated number of Asian people living in BBC local radio areas, London will always feature highest on the list. Indeed, numerically the Asian population in London was larger than the next ten BBC local radio transmission areas combined but as part of the overall population in the

³⁴ See, CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Background*, (CRE; London, 1978); and, Annual Report of the Registrar General, (OPCS: London, 1980).

³⁵ Community Relations Commission, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Data*, (CRC; London, 1974), CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Information on the Pattern of Settlement*, (CRE; London, 1978); COI, *The Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales*, (COI; London, 1980), Table 9.2.

³⁶ F. Eames, 'ITV and the Ugandan Migration', *Media History*, 15:4, (2009), pp. 453-469.

³⁷ Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, p. 2.

³⁸ ATV Today, The National Front in Leicester, TX 26 May 1976, MACE Archive, <http://www.macearchive.org/films/atv-today-26051976-national-front-leicester> (Accessed 1 November 2017).

capital Asian people were a less visible and smaller percentage of the total population than in other cities. It was therefore extremely difficult for BBC local radio station managers to be sure of the exact proportions of ethnic minorities living in their patch and much of the provision was based on instinct. In May 1972 an internal paper was drawn up within BBC local radio HQ to outline the current provision of ‘programmes for immigrants’.³⁹ The paper noted there was a debate within local radio about whether to ‘segregate matters of immigrant interest to a specific timeslot’ or ‘whether their culture should find its way into the whole range of station output’.⁴⁰ Despite drawing up lists of programming and showing the differing provision – or lack of provision – across England the paper once again highlights the absolute independence of local radio station managers to decide local programme matters for themselves;

The programme policy relating to immigrant programmes is left to the individual station. It is therefore able to organise its own output to reflect the ethnic groups within its audience so meeting local requirements as it judges most appropriate.⁴¹

Crucially there was to be no central master plan for Asian programming as station managers retained editorial control over their schedules and provision was to vary across the country.

2.3 ‘Access Programmes’: The first BBC local radio Asian programmes.

The eight BBC local radio experimental stations began broadcasting in Leicester, Brighton, Durham, Leeds, Merseyside, Nottingham, Sheffield and Stoke-on-Trent from November 1967 into 1968. They broadcast on VHF/FM transmitters, then a new technology in Britain for radio, which relied on listeners buying expensive new radios to receive local programmes. Three of these eight experimental stations, BBC Radio Sheffield, BBC Radio Nottingham and BBC Radio Leeds decided to broadcast targeted Asian programming for a combined total of one hour forty minutes a week. Nationally there was considerable press interest in the new stations and a BBC Radio Four documentary, *Radio Goes Local*, homed in on Sheffield and noted that BBC Radio

³⁹ BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LRHQ, Minorities Programmes Internal Paper, Summary of BBC Local Radio Programmes for Immigrants, May 1972.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Sheffield was broadcasting a programme in Urdu; so, the presenter asked with some irony; ‘how many Urdu speaking VHF radio owners might there be in Sheffield?’⁴² However, it was Michael Barton, the Station Manager, who had the last laugh, as he reported to Local Radio Headquarters in London;

This programme is broadcast weekly at 6.30 pm on a Saturday night when many Indians and Pakistanis are getting together for a social evening. It has been known for up to 100 of them to gather together to listen to the programme.⁴³

For Barton, this was an important programme development, as was the later introduction of a ten-minute Bengali section of the programme;

I am constantly receiving letters asking us to step up the number of broadcasts in Bengali or for more airtime. For myself the experiment has paid off and has now become a regular commitment on Radio Sheffield.⁴⁴

Practical difficulties in putting Asian programming on air included the tight staffing levels on the new stations and the BBC agreement with the Musicians Union that it could devote only a limited amount of airtime to playing records, the so called ‘needle time’ agreement, which severely curtailed and restricted the playing of records on air; a major part of Asian programming.

BBC Radio Nottingham began broadcasting *Nawrang* in Hindustani in late 1968 and hit upon the unique idea of advertising the programme on cinema screens before the showing of Bollywood films. However, the precarious nature of relying on volunteer presenters for the programme was highlighted by Gerald Nethercott, the Station manager, in a memo to Local Radio Headquarters;

Nawrang had to be rested in the summer as the presenter went to India to get married. He told us he was only going to be away for a month, but nobody has heard of him since. We have now found another presenter through the Community Relations Council and the programme will restart in October.⁴⁵

⁴² University of Leicester Special Collections, Dyos Papers, ULA, 104/2/2, Script, *Radio Goes Local*, BBC Radio Four, TX 18 February 1968.

⁴³ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1, Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes Memo from Manager, Radio Sheffield to Local Radio HQ; ‘Immigrant Programmes’, 14 December 1970.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from Manager, Radio Nottingham to Local Radio HQ, ‘Immigrant Programmes’, 28 September 1970.

The note from Nethercott also showed the difficulty of organising and maintaining such a programme;

As long as we can continue to do it without much staff effort it is probably worthwhile doing so, but if it had to become a staff chore of a major kind, then I should have to drop it. Therefore, everything depends on the new presenter.⁴⁶

The erratic nature of the off-air / on-air status of *Nawrang* in its early years at BBC Radio Nottingham is perhaps not a reflection of the commitment of the station to serving Asian audiences, but more about the difficulty of an all-white production team having the contacts and skills to make significant connections with local communities.

The third experimental station to produce an Asian programme was BBC Radio Leeds which began broadcasting a programme in Hindustani from late 1968. Called *Jhalak*, the programme was presented by members of the Indian Workers Association who had approached the station requesting a programme be started.⁴⁷ However, the station went further in engaging with the anti-immigration arguments of Enoch Powell, and in late 1968 broadcast a series of special programmes highlighting the benefits of immigration to Yorkshire. Station manager Phil Sidey reported to his Local Radio Advisory Committee;

After the second immigration speech of Enoch Powell Radio Leeds put out a series of programmes called 'Black Rose' with the help of Eric Butterworth and had received praise in Parliament'.⁴⁸

Butterworth was a lecturer in Community Studies at the University of York and in 1975 was awarded an OBE for his work in the field of race relations.⁴⁹ The programme was introduced by local MP Merlyn Rees, then the Home Office minister with responsibility for race relations and Sidey recalled the programme with pride in his memoir of the first two years of BBC Radio Leeds;

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ BBC Radio Leeds Station Magazine, 1975, BBC Radio Leeds Archive.

⁴⁸ BBC WAC File, R81/10/1 Radio Leeds Minutes, 1968-1973, Radio Leeds LRAC Minutes, 7 January 1969.

⁴⁹ Eric Butterworth Obituary, *The Guardian* 5 June 2006.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jun/05/guardianobituaries.highereducation> (Accessed 19 September 2017).

We might well have been the first British radio station to take a political stance ... After Mr. Enoch Powell's first and most notorious 'rivers of blood' speech we felt a counter blast was needed from multi-racial Leeds. Within forty-eight hours of the speech (and after a young black girl working for us burst into tears saying that for the first time in her life she felt herself to be a foreigner), we launched a series of six programmes called *The Black Rose*.... Mike [the producer Mike McGowan] was interviewed on national radio and was asked: 'Do you think it is right to use BBC airtime to take a political issue of this sort?' He gave a carefully thought-out and comprehensive answer: 'Yes'.⁵⁰

Overall, Sidey, expressed rather more faith in his ethnic programmes than Gerald Nethercott at BBC Radio Nottingham when he suggested to BBC Local Radio Headquarters that 'we intend this service to run virtually for ever'.⁵¹

Of the other four experimental stations in Merseyside, Stoke, Brighton and Durham none had decided to broadcast an Asian programme. Rex Bawden, the Station Manager of BBC Radio Merseyside saw little need in such provision;

'Programmes for Immigrants. We do none at all. Peculiar position in Merseyside where large scale 'immigration' took place in the Nineteenth century and relatively little since means this section of the community is virtually integrated. Almost all are English speaking and regard themselves as Merseysiders and lame ducks like the rest of us. Hence no need for special programmes'.⁵²

It would be 1981 and under a new station manager before BBC Radio Merseyside decided to broadcast an Asian programme. After the two-year local radio experiment came to an end the stations were deemed by the government to have been successful enough for the BBC to establish a licence fee funded local radio service. In reaching this conclusion the Heath government noted in the 1971 White Paper on radio;

The Government envisages that the Corporation's stations will attach first importance to serving a wide variety of minority audiences.⁵³

⁵⁰ P. Sidey, *Hello Mrs Butterfield: The hilarious story of 'Radio Irreverent', the first two years of BBC Radio Leeds*, (Kestrel Press; Claverdon, Warks, 1994), p. 139.

⁵¹ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from Manager, Radio Leeds to Local Radio HQ, 'Immigrant Programmes', 16 September 1970.

⁵² BBC WAC File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Telex message from Rex Bawden to Local Radio HQ, 'Immigrant Programmes', 14 September 1970.

⁵³ CMND 5636, 1971 White Paper: An Alternative System of Radio Broadcasting, (HMSO; London, 1971)

This laid down a marker for the BBC to serve minorities better, something that a study published in 1972 by the University of Leicester asserted the experimental stations had failed to achieve, arguing ‘the case for the community value of local radio remains unproven’.⁵⁴ Seven of the experimental stations were retained and an expansion of the service included new stations in twelve other English locations; Birmingham, Blackburn, Bristol, Derby, Humberside, London, Manchester, Medway, Newcastle, Oxford, Solent and Teeside. One of the original experimental stations, BBC Radio Durham was closed, with the operation transferred to a new location in Carlisle. With London, Birmingham, Blackburn and Manchester included in the roll-out it might be expected that these new stations would engage with Asian communities in their areas.

The small operating budgets of the BBC local radio stations meant the station managers had to be creative about funding ‘minority’ programming. The Local Radio Handbook provided to stations by the BBC recognised this and outlined how ‘access programming’ could be used as a vehicle to offer programming for community groups;

Programme time may be offered to any group, association, organisation, community or consortium of individuals with views or activities which are not represented on the air in the course of other programming, and whose purpose is not to represent or promote a political party or group, or to pursue an industrial dispute.⁵⁵

It was through this ‘access programme’ route most of the early Asian programmes were in effect outsourced to local Community Relations Councils and their local expertise and contacts. The BBC guidance for local radio station managers on access programming noted there should be no advertising, incitement to riot, personal attacks, appeals for money or ‘no racialism or attempts to incite racist feeling’.⁵⁶ When television producers used this method in the 1970s for programme strands such as *Open Door*, editorial considerations were stretched to breaking point when access was given to *The British Campaign to Stop Immigration* in 1976. Nevertheless, Malik argues that *Open Door*, adapted from BBC local radio access programming, allowed a change in the dynamics of production with black people becoming more involved.⁵⁷ In BBC local radio

⁵⁴ A. Wells and J. West, *Local Radio and the Community*, Final Report, (Centre for Mass Communications Research; Leicester, 1972), p.12.

⁵⁵ BBC Local Radio Handbook, Amended June 1973, Access Programmes, BBC Radio Nottingham Archive.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Malik, *Representing Black Britain*, p. 48.

Asian ‘access’ programming in this period proved to be less editorially challenging than *Open Door* – but did allow Asian presenters to get a foothold in broadcasting.

This study has compiled a list of BBC local radio Asian programming so that its provision and growth can be tracked chronologically across England. As the table below shows by 1975 eleven of the twenty BBC local radio stations were producing programmes for Asian communities in their editorial areas, a total output growing from under two hours on three stations in 1969 to over seven hours – excluding repeats - on eleven stations in 1975.

Table 2-2 BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMME PROVISION 1969-1975

Station	1969 – 3 Stations	1972 – 10 Stations	1975 – 11 Stations
Birmingham	= not on air or no Asian programming	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Blackburn		<i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujrati/Urdu – 30 minutes	<i>Mehfil</i> ; off air awaiting a re-launch.
Derby		<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindustani -30 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindustani -30 mins.
Leeds	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali – 30 minutes.	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali – 30 minutes
Leicester		<i>Milan</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes	<i>Milan</i> ; Hindustani – 45 minutes
London		<i>Jharoka</i> ; Hindustani and <i>Darpan</i> ; Bengali – 25 minutes each.	<i>Jharoka</i> ; Hindustani and <i>Darpan</i> ; Bengali – 25 minutes each.
Manchester		<i>Eastwards Northwestwards</i> ; English / Urdu – 30 minutes.	<i>Eastwards Northwestwards</i> ; English / Urdu – 2 x 30 minutes.
Medway			<i>Sangam</i> ; - Hindustani – 30 minutes fortnightly.
Nottingham	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 40 minutes.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 40 minutes.
Oxford		<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.
Sheffield	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.
Total Hours	1 hour 45 minutes	6 hours 20 minutes	7 hours 5 minutes

Source: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.

The language used was predominantly Hindustani, used by seven stations, but Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali are also in evidence as stations asserted some editorial divergence from the programmes of the BBC’s Immigrant Programme Unit. The duration of programmes did not vary much between stations although BBC Radio Birmingham was

an outlier with an hour-long record request programme, *East in West*, presented in English each week and targeted in turn at the Indian and Pakistani audiences. BBC Radio Birmingham had launched in November 1970 and had the luxury of being based in Pebble Mill, the same building as the Immigrants Programme Unit. This gave it access to the guests that visited the Unit and its expertise. Despite this advantage the minutes of the BBC Radio Birmingham Local Radio Advisory Council (LRAC) reveal an ongoing debate about changing the format of the request programmes to add feature material. The debate continued without any change in the programme format through to 1975 when the Programme Organiser, Bryan Harris, told the LRAC;

In April we would be introducing topical and magazine elements into *East in West* and later launching a full-scale magazine programme for immigrants.⁵⁸

A year later these elements had still not been introduced into *East in West* further frustrating LRAC members. BBC Radio Birmingham did launch a series of programmes with the various Community Relations Councils in its patch in 1976 but this failed to tackle the lack of aspiration for its targeted Asian programme.

The table above shows that in 1975 *Mehfil*, the Asian programming at BBC Radio Blackburn, was not on air and awaiting a relaunch, having been taken off air in taken off-air in August the previous year. There was a general antipathy towards Asians by white residents in Blackburn which was captured by journalist Jeremy Seabrook who recorded some strong comments about immigration of local people in a book, an example includes;

In a few years, the way they are breeding, they'll take over. They get everything that's going. Who's paying for their houses, that's what I would like to know?⁵⁹

Seabrook's account of the racial tension in the town was written in 1971 the same year that BBC Radio Blackburn went on air. *Mehfil* began within weeks of the station launching and the LRAC minutes of February 1973 gave some of the background of the difficult birth of the programme;

⁵⁸ BBC WAC File, R81/2/1 Radio WM Minutes, 1970 -1977, BBC Radio Birmingham, LRAC Minutes, 9 April 1973.

⁵⁹ J. Seabrook, *City Close Up*, (Allen Lane; London, 1971), p.51.

The two presenters of this programme had been chosen by open audition and translation tests – dissension among immigrant groups being rife at the time – and they emerged as not only the most efficient performers, but also the only ones with the time to devote to the project. It was known that both had strong political affiliations, but this had proved an advantage, in that their broadcasts were carefully monitored and any deviation from unbiased broadcasting immediately brought to our attention.⁶⁰

This was part of an attempt by the management to justify the programme to the LRAC as it received constant complaints from different factions within the local Asian community. In the LRAC meeting of April 1973 matters came to a head as station manager John Musgrove reported;

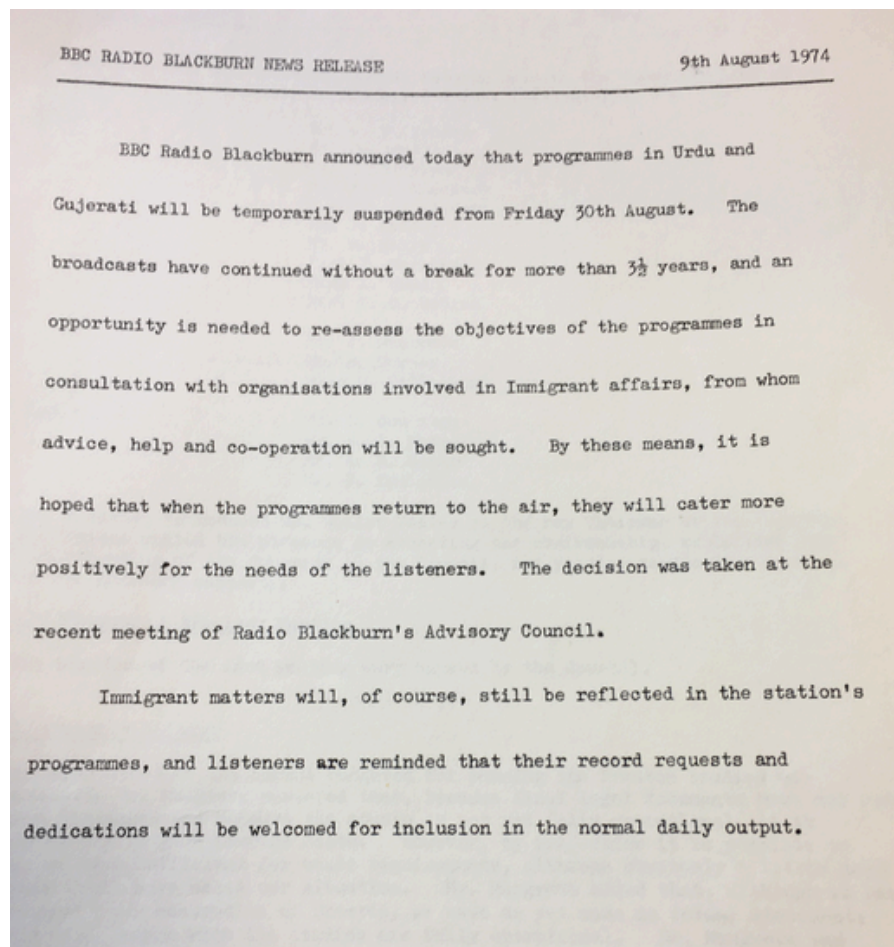
Simultaneously dissident factions began to bombard the office with demands that as “they spoke for the whole immigrant community” they should decide the future of our programmes and provide the presenters. Not only did 12 organisations make this claim, but many private individuals claimed to speak for the whole community. Letters, visitors and phone calls swarmed into the building, until during the last three weeks, Mr Musgrove and his Programme Organiser, and the producer of programmes, were all spending more time on immigrant matters than on the rest of the station output.⁶¹

The use of ‘swarming’ in this context suggests an almost casually racist view of the local Asian community as pests. In his frustration the station manager, John Musgrove, asked for the support of the LRAC to try and solve the problems through a community meeting and if that failed then to suspend the programme until further notice. The programme was subsequently dropped, and the decision communicated to the local Asian communities through a Press Release;

⁶⁰ BBC Radio Blackburn LRAC Minutes 1970-1973, BBC WAC File, R81/3/1.LRAC Minutes, 12 February 1973.

⁶¹ BBC WAC File, BBC Radio Blackburn Minutes 1974-79, R81/3/2BBC Radio Blackburn LRAC Minutes 1970-1973, LRAC Minutes, 12 February 1973.

Figure 2-2 BBC RADIO BLACKBURN PRESS RELEASE 1974



Source: BBC WAC File, BBC Radio Blackburn Minutes 1974-79, R81/3/2.

It was not until March 1977 that *Mehfil* returned to the air and this incident shows the low status of Asian programming within the station. Taking it off air was an indication that *Mehfil* was not core to the schedule; that it was almost a 'favour' for the local Asian community. Had it been viewed as core programming for the station then firmer management, and possibly a switch to English presentation as happened in Manchester, London and Leicester in 1976 might have kept the programme on air and built closer relationships with local Asian organisations and communities.

When BBC Radio London launched in 1970 it did not broadcast an Asian programme despite London being home to the largest Asian population in Britain. Correspondence in the BBC's files suggests the station manager, Peter Redhouse, viewed 'immigrant' programmes as a second order priority to be tackled once the station was established;

We have no plans to broadcast in immigrant languages at the moment and will not consider doing so until we have established an audience. A member of my Advisory Council has put forward a strong case for programmes in Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali or Urdu..... he accepts the time is not yet ripe for such an attempt on Radio London.⁶²

However, from October 1971 BBC Radio London launched two new weekly programmes targeted at the Asian communities in the capital. Broadcast late on a Friday evening at 10pm, *Dharpan* in Bengali and *Jharoka* in Hindustani were the first local Asian programmes to be heard by Asians in London. The station was able to use London based organisations to help set up the programmes including the Race Relations Board, the Institute of Race Relations, and importantly the Eastern Service of the BBC World Service. These collaborations suggest that the BBC Immigrants Programme Unit may have benefitted from being based in the capital rather than Birmingham. BBC Radio London broke with the policy of the IPU as both of the new programmes were able to include a weekly round-up of news from the Indian sub-continent produced by the Eastern Service at Bush House.⁶³ At the time of the Bangladesh war in 1971 this news service attracted criticism from listeners reflecting the tension between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This proved to be a significant factor in the end of these programmes, apparently supporting the IPU view about avoiding contentious issues on air. Even though by 1973 the programmes had been extended to 45 minutes each and moved to 6.45 pm on Sunday evenings they were replaced by *London Sounds Eastern* in 1976. The switch to a unified programme, presented in English caused something of a backlash from listeners and lobby groups and will be discussed in chapter 4 in which BBC local stations started to develop different strategies to serve Asian audiences.

Where stations were not providing any ethnic programming, in Brighton, Bristol, Humberside, Medway, Newcastle, Solent, Stoke-on-Trent, and Teeside, local radio HQ noted 'all these stations reflect immigrant matters in news and general programmes on the basis of normal news values.'⁶⁴ The question here is what were 'normal' news values at this time? A range of contemporary studies show the media in Britain treated immigrant communities as a problem and tended to only deal with them when

⁶² BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LRHQ, Minorities Programmes, Peter Redhouse, Memo to Assistant Head of Local Radio Development, October 1970.

⁶³ BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LRHQ, Minorities Programmes, Internal Paper, Summary of BBC Local Radio Programmes for Immigrants, May 1972.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

challenging news stories arose. The coverage of immigration was generally seen to be negative, particularly during this period as it was driven by a narrative led by coverage of Enoch Powell, continuing immigration legislation and racial tension. Hartmann and Husband writing in 1974 suggested 'Britain has a problem with racism' and pointed to the inadequacies of daily journalism.⁶⁵ Therefore, leaving these issues to daily journalism risked reinforcing the marginalisation of Asian communities.

2.4 The Pioneer Presenters.

Interviews for this study include four presenters from this period, all of whom were immigrants to Britain; three from the Indian sub-continent and one from East Africa. The interviews reveal that none of them were doing this for the money – there was none, save for the covering of expenses and none of them gained full time jobs in broadcasting. They all displayed a commitment to their local communities which endured despite a lack of engagement with the rest of the radio station and in some cases a lack of active support from management. However, as this study will later show the marginal nature of the programming presented by these 'pioneers' stored up problems in the 1980s as stations began to engage with the changing nature of local Asian communities. A growing and vocal second generation of Asians born in Britain, many of whom did not speak mother tongue languages, and certainly not Hindustani, pushed for new programming to be presented in English. Pushpa Rao at BBC Radio Nottingham, Siraj Patel at BBC Radio Blackburn, Ali Hasan at BBC Radio Leeds and Bikram Bhamra at BBC Radio Medway all began presenting their programmes in the early 1970s.

Pushpa Rao came to England in 1964 with her husband when he was appointed as a surgeon at the Nottingham City hospital. Born in Nagpur in India Rao had some experience in college of script writing for educative television programmes aimed at the farming community. When the early *Nawrang* programme was dropped by BBC Radio Nottingham in 1972 Rao working with the Community Relations Council helped to organise a group of local community organisations, including the Indian Workers

⁶⁵ P. Hartmann & C. Husband, *Racism and the Mass Media*, (Davis-Poynter; London, 1975), p. 205.

Association, The Pakistan Association, three Gurdwara's, and a Hindu Temple, to try get it back on air again.⁶⁶

It was very much a community thing. Lots of community organisations got together there were about ten or twelve of them. They went and approached the radio station to say that they wanted a community programme. It was advertised and a lot of interviews were taken.⁶⁷

Rao came through the interview process which included translating and recording a script in Hindustani and the new station manager, Tom Beesley, appointed her and a male co-presenter;

They said one person for India and one person for Pakistan, so there were two of us. The other gentleman left, and Khalid Sharif came to join me after a year. They used to insist we play a few Pakistani songs and religious songs, so we had to overcome this because the ordinary listener didn't want to listen to religious songs at that time of day.⁶⁸

This approach followed the policy of *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* which had set out to ensure impartiality between the Indian and Pakistani elements of the programme.

Figure 2-3 BBC RADIO NOTTINGHAM 'NAWRANG' TEAM



*Left to Right; Khalid Sharif, Ruka Sana Aslam, Pushpa Rao.
Source: BBC Radio Nottingham Listener Magazine, Summer 1978.*

BBC Radio Nottingham relied on the programme team to supply its own records for the programme and Rao remembers regularly asking listeners to bring records to the station

⁶⁶ Pushpa Rao, (D.o.B. 13 May 1941), Oral History Interview, recorded Nottingham, 15 June 2017.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

so that they could be played in subsequent programmes. The presenters were paid for their travelling expenses but made a big personal time commitment to get the programme ready.

I used to go on a Wednesday or Thursday and bring the letters home and sort it out, and all the requests sorted out. And we had a phone in programme, they used to ring us. The programme was information, medical issues, legal issues, immigration that type of thing. There were four or five local Asian councillors we could call on.⁶⁹

Rao continued presenting on BBC Radio Nottingham into the late 1990s. In the 1980s to try and introduce a younger programme sound BBC Radio Nottingham shared a weekly edition in English of the *Six O'clock Show* from BBC Radio Leicester before adding their own 'young Asian' programme in 1987. This left *Nawrang* still targeting its original listeners, principally first generation immigrants to Nottingham.

Siraj Patel, who came from the Gujarat in India to England in 1963, was one of the two presenters recruited by BBC Radio Blackburn in 1971 to present the *Mehfil* programme. Patel had launched a Gujarati newspaper in Lancashire in the 1960s and in the 1970s became a Community Relations Officer in Blackburn. He responded to an advert on BBC Radio Blackburn for Asian presenters;

They wanted people to go for an audition. So, I went for the audition there must have been twenty-five people. We were given a small paragraph to read for the radio and they said, well Siraj your voice is very appropriate for the radio broadcasting.⁷⁰

The other presenter selected was Nasim Bajwa, a Pakistani, and the programme was broadcast in Urdu and Gujarati. Patel told me that both were paid expenses but were effectively volunteers in the early years.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Siraj Patel, (D.o.B. 2 September 1938), Oral History Interview, recorded Manchester, 30 September 2018.

Figure 2-4 BBC RADIO BLACKBURN 1971



**Siraj Patel (left) and Producer Fletcher Richardson,
Source: BBC Radio Blackburn magazine 1973.**

As a Community Relations Officer Patel was well aware of the racial tension in Blackburn;

There was a lot of propaganda against the Asian people, and especially the local evening paper [*The Lancashire Evening Telegraph*] they printed a lot of stories against us We had a banner for marches “Black and White – Unite and Fight” At the bus station local Asians could be attacked by white gangs.’⁷¹

He was working away from Lancashire between 1974 and 1977 when *Mehfil* was taken off air by the station but returned in the 1980s to resume his presentation role which continued right through to the late 1990s. As in Nottingham new ‘younger’ Asian programmes were developed around this original show, with new editions in English, Gujarati and Urdu, as will be seen in later chapters.

At BBC Radio Leeds the two Asian programmes in this period came about after appeals to the radio station by local communities. The Hindustani programme *Jhalak* was launched in 1970 by members of the Indian Workers Association with the express aim of ‘reminding people, particularly young people, of their cultural roots in Asia, and initiating them into a new way of life in the West Riding’.⁷² The Bengali programme *Jhankar* was launched in early 1973 after the station was contacted by a Bangladeshi student after he was stranded in England following the civil war of 1971. Ali Hasan was unable to return

⁷¹ OHI, Siraj Patel.

⁷² BBC Radio Leeds Listener Magazine, Summer 1977, p. 16.

to Bangladesh and recognising that there was a large Bengali speaking community in West Yorkshire he approached Ray Beatty, the manager of BBC Radio Leeds;

We had a long talk and the manager agreed to join a committee from the community and in March 1973 we produced a pilot programme in Bengali which was sent to BBC World Service to check so they could hear how we wanted to produce the programme. It was important it was in Bengali because in those days the people who came here from Bangladesh were mainly working-class people who spoke little English.⁷³

Hasan told me the post bag for the programme was large and he and members of the team had to go to shops in Leicester and London to buy records to satisfy the music requests they received.

Those days the management we had was very good and they used to monitor the programme and because of the response we had to the programme they increased it from half an hour to an hour. All the letters used to come to the radio station, and we used to collect them on a Friday ... we had a group of people and we used to divide them amongst ourselves to deal with.⁷⁴

Figure 2-5 BBC LEEDS, 'JHANKAR' TEAM 1977



**Left to right (standing) Ali Hasan, Zulfikar Sadique, Shawkat Ahmed, and Sharif Sadique (seated).
BBC Leeds Listener Magazine, Summer 1977.**

⁷³ Ali Hasan, (D.o.B. 3 February 1948), Oral History Interview, recorded Leeds, 12 July 2018.

⁷⁴ OHI, Ali Hasan.

Hasan and his team continued presenting until the early 2000s, but in 1985 BBC Radio Leeds added a daily programme in English to provide more current affairs coverage for Asians in West Yorkshire.

Bikram Bhamra is an interesting contrast to the other presenters. Before coming to England in 1967 he had considerable broadcasting experience from his career with the Voice of Kenya. As a 45 year-old when he began at BBC Radio Kent he probably had more experience in radio than most of the staff at the radio station. He was one of the many East African Asians in Britain who were ‘twice migrated’ having been born in the Punjab in India and moving to Kenya as a teenager during the partition of 1947.

Figure 2-6 BIKRAM BHAMRA AT THE VOICE OF KENYA 1967.



Photo: East African Standard.⁷⁵

Bhamra broadcast on BBC Radio Medway (it later became BBC Radio Kent) for fifteen years from 1974 through until 1989 and then on to the BBC Asian Network in Birmingham. BBC Radio Medway had launched with a clear decision from Harold

⁷⁵ *East African Standard*, The Week in Sound, 6 January 1967, p. 20, Bikram Bhamra personal collection.

Rogers, the station manager, that it would not produce an Asian language programme. Rogers told BBC local radio HQ in 1970 that the local population in Gravesend was up to '10% Pakistani and in Chatham around 3% Pakistani Sikh' and that he took an 'integrationist' approach;

I do not consider it right to do these programmes in the immigrants' own language; our job should be to integrate them into our society, and not keep them as a separate community.⁷⁶

However, by 1974 Bhamra was presenting a programme called *Sangam* in Hindustani on the station. When he first came to England he had done some freelance work for the BBC World Service in London, where he lived, and the BBC Asian Programme Unit in Birmingham. However, unable to find full time work in broadcasting he ended up working for British Railways as a clerk in London. He approached BBC Radio Medway and offered to present a pilot programme which was produced and sent by the station to a listener in Gravesend for feedback; to Bhamra's surprise the listener turned out to be 'one of my fans from Kenya!'⁷⁷ The programme began fortnightly but a report in *Rail News* in October 1974 revealed that the show soon became weekly after it attracted a substantial postbag.⁷⁸

Figure 2-7 BIKRAM BHAMRA – BBC RADIO MEDWAY 1974



Bikram Bhamra with Producer Peter Glanville, Rail News, October 1974

⁷⁶ BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LRHQ, Minorities Programmes, Memo H. Rogers to Assistant Head of Local Radio Development, 28 September 1970.

⁷⁷ Bikram Bhamra, (D.o.B. 29 November 1929), Oral History Interview, recorded Birmingham 5 October 2017.

⁷⁸ Rail News, *Rail Man's Diary*, October 1974, Bikram Bhamra personal collection.

Unusually BBC Radio Medway and Bikram Bhamra got together with no input from the local Community Relations Council, although he told me he found the local Community Relations officer very helpful with contacts once the programme was on air. After the disappointment of not getting a full-time post in radio again Bhamra still has a great affection for his BBC Radio Medway programme;

I loved it. I loved it. Plus, the first programme I broadcast my Kenya friends who used to be in the Kent area sent me letters, and they loved the programme.⁷⁹

With such an accomplished broadcaster on air BBC Radio Kent had little incentive to develop a programme team or new Asian presenters and, as part of the BBC local radio funding cuts of 1989, felt able to drop the programme and replace it with a taped offering from BBC Radio Bedfordshire.

None of these four main presenters were asked to, nor introduced, controversial topics into their shows which were effectively request, entertainment and information programmes – reflecting the unofficial policy instigated by the BBC when launching the Immigrants Programme Unit. Over time the longevity and unchanging nature of the programmes made them increasingly less relevant to younger listeners as they all retained their mother-tongue language presentation. In the long run this became problematic for station management when they wanted to introduce English presentation. Despite the fact that new migrants continually arrived from the subcontinent the programmes became frozen in time, failing to adapt to the challenges faced by new generations of British Asians. However, I argue that these programmes did offer islands of cultural reinforcement in a developing multi-cultural society, and a valuable service, particularly for older listeners. Peach has argued the South Asian communities in Britain ‘retained much of their cultural distinctiveness’ and I believe that these programmes were an important part of that process.⁸⁰

When writing about *Nai Zindagi*, *Naya Jeevan* on BBC television in 1983 Page set out a range of issues that are equally pertinent to these long running language programmes on BBC local radio. Page argued that the second generation had a poor grasp of mother

⁷⁹ OHI, Bikram Bhamra.

⁸⁰ C. Peach, South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain 1951 – 2001, *Contemporary South Asia*, (2006), 15.2 p. 144.

tongue languages and asked, who should the programmes be targeting?⁸¹ This observation, when applied to BBC local radio is crucial in understanding these early programmes and how the long running role of the presenters allowed the programmes to become ‘self-defining’ in their audience targeting. By leaving targeting to the programme teams and having little in the way of direct week to week management local station managers found it difficult to force change in the 1980s and opted for an approach of adding additional programmes rather than tackling change. As will be seen in chapter 4 the experience at BBC Radio Derby in 1980, when the Asian programme team walked out of the station rather than switch programme presentation from Hindustani to English, showed the inherent difficulties in both managing change and teams of volunteers.

2.5 BBC Radio Leicester, a Case Study.

BBC Radio Leicester is pivotal to this research as a case study. Launched on 8 November 1967 as the first local radio station in England it was based in a city in which the Asian population grew faster than in any other editorial area. In an opening day interview on *ITV News* Maurice Ennals, the Station Manager, acknowledged the presence of the new communities in the city while talking about some of the groups the radio station would be targeting, the tight finances of the station, and his determination to maintain local editorial control;

This is going to be local radio. Local news, local news features, local news for the blind, for immigrants, for old people, for the hospitals, for commerce and industry. The emphasis throughout will be on local output.⁸²

The station did broadcast targeted programmes such as *Coffee Break*, ‘for women at home’, *The Grain*, ‘a pop youth magazine’ and *The Over-60’s Club* but decided not to target the Asian community with a dedicated programme.⁸³ The BBC’s own figures on immigration which were produced for the 1965 radio series *Colour in Britain* placed Leicester twelfth in a list of British cities with the highest immigrant populations,

⁸¹ D. Page, Broadcasting to Britain’s Asian Minorities, *India International Centre Quarterly*, (1983), 10.2, p. 169.

⁸² Midlands News, ‘Opening of Radio Leicester’, TX 8 November 1967, MACE Archive, <http://www.macearchive.org/Archive/Title/midlands-news-08111967-opening-of-radio-leicester/MediaEntry/1333.html>

⁸³ BBC Radio Leicester Programme Billings, *Radio Times*, 9 November 1967.

suggesting around 4,000 people of Indian or Pakistani origin lived in the city.⁸⁴ If these figures influenced the station management then we now know that they were hopelessly out of date and did not take into account the growing Kenyan Asian population in Leicester in the late 1960s. However, the opening schedules did include *Getting Together* a weekly programme aimed at all immigrant communities and described as being ‘for and about immigrants who have made their home in the city’. A surviving script from a BBC Radio 4 documentary, *Radio Goes Local*, about the local radio experiment, has a section from *Getting Together*;

Presenter:	In Leicester, they have a special programme for immigrants;
Radio Leicester Clip:	‘You remember last week we were talking about the Moslem festival of Edel fFitch [sic] (Eid El-Fitr) and the month of fasting that precedes it? Well on Sunday I was invited by Dr. Syad who was one of the speakers to the Eed [sic] party which was held at his house by the Women’s International Friendship Club. This is a club where English and Asian women can meet socially, and they take it in turns to entertain each other. Being Eed [sic] it was the turn of the Pakistanis and they prepared a wide variety of Pakistani food ⁸⁵

This has a BBC ‘middle-class’ earnest look, and how useful the programme was to local Asians struggling with immigration or work-related issues is difficult to judge. The producer Dave Kirkwood had begun his BBC career as a camera operator at the BBC Immigrants Programme Unit in Birmingham and the presenter Rita Chapman was a researcher at the University of Leicester. In the photograph below Dave Kirkwood and Rita Chapman are explaining the programme to politicians, Nazim Muradeli and Vidya Pooran-Muradeli (centre) who were visiting Leicester from the Caribbean.

⁸⁴ R. Hooper, *Colour In Britain*, (BBC; London, 1965), p. 18.

⁸⁵ University of Leicester Special Collections, Dyos Papers, ULA/04/2/2, Correspondence re BBC Radio Leicester, ‘*Radio Goes Local*’, BBC Radio 4, TX 18 February 1968.

Figure 2-8 GETTING TOGETHER: BBC RADIO LEICESTER 1968.



Photo courtesy of Dave Kirkwood

There was an active lobby to get the station to introduce an Asian programme as the station manager Bob Kennedy acknowledged. He wrote to BBC local radio HQ in October 1970 to inform them that while *Getting Together* had been ‘successful’ he now felt a new direction was required;

About four months ago it was decided that the brief for the programme should change and that we should provide thirty minutes each week solely for the Asian immigrant community. This they have asked for since before the station opened and the first type of immigrant programme was a compromise on their requirements and what we felt we ought to be doing. Now it has been decided that the size of this community, already large and growing, demanded a separate programme solely aimed at them. From this last week we are now broadcasting thirty minutes a week in Hindustani.⁸⁶

The station belatedly recognised the growth in the growth the Asian population in Leicester which had begun with the Africanisation policies in Kenya and other East African states in the mid to late 1960s. This was later boosted by the expulsion of Ugandan Asians by Idi Amin in 1972 and the Asian population of the city grew tenfold to reach 40,000 in the ten years to 1976 bringing major challenges to the local media, local government, politicians and the local population. In her book on the Ugandan expulsion and its effect on Leicester Valerie Marett, who was a key player in local anti-racist groups such as Unity Against Racialism, is excoriating about the early response of

⁸⁶ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 LRHQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from Bob Kennedy to Assistant Head of Local Radio Development, 30 October 1970.

local politicians and the *Leicester Mercury*.⁸⁷ Surviving news documentaries in the BBC Radio Leicester archive reveal the same ‘white’ editorial agenda as the rest of the local media in identifying immigrants as the problem in the city. The Labour controlled City Council had placed an advert in the *Ugandan Argos* in 1972 urging Asians not to come to Leicester;

In your own interests and those of your family you should accept the advice of the Uganda Resettlement Board and not come to Leicester.⁸⁸

At the 1972 Labour Party Conference the Labour Leader of the Council, Edward Marston, speaking to BBC Radio Leicester was given the opportunity to put the advert in some kind of perspective;

‘We were trying to help the Uganda people who are coming into our country, we didn’t want them to come to overcrowded conditions. We wanted them to come and enjoy the towns where there is more occupation and better conditions than there are in Leicester at the present time’.⁸⁹

But there was no challenge to this view in the programme nor a week later to the Harborough MP, Sir John Farr at the Conservative Party conference, who went further in an interview with the station when he suggested the Ugandan Asians should be refused entry to the country;

‘In my view, they are not naturally adapted to Britain in any way. They may well feel homesick after we have spent a lot of money trying to settle them here. They should have been encouraged to return to Asia’.⁹⁰

In both programmes immigration was featured as a problem for the city. The interviews highlight the political problems caused by the rapid immigration into Leicester and how BBC Radio Leicester still seemed to be telling the story from the perspective of the white community. The growing Asian community in the city led to new political groups forming from as early as 1968, in particular influenced by Enoch Powell and his so called

⁸⁷ Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*.

⁸⁸ B. Troyna and R. Ward, ‘Racial Antipathy and Local Opinion Leaders: A Tale of Two Cities’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 9. No. 3, 1981, p. 463.

⁸⁹ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective, Labour Party Conference, TX 7 October 1972, (ROLL&R, RL 1720).

⁹⁰ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective ‘Conservative Party Conference 1972’, broadcast 12 October 1972, (ROLL&R, RL1720).

‘Rivers of Blood’ speech. The Anti-Immigration Society – AIMS – was set up in May 1968 having recruited members via a full page advertisement in the *Leicester Mercury* in March.⁹¹ The advert included a request for funds and key among its policies was an immediate halt to immigration and a phased repatriation of ‘all immigrants to their country of origin’.⁹² Perhaps learning from anti-civil rights groups in the United States AIMS was clear not to mention colour or particular countries of origin. It claimed to be;

A private non-racialist, non-violent society of ordinary people of all political affiliations dedicated to constitutional reform in the interests of protecting the British way of life and civil liberties.⁹³

Some of these ‘ordinary people’, named on the committee went on to stand for the National Front in Leicester in local and national elections in the 1970s. Countering AIMS was the Inter Racial Solidarity Campaign (IRSC) which was formed in 1969 and during the 1970s ‘combatted the National Front and other fascist groups’ and ‘leafleted every Leicester home’.⁹⁴ The right wing British Movement was set up in the Midlands in 1968 but was particularly active in Leicester. Ray Hill the Leicester Branch Secretary told the *Leicester Mercury* in 1969;

Members of the British Movement plan to distribute 10,000 of their own news sheet, ‘Black and White News’, in Leicester during the next month.⁹⁵

Many local organisations were set up and folded in short order, as illustrated by the *Send Them Back* campaign which lasted just three months in the spring of 1971. Set up in a flat in an upmarket area of the city the campaign distributed stickers with the words ‘Send Them Back’ across the country. As with AIMS this campaign focussed on repatriation;

The issue is urgent. The immigrants are still, in all senses of word, Aliens in our community. It is not enough to stem the flood. We must turn the tide.⁹⁶

⁹¹ C. T. Husbands, *Racial Exclusionism and the City: The Urban Support of the National Front* (Routledge; London, 1983), p. 90.

⁹² AIMS Advert, *Leicester Mercury*, 6 May 1968, p. 8.

⁹³ AIMS Advert.

⁹⁴ *Equality*, IRSC Newsletter March 1990, ROLL&R, Periodicals, E.

⁹⁵ UoL Special Collections, LMA 2/3/B Box 21, Black and White Leaflet, *Leicester Mercury*, 20 October 1969, *Leicester Mercury* Archive.

⁹⁶ UoL Special Collections, *Leicester Mercury* Archive, LMA 2/3/B Box 21, Send Them Back Folds After Only Three Months, *Leicester Mercury*, 11 August 1971.

By 1972 marches by rival groups such as the National Front and the Inter Racial Solidarity Campaign were high on the news agenda – and adding to racial tension in the city. An anti-immigration march in September attracted 600 people according the *Mercury*, with 5000 marching against racism in an IRSC march in October.⁹⁷ Below is a picture of a typical IRSC march in the 1970s;

Figure 2-9 IRSC MARCH, LEICESTER, 24 AUGUST 1974



Source: Ned Newitt

In 1972 Enoch Powell was one of the most featured politicians on BBC Radio Four and rarely failed to come up with strong copy as his views were both controversial and, in some quarters, popular.⁹⁸ In one interview in that year Powell when speaking about the decision by the Heath government to allow Ugandan Asians to come to Britain shows he had studied the situation in Leicester;

They must be out of their mind. They are under no obligation to do so. They know the horrific consequences that could follow from this – and if they don't, they should go to Leicester and ask them there.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ UoL Special Collections, *Leicester Mercury* Archive, LMA 2/3/D Demonstrations 1969-86. Anti-Immigration March, 11 September 1972 & 5,000 March in Demo Against Racism, 23 October 1972,

⁹⁸ D. Hendy, *Life on Air: A History of Radio Four*, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 96.

⁹⁹ E Powell, Radio Four 1972 interview featured in 'Out of Uganda', BBC Radio Leicester, TX 2002. BBC Radio Leicester archive.

In Leicester in December 1972 rival marchers demonstrated their support for and against Powell;

White knitters from the strike-torn Mansfield Hosiery Mills at Loughborough were among the Powell supporters while Asian strikers from the same mills were in the counter demonstration.¹⁰⁰

An Enoch Powell Support Group (EPSG) was formed in Leicester in 1972 and together with AIMS and the National Front began to stand in the local city council elections. In 1973 the EPSG and the National Front stood candidates locally with 23 NF and 2 EPSG candidates achieving a combined 19,023 votes – a 10.5 percentage share. The arrival in the city of Ugandan Asians in 1972 was used by these right-wing groups to champion their policies of ending coloured immigration and repatriation – and they began to have a significant impact in the city. Members of the ESPG picketed a visit to Leicester by Government ministers in February 1973 to assess the impact of Ugandan Asians in the city. A BBC Radio Leicester documentary points out their presence and their insistence that the ministers visit the ‘homes of white people affected by immigration’. The introduction to this programme shows the radio station still viewing the presence of immigrants in the city as a problem;

‘Both Ministers have a responsibility for problems caused by Britain’s immigrant population, such as problems in health, housing, education and social service. They’re problems which Leicester Corporation has faced for some years, but the recent influx of Ugandan Asians made them all the more acute. So acute that the measures adopted by the City Council made the city the focus of the nation’s attention.’¹⁰¹

The BBC’s Panorama programme broadcast in November 1972 described Leicester as a ‘magnet for Asians’ and included an interview with the Labour City Council leader, Edward Marston;

‘We can’t absorb any more. We are full. The City is full as far as our services are concerned, as far as our land is concerned for the building of premises and such like. We are literally full’.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ UoL Special Collections, *Leicester Mercury* Archive, LMA 2/3/E, Enoch Powell Support Group, More Than 1,000 people in Rival Demonstrations For and against Powell, *Leicester Mercury*, 11 December 1972.

¹⁰¹ In-Perspective Documentary, ‘Immigration’, BBC Radio Leicester, TX 8 February 1973. BBC Leicester Programme Archive at ROLL&R, RL 1732.

¹⁰² Panorama, ‘Leicester Asians’, BBC One, TX 27 November 1972. BBC Programme Archive No. LCA1213E

This was part of a national media narrative that had marked Leicester out as the most racist city in Britain.¹⁰³ There was a toxic atmosphere as Paul Winstone, who arrived as a student in Leicester in 1970 from the East End of London, described;

‘I was appalled at the level of racism in the city. There seemed to be a climate in the city that racism was respectable, and that black people were the problem. What disturbed me most was the atmosphere of ‘gut-hatred’ for black people’.¹⁰⁴

Winstone went on to play a pivotal role in improving race relations in Leicester as an advisor on race issues at the City Council. The response of the City Council to the Ugandan expulsion sparked off a period of infighting within the Labour group and a new, younger left-wing caucus began to take control of the group after the 1973 local elections to try to promote a multi-cultural agenda.¹⁰⁵ In 1973 the Leicester Council for Community Relations organised a survey in the north of the city to try to analyse race relations and the rumours spread by various anti-immigration groups, the survey found;

People expressed resentment ‘that money could always be found to help Asians’. Immigrants impeded their children’s education. Statistics were requested about the number of coloured immigrants on waiting lists for hospital treatment compared to white people. Too many immigrants had created a shortage of houses and pushed up prices. Generally, people associated Indians and Pakistanis with people who have run away to an easier life in Britain.¹⁰⁶

These long running tropes about immigrants regularly surface today in relation to Brexit. During the 1970s recessions the city went through a period of industrial retrenchment and immigrants became a common target as unemployment rose. Two industrial disputes, at Mansfield Hosiery Mills and Imperial Typewriters brought institutional racism in the workplace into sharp focus when Trade Unions failed to support the grievances of Asian workers who were denied promotion and paid less than their white colleagues.¹⁰⁷ The Imperial strike provided the growing National Front in the city with an opportunity to target the white workers with their brand of right wing policies – focusing on the repatriation of immigrants. Today the strike is remembered as a turning point in political

¹⁰³ V. Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Oral History Interview, Paul Winstone, EMOHA, CH/095/0104

¹⁰⁵ F. Eames, ‘ITV and the 1972 Ugandan Migration’, *Media History*, (2009), 15:4, p. 455.

¹⁰⁶ A Collection of Fears and Rumours in the Northern area of Leicester, Leicester Council for Community Relations, 2 May 1973, (ROLL&R, DE 2383/2).

¹⁰⁷ See; J. Wrench, *Unequal Comrades: Trade Unions, Equal Opportunity and Racism, Policy Papers in Ethnic Relations No. 5*, University of Warwick.

activism in the city with local groups such as the Inter-Racial Solidarity Campaign joining counter marches with the strikers against the National Front.¹⁰⁸ The strike was a microcosm of race relations in the city at this time which Troyna and Ward have characterised as a period of ‘racial antipathy’.¹⁰⁹ It marked a failure by the local press and radio to recognise that Leicester had become a multi-cultural city, with a fifth of the population not seeing the world through a ‘white’ lens.

The surviving documentaries on immigration, race relations and the Imperial strike produced by BBC Radio Leicester show that the management at the station were aware of the racial turmoil in the city and in 1970 the station did target a new programme at the Asian population. Called *Milan*, which loosely translates to ‘Getting Together’, the presentation by Riaz Sheikh the Community Relations Officer for Leicester was in the BBC’s preferred Hindustani rather than English which gave producer Dave Kirkwood a problem;

My main concern was that I am producing it and I’m responsible for it, but I don’t know what they are saying, I only have their word for it. So, I set about reassuring myself. I sent a recording of one of our programmes to Bush House, and when it came back, they said it’s exactly what it says on the running order, but they are using the language of a five-year old child. The presenter said to me yes, it is, it’s a base language so it has got to be simple.¹¹⁰

The choice of language was noted in the *Radio Times* as a ‘compromise’ but it was one that followed the established BBC practice on network television and radio. The *Radio Times* feature on the launch of the programme confirmed;

Milan will give the Asian Community in Leicester an opportunity to become more involved in their station and to help devising their own programme.¹¹¹

This last point goes to the heart of the proposition of the BBC local radio experiment, carried through into the BBC stations after 1970, that the stations were there to produce

¹⁰⁸ BBC, Imperial Typewriter Strike recalls ‘shameful’ union, BBC News, 15 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-48586737> (Accessed 17 August 2019).

¹⁰⁹ B. Troyna & R. Ward, Racial Antipathy and local opinion leaders: a tale of two cities, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 9.3, 1981, pp. 454-466.

¹¹⁰ David Kirkwood, (b. 19 August 1946), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 25 September 2017.

¹¹¹ BBC Radio Leicester Programme Page, ‘*Milan* Means Getting Together’, *Radio Times*, 15 October 1970.

a basic programme schedule supplemented by the use of network radio programmes and the development of access programmes by the minority interest groups. As Kirkwood noted, with the small staff on each station ‘you couldn’t, within the level of staffing that was available, recruit that level of specialism’¹¹². Therefore, BBC Radio Leicester, as with the other BBC local stations in this period was more facilitator than producer of Asian programming. Linfoot outlines the array of access programming on BBC local radio during this period which ranged from Esperanto at BBC Radio Stoke, Scouting at BBC Radio Nottingham and a Jewish programme *Jacob’s Ladder* at BBC Radio Leeds.¹¹³

Despite the arrival of Ugandan Asians in late 1972 and the very visible changes in Leicester the station management failed to increase the Asian programme provision. *Milan* continued in Hindustani, both on the margins of the programme schedule and the editorial focus of the station. The programme slowly built up a new regular team of presenters that stayed with the programme throughout the decade. By 1974 the programme production responsibilities had shifted from Kirkwood to Khalid Aziz, the station’s first Asian journalist. *Milan* covered health and social issues but as with the other BBC local radio programmes did not venture into the area of current affairs in the city – or the sub-continent.

Figure 2-10 BBC RADIO LEICESTER MILAN PRESENTERS 1974



*From left to right, Kartar Singh Sandhu, Dipak Chaudhary and Bupinder Atwal.
Source BBC Radio Leicester.*

¹¹² OHI, Kirkwood.

¹¹³ M. Linfoot, A History of Local Radio, pp. 285 – 291,

Karter Singh Sandhu from the *Milan* presentation team was appointed to the BBC Radio Leicester Local Radio Advisory Council (LRAC) which intermittently debated the provision of ethnic minority programming on the station. When Owen Bentley was appointed as Station manager in late 1975 the pent-up demand from some members of the LRAC for more ethnic programming surfaced in his first LRAC meeting. In an agenda item titled 'BBC Radio Leicester and our Multi-Cultural Society', Earl Robinson, the first black head teacher in Leicester, told the meeting that the LRAC had not been listened to by management thus far;

Leicester had one of the largest proportions of minority groups in the country, running towards 18%. There was a need for a more wholesome community and Radio Leicester, he felt, could help achieve this by giving more attention to minority interest groups and creating greater awareness, more positive relationships and greater understanding between the different elements in our society.¹¹⁴

This is a significant moment for the LRAC in Leicester. It marks a point at which Owen Bentley, the new station manager came face to face with the debate that the LRAC had been having during this period of social turmoil in Leicester. Robinson suggested that the station should work with the Community Relations Council 'to talk about possible ways of satisfying some of the needs', and he was supported by other members in his quest;

Mrs. Allen thought "Milan" was fine but accounted for too little of the output if the immigrant audience was 18%.¹¹⁵

The robust language in the minutes, which were approved by the station manager, show how seriously the LRAC took the provision of ethnic programming – for both African Caribbean and Asian audiences. By seeing the station as a way of attaining a more 'wholesome community' the LRAC were pointing the way to the radio station playing a part in the social cohesion of the city. The LRAC's across the country took an active role in both supporting and challenging local radio managers and their role was an important one in the development of local radio.¹¹⁶ The LRAC in Leicester had set Bentley, as the new manager, a challenge to serve ethnic minorities better and his response will be considered in the next chapter.

¹¹⁴ BBC WAC, File R 81/11/2 BBC Radio Leicester Minutes, BBC Radio Leicester LRAC Minutes, 29 October 1975.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Linfoot, Local Radio, p.297.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there was no formal BBC policy in the area of Asian broadcasting in BBC local radio and if there is a sense that the station managers were making things up as they went along, it is because they were. The Immigrants Programme Unit was set up with traditional BBC network staffing levels and therefore had little practical to offer the new tightly staffed and budgeted BBC local radio in new ways of working. However, *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* did offer stations an overall model to follow with Hindustani presentation, little controversial content and presentation with both Indian and Pakistani communities represented. This was a powerful example, yet a minority of stations broke with this template to use different languages for presentation such as Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali, highlighting the editorial independence of station managers.

Community Relations Councils provided a useful bridge between BBC local stations and ethnic communities. Many stations effectively ‘contracted out’ the production process to Community Relations Officers who were often recruited as presenters and facilitators of these access programmes. Most of the presenters were volunteers with little or no radio experience but a desire to help their local communities get a voice on the new radio stations. However, some of the early presenters had broadcast experience in Kenya, where until the late 1960s the Voice of Kenya broadcast an Asian National radio service of over seventy hours a week – but their wide experience remained largely untapped.

The programmes were broadcast in languages not understood by local BBC staff making them hard to monitor. When problems arose, as in Blackburn, it was therefore difficult for the station staff to adjudicate and some stations sent recordings of programmes to the BBC World Service at Bush House in London for reassurance about what they were broadcasting. As the 1970s progressed there was a push for a switch in language presentation to English, in part to combat this production difficulty and in part to connect with a new second generation growing up in Britain who increasingly lacked language skills. This proved to be a difficult transition and was partially reversed in the late 1980s as will be seen in later chapters.

As Brown argues, BBC local radio provided programming in languages other than English for local ethnic communities but there was no set pattern to the provision, the programmes were not co-ordinated, mandatory or linked to each other and were broadcast at inconvenient times in the broadcast day.¹¹⁷ The points about co-ordination and central policy are important - the BBC did not hold a conference for local radio station managers on 'Immigrant Programming' until the summer of 1976. However, this research shows that there was some innovative and independent thinking; programmes at BBC Radio Sheffield and BBC Radio Blackburn were the first to use Bengali, Urdu and Gujarati; BBC Radio Leeds went so far as to produce *Black Rose* about the positive impacts of immigration in West Yorkshire; and BBC Radio Birmingham broadcast its Asian programming in English from its launch in 1970.

The radio programming targeted at Asians by BBC local radio stations up to 1975 was at worst tokenistic and at best a genuine attempt to 'do something' to satisfy local lobbying by Community Relations Councils, community groups and correspondence from local Asian listeners. Some stations regarded the programmes as a chore to be carried out with the least fuss possible, others were fulfilling what they saw as their 'Reithian' public service obligation. Despite the rise of right-wing anti-immigration lobby groups and their demonstrable impact on race relations there is no discernible evidence in the archives that it had a measurable effect on the development of early Asian programming. However, when the toxicity of race relations in Leicester deteriorated further in 1976, through the activities of the National Front in particular, this had a decisive effect on new programming developments. Members of the BBC Radio Leicester advisory council argued that the station had a role to play in driving community cohesion in the city and as the next chapter shows 1976 was to become a crucial year in the development of Asian programming on BBC local radio.

¹¹⁷ D. Browne, 'Speaking Up: A brief history of minority languages', p. 112.

Chapter 3 1976: Kick-starting British Asian Radio in Leicester.

In late October 1976 readers of the *Radio Times* turning to the BBC Radio Leicester programme listings page found a picture of two new presenters about to take to the air. Mira Trivedi dressed in a sari was sitting at a broadcast desk while a younger and suited Don Kotak was standing behind her. Both were smiling intently at the camera inviting readers to sample their new programme; ‘Six-Fifteen – a good time to get to know your neighbours’, ran the caption underneath. For the first time here was an Asian programme without the label ‘for our Asian listeners’, instead the tag line read ‘Radio Leicester’s new community programme’.¹ There was little sign here that this was the launch of a revolution by a BBC local radio station about to kick-start British Asian radio. Yet *Six-Fifteen* set in motion a chain of events that led to the launch of the BBC’s national Asian Network and a full time commercial Asian radio station in Leicester.

Figure 3-1 RADIO TIMES 16-22 OCTOBER 1976



Source: University of Leicester.

As this chapter will show the new programme which was presented in English was aimed at both improving race relations in Leicester and targeting young Asians caught between two cultures. This challenged the existing policies on BBC local radio stations which, as

¹ *Radio Times*, 16-22 October 1976, p.70.

the previous chapter has shown, were broadcasting short weekly, or even bi-weekly, programmes to their local Asian communities. There had been no substantial increase in the broadcast time allocated to Asian programmes on BBC local radio in the eight years since their introduction in Sheffield in 1968. They remained on the fringes of the output in weekend and evening slots and on the margins of the production process on most local stations. BBC Radio Leicester was no exception to this pattern with *Milan*, presented in Hindustani, broadcast on a weekly basis, despite the rapid rise in the Asian population in the city, until now.

The new programme launched on Monday 16 October 1976 at 6.15 pm in the evening and was the first five days a week Asian radio programme in Britain. *Six Fifteen* launched at a time of great social upheaval in Leicester in which the rapid increase in Asian immigration and a downturn in the economic situation was fuelling a rise in support for anti-immigration protest groups and right-wing nationalist parties. As a sign of this turmoil the National Front made the first of a number of radio appearances on BBC Radio Leicester in a debate programme at the end of the first week of the new *Six Fifteen* programme.

This chapter will assess why BBC Radio Leicester took this course of action, despite having no local commercial radio competition and being under no central pressure from the BBC to increase its Asian output. Indeed, no other BBC station followed suit with a five day a week service until BBC Radio Leeds launch *Connections* in 1985. It will argue that six key elements combined to create the conditions in which this change happened;

1. existing local media coverage of the changing city,
2. rapidly increasing Asian immigration,
3. a toxic racial attitude driven by the local rise of right-wing anti-immigrant organisations,
4. an important and remarkable African connection,
5. the arrival of a new Station manager at the height of this racial tension, and
6. the independence of BBC local radio station managers.

Many BBC local radio stations had some of these factors at play in their transmission areas, but after examining each of these factors in turn I argue that the most crucial elements were the arrival of Owen Bentley as Station Manager at BBC Radio Leicester and the editorial

freedom he had to run his radio station. For the first time a BBC local radio station recognised that the new Asian communities were potential audiences and mainstream consumers – not just ‘problem immigrants’ or the cause of social friction. They formed a substantial part of the demographic make-up of the area and as licence fee payers merited more than a fringe service. Nevertheless, given some of its previous coverage of the immigration issue the radio station had to fundamentally challenge its own programming policies to get *Six Fifteen* on air.

3.1 Existing local media coverage of the changing city.

Leicester in 1976 was a city in flux; a mixture of rapid Asian immigration, a decline in manufacturing and a rise in unemployment figures featured on the front pages of the *Leicester Mercury* and the airwaves of BBC Radio Leicester. The economic changes seemed all the more news worthy given that only five years before a special survey of the city had argued that Leicester was ‘the richest city in the United Kingdom and the second richest city in Europe after Lille’.² Ironically it was these claims of the richness of the city that may have attracted immigrants to Leicester. Throughout the mid 1970s front page headlines in the *Leicester Mercury* charted the rise in unemployment; ‘Jobless Record Even Worse Than It Looks’ suggested the paper in July 1975 and a year later it was reporting that the ‘Jobless Total Soars To Record’.³ Front page immigration coverage during the Ugandan Asian crisis of 1972 featured such headlines as ‘Asians Unwelcome Unless City Given Aid – Labour Leader’ and ‘It Could Be 4,000 Asians for Leicester’.⁴ Key local strikes by Asian workers at Mansfield Hosiery Mills and Imperial Typewriters drew the focus of groups such as the National Front who tried to draw a connection between the arrival of the immigrants and the economic decline of the city. The reporting on immigration by the *Leicester Mercury* has been criticised by Valerie Marett for being both alarmist and actively stirring up racial hostility.⁵ Immigration was a long-standing issue for the *Mercury*

² W.K.Smigielski, *Leicester Today and Tomorrow* (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 1971), p. 37.

³ ‘Jobless Record Worse Than It Looks’, 21 August 1975; ‘Leicester Jobless Soars to Record’, 24 August 1976, both *Leicester Mercury*, p. 1.

⁴ ‘Asians Unwelcome Unless City Given Aid – Labour Leader’, 18 August 1972; ‘It Could Be 4,000 Asians for Leicester’, 24 October 1972, both *Leicester Mercury*, p.1.

⁵ V. Marret, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, (Leicester University Press; Leicester, 1989), p.53.

and as early as 1968 the Editor had written to students at the University of Leicester, who had complained about the paper's editorial stance;

The *Leicester Mercury* has consistently espoused a policy of restraining further immigration until the present immigrants can be integrated, their housing needs met, and adequate schooling provided for many children who cannot speak English – a policy which appears to be meeting with wider support among politicians of all parties.⁶

This editorial policy continued into the 1970s, by which time Barry Troyna argued that the *Leicester Mercury* had gone as far as having 'routinised National Front stories' making the party seem more mainstream than it actually was.⁷

As seen in the previous chapter the political coverage of the issue by BBC Radio Leicester also homed in on immigration and the problems it was perceived to be causing in the city. For example, in 1972 it gave airtime to Anthony Reed-Herbert, Chairman of the Harborough Young Conservatives who argued strongly against immigration and the decision of the Heath government to allow Ugandan Asians into Britain;

'I think definitely the answer should have been no. The United Kingdom should not have to absorb any further immigrant influx and to ask us to do so is only to exacerbate an already tense and uncertain situation'⁸

This on-air intervention by Reed Herbert is important as he defected to the Leicester branch of the National Front later that year. Another BBC Radio Leicester current affairs programme on immigration in 1972 in which the reporter outlines the 'pressure for services in the city of some 40,000 new arrivals over the last decade' features an interview with the Labour leader of the City Council, Edward Marston, who offered a very pessimistic view; 'We can't see, over the next few months at any rate, any change as far as betterment in concerned'.⁹

As British passport holders the Ugandan Asians had every right to come to Britain, even though the Heath government tried to 'soften up' the electorate by suggesting they were

⁶ S. England. *Magnificent Mercury*, (Kairos Press; Leicester), p. 79.

⁷ B. Troyna, *Public Awareness and the Media: A Study of Reporting on Race*, (CRE; London, 1981), p. 22.

⁸ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective, 'Conservative Party Conference 1972, TX 12 October 1972, ROLL&R, RL 1726.

⁹ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective, 'Immigration', TX, 8 February 1973, ROLL&R, RL 1732.

refugees. The national view of the crisis contrasted to that in areas like Leicester where the Asians began to settle.¹⁰ Partially sympathetic coverage of the plight of the refugees escaping Uganda on ITV's *News at Ten* was in stark contrast to the coverage of the problems caused in Leicester by the arrival of the Ugandan Asians on the nightly local news programme *ATV Today*.¹¹

Taken together the general reporting of BBC Radio Leicester and the *Leicester Mercury* followed a pattern of negative reporting on immigration and race. Charles Husband, a lecturer in the city at the time, suggested that the British media had decided that the immigrants were the problem. Writing in 1975 he highlighted what he argued was a lack of imagination by the media to recognise the changing face of Britain in the early 1970s;

Despite the impression that may be acquired by exposure to the mass media we are no longer a white society which happens to contain a number of black immigrants. We are now a multi-racial Britain, and this is a fact that must be acknowledged and inform policy making in all areas of activity including the operation of the mass media.¹²

In a city declining economically the continued arrival of new Asian immigrants at an unprecedented rate continued to attract the focus of the local media as it came to terms with the changing city it covered. A young Asian woman perhaps summed up some of the local feelings towards immigrants when she told BBC Radio Leicester what local women said to her in the knitwear factory in which she worked;

'We don't want Asians in Leicester, it's overcrowded. Enoch Powell, he's the man, he didn't want Asians to come into this country'.¹³

The existing literature suggests that local journalism was partly responsible for the rise of anti-immigration sentiment in Leicester. However, immigration was of concern to local people and neither BBC Radio Leicester nor the *Leicester Mercury* could have ignored this as a story or played down the political consequences. There is little evidence that the local media ran positive stories about the benefits of Asian immigration to Leicester, unlike

¹⁰ See, Y. Hamai, 'Imperial Burden' or 'Jews of Africa'? An Analysis of Political and Media Discourse in the Ugandan Asian Crisis (1972)', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22.3 (2011), pp. 415-436.

¹¹ F. Eames, 'ITV and the 1972 Ugandan Migration', *Media History*, (2009), 15/4, pp. 453-469.

¹² C. Husband, *White Media & Black Britain; A Critical Look at Race Relations Today*, (Arrow: London, 1975), p. 36., See also, P. Hartmann & C. Husband, *Racism & The Mass Media*, (Davis-Poynter: London 1975), Chapter 5.

¹³ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective, 'Ugandan Asians', TX, 8 February 1973, ROLL&R, RL 1726.

Black Rose the series run by BBC Radio Leeds to try and counter some of the negative reporting of speeches on immigration by Enoch Powell. Nevertheless, an editorial in the *Leicester Mercury* after the National Front after had received a tenth of vote (9.8 percent) in the 1973 City Council elections left readers in no doubt about the policy of the paper;

Hate is not patriotism and persecution is not policy. The Front would have nothing to offer the Town Hall except a totally divisive and destructive force. The voters of Leicester – sometimes erroneously portrayed to the rest of the country as racial bigots – have shown they know the difference between politics and vicious polemics.¹⁴

Local coverage of immigration followed the ebb and flow of the debate, but as Charles Husband suggested, this was very much a white media not yet recognising how the social landscape was changing.

3.2 Rapidly increasing Asian immigration to Leicester.

The main period of immigration to Leicester of people of South Asian heritage occurred in under two decades, driven by the Africanisation policies of newly independent East African states. The number of Asian immigrants to Leicester in the early 1960s was negligible, a study of Indian immigration to Britain by Rashmi Desai published in 1963 even fails to mention the city.¹⁵ A decade later a local television news report on the activities of the National Front in Leicester on *ATV Today* suggested that Leicester had ‘an estimated 40,000 Asians’, some fourteen percent of the population.¹⁶ The *Survey of Leicester* by Leicester City Council in 1983 records an Asian population of 63,000, making the *ATV Today* figures seem to be a reasonably accurate estimation.¹⁷ This rapid increase in Asian immigration from the mid-1960s is double the rate recorded across the UK between 1961 and 1977 by the BBC, and perhaps proffers an explanation for the adverse reaction of the white population and media in the city.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Leicester Mercury* Editorial, 8 June 1973, p. 12.

¹⁵ R. Desai, *Indian Immigrants to Britain*, (Oxford University Press; London, 1963).

¹⁶ *ATV Today*, The National Front in Leicester, TX 26 May 1976, MACE Archive, (Accessed 9 March 2017). <http://www.macearchive.org/Archive/Title/atv-today-26051976-national-front-in-leicester/MediaEntry/1586.html>.

¹⁷ Leicester City Council, *The Survey of Leicester, 1983 – Initial Report of Survey*, (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 1984).

¹⁸ See, R. Hooper, *Colour in Britain*, (BBC; London 1965), p. 5, and BBC GAC Paper, *The Broadcasting Problems Associated with Asian and Black Minorities in the UK*, p. 6, in BBC WAC File, R102/38/1.

The dramatic effect of the rapidity of this increase in Asian immigration to Leicester from the mid 1960s into the 1970s played itself out on the Belgrave Road in Leicester. Today, every October Belgrave Road in Leicester hosts up to 35,000 visitors from across the country to witness the switching on of the Diwali lights, part of the celebration of the Hindu festival of light. The annual switch-on is claimed to be the largest event of its type outside India and is one of the stand-out religious and cultural festivals in the calendar for Leicester, now routinely celebrated as a model city of multi-culturalism and racial harmony.¹⁹ But in 1976 the Belgrave Road was in the midst of a radical transformation from a typical Leicester arterial road into the vibrant ‘Golden Mile’ of today. In 1966 just one Asian owned shop stood alone in a side street off the main Belgrave Road, but ten years later in 1976 a shopping survey by the City Council found that six out of ten of the shops on the road were Asian owned or managed. John Dean, the City Planning Officer, suggested that ‘the presence of an Asian cinema, emphasises the importance of the road to the Asian populace’.²⁰ The same survey pointed out that Belgrave Road was the only arterial shopping road in the city in which Asian owned and managed shops were so prominent. Which perhaps is why Leicester locals, including my father, who drove along Belgrave Road in the 1970s referred to it as the ‘Khyber Pass’, in an example of the casual racism exhibited in the city at the time. Nowhere in Leicester changed so fast; the small terraced houses once scheduled for demolition were cheap to buy and a substantial Asian community became established in the area surrounding Belgrave Road. There was tension in the area between the existing residents and the newly arriving Ugandan Asian families as Mike Allbut, a social worker at the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre, and who was later to present the *Six o’clock Show* on BBC Leicester, remembers;

To say that white people were moving out in droves as the Ugandans moved in is not an under estimation. But some people deliberately stayed. They were the hard-core National Front families and those people made our life hell at the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre. Every time we started something for the Asian community, they turned up to join in.²¹

¹⁹ For example, see P. Popham, We’re all in this together: How Leicester became a model of multiculturalism (even if that was never the plan...), *The Independent*, 27 July 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/were-all-in-this-together-how-leicester-became-a-model-of-multiculturalism-even-if-that-was-never-8732691.html> ; and K. Osborne, Leicester’s lesson in racial harmony, BBC News, 29 May 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1357865.stm> , (both accessed 17 May 2018).

²⁰ J. Dean, *Belgrave Shopping Survey*, Leicester City Council, (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 1977), p. 15.

²¹ Mike Allbut, (b. 14 February 1947), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, UK, 13 February 2017.

In 1975, at the height of the transformation of the Belgrave Road, BBC Radio Leicester sent a reporter to explore the rise of Asian owned shops and the changing customer base that frequented the road. Listening to the programme it is possible to take an audio walk along the road, to hear the fears of the local white population and contrast them with the hopes of the Asian immigrants. This programme evocatively captures the atmosphere of the change in the city at this crucial point in its post war history – and something of the editorial line BBC Radio Leicester had been taking on immigration. It begins with the reporter explaining that the ongoing change is ‘more rapid than anyone in Leicester has witnessed before’ and that Belgrave Road had become;

‘a monument or eyesore, whichever way you look at it, to the living fact that the Asian has come to stay in Leicester’.²²

The terminology is interesting here as the reporter refers to ‘the Asian’ as one group without any attempt to give the listener a chance to understand the different communities, cultures and religions – they were just portrayed as the outsiders, the problem. The existing local traders on Belgrave Road didn’t hold back in their criticism of the changes - or the immigrants. The reporter tells us that one refused to comment ‘as he didn’t have anything good to say about the immigrants, he would rather not talk at all’, and a garage owner told the reporter, ‘I cringe when an Indian walks through the door, they are turning it into a ghetto really’. After interviewing the owner of the newly built Natraj cinema, ‘the first purpose built air-conditioned Asian cinema in Europe’ the reporter asks the listener to consider where the money has come from for all the Asian businesses springing up? In a clear reference to stories of Asians arriving penniless in the city listeners were asked to consider, ‘were they telling lies about the money?’.²³ By the mid-1970s Belgrave Road and the surrounding area was a visible reminder of the changes that immigration was bringing to Leicester. As one white local shopkeeper told BBC Radio Leicester there were more changes to come;

‘Well, they have told me - not saying any names – that the Belgrave road from Abbey Park Road to Checketts Road will be an Indian Empire, so there won’t be any white people left on the road’.²⁴

²² BBC Radio Leicester, *In Perspective*, ‘Belgrave Road’, TX 24 January 1976, BBC Radio Leicester Tape Archive, ROLLR RL 1872.

²³ BBC Radio Leicester, ‘Belgrave Road’.

²⁴ BBC Radio Leicester, ‘Belgrave Road’.

This fear of immigration and change drove the racially poisonous atmosphere in the city. After the city council advert in Uganda to try and persuade the Ugandan Asians not to come Leicester was described in 1972 in the national press as ‘the most racist city in Britain’, and provided the basis for the rise of the nationalist right.²⁵

3.3 The rise of the nationalist right.

The drip-drip effect of local reporting on race in Leicester and the high-profile opposition of Enoch Powell to coloured immigration had a profound impact in the city. When Powell addressed a Conservative party think-tank at the Midland Hotel in Wolverhampton on 20 April 1968 he was tapping into concerns about Black and Asian immigration, that had become prevalent in Leicester. These had led to the founding of the Anti-Immigration Society (AIMS) some weeks earlier in March 1968. Within two weeks of Powell’s speech, on 6 May 1968 the organisers of AIMS had pulled together enough funding from subscriptions to take out a prominent full-page advert in the *Leicester Mercury*.²⁶ The advert set out the aims of the new group which included the repeal of the British Nationality Act of 1948, repatriation of immigrants and a new series of immigration quotas and work permits.²⁷ It also included a plea for new members and two days later the *Leicester Mercury* reported that AIMS had been ‘swamped with letters’ which ‘numbered in the hundreds’.²⁸ This report also quoted Sean Lalor, the Leicester Commonwealth Liaison Officer who told the paper;

Immigration was being made into a scapegoat for all economic and social problems of the country. Intentionally or not the society is supporting the mythology and ignorance that surrounds the debate on immigration. They are enforcing the idea of the liability of the immigrant.²⁹

From 1968 the radical right in Leicester through AIMS, the Enoch Powell Support Group and the National Front began to fill the vacuum left by the hesitant response of the two major political parties to the pace of demographic change in Leicester. Petitions against immigration circulated in local factories and local Labour and Conservative politicians not

²⁵ G. Singh, ‘Multiculturalism in Contemporary Britain: Reflections on the “Leicester Model”’, *Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 5.1, (2003): p. 42.

²⁶ AIMS Advertisement, *Leicester Mercury*, 6 May 1968, p. 8.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ ‘Anti-Immigration Society Swamped with Letters’, *Leicester Mercury*, 8 May 1968, p.20.

²⁹ Ibid.

only failed to assuage local fears around mass immigration but accentuated them.³⁰ An example in Belgrave saw the local Conservative MP, Tom Boardman, writing to Conservative HQ, with copies to the local press, arguing that immigrants should not be allowed to join local Tory branches; 'which would immediately mean the dissolution of those branches, as the bulk of the indigenous members would resent it'.³¹ With the large Latimer Conservative Club based just off the Belgrave Road this put local Conservatives in conflict with the increasing number Asian immigrants now living locally.

In 1972 members from local Conservative party branches led by Anthony Reed Herbert defected to the National Front. Reed Herbert went on to build an effective political campaign around a 'coalition of interests' with anti-immigration groups such as the Anti-Immigration Society, the Enoch Powell Support Group and the Send Them Back Campaign. This fed the toxicity of local race relations in the city and there was a steady increase in support for the National Front. From fielding just six candidates in 1972 the National Front was able to contest every seat in 1976 and gained almost one fifth of the vote (18.3%), narrowly missing out on a council seat.³² The Front's share of the vote in the three wards around Belgrave Road, Abbey (31.3%), Latimer (28.1%) and Belgrave (27%) was even higher, driven by the rapid change witnessed by the locals.³³ This electoral performance represented a huge increase for the Front - in just four years they overtook the Liberals to become the third party in Leicester in terms of electoral performance. Leicester was one of the National Front's key electoral areas, but they were also seen as the fourth largest party in Britain and capable of benefitting from any fall in the share of Labour and Conservative votes.³⁴ Over the next decade as the demographics changed still further the wards around Belgrave Road elected the first Asian councillors in the city. By the 1991 census the proportion of the Asian population in the three wards had risen to almost half in Belgrave (48.1%) and Abbey (47.6%), whilst in Latimer ward over two thirds (67.1%) of the population were of South Asian heritage.³⁵ Even though this was less than in other city

³⁰ Marett, *Immigrants settling in the city*, pp. 53-58.

³¹ R. M. Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 2010), p.84.

³² *Leicester Mercury*, Elections Results, 7 May 1976.

³³ *Leicester Mercury*, Elections Results.

³⁴ M. Walker, *The National Front*, (Fontana Collins; London, 1977), pp. 221-223.

³⁵ *Ethnic Minorities in Leicester, Census 1991, Facts*, Leicester City Council (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 1996), p. 10.

wards around Highfields, the Belgrave Road was seen as the focus of the 'Ugandan Asian story' and a visible symbol of the 'new' Leicester.

The 1976 election triggered political change in the city as the Conservatives ousted the Labour party. Michael Cufflin the new Conservative Leader of the Council told *ATV Today* that there was still concern in the city over how many more Asians could come to Leicester;

'It must be appreciated in Westminster that there is quite a widespread concern that could be allayed, but the no one knows the facts on these matters, do they? For example, the potential numbers of people who could come, I don't know the answer or whether they will come. And I think this is one of the things people are concerned about and perhaps if there were more information available fears may well be allayed'.³⁶

In this interview Cufflin articulated the widespread fear in Leicester about continued immigration and in particular the policies of governments in East Africa where 'Africanisation' policies had been responsible for much of the Asian immigration to Leicester.

3.4 African connections.

There are intriguing African connections in Leicester providing further background to the development of the *Six-Fifteen* programme by BBC Radio Leicester. The East African roots of the new Asian population is well documented in the existing literature.³⁷ It gave the Asian population in the city a core of a Gujarati, English speaking, well-educated and entrepreneurial middle class. The Asian population in Leicester is atypical with a markedly different profile to that of northern mill towns such as Blackburn, Bradford and Huddersfield which had Asian populations mainly drawn from rural India and Pakistan. Due to the nature of the Ugandan expulsion and the Africanisation in Kenya the city also had a large number of Asian families with a long-term commitment to Britain, rather than male workers with a plan to return home. In 1978 David Lane, the first Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality clumsily attempted to explain to BBC News executives at Broadcasting House the differences in Asian communities across the country;

³⁶ 'The National Front in Leicester', *ATV Today*, TX 26 May 1976, MACE Archive.

³⁷ See Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, and Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries in the City*.

Among those who originated from the sub-continent there was a wide range of backgrounds, from sophisticated East African Asians to bewildered Bengalis from the remoter parts of Bangladesh.³⁸

It was to be from this ‘sophisticated’ East African Asian community that BBC Radio Leicester recruited its new Asian presenters in 1976, Don Kotak and Mira Trivedi.

Figure 3-2 DON KOTAK AND MIRA TRIVEDI, BBC RADIO LEICESTER, 1976



Source: BBC Leicester Photo Archive

Don Kotak had moved to England from Nairobi in Kenya with his family in 1966 when he was 11 years old. After studying at the Polytechnic in Leicester he was training as an accountant in the city when he applied to be one of the new presenters on *Six-Fifteen*. Mira Trivedi was born in India and moved to Kampala in Uganda when she got married in 1959. She left Uganda with her husband in 1971 before Amin’s expulsion of the Asian communities and settled in Leicester. In 1976 Trivedi was working for the Social Services in Leicester when she applied to become a presenter. Neither had any previous experience in radio, but vital to the success of the project was the different links they had into the local communities.

³⁸ BBC WAC File R/78/2, 688/1, BBC News and Current Affairs Meeting, Broadcasting House, 4 July 1978.

Critically, the East African community that had now settled in Leicester had been used to listening to specialist Asian programmes on the national stations in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and were eager to tune into this new daily radio programme. As forward thinking as many BBC local radio stations may have felt their Asian provision to be, it was minor compared to the Voice of Kenya which by the early 1960s was producing up to seventy hours a week of Asian programming in five languages. The schedule below from the *Radio Times of Kenya* in 1960 features Bikram Bhamra, who had re-established his radio presence on BBC Radio Medway in 1974.

Figure 3-3 RADIO TIMES OF KENYA 1960

RADIO TIMES of Kenya
November 17, 1960

ASIAN NATIONAL
TUESDAY
November 22, 1960

Indian Wave 430m, 605kc/s, 6.30 to 8 am, 12.30 to 2 pm, 5 to 10.30 pm
Short Wave 43m, 7.15 mc/s, 12.30 to 2 pm, 5 to 6.30 pm
Short Wave 43m, 4.855mc/s, 6.30 to 8 am, 6.45 to 10.30 pm

6.30 am Geeta Path
By Pandit Laxmi Narain Shastri

6.45 Bhajans
Devotional Songs

7.0 BHOR KI BELA

7.30 BBC World News
in English
followed by
KBS News Summary
in Hindustani

7.40 Weather Forecast
and Programme Parade

7.45 Shabnam
Your favourite singer
Mena Kapoor

8.0 Close Down

12.30 pm ROUND THE
WARDS
Darshi plays requests from
patients in King George VI
and I.D. Hospitals

1.0 Duganey
By Suman Kalyanpur and
Mahendra Kapoor

1.15 World News Headlines
in Hindustani,
KBS News Bulletin
Weather Report and
Announcements

ALL INDIA RADIO
13, 16, 19 and 25 metre bands
Hindustani news at 7 am
and 8.45 pm
English news at 7.30 am
and 6.45 pm

1.30 FILMI SANGEET
From the films
Anura, Shikhi, Mahal,
Marhal and Aandhien

2.0 Close Down

5.0 Jhilmil
Your favourite singer
Mukesh

5.15 Hansarivadan
Lok Dhan
By H. Biswas

5.30 Radio Magazine

5.50 Waqiat-i-Alam

6.0 Ham Se Puchhiye

6.20 Vishva Samiksha

6.30 Sazson par Filmi Tarzan

6.45 SAANJH KI BELA

7.15 Weather Forecast

8.25 Interlude

8.30 STANVAC CAMERA

9.0 BBC World News
in English
followed by
KBS News Commentary

9.15 PUNJABI CHORUS
GEETS
Gaitri Bose aur Sathi,
Lata aur Sathi
Zubeida aur Sathi

9.35 Humorous Skits
By Mirza Sultan aur Sathi,
Sultan Khoosat aur Sathi

9.45 Kavi aur Kavita
A feature
By Dharmendra Nath

10.0 AAP KI PASAND
Listeners' Requests

10.30 Close Down

B. S. BHAMRA
Mr. Bhamra has joined the Asian National as a Senior Programme Assistant on transfer from the Education Department, which he joined as a schoolmaster in 1951. He is keen on scouting and holds the Wood Badge.
Mr. Bhamra has been connected with Asian Broadcasting since 1951 and has contributed short stories, plays and talks. He is now taking over the Children's Programmes in the Asian Service in addition to the plays and other features which he already presents.

Source: Bikram Bhamra, Personal Archive.

In contrast to East Africa the new arrivals in Leicester encountered a radio 'vacuum' with just 45 minutes a week of targeted programming on *Milan*. There was a pent-up demand from people who had been in the habit of daily listening.

At BBC Radio Leicester both Owen Bentley, the new station manager, and Greg Ainger, one of the newly appointed production staff who worked on the *Six-Fifteen* programme had spent time in Africa. Unusually for a BBC local radio manager Bentley had worked at a BBC relay station in Botswana, set up to serve Rhodesia after UDI was declared in 1965.

It was in Botswana that Bentley had witnessed the racial tensions between Africans and Asians, 'I was much more aware of much more diverse communities'.³⁹ As a British VSO worker in a Ugandan school, Ainger was expelled by Amin in 1972 and though he felt he was treated with considerably more care than the Ugandan Asians he was still robbed by the roadside by Ugandan troops;

'Every twenty miles or so there was an army roadblock and we were filtered into three lines, Europeans, the Africans were let through and then the Asians were taken off into the bush on either side of the road and I have no reason to believe they were treated gently'.⁴⁰

This experience gave Bentley and Ainger some empathy and understanding of the plight of the East African Asians who now found themselves in an unwelcoming city. Stations such as BBC Radio Blackburn, which took its Asian programme off air in 1975 did not have this same connection with local Asian communities.

3.5 A New station manager at BBC Radio Leicester

Owen Bentley became manager of BBC Radio Leicester in September 1975. At 33 he had built up a wealth of experience in local radio at BBC local radio stations in Stoke, Oxford, and Sheffield. At Oxford and Sheffield, he had witnessed the Asian programming engaging with local Asian communities.

Within weeks of arriving at the radio station Bentley was put under pressure by some members of his Local Radio Advisory Council (LRAC) to do more to represent ethnic minorities on the air through special programming. The minutes for the LRAC meeting in October 1975 marked a sea change with Earl Robinson a black member of the committee arguing for BBC Radio Leicester to do more;

He was really pleading with Radio Leicester to look at its priorities and see if what was being offered was significant.⁴¹

In May 1976, just days after the National Front had nearly gained a councillor in Leicester, Kartar Singh Sandhu, a local teacher and one of the presenters of the weekly *Milan*

³⁹ Owen Bentley, (b. 12 August 1942), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 22 November 2016.

⁴⁰ Greg Ainger, (b. 12 March 1951), Oral History Interview, recorded London, 7 February 2017.

⁴¹ BBC WAC file, R81/11/2, BBC Radio Leicester LRAC Minutes 29 October 1975.

programme, retired from the LRAC after his three-year term of office. As his parting shot the minutes note that he called for more to be done for minorities in the city;

Racial harmony was his main interest, and more should be done in programmes to show the different types of culture in the Leicester area.⁴²

Again, here was an LRAC member calling for the station to play a part in the social cohesion of the city. Bentley confirmed to the advisory council in July that he was planning a new nightly programme ‘to attract listeners from ethnic minorities’, he told the meeting that in the past he had been against special programmes but now felt that ‘specific programmes had to be mounted in order to open the lines of communication’.⁴³ By August Bentley was able to tell the LRAC that through his discussions with the Community Relations Council he had gained a grant of £900 to get a new daily community programme off the ground. Called *Six-Fifteen* it was to be broadcast in English, although the existing *Milan* programme broadcast on Tuesdays would be retained. The new programme was to be launched on Monday 16 October.

3.6 The independence of local radio station managers

Bentley could take this decision to launch a new daily programme, even though he knew he might get an adverse reaction, because of the editorial independence he enjoyed as a BBC local radio Station Manager. Through this independence Station Managers in BBC local radio were responsible for many firsts in British radio; phone-in programmes in Sheffield and Nottingham, an African-Caribbean programme in Leeds, an Esperanto serial in Stoke, and an Asian soap opera in Leicester. That managers were able to develop such a diverse range of programming rather than work to set templates was down to their independence, guaranteed by the BBC during the two-year experiment, and a freedom that continued into the 1970s and 1980s. Michael Barton, the first Station manager of BBC Radio Sheffield, and the only Controller of BBC local radio explained the autonomy he had as a manager;

⁴² BBC Radio Leicester LRAC Minutes, 15 May 1976.

⁴³ BBC Radio Leicester LRAC Minutes, 20 July 1976.

We were totally free to interpret the events that were going on, reflect them in a way that we thought was appropriate.⁴⁴

Figure 3-4 OWEN BENTLEY, BBC RADIO LEICESTER, 1975



BBC Radio Leicester Photo Archive

There was no central policy on programming for Bentley to follow and when the *Leicester Mercury* implied in an editorial that BBC Radio Leicester was subject to control from London, Bentley was quick to rebut the argument in a letter to the paper;

No “mandarin” tells Radio Leicester what it should and should not do. No programme schedule for this station has ever been sent to Broadcasting House for approval. I refute entirely that London headquarters opinions matter more than the local.⁴⁵

It was this independence that enabled such an innovative programming move to go ahead funded by the grant from the Leicester Council for Community Relations. This grant fully funded the programme for six months, after which Bentley had to appeal for more funds from the BBC or trim his local budgets elsewhere on the station. Getting a service on air and then challenging the BBC ‘not’ to provide ongoing funding was a strategy that Bentley used again in 1989 with the launch of the BBC Midlands Asian Network.

⁴⁴ OHI, Michael Barton.

⁴⁵ UoL Special Collections, *Leicester Mercury* Archive, ‘No Kowtowing to BBC by Leicester Radio’, *Leicester Mercury*, 23 March 1977.

3.7 Getting *Six Fifteen* on air.

The synchronisation of these six factors in the summer of 1976 in Leicester created an environment in which the new *Six Fifteen* programme could be launched. The two crucial factors were the arrival of Owen Bentley and the editorial freedom he had to make this key change. Before his arrival the station had been content to stick with the weekly *Milan* programme and yet within a year had embarked on a new direction for community programming. When Bentley set down his roots in Leicester, he chose to live in the Leicestershire village of Barkby, just north of the city. This meant that he drove daily into Leicester through Belgrave and witnessed at first-hand how this part of Leicester had been thoroughly changed by Asian immigration;

‘You walked the streets in Leicester, and you saw a pretty large Asian minority population, and you listened to Radio Leicester and everything was geared to the white indigenous population.... I felt that if Leicester was going to be a successful radio station then it was going to have to embrace this community’.⁴⁶

This point was also made by producer Greg Ainger;

‘The radio station itself, other than paying lip service through the *Milan* programme which was actually in Hindi [Hindustani] ... wasn’t reflective of the community I saw and felt when I was at Leicester ... and also I could see the potential that radio had to be an integrative force in the whole of the community’.⁴⁷

However, Bentley also recognised the new electoral strength of the National Front after the 1976 election and looked at ways in which they could be included on air for the first time;

‘We did not like the National Front, the staff did not like the National Front, the unions did not like the National Front. But I felt we had a duty to reflect their views given the electoral support they had garnered’.⁴⁸

By the summer of 1976 therefore, Bentley faced two major challenges; firstly, how should the growing support of the NF be recognised on air after its local election ‘success’, and secondly, how was the radio station going to connect with the growing Asian population of the city without inflaming the racially charged situation in the city? These were flip sides of the same coin and tackling both without reputational damage to the station would be

⁴⁶ OHI, Owen Bentley.

⁴⁷ OHI, Greg Ainger.

⁴⁸ OHI, Bentley, recorded February 2013.

difficult. By mid-1976 Bentley had decided that the radio station should play a role in trying to calm the racially charged atmosphere in Leicester by getting more Asians on to the local airwaves;

‘Part of the rise of the National Front was sheer ignorance of what these communities were, it was the fear of the unknown, fear of the other. And it was a way of getting over this fear of the other if you could get them more on the air, not giving them their own programme as such but having it in English and therefore accessible and that some of that white audience would hear a different sort of Asian to the one they had in their perception’.⁴⁹

The minutes of the BBC Radio Leicester LRAC show that in July of 1976 Bentley was able to report that he had a plan to make a ‘serious effort to attract listeners from ethnic minorities by way of a programme at 6.15 each evening’.⁵⁰ Here his language is important as he clearly was seeing the minorities as a potential audience for the radio station, not as a problem. Crucial to the announcement at this meeting was that the new programming was to be in English;

‘It was the realisation that most Asians either if they were born here or not born here had a great command of English, it was something like ninety per cent. You then realised you had these young people whose formative years were purely in Leicester; it was their town’.⁵¹

This was echoed by Don Kotak, one of the freelance Asian presenters recruited by BBC Radio Leicester;

‘English was important. I knew that all East African Asians, the large majority of them understood English, spoke English throughout their lives over there. And it also helped break the programming in gently as the ordinary daily listener hadn’t heard this type of programme before’.⁵²

Bentley was also clear on the reasons for broadcasting a programme every weeknight;

‘A big thing for me was they’re not listening to us. Because why should they, there was absolutely nothing for them in the rest of the output? A big idea I had was you get some programmes for them to start listening to the station and they will then translate their affections to the remainder of the output. So, they will end up listening to the breakfast

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ BBC Radio Leicester, LRAC Minutes, 20 July 1976, p.4.

⁵¹ Bentley, OHI, November 2016.

⁵² Don Kotak, (D.o.B., 3 August 1954), Oral History Interview recorded Leicester, 9 March 2017.

show which has a bulletin that reflects not only just pure white news but news of importance to Asians too'.⁵³

Bentley observed that 'single programmes made no difference' and that ideas about sequencing programmes across the week to provide an audience inheritance from one programme to another were coming to the fore in BBC local radio thinking; 'make a splash, let's see if they'll come in and then let's move them into the output overall'.⁵⁴ The grant from the Community Relations Council effectively made the programme a six month pilot, but once *Six-Fifteen* was on air it proved to be difficult to dislodge. Bentley suggested that this lack of BBC funding continued to dog ethnic minority programmes;

'That's the story of Asian Network funding throughout ... My basic trick of it really, and it worked, was that you make a success of it and then you go back to the BBC and go "look at this! You need to give me a bit more money to keep this going"'.⁵⁵

The first time the National Front appeared on air was on Saturday 23 October on Saturday lunchtime at the end of a momentous week of risks for Bentley. Not only had he launched *Six-Fifteen* but also carried out his decision to put the National Front on air in a debate programme. The pre-recorded debate featured Brian Piper, a local Labour Councillor who was an avid critic of the National Front and Anthony Reed Herbert the local NF branch organiser. When the pair had entered Epic House to record the programme, they had been met by a sizeable demonstration against the broadcast; 'Two jostled by pickets before radio debate' reported the *Leicester Mercury*. The protesters argued that giving the National Front airtime was racist and gave them 'credibility and respectability'.⁵⁶ Groups opposed to the National Front normally refused to share a platform with them, effectively removing the possibility of a debate programme airing. At election times the Labour party would not take part in programmes with the National Front, which as the electoral law stood at the time was a strategy that had kept the National Front off the air. Piper was one of the fiercest local critics of the National Front and had to resign from membership of the Inter Racial Solidarity Group so he could take part in the programme. He later recalled the toxic atmosphere that was engendered by the National Front and perhaps revealed more than he

⁵³ Bentley, OHI, November 2016.

⁵⁴ Bentley, OHI, November 2016.

⁵⁵ Bentley, OHI, November 2016.

⁵⁶ 'Two jostled by pickets before radio debate', *Leicester Mercury*, 22 October 1976.

meant to when he recalled his thoughts as he shared the lift journey to street level with Reed Herbert after the recording;

‘So, Reed-Herbert and myself are going down in the lift, and I had my pocket knife in my pocket and I think to myself I would do the world a favour and be out in seven years if I sorted him now, I could do this. Then I thought “you bloody idiot Piper that’s exactly what they want; turn him into a martyr”. That was the level of emotion meeting NF people could generate in you’.⁵⁷

Piper was adamant he had made the right decision to confront the National Front on air;

‘It is an ideological debate and if you are going to take on the National Front you don’t do it by denying them a platform and turn them into martyrs and deny their free speech’.⁵⁸

The on-air introduction to the debate portrays the nervousness of the radio station about what it was broadcasting; the presenter read a press statement from the Inter-Racial Solidarity Campaign;

‘The Inter Racial Solidarity Group is appalled that Radio Leicester in the interests of ‘so called free speech’ should allow the National Front airtime to express views which they are well aware are totally repugnant.’ The presenter continued ‘however, Radio Leicester does believe in free speech and reflecting issues that are important in this city’.⁵⁹

A review of the local press in Leicestershire reveals that unlike the reporting of the National Front debate the launch of *Six Fifteen* received no coverage.

3.8 Reaction to *Six Fifteen*

Six-Fifteen first aired on Monday 16th October 1976. The new presenters were quite clear that entertainment as well as information would be key to the success of the programme. Mira Trivedi thought *Milan* had limitations and that they could break with the format;

‘*Milan* was a bit of information and a bit of entertainment, but that programme wasn’t enough to cater for all the Indians and Pakistanis who were living here. There was such a big vacuum where entertainment was needed.... in India we used to listen to the radio the whole day, in Africa we used to listen to the radio the whole day and when we came here there was very little Indian music, just *Milan* once a week’.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Brian Piper Oral History Interview, EMOHA Accession number 02315/S, EM/142.

⁵⁸ Brian Piper Interview, EMOHA.

⁵⁹ BBC Radio Leicester, In Perspective ‘NF Debate’, broadcast 23 October 1976, (ROLL&R, RL 1897).

⁶⁰ Mira Trivedi, (D.o.B., 26 January 1940), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 17 March 2017.

Don Kotak also felt the new programme should be strongly music based;

‘I went to see Owen ... and I wrote out what I thought we could be doing, and I said it’s got to be music based because that’s what the Asian community need’.⁶¹

Once the decision had been taken to broadcast *Six Fifteen* the next problem faced by Bentley was to convince the existing staff on station that it was the right programme to broadcast and the transmission time was right. Bentley recalled;

‘The staff weren’t all in favour at all. They thought it was what we now call “a brave decision”, they told me “you are going to alienate the audience”, and there was quite a view of that on the station’.⁶²

As Greg Ainger remembered there was also a feeling of resentment towards both the programme and the new Asian presenters;

‘I wish I could sit here and say it was universally well received. It wasn’t. In a way the radio station was reflecting the same kind of prejudices that were in the community. It was a problem and trying to get the radio station reflecting at least in part the communities I was trying to reach wasn’t particularly easy’.⁶³

Don Kotak went further in describing how he and Mira Trivedi were received by some of the BBC Radio Leicester staff;

‘Very badly. Some people were ok, but when I look in hindsight, I knew what they were saying behind our backs. At Epic House when you went in there no one welcomed you. There were one or two friendly people there but not many more. Owen was great, Greg was fine, but we were treated like a little ghetto set up’.⁶⁴

As some of the staff at BBC Radio Leicester reflected the same prejudices and fears as the wider community the station manager might easily have put this programme idea aside or waited for the BBC to fund it. But Bentley pressed on and was braced for a backlash from the listeners. At an LRAC meeting Mrs Rachel Root, the LRAC Chair, suggested that BBC Radio Leicester ‘might perhaps make itself unpopular with the general “working class” community in the city by broadcasting such a programme’.⁶⁵ Bentley recalls;

⁶¹ OHI Kotak.

⁶² OHI Bentley, November 2016.

⁶³ OHI, Greg Ainger.

⁶⁴ OHI Kotak.

⁶⁵ BBC Radio Leicester, LRAC Minutes, 28 September 1976, p.4.

‘I was expecting a backlash, but it was nowhere near as big as I was expecting. I suppose part of that was where we scheduled it, by six o’clock the white audience was fairly small, whereas it turned out to be a great time for the Asian community to be listening. I got letters and maybe the odd abusive phone call, but in the end, there wasn’t a campaign against it. What I was fearing was that a group might get together and really hammer it’.⁶⁶

There was no organised campaign against the programme. The fact that four nights a week it was presented in English made it accessible to all the listeners and importantly policy makers in the local authorities – many of whom appeared on the programme as guests. Surinder Sharma, who came to Leicester as a child from Nairobi in 1965 and went on to serve as a City Councillor in the 1980s thought the programme caught the prevailing attempts in the public services to connect with the growing Asian communities. He thought it important that it was broadcast in English;

I think it was, because it was not just broadcasting but it was going to community events, Mela’s, Diwali and Eid and so on. It was important to keep English as a medium. Airing important issues on air and holding people to account.⁶⁷

In launching *Six Fifteen* BBC Radio Leicester became the broadcaster with the most hours of Asian programming in Britain. As one of thirteen BBC local radio stations producing a combined total of 14 hours and 15 minutes a week BBC Radio Leicester was now responsible for more than a quarter (26.3 percent) of this Asian output.⁶⁸

Very few of the early broadcasts were retained but newly discovered recordings give a feel of the sound of these programmes. They capture Leicester at a turning point in its post war history and provide a contrasting view of the city to the current affairs programmes discussed earlier in this chapter. There is also a striking and contrasting note to the existing historiography, which is based on written material rather than the audio of the programmes. Matthew Linfoot’s account of the early years of BBC local radio includes a section on minority programmes grouped together under the heading ‘Pure Amateursville’. This title is drawn from the minutes of a 1978 BBC Programmes Review meeting in London which featured a review of BBC Radio Leicester’s *6-3-0 Show*, the second iteration of *Six Fifteen*. In the meeting Head of Recording Services (Radio) ‘thought the programme would irritate the local English population’, MDR (Managing Director Radio) summed the presenter up

⁶⁶ OHI Bentley, November 2016.

⁶⁷ Surinder Sharma, (D.o.B., 5 July 1953), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester 7 September 2017.

⁶⁸ *Radio Times*, BBC local radio Billings Pages, October 1976, BBC WAC.

as 'pure amateursville', although Presentation Editor BBC Radio 4 felt 'the Asian music was better than anything produced on the network, which sounded like it was produced on chapattis'.⁶⁹ BBC Radio Leicester had the benefit of the use of a local private Asian record library which imported the latest Bollywood soundtracks direct from the sub-continent giving the programme direct access to new music via presenters who had an intimate knowledge of the material.

The earliest surviving complete edition of *the 6-3-0 Show* was broadcast live in May 1977 just six months after the programme began. Far from being 'pure amateursville' it displays a remarkable range and depth for the period - it is no less than an embryonic sequence programme that is recognizable on radio stations today. It includes a feature on a social work conference about problems faced by Asians in Leicester, live radio car interviews from the heart of Leicester's Asian community in Highfields, community notices, Bollywood film times at local cinemas, requests and music. According to Greg Ainger, the radio car features regularly stopped the traffic in Highfields and Belgrave as Asian listeners surrounded the car to get their voice on air, pass messages to friends and meet the presenters. It is one of the earliest programmes presented by Vijay Sharma, who was later to be appointed to the staff of BBC Radio Leicester as Community Programmes Producer. On this edition even though Sharma is clearly still getting to grips with presentation techniques the programme feels strongly engaged with the local community and has an appealing feel to it.

In another edition from 1977 presented by Don Kotak there is a discussion section with a young person's panel with young women in the studio reflecting on their problematic relationship with their parents;

Teenage girl in studio; 'If parents have come over here and they are gonna stay here permanently they've got to do a few changes, because my parents have not changed, they think that girls are not allowed to dance, while I like dancing you see. If I tell them I'm going to a disco they'd probably say you're not going.

Don Kotak; 'But they probably don't think you are old enough to go out'

Teenage girl in studio; 'Yeah, if I'm not too old enough then by the time I'm gonna be eighteen they are going to try and get me married off. You see, in our sort of thing girls are

⁶⁹ M. Linfoot, *Local Radio in England*, pp. 282-285.

getting married so quickly. For example, a friend of mine she's only seventeen but she's married now, and I think that's really too much'.

This has a strikingly contemporary feel and would stand up against any current programme in contrast to programmes such as *Milan* which were very much of their time. This debate was part of a deliberate attempt by the station to try and target young Asians caught between two cultures. This was a very real situation for youngsters in Leicester as Surinder Sharma recalled from his time growing up in the city;

'We were hearing and listening to different things at school but coming home was very different. We still spoke in Punjabi at home to Mum and Dad. There were two cultures, but I think we straddled it fairly well. We were living two lives in a way, but that was a positive experience'.⁷⁰

What these two editions show is that there was room in the new daily format to explore local news, the social issues of the day, practical advice on a range of issues and community information packaged with music and entertainment. The fact that BBC Radio Leicester now had as much as five times the airtime devoted to Asian programming than other stations allowed the programmes the space to tackle the widest range of material. These recordings provide an invaluable opportunity to place the role of the radio station into the context of the time and it stands up to scrutiny when compared to other BBC Radio Leicester programmes from the period. The five nights a week format also ensured that far more people became involved in the programme, as presenters, guests, phone answerers and reporters, building up a critical mass of people on station.

The programme proved to be a 'hit' with the local Asian population. The CRE carried out audience research in Leicester in May 1977 when a team of researchers led by Muhammad Anwar found that within just seven months the now titled *The 6-3-0 Show* was achieving a high penetration into the Asian community with two thirds of the 953 sample listening regularly and a further quarter listening occasionally.⁷¹ These results contrasted sharply with the regular BBC audience research for BBC Radio Leicester which Bentley suggested showed that Asian programmes had few listeners.

⁷⁰ OHI Surinder Sharma.

⁷¹ M. Anwar, *Who Tunes into What?*, (CRE; London 1978).

‘The BBC audience research at the time, its methodology was wrong as they had not systematically taken into account the Asian audience, where it was, and where the interviews should take place. The interviewers were all white and were they happy to try and get their quota of Asians – if they had such a quota?’⁷²

For Bharti Rajani, who came to Leicester with her family after being expelled from Uganda in 1972, the new programme was a revelation and quickly became a regular part of their evening routine at home;

When I heard Radio Leicester for the first time I was over the moon, I was so happy. Me and my family listened because we were so fond of Asian music, so we felt we have got something at least. I used to listen to each and every word of it, I never used to miss it. It meant a lot, because we were missing the country [Uganda] so it was something to look forward to. You could listen to the other people and take part in competitions, I won so many prizes!⁷³

Surinder Sharma remembered how quickly word spread about the new programme and how it engendered a new sense of belonging;

I became aware of the new programme very quickly because we used to listen to *Milan*. I think it was important in making you feel at home you had a sense of belonging. You could hear locally news and music and comment and so on which was different.⁷⁴

This chapter has identified the moment in which British Asian Radio began as a proper concept through the launch of *Six Fifteen* by BBC Radio Leicester in October 1976. Its importance is recognised by Surinder Sharma through his professional perspective of a lifetime of work in the field of equality;

I think it was quite revolutionary to have programming every day, but also then later having programmes from six o’clock to midnight, so I think there was an evolution at Radio Leicester. You know Owen and his team at the time deserve a lot of praise for what they did at the time. I think people don’t recognise the individuals who made a difference in this city, but I think there were many individuals who did make a huge difference in making people feel they were part of local society, they had arrived and were part and parcel of being the Leicester community.⁷⁵

⁷² OHI, Bentley, November 2016.

⁷³ Bharti Rajani, (D.o.B. 29 October 1957), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester 20 June 2018.

⁷⁴ OHI, Surinder Sharma.

⁷⁵ OHI, Surinder Sharma.

3.9 Conclusion

The picture of Don Kotak and Mira Trivedi in the Leicester edition of the *Radio Times* in October 1976 with the invitation to ‘get to know your neighbours’ was a public demonstration of an innovative and creative decision by Owen Bentley which represented a cultural shift in the provision of Asian radio programming. Bentley recognised that the growing Asian communities in the city were potential consumers of the radio station and that for a BBC station to fulfil its remit it needed to connect with all sections of the local community. The new programme was also a response to criticism of the station by Earl Robinson and Kartar Singh Sandhu of the LRAC who felt the station should be more inclusive of the minority communities in the city. Significantly it was popular with the Asian communities of the city and as this chapter has demonstrated played a part in making new arrivals feel a sense of belonging to Leicester. In setting out to target young Asians caught between two cultures there was an acknowledgement that the demographics and identities within the Asian communities were changing and had an increasing importance in local radio programming into the 1980s. This is something that will be explored in future chapters as a new young British Asian culture developed that was distinct from that of their parents and culture clashes were represented on air. Bentley challenged the existing institutional culture in the BBC and was very much out on his own in terms of daily Asian programming for another decade.

There was never any prospect of large amounts of new money for BBC local radio projects such as this, and Bentley, despite proof of his audience success relied on annual funding grants from BBC local radio headquarters to help keep this new programme going. The independence granted to BBC local radio station managers became a key worry of a London-centric BBC that felt it was difficult to put a brake on programme ambition and spend. This was especially so as BBC local radio expanded and made increasing calls on the licence fee, with senior figures across the corporation openly questioning if the BBC should be in local radio at all. However, as the next chapter will show the independence of local radio station managers that allowed *Six-Fifteen* to get on air was both a strength and a weakness. Station managers acting individually, as Owen Bentley did in 1976, could steer their stations and the wider BBC into new direction - but few did for another decade.

These themes will be explored in the next chapter as BBC local radio began to move towards a clearer understanding of how to connect with Asian communities. This came with a recognition that ethnic programmes were not in themselves enough and that an emphasis had to be placed on covering the concerns of minorities right across the programme day.

Chapter 4 1976 – 1984: Policy, Programmes and Asian communities disconnected.

On the morning of 22 June 1976 senior staff from BBC local radio met in a fifth-floor conference room at the BBC's new Pebble Mill building in leafy suburban Edgbaston in Birmingham. The sixteen white men and one white woman from fourteen local stations and BBC local radio HQ were attending a conference to discuss 'programmes for immigrants'. During the day they were joined by three members of staff from the BBC's Asian Unit which was based at Pebble Mill – only one of them, Ali Rampul, was Asian.¹ There were no voices in the room from the twenty Asian or black programmes broadcast each week on BBC local radio. The attendance list for this first BBC local radio conference on 'immigrant' programmes confirms what Husband and Chauhan argued ten years later, that white media professionals grouped ethnic communities together and marked them out as immigrants, separate from the rest of the audience and the BBC.² The lack of black and Asian voices at this meeting highlights the main problem faced over the next decade in BBC local radio; that of a dominant 'white' paternalistic editorial perspective which largely excluded local non-white communities from the decision making process. This conference therefore concentrated on bureaucratic management problems such as a lack of funding and the difficulties of producing Asian programmes broadcast in languages they and their staff did not understand. It did not focus on the needs or special programme requirements that 'immigrant' communities might have had.

It is therefore no surprise to learn that during this period there was little change across BBC local radio and most Asian programmes remained marginalised in the broadcast schedules and stations – except in Leicester. Asian programme teams mostly came into the radio station after hours and had relatively few connections with the day to day activities of the rest of the station. A similar disconnect was recognised in television by Malik and Newton who argue that as public service broadcasting developed alongside mass immigration, minority communities remained 'under-served as audiences and excluded as

¹ BBC WAC File, R102/38/1, Local Radio Conference on Immigrant Programmes, Minutes, June 1976.

² C. Husband and J. M. Chouhan, 'Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain, in D. Tain, (Ed.), *Test Theory, New Approaches to the Analysis of Mass Media Discourse and Communication*, (Boston; De Gruyter, 1985), p.287.

practitioners’.³ This created a ‘broadcast ghetto’ effect of separation within the stations, again this was an effect similarly generated in television in later years.⁴ By 1983 sixteen BBC local radio stations were producing a total of almost seventeen hours of weekly Asian programming to around one million people of South Asian heritage in England, little changed from the picture in 1976. But more than a quarter of these hours were broadcast by BBC Radio Leicester to its 63,000 strong local Asian communities, no other BBC station followed suit with a daily Asian programme. While the presentation of Asian programmes in mother-tongue languages became editorially difficult for local staff to manage it is noticeable that two of the most spoken South Asian languages in Britain, Punjabi and Gujarati were hardly in evidence on air. This is something which was problematical for the listeners and language lobbies developed within local communities to push the BBC to do more. In this period BBC local radio was operating under severe financial constraints and there was a lack of a wider editorial and policy direction in the BBC to force change. The new daily programming at BBC Radio Leicester from October 1976 was launched against the grain of ‘accepted’ practice across BBC local radio, and it remained an outlier.

This chapter will therefore firstly place this lack of change into the background of an emerging but imprecise BBC policy, secondly, measure programme provision against the changing demographics within the Asian communities, thirdly argue that in programme presentation South Asian languages became more not less important, and fourthly compare these factors against developments at BBC Radio Leicester.

4.1 BBC Policy

An unwritten BBC policy in the area of Asian programming had emerged from the example set by the Immigrants (then Asian) Programme Unit in Birmingham. This consisted of three key elements; weekly programmes, Hindustani as the broadcast language of choice and the avoidance of divisive current affairs issues. The establishment of the Annan committee on broadcasting in the mid 1970s forced the BBC to formally consider its policy in the field of broadcasting to ethnic minorities. Now remembered for the recommendation

³ S. Malik & D. M. Newton, (Eds.), *Adjusting the Contrast: British Television and Constructs of Race*, (University of Manchester Press; Manchester, 2018), p. 2.

⁴ See Malik on ghettoization in media policy: S. Malik, ‘Creative Diversity: UK Public Service Broadcasting After Multiculturalism’, *Popular Communication*, (2013), 11.3, p. 227.

to set up Channel 4, Annan also threatened the future of BBC local radio and during its consultation period the BBC drew up position papers and presented evidence to the hearings.

The *Memorandum on Broadcasting and Racial Minorities* submitted to Annan in 1975 was the first to formally set out BBC policy in this area. This paper was short on specific proposals, instead reflecting at length on the problems the BBC faces as a broadcaster. For example, in assessing the weekly Asian programmes on network radio and television the BBC acknowledged that;

to date there has been no formal survey by BBC Audience Research ... the audience is small and scattered for sampling purposes and the linguistic and cultural difficulties of communicating with its members are considerable.⁵

It goes on to suggest that as the Asian Programmes Unit receives a ‘considerable amount of correspondence’ and therefore the BBC had no ‘reason to think’ the programmes were not successful.⁶ This lack of audience data is far from the policy the paper suggests that the BBC should adopt, particularly given the state of race relations in Britain at the time;

In an area as amorphous as racial connotations, it is important to check how fully the messages which the audience receives corresponds with the messages the broadcasters believe themselves to be transmitting.⁷

This reference to the then new theory espoused by Stuart Hall on encoding and decoding of media messages is a clear challenge to improve in this area.⁸ But the only two relevant audience research papers attached to the memorandum are from 1972 and 1968 and did not include any new interviews or research with black or Asian licence payers. It is therefore possible to ‘decode’ that ethnic minorities were not top of the BBC’s priorities. Research by the CRE in 1978 in Leicester and 1983 across England provided crucial new evidence

⁵ BBC WAC File, R4/93/1, Annan Committee, BBC Memorandum; *Memorandum on Broadcasting and Racial Minorities*, p. 4.

⁶ BBC Memorandum, p. 4.

⁷ BBC Memorandum, p. 12.

⁸ S. Hall, Encoding/decoding, in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds), *Culture, media, language—Working papers in cultural studies*, 1972–79 (London; Routledge, 1980), pp. 117–127.

about Asian programmes and audiences, but the BBC itself did no further research on Asian radio programming in local radio until 1985 in Leicester.

The low priority the BBC placed on funding new research was reinforced by the title of an internal BBC working paper in 1977 titled *The Broadcasting Problems Associated with Asian and Black Minorities in the United Kingdom*. This paper celebrated the provision of special programmes for minorities and identified the potential audience for Asian programmes as ‘rather more than one million’.⁹ However, it provided no survey data or evidence about the needs of minority communities arguing that funding any new ethnic programming was problematical;

‘until a satisfactory level of revenue can be derived from licence fees, programmes for minorities can only be developed at the expense of the majority’.¹⁰

In no other programme area had the BBC linked licence fee income from specific groups to programme funding, not even in the language programming in Wales and Scotland. This was something of a diversion as part of its argument about funding the paper suggests that ‘special language broadcasts for minorities tend to provoke resentment amongst the majority and obstruct rather than assist integration’, although no qualitative or quantitative evidence for this assertion is included in the paper. Asian programming was something the BBC appeared to be trying to avoid as it is something it did not understand. There is no mention in this paper of other languages such as Welsh or Gaelic being a problem, but the ‘intrusiveness’ of the Hindustani presentation on the Sunday morning BBC Radio 4 programme *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiya* was highlighted;

‘the indigenous English-speaking audience, were confronted on Sunday mornings on Radio 4 by a language they almost universally did not understand’.¹¹

Successive controllers of BBC Radio 4 used this paper as further ammunition to drop the programme, showing that internal lobbying could be effective. In 1982 Monica Sims wanted to get rid of it because ‘it isn’t good enough, serves no useful purpose and doesn’t

⁹ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1, ‘The Broadcasting Problems Associated with Asian and Black Minorities’, 6 April 1977, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ BBC, Broadcasting Problems, p.21.

¹¹ BBC, Broadcasting Problems, p.10.

belong on Radio 4'.¹² Yet the listeners of *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiya* were also licence fee payers. Similar arguments and attitudes were echoed in 2009 when the BBC tried to close the BBC Asian Network.¹³

For BBC local radio the Annan committee presented a clear and present danger with its recommendation of a new regulator for all local radio and the removal of local stations from BBC and IBA control.¹⁴ In a widely distributed lobby booklet called *Serving Neighbourhood and Nation* produced in 1977 to influence public opinion the BBC celebrated the benefits of a BBC run local radio service. The lack of prominence in the booklet about programming for minorities can be viewed as a touchstone of how important connecting with these communities was regarded – or not regarded - by individual stations.¹⁵

Figure 4-1 SERVING NEIGHBOURHOOD AND NATION 1977



¹² BBC WAC, File R102/13/1, Programmes for Immigrants, Part 2, 1980-82, Memo from CR4 to MDR, 2 October 1981.

¹³ See, G. Aujla-Sidhu, 'Public Service Broadcasting: The challenges of representing ethnic minority audiences', *New Directions in Media Research*, (2015) 1.1, p.41.

¹⁴ See, G. Starkey, *Local Radio*, p. 57.

¹⁵ BBC, *Serving Neighbourhood and Nation*, (BBC; London, 1977).

Each of the twenty local stations was given a page to outline their own programme philosophies. Only three of the stations mentioned their Asian programming. BBC Radio Blackburn, captured the fractured state of its broadcast area as it highlighted ‘immigrants’ as one of the issues that united the ‘white’ population of disparate Lancashire towns;

As one community heard about activities in another, more and more common factors emerged – public transport, vandalism, local government matters, entertainment, the arts, the immigrants.¹⁶

BBC Radio Nottingham made a major play of the multi-cultural element of the city and outlined its minority programming, though it still regarded it as separate;

As befits a multi-racial community, when Nottingham speaks, it isn’t always in English. There’s a good chance that you’ll even mispronounce *Nawrang* – that is, of course, unless you are one of the several thousand citizens of Asian origin who tune in every week for this programme specially for their interests.¹⁷

Owen Bentley at BBC Radio Leicester used the booklet to promote his new nightly Asian programme within the context of a changing and multi-racial city;

One in five living within the city boundaries is of Asian or West Indian origin and to mirror the new multi-cultural community Radio Leicester has added a whole new block of programmes to its output. The station now broadcasts *Six-Fifteen* a 45-minute programme capturing the new audience. The need for a new programme was recognised by the Leicester Council for Community Relations and with the aid of a grant, Asian presenters have been recruited, a subscription taken out with an Indian record library and *Six-Fifteen* has taken to the air with a mix of music, interviews and news of local events.¹⁸

The entry for Leicester goes further in recognising the changing nature of Asian communities, the developing generational split and the need for better community relations;

One group which *Six-Fifteen* is out to capture is the generation that is caught between two cultures; its integration into the community as a whole is vital for race-relations in the city, and therefore, vital for Radio Leicester.¹⁹

¹⁶ BBC, *Serving Neighbourhood and Nation*, p.39.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.52

¹⁸ Ibid., p.46.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.46.

Bentley is linking the state of race relations in the city and the part his station should play in social cohesion. The language in this booklet shows that the understanding of the importance Asian programming was slowly changing, but the experience in Blackburn was more typical across BBC local radio. The 1982 paper *Ethnic Minorities and the BBC* showed that the corporation was becoming more aware of its shortcomings and highlighted two key criticisms it regularly faced;

that the BBC is not carrying out properly its obligation to these communities as a self-proclaimed equal opportunities employer; and that its programming does not adequately reflect the multi-racial character of British society today or cater more than grudgingly for the special needs of the ethnic minorities.²⁰

On the employment criticism the BBC acknowledged that ‘no systematic attempt has been made to monitor the level of black employment’ within the BBC.²¹ The best it could highlight in an organisation of twenty thousand people was a series of less than a dozen individual success stories of people gaining short term contracts.²² It pointed to a lack of qualified applicants for posts and suggested putting funds towards external training schemes which would work to provide applicants of a higher calibre.²³ In unwittingly accentuating the negatives the paper went on to argue that minority presenters may not be able to deal even-handedly with controversial topics, giving as an example;

‘can a black presenter justify to his listeners dealing in a “balanced” way with a speech by Enoch Powell?’²⁴

This statement might capture the prevailing views of the period but in effect the BBC in these papers is suggesting that to be editorially ‘white’ (and probably male) was the ‘normal’ default position and that minority broadcasters needed to appropriate an ‘editorial whiteness’.²⁵ As late as 2009 David Gillborn, discussing BBC Radio 5 Live, argued there was a ‘regime of whiteness’ that still operated in Britain in which even in talk radio ‘white people are free to speculate on the nature of intelligence’ [of ethnic minorities] and

²⁰ BBC WAC File, B193/5/2, *Ethnic Minorities and the BBC*, December 1981.

²¹ BBC, *Ethnic Minorities*, p. 2.

²² BBC, *Ethnic Minorities*, p.3.

²³ BBC, *Ethnic Minorities*, p.4.

²⁴ BBC, *Ethnic Minorities*, p. 6.

²⁵ See discussion on whiteness in Chapter One, R Dyer, *White*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

‘reinforce racial stereotypes’.²⁶ None of the strategy papers suggest that the talent pool in ethnic minority programmes in BBC local radio could be tapped – or their audiences targeted with information about how to apply for BBC jobs. In 1982 the CRE suggested that broadcasters should establish ethnic monitoring units and engage in better training for their ethnic staff and potential staff.²⁷ In BBC local radio pressure from Asian and black programme teams led to the setting up of ‘ethnic minority’ training courses at BBC Local Radio Training in London, the first course was seen as so unusual and newsworthy that it appeared in *The Times*;

Figure 4-2 BBC LOCAL RADIO TRAINING 1982



Source: Jona Kotnis

There is no caption showing the names of the course participants, but Jona Kotnis from BBC Radio Northampton who gave me this cutting is seated at the desk with instructor Robert McLeish. Of course, bringing presenters of minority programmes together enabled them to compare their experiences as Jona recalled;

²⁶ D. Gillborn, ‘Risk-Free Racism: Whiteness and So-Called Free Speech’, *Wake Forest Law Review*, (2009), v.44, pp. 534 – 555.

²⁷ M. Anwar and A. Shang, *Television in a Multi-Racial Society*, (CRE; London, 1982, p. 67.

Everyone had the same complaints, unless we progress how are our children going to progress, they need role models, and this went on and it still goes on I'm afraid.²⁸

As Head of the BBC Local Radio Training Unit in the late 1980s, Sue Ahern a former producer of *The Six O'clock Show* at BBC Radio Leicester, confirmed the lack of commitment to Asian programming on some stations and by some station managers was related to her when presenters came on courses at the Unit;

They'd come [to Radio Training] and they'd say can you listen to this for me, and I'd listen and give feedback. They weren't even getting feedback from their station. I don't think people even listened on their station to their programme. The Asian programmes, especially those in mother tongue, nobody listened. I remember that somebody played out one of the Asian programmes that was pre-recorded – not in Leicester – back to front and nobody noticed until people rang in to tell them.²⁹

An exchange of memoranda on this topic set out the challenges that some ethnic minority programme presenters faced. After a 'multi-cultural news' course at BBC Radio Training, Jim Latham the Senior Instructor for Journalism, suggested he had been 'culturally sand papered' and noted to local radio managers that there was;

A very high degree of cynicism apparent in the course members and it was very depressing to find that they were as cynical about the BBC and Local Radio as they were for instance about the Police There was a very strong feeling that Local Radio was paying little more than lip service to the needs of these communities.³⁰

Tony Inchley, the station manager at BBC Radio Leicester replied;

Third-rate standards are accepted too easily in the area of ethnic broadcasting, but we should work together to deal with this and not sit back and complain in isolation.³¹

It could be different. At Leicester there was a push to find and train Asian reporters to reflect the changing demography in the city, showing that BBC local radio had the potential to become a new recruiting ground for black and Asian talent into the wider BBC. However, the response of delegates to courses at Radio Training shows how most local radio managers failed to see the links between their ethnic programming and recruitment.

²⁸ Jona Kotnis, (D.o.B. 15 October 1946), Oral History Interview, recorded Northampton, 6 October 2017.

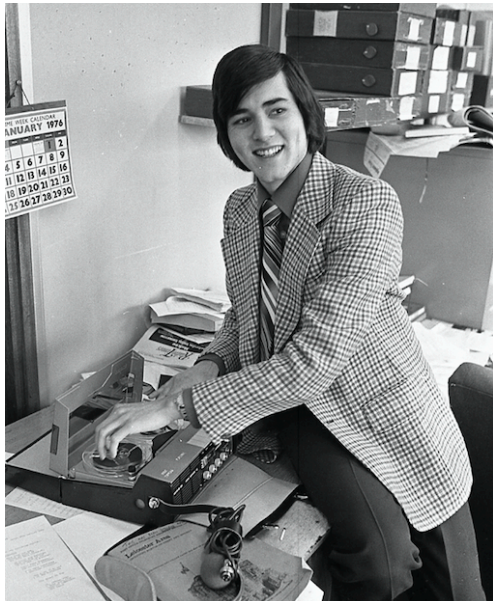
²⁹ OHI, Sue Ahern, (D.o.B. 26.10.54), interviewed London, 7 December 2017.

³⁰ Memorandum, J. Latham to Senior Manager BBC Local Radio, 'Multi-Cultural News', 25 April 1983. BBC Radio Leicester File, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

³¹ Memorandum, T. Inchley to Senior Manager BBC Local Radio, 'Multi-Cultural News', 25 May 1983. BBC Radio Leicester File, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

In the 1970s BBC Radio Leicester had recruited two Asian reporters in its newsroom of seven people, Bharat Patel and Khalid Aziz, who both went on to work in regional television in the 1980s and beyond.

Figure 4-3 KHALID AZIZ, BBC RADIO LEICESTER, 1976



Source: BBC Radio Leicester Archive

Ethnic Minorities and the BBC makes a fleeting observation about BBC local radio programmes suggesting they need to be ‘thought about, and a coherent policy worked out’ and offered some draft guidelines. While listing the spread of programming on BBC local radio it recognised that there were questions about this provision; suggesting the programmes were not on air for long enough, the presenters were freelance and amateur, none of the programmes were produced by members of the community they served, and they were little more than record request shows. It argued that the programming should be strengthened by the provision of centrally produced programming material such as news bulletins about the sub-continent and repeated the argument for the removal of the responsibility for Asian programming from network radio to BBC local radio. Once again, no funding streams were made available and there was no discussion around best practice which might have pointed to the audience success of the daily Asian programming in Leicester. The fact that none of the station managers contacted in the course of this study could ever recall seeing the guidelines before suggests the policy was either not widely circulated or read on local radio stations.

In the field of News and Current Affairs there was a general consensus in this period that ethnic minorities were presented as ‘the problem’.³² Further, Schaffer argues that programmes in this period that presented issues of race in a neutral manner ‘ran the risk of conferring legitimacy on anti-immigrant voices’.³³ This reinforced the perception among ethnic minorities that they were ‘indulged’ with black and Asian programmes whereas on the rest of the schedule, and notably in news and current affairs, they appeared in stories that Troyna noted were ‘characterised by an emphasis on negativity’.³⁴

The BBC was aware of its shortcomings and regularly invited ‘outside experts’ to attend its bi-weekly News and Current Affairs (NCA) meetings as a way of stimulating debate on broad editorial policy issues. In July 1978 David Lane, the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, and his assistants attended the NCA meeting to discuss race and the news. Lane pointed out to the assembled Editors that two fifths of the ethnic minorities in Britain had been born here – they were not immigrants.³⁵ The minutes show how Lane made the case for a more balanced news agenda;

Mr. Lane said the public debate on this subject was still unbalanced, concentrating too much on immigration (which was declining), and not enough on race relations generally and on particular problems such as the alienation of young black people.³⁶

The decision by BBC Radio Leicester to go ahead with broadcasts featuring the National Front caused concern in BBC News centrally when trade union opposition was expressed in Leicester. In the NCA meeting of March 1978 the BBC Radio Leicester issue was discussed;

‘D.N.C.A (Deputy Editor News and Current affairs) said that problems had arisen at Radio Leicester when NUJ members had said they did not wish to work on a phone-in programme involving members of the National Front. The staff had been told that any member who refused duty would be suspended, and eventually the programme proceeded as planned’.³⁷

³² For example, see; C. Husband, (Ed.), *White Media and Black Britain, A Critical Look at the Role of the Media in Race Relations Today*, (Arrow; London, 1975); and B. Troyna, *Public Awareness and the Media: A Study of the Reporting of Race*, (CRE; London, 1981).

³³ G. Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation*, p. 87.

³⁴ Troyna, *Public Awareness and the Media*, p. 80.

³⁵ BBC WAC File – R/78/2 688/1, BBC News and Current Affairs Bi Weekly Meetings, 4 July 1978, agenda item 333.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ BBC News and Current Affairs Bi-Weekly Meetings, 7 March 1978, agenda item 111.

This programme was in fact broadcast on 24 February 1978 with no union members being suspended as it was presented by the John Collard the News Editor, and produced by the Station Manager, Owen Bentley.³⁸ A month later this dispute in Leicester took on a deeper complexion;

D.N.C.A said that at the recent ABS (Association of Broadcast Staff) Annual Council an emergency proposition had been passed that it was morally offensive for broadcasting authorities to call upon staff to work on programmes such as the recent one at Radio Leicester directly involving National Front candidates. The emergency proposition indicated that the NEC (National Executive Committee) would support any member of staff “who has strong personal objections to racialism and who refuses to work on these programmes”.”.³⁹

These union issues were taken very seriously by the BBC which had a number of industrial relations problems – including strikes – during the period. Nevertheless, it was important for the BBC to maintain editorial control over the content of programmes and to be able to choose the contributors who were booked to appear on them and in Leicester the National Front continued to appear infrequently on air up to the 1979 election. These discussions around race led to the working paper ‘*Coverage of Racial Matters*’ circulated among senior editors in February 1980. It argues that the BBC had to balance its ‘journalistic objectivity’ with its ‘ethical obligations as part of a society in which racism is generally and justifiably deplored’.⁴⁰ Broadcasters and national newspapers were constantly accused of concentrating on violent racial conflict and immigration while doing little to explain the difficulties faced by minorities. In 1981 Troyna carried out a content analysis of 650 newspapers and found that two fifths of the stories on race concentrated on topics such as the National Front, crime, immigration, race relations and ‘white hostility’.⁴¹ Troyna found that fewer than one in ten stories featured housing, health and employment, areas in which minorities faced considerable difficulties.⁴²

News coverage by the BBC was discussed in the 1982 policy paper *Ethnic Minorities and the BBC* which suggested that the BBC had ‘problems in getting the co-operation of black people and of finding people who were prepared to act as spokesmen for groups or

³⁸ Radio Leicester Archive at ROLL&R, (Uncatalogued), ‘*Crosstalk NF Phone-In*’, TX 24 February 1978.

³⁹ BBC WAC File – R/78/2 688/1, BBC News and Current Affairs Bi-Weekly Meetings, 4 April 1978, agenda item 181.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Troyna, *Public Awareness*, p. 17.

⁴² Troyna, *Public Awareness*, p. 17.

interests'.⁴³ This debate seemed to highlight the 'contact book driven' journalism of the period in which 'spokesmen' were sought as a quick and easy solution to presenting a story. It emphasises the lack of connection between BBC journalists and minorities. Had this connection been better they might have realised, for example, that it was too simplistic to suggest that someone could speak for all 'Asians', or all 'Muslims' for example. This debate continues in the BBC; in 2000 Newton highlighted the backlash against the BBC drawing up a database of black and Asian 'experts' that was designed to 'get more black and Asian faces on to BBC News and Current Affairs'.⁴⁴ Ultimately getting more black and Asian faces and voices on to BBC News and Current Affairs – and BBC local radio – was one of recruitment. The employment of black and Asian journalists with their own life experiences and contact books would in turn reflect the stories they sought or considered to be of importance, widening the range and content of the BBC.

Policy papers and editorial discussions around the provision of minority programmes and the news coverage of racial matters shows the BBC slowly coming to terms with the changing multi-racial nature of Britain. The constant appendices to these papers showing lists of the programme provision for minorities on BBC local radio can be viewed as the corporation grasping at solid examples of its work while it was in a situation of editorial flux, an achievement that could be trumpeted. But in reality, the Asian programmes broadcast on BBC local radio were increasingly disconnected from the wider policy aims of the BBC.

4.2 The Asian Programmes on BBC local radio.

This disconnect between policy and BBC local radio practice saw little new money for programme development and there were only marginal changes in the quantity of Asian programming on air between 1976 and 1984. This lack of new 'BBC' money was emphasised by the launch of the daily *Six-Fifteen* programme on BBC Radio Leicester which was funded by a grant from the local community relations council. With only limited additional BBC money forthcoming after the grant was exhausted the station had to spread its wider programme budgets more thinly to accommodate this. By the end of 1976 there

⁴³ BBC NCA Meeting 4 April 1978.

⁴⁴ D. Newton, *Paving the Empire Road, BBC Television and Black Britons*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2011), p. 218.

were thirteen stations with established Asian programmes a situation that did not alter substantially in this period, though new programmes came on air at BBC Radio Merseyside in 1981, BBC Radio Cleveland and BBC Radio Solent in 1983. Stations continued to produce their weekly Asian programmes with some cutting the broadcast time of shows in the light of the 1980 local radio cuts and only BBC Radio Derby making a switch to English presentation.

Table 4-1 BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMME PROVISION 1976-1983

Station	1976	1979	1981	1983
Birmingham /WM	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 90 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 75 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 30 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Blackburn	<i>Mehfil</i> ; off air awaiting a re-launch.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu & Gujarati – 60 mins	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu & Gujarati – 60 mins	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu/Gujarati – 60 mins.
Bristol	<i>Mehfil</i> ; – Hindi/Urdu – 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu/English – 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).
Cleveland				<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 25 mins.
Derby	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi / Urdu -30 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi / Urdu -60 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English, 45 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English, 45 mins.
Leeds	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindi /Urdu – 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali – 60 minutes	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins.	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins.	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins.
Leicester	<i>Six-Fifteen</i> ; English – 45 minutes x 4 <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 45 minutes	<i>6-3-0 Show</i> ; English – 60 minutes x 4 & <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 60 minutes	<i>Six-O-Five Show</i> ; English – 60 minutes x 4 <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 60 minutes	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 4 x 60 mins. <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 60 mins.
London	London Sounds Eastern; English – 60 mins.	London Sounds Eastern; English – 60 mins.	London Sounds Eastern; English – 60 mins.	<i>London Sounds Eastern</i> ; English – 60 mins.
Manchester	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English / Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Medway	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu – 30 mins fortnightly.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu – 40 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu – 45 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 45 mins.
Merseyside			<i>Ijtama</i> ; English, 30 mins.	<i>Ijtama</i> ; English, 30 mins.
Nottingham	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 90 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 75 mins.
Oxford	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.
Sheffield	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 60 mins.	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 60 mins.	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu - 45 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 15 mins.	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu - 40 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 15 mins.
Solent				<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.
Stoke	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 22 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.
Total Hours	14 hours 15 minutes	16 hours 15 minutes	15 hours 52 minutes	16 hours 50 minutes

Sources: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.
Radio Times Local and Regional Editions.

The programme list above show how the early unwritten policy from the Immigrants/Asian Programme Unit with single weekly shows mainly presented in mother tongue languages still prevailed in 1983. The new programme launched by BBC Radio Solent in 1983 included Urdu elements while the decision by BBC Radio Bristol to broadcast a thirty-minute programme on alternative Sundays was hardly likely to build up a regular and dedicated listenership. The daily programme at BBC Radio Leicester stands out and received demonstrably large listening figures with the regular daily ‘appointment to listen’ around 6 o’clock each weekday evening proving popular. A CRE study in 1978 calculated that the total programming for BBC local radio was 85,000 hours per annum, suggesting that the 832 hours of annual Asian output on BBC local radio was less than one percent of the total broadcasting time.⁴⁵ At BBC Radio Leicester seven percent of broadcast hours were devoted to Asian programming, which matched the Asian population statistics for its broadcast area of Leicestershire as a whole.⁴⁶

The programme provision may have remained reasonably static but there was a tenfold growth in the size of the South Asian community in Britain between 1961 and 1981; it grew from 112,000 in 1961 to 516,000 in 1971 and doubled in size to over one million (1,037,000) by 1981.⁴⁷ There was also a change in the type of migration, firstly, in the late 1950s and 1960s single men came to seek work with plans to save and return home, secondly, from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s there was the arrival of complete families as East Africans from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi arrived and then thirdly, in the late 1970s the dependants of immigrants already here came to join them. The Home Office estimated that between 1976 and 1981 ‘one third of those accepted for settlement in the UK were from the Indian sub-continent and they were mainly dependants of those already settled here’.⁴⁸ BBC presenters reflected these settlement patterns, for example Don Kotak (BBC Radio Leicester) arrived as a teenager with his family from Kenya in 1965 and Satvinder Rana (BBC Radio Derby) came as young boy from India with his mother and siblings to join his father who had arrived in the early 1960s from the Punjab;

⁴⁵ M. Anwar, *Who Tunes Into What*, p. 10, and *Radio Times*.

⁴⁶ Analysis of Leicester edition of the *Radio Times*.

⁴⁷ C Peach, ‘South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain; 1951-2001’, *Contemporary South Asia*, 15.2 (2006), pp. 133-146.

⁴⁸ Home Office Statistical Bulletin, *Immigration from the Indian sub-continent - 1981*, Issue 5 1982, 5 April 1982.

‘My father had come here to earn some money and then to go back, but that never happened. So, the trend then was to invite families over and work a little bit longer than four years, in order to go back and set themselves up’.⁴⁹

Given the changing nature of local Asian communities assessing the need for Asian programming during this period was difficult but not impossible. The CRE established the best guidance on the size of ethnic minority communities across England - complete with local tables.⁵⁰ Given that most stations worked with local Community Relations Officers on the design of their programmes station managers should have been aware of the size and complexities of the communities they were broadcasting to. In 1978 the BBC Radio Leeds station magazine for listeners carried a feature about its Asian programming which it said was ‘for the 40,000 people of the Asian community living in the area’.⁵¹ This number is within a whisker of figures put together for this thesis of 41,822 and set out in a table below, suggesting station managers were indeed well aware of the ethnic demographics within their editorial areas.

There is evidence in the files held at the BBC WAC that the BBC local radio HQ unit was aware of the need to validate the provision of programmes for ethnic minorities across the country. In 1981 Peter Redhouse (DGMLR) had requested figures on minority populations from his Education Officer, John Saunders. In a memorandum accompanying the ONS figures from the 1971 census Saunders suggests that despite the numbers of New Commonwealth immigrants living in Hampshire and Sussex that both BBC Radio Solent and BBC Radio Sussex had failed to provide any minority programming because of their ‘middle class “county” ethos’.⁵² This criticism may have stung BBC Radio Solent into launching a new Asian programme but the independence of station managers was still key to the provision – or lack of provision - of minority programmes.

The first chart below shows the top five BBC local radio editorial areas as expressed by the estimated size of the local Asian population in 1980 using data from the 1971 census and adding data about the birthplace of mothers from the Registrar General.

⁴⁹ Satvinder Rani, (D.o.B. 15 December 1959), Oral History Interview, recorded Derby 8 September 2017.

⁵⁰ CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Background*, (CRE: London, 1978).

⁵¹ BBC Radio Leeds Magazine, Summer 1978, p. 16.

⁵² BBC WAC File, R102/13/1 Programmes for Immigrants, Part 2 (1980-82), Internal BBC LRHQ Memo from Education Officer to DGMLR, Ethnic Populations, 7 July 1981.

Table 4-2 ESTIMATED ASIAN POPULATION: 1971

	Station	1971 + Births
1	London	222,970
2	Birmingham (West Midlands)	101,727
3	Leeds (West Yorkshire)	41,882
4	Leicester	32,541*(63,000)
5	Manchester	29,123

*Source: Census Data and Registrar of Births and Deaths.
(Research in Leicester in 1983 put the figure at 63,000).⁵³

The Asian population in London was larger than that in all of the other BBC editorial areas combined but throughout this period BBC Radio London broadcast *London Sounds Eastern* for one hour each week for the Asian communities in the capital before dropping the programme in 1988. In contrast the total population figures for African-Caribbean communities in London numbered 168,695 - around 50,000 fewer than the figure for the Asian population.⁵⁴ BBC Radio London felt the African Caribbean community was important enough to warrant a daily programme, *Black Londoners*, from May 1978.⁵⁵ Why this programme opportunity was not offered to Asian listeners, who were more numerous, raises questions either about the commitment of station management or perhaps, the visibility of these communities in central London and the level of lobbying by different community groups. Certainly, there was a more vigorous engagement with the media by African Caribbean groups through a variety of organisations funded by the Greater London Council. For example, in 1982 the Black Women's Radio Group, funded by the GLC, highlighted what it saw as the poor coverage of black issues by BBC Radio London, LBC and Capital.⁵⁶ There was praise for *Black Londoners* as the only programme to tackle serious 'black issues' in London, with London stations criticised for their lack of appreciation of the views of ethnic groups.⁵⁷ In response to this criticism the BBC was unsurprisingly defensive; Derrick Amore, the station manager of BBC Radio London, told the UK Press Gazette in April 1982;

⁵³ Leicester City Council, *The Survey of Leicester*, (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 1983).

⁵⁴ CRE, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Statistical Background*, (CRE; London, 1978).

⁵⁵ *Radio Times*, BBC Radio London billings, 14 -21 May 1978.

⁵⁶ Local Radio Workshop, *Nothing Local About it: London's Local Radio*, (Commedia; London, 1982), p. 124.

⁵⁷ Local Radio Workshop, p. 130.

From the nature of the research, the failure of the conclusions to follow from the research and the general tone; It's what I'd expect of the extreme left wing'.⁵⁸

In an age of continual press attacks on 'loony-left' councils in London, Amoore effectively closed down what might have been a useful community debate.

By 1983 Leicester had by far the highest proportion of Asians in the population. The table below shows that Blackburn is the town with the second highest proportion while the big cities of Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and London are lower down the list. In Leicester it was impossible to miss the new Asian communities as part of the changing demographics of the city.

Table 4-3 ASIAN POPULATION AS A PROPORTION OF LOCAL POPULATION.

	Station	1971+Births
1	Leicester	11.4 (22.1)*
2	Blackburn	10.9
3	Birmingham (WM)	9.3
4	Leeds (WY)	5.7
5	Manchester	5.4
6	London	3.1

Source: Census Data and Registrar of Births and Deaths.
 *(Research in Leicester in 1983 put the figure at 22.1%)⁵⁹

Reluctance to provide Asian programming still prevailed. The *Mehfil* programme on BBC Radio Blackburn was taken off air in 1975 and did not return until 1977 and a lack of commitment to it remained. The station manager John Musgrove, told the LRAC that while he recognised the programme was missed;

Inflation has swallowed up much of the money for these programmes and he had asked for an increase in Programme budget, but even if this was forthcoming it would be necessary to mount future programmes less expensively than hitherto, and the meetings with CRO's [Community Relations Officers] are a first step in exploring the possibility of 'self-help'.⁶⁰

When it did return it was still presented in Gujarati and Urdu not English, which given the history of the programme left the station management open to making the same errors that had forced the programme off-air.

⁵⁸ *UK Press Gazette*, 24 May 1982.

⁵⁹ Leicester City Council, *Survey of Leicester*.

⁶⁰ BBC WAC, File R81/3/2, Radio Blackburn Minutes 1974-1979, LRAC Meeting 13 January 1975.

BBC Radio Birmingham with the third highest proportion of South Asians in the local population chose not to protect its Asian programme from the 1980 local radio programme cuts. The *East in West* programme presented by Muhammad Ayyub and Saeed Zafar was cut from an hour to thirty minutes as part of the cuts instigated by Aubrey Singer, the Managing Director of Radio. In Birmingham the station management acted on the instructions literally and took the decision to spread the cuts across all programmes making no exception for the valuable work of *East in West*. In Leicester the *Six Fifteen* programme was protected from cuts by Owen Bentley and elsewhere only BBC Radio Stoke applied the cut to its Asian programme, reducing the length of *Intikhab* from thirty to twenty-two minutes. The savings made in these cuts to Asian programming were minimal, but the damage to the relationship between the stations and their local communities was more difficult to assess. June Harben, the Education Producer at BBC Radio Birmingham, and producer of *East in West* constantly lobbied for the cut to be restored arguing that the programme was ‘too short’ and that the programme played an important part in a cross flow of ideas to the general output of the station.⁶¹ By March 1982 the programme had been restored to its one-hour slot and the annual report by Harben outlined some of the highlights which included a new phone in element and features on health and the law that had been first promised in the 1970s.⁶² Despite the efforts of the Education Producer it took until the late 1980s for BBC Radio Birmingham, then re-branded as BBC Radio WM, to expand its Asian output under former BBC Radio Leicester station manager Tony Inchley.

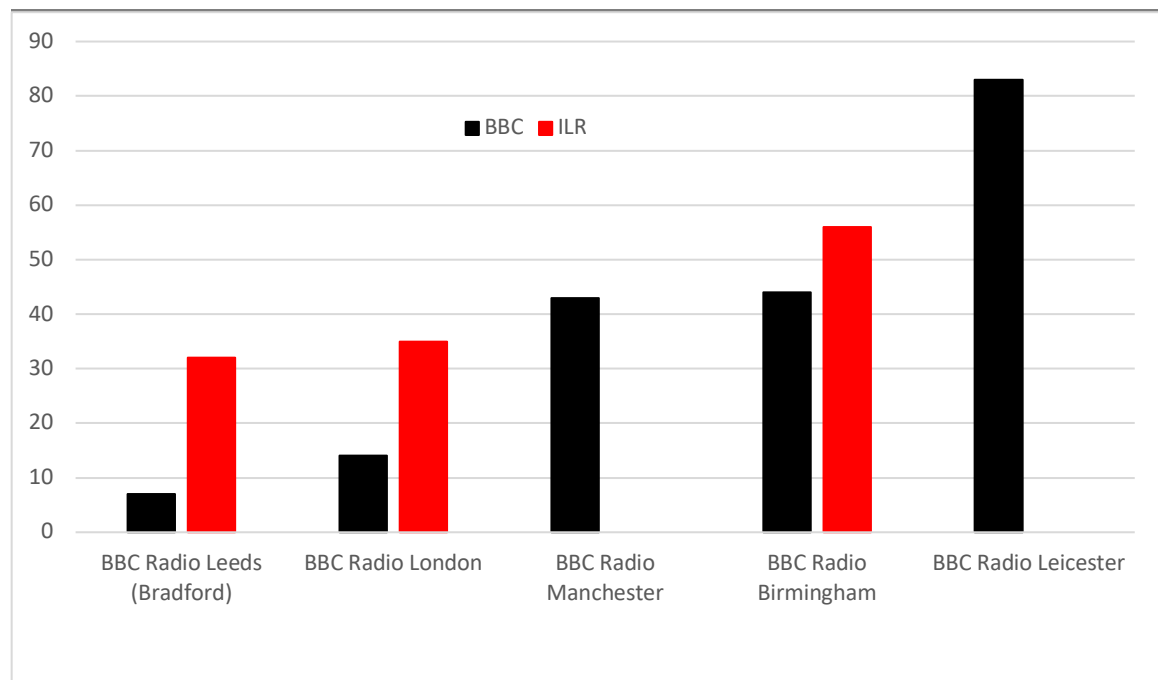
Research by the CRE in 1983 recognised the need for more representation of ethnic communities on ‘mainstream’ programmes but argued that targeted Asian and African-Caribbean programming was still vital, noting, ‘the extraordinary popularity of some of these programmes’.⁶³ The CRE study conducted interviews about television and radio in Asian and African Caribbean communities in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford (in the BBC Radio Leeds area). The chart below shows the weekly reach among local Asian groups in these cities, with the addition of CRE research about the daily BBC Radio Leicester programme from 1978.

⁶¹ J. Harben, Education Producer’s Report, BBC Radio Birmingham, April 1981. June Harben, private archive.

⁶² J. Harben, Education Producer’s Report, BBC Radio Birmingham, March 1982. June Harben private archive.

⁶³ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p.7.

Figure 4-4 PERCENTAGE OF LISTENING BY LOCAL ASIAN COMMUNITIES EACH WEEK:



Source: CRE

The research showed that where ILR and BBC both broadcast Asian programmes that ILR was the most popular choice amongst Asian listeners. Only in Manchester where there was no ILR competition did the BBC programme *Eastwards North Westwards* prove to be the first choice.⁶⁴ The Leicester figures were taken before ILR began broadcasting in the city – but show how a regular daily programme could be a key bridge in firmly connecting with Asian communities. It is also worth pointing out that the listening within the Asian communities in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leicester went way beyond anything that the stations were getting for their general listening.⁶⁵ Indeed, as the next chapter will show the ‘big city’ stations of London, Manchester and Birmingham were to come under threat of closure because of their continual failure to attract significant audiences. Only in Birmingham would station management go on to grasp the possibility of attracting Asian audiences as a serious option.

Despite the success demonstrated by the CRE research there was no new money forthcoming and station managers were not willing to subsidise new Asian programming at the expense of their other output. Developing BBC policies on ethnic minority

⁶⁴ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p. 23.

⁶⁵ Today BBC Radio London has a weekly reach of 4% of the overall audience, RAJAR quarterly listening figures June 2019, https://www.rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly_listening.php (Accessed 20 August 2019).

broadcasting were not costed or funded and failed to make an immediate impact on BBC local radio. The independence of BBC local radio station managers therefore remained a strength and a weakness. Managers could not be forced to produce more Asian programming but had the freedom to experiment as Owen Bentley had done in Leicester by launching the nightly Asian programme strand. The question of language was important, and few managers were willing to risk upsetting their programme teams by forcing them to broadcast in English.

4.3 A Question of Language.

The choice of which language to use for Asian programmes was left to individual station managers to decide, but the existing literature suggests that as the 1970s progressed there was an important switch to English language presentation.⁶⁶ Analysis of the *Radio Times* suggests that this was not the case and ‘mother tongue’ language programmes were in the majority right into the 1980s. By the time of the launch of the early Asian Network on BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio WM in late 1988, an increase in airtime allowed for even more language programmes to be broadcast.

Table 4-4 THE BROADCAST LANGUAGE OF BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMMES

Number of Programmes	1975	1976	1981	1983
English	2	7*	7*	8*
Hindustani	9	7	7	6
Urdu	-	2	2.5	2.5
Bengali	3	2	2	2
Gujarati	-	-	0.5	0.5
Total	14	18	19	19

*Includes 4 programmes in English at BBC Radio Leicester.

Source: Radio Times Local Radio Billings Pages.

The table above shows that though there was an increase in the use of English language presentation, this was largely due to the addition of four programmes in English from BBC Radio Leicester. The experience of using English presentation in the big city stations of London, Birmingham and Manchester was not replicated in the smaller stations. At the 1976 conference on ‘Immigrant Programmes’, Peter Redhouse, the Deputy General

⁶⁶ See, Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation*, pp. 59-51.

Manager of BBC local radio set out the reasons why he felt that English should be the broadcast language of choice;

A lack of knowledge of the languages concerned make it impossible to exercise editorial control. The comparative absence in ethnic communities of potential broadcasters with journalistic training / knowledge of BBC principles and practice makes proper editorial control particularly necessary. While managers would like to move to a structure in which these programmes are broadcast in English, they believe the time is not yet ripe for this, and that recent political developments have probably delayed such a change.⁶⁷

We do not know what the ‘recent political developments’ might have been that Redhouse was outlining in the memorandum; possibly the launch of the new Commission for Racial Equality? Recruiting Asian staff with the right language skills to produce this programming would make editorial control possible and this happened in Leicester in 1984. Of the main five South Asian languages spoken in Britain there were no Punjabi language programmes and BBC Radio Blackburn was the sole provider of Gujarati language programming – devoting half of its *Mehfil* programme each to Gujarati and Urdu. By 1983 the majority of programmes were still broadcast in ‘mother tongue’ languages as BBC local radio station managers shied away from forcing change on to established programme teams, many of which were comprised of volunteers. Tracking the language use across the country shows that some local editors had taken soundings from local communities to try and reflect the majority view of language. For example, BBC Radio Leeds and BBC Radio Sheffield developed Bengali language programmes shortly after the civil war in Bangladesh in 1971. The first station manager of BBC Radio Leeds, Phil Sidey, was Head of Network Production at Pebble Mill in the late 1970s and editorially responsible for the Asian Programmes Unit. Sidey perhaps caught the prevailing mood of his former fellow station managers as he told a Board of Management meeting;

English can be the only lingua franca, but I would not care to be the person who has to convince the sub-continent, or even the Asian Programmes Advisory Committee, that this is so’.⁶⁸

The Hindustani language or Hindi/Urdu as it often appeared in the *Radio Times*, with the exception of BBC Radio Bristol which listed the language as ‘Asian’, was a constant

⁶⁷ BBC WAC, File R102/38/1 Local Radio HQ Minorities Programmes, Memo from DGMLR to DPA re Broadcasting to Racial Minorities, 5 July 1976,

⁶⁸ BBC WAC File, R2/28/3, BBC Board of Management Meeting, 15 September 1979.

presence throughout this period. For BBC local radio station managers, this choice proved to a useful bulwark which they could use to resist local lobbying about using other languages in their local programmes. This was despite a growing recognition within the wider BBC that though Hindustani was universally understood it had flaws;

It does not, however, cater for most people of Bangladeshi origin, and there is a demand among Gujarati's and Punjabis, who form two of the main Asian communities in Britain, for programmes in their own language.⁶⁹

These shortcomings were emphasised by CRE research in 1983 which found that the use of language by the BBC and ILR was an indicator of radio listening among Asian communities. The study found that compared to 96% of Indians and 86% of Pakistanis only 63% of respondents from Bangladesh had radios in the household.⁷⁰ The lack of language choice on air was becoming a pressure point for the BBC. The Asian Programmes Advisory Committee (APAC) was also exercised by the question of language and repeatedly put pressure on the management of BBC Radio Leicester to introduce a Gujarati language programme. In a memorandum to the station manager in Leicester in May 1983 titled 'RADIO LEICESTER AND GUJARATI DEMANDS', Towyn Mason the Assistant Head of the BBC's secretariat in London expressed the desire by APAC that BBC Radio Leicester should broadcast a programme in Gujarati;

I ought to explain that though strictly the brief of APAC is to advise on the programmes broadcast by the Asian Unit at Pebble Mill, inevitably its concern has spread to other programmes of interest to Asians, and the Chairman of the Committee, Lord Chitnis, has expressed himself fairly strongly on the Radio Leicester issue.⁷¹

In response Tony Inchley, the station manager at BBC Radio Leicester invited members of APAC to visit Radio Leicester to 'appreciate the quantity and quality of our output in this field' and outlined why he refused to broadcast a Gujarati programme;

It has not been the policy of this station to broadcast regularly in Gujarati, but the community is well catered for in terms of music (a strong Gujarati influence within the *Six O Five Show*) and in interviews, the What's On Diary and information. If we took the

⁶⁹ BBC WAC File, B193/5/2, Ethnic Minorities and the BBC: Note by Director, Public Affairs, 30 December 1981, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p. 14.

⁷¹ Internal BBC Memo, Towyn Mason to Manager, Radio Leicester, 'RADIO LEICESTER AND GUJARATI DEMANDS', 23 May 1983, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

decision to feature a regular programme exclusively for the Gujarati community, we would face even greater pressure for mother tongue output from other sectors.⁷²

This argument against ‘mother tongue’ languages was used by Allen Holden, the station manager of BBC Radio London to justify his switch to English presentation in 1976. From 1972 the station had broadcast two language programmes of twenty-five minutes each, one presented in Hindi/Urdu and a second in Bengali. In 1976 the station had taken the decision to replace these programmes with a single programme broadcast in English after lobbying to include more languages in the mix. A campaign against the change found its way into *The Listener* and letters of complaint reached the office of the Director General. Replying to a query about the change from the DG’s office, Holden argued that there had been growing demands for Gujarati and Pashto language programmes and that he felt ‘it would be impossible to meet these demands – which very often went with a nationalistic interpretation of what these programmes should be’.⁷³ Therefore the decision had been taken to present the programme in English with a new presenter, Vernon Corea, who had been an established broadcaster in Sri Lanka before coming to London to work for a Christian charity.

The difficulties of making a switch in language from ‘mother-tongue’ to English were revealed at BBC Radio Derby in the summer of 1981. The new station manager Bryan Harris arrived from BBC Radio WM where the Asian programme *East in West* had always been broadcast in English. Harris insisted switching the presentation of BBC Radio Derby’s Asian programme *Sangam* from Hindustani to English, but when told of the proposed language change and given the opportunity to broadcast in English the entire Asian programme team walked out of the station. Satvinder Rana, presenter of *Aaj Kaal* the successor programme to *Sangam*, recalled attending a public meeting at BBC Radio Derby as the station tried to recruit a new team;

‘There was opposition to it. Some people felt this was an Asian programme, it needs to be in Asian languages, and it needs to be what we want it to be. And I could understand that’.⁷⁴

⁷² Internal BBC Memo, Tony Inchley, Station Manager BBC radio Leicester to Towyn Mason, ‘RADIO LEICESTER AND GUJARATI DEMANDS’, 31 May 1983, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

⁷³ BBC WAC File, R34/1303/2, Memo from A Holden to Norman Longmate, Secretariat, 1 November 1976.

⁷⁴ OHI, Satvinder Rani.

A new team made up of six young people including Rana was pulled together and after two months of training, *Aaj Kaal* went on air on BBC Radio Derby in September 1981.

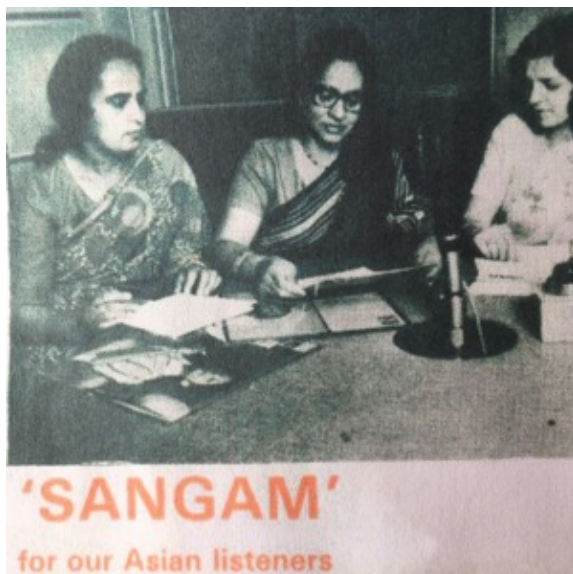
Figure 4-5 BBC RADIO DERBY - THE 'AAJ KAAL' TEAM 1982



Satvinder Rani Personal Collection.

There is a marked contrast between the look of the young *Aaj Kaal* team in their western dress and the former presenters of Sangam which mirrored the generational change within Asian communities.

Figure 4-6 BBC RADIO DERBY – THE SANGAM TEAM



BBC Radio Derby Magazine, December 1979

Rana told me there was a vocal minority against the new programme, opposed to the presentation by younger people and not 'the seasoned presenters the audience had been used to'.⁷⁵ The new programme was focussed on music, films and entertainment and only carried the national news provided centrally for Asian programmes, nevertheless it became very popular right across the Midlands and won awards sponsored by Asian newspapers for its work on the promotion of the new British Bhangra music.

The lobbying for different languages to be used for Asian programmes continued across BBC local radio right through the 1980s and on in to the 1990s. The choice of languages adopted in the early days was questioned by local communities, but this was a period in which station managers largely accepted the status quo. This was challenged later in the 1980s as more airtime was made available for Asian programming and language demands became more difficult to ignore. Having made the decision to broadcast four of the five editions of the new daily programme in English, while retaining the *Milan* programme in Hindustani, BBC Radio Leicester used its new programming to connect with the English speaking second generation.

4.4 BBC Radio Leicester – A Case Study

In a period when there was no internal pressure on station managers to increase their Asian programming Owen Bentley at BBC Radio Leicester acted independently to launch a daily Asian programme and put the National Front on air in 1976. Between 1976 and 1984 the station faced accusations of racism for engaging with the National Front, while at the same time, was recognised for providing a unique daily community programme in English that was accessible to the whole of the audience. Bentley continued to look for outside funding for new programme developments and Leicester City Council reprised its role in the BBC local radio experiment as it provided funding to develop a language course that appeared on air in the guise of a daily soap opera.

As this chapter has shown dealing with the National Front caused difficulties with staff, unions and the BBC centrally. In February 1978 the National Front appeared in their first

⁷⁵ OHI, Satvinder Rana.

phone-in programme on the station. Today this would almost certainly involve a referral to senior management if for example the BNP or EDL was to be invited on air. Listening to the exchanges between the callers and Anthony Reed Herbert, the National Front Branch Organiser, in the studio is powerful as caller after caller challenged the policies of his party. One of the more heated exchanges involved listener Harry Thomas who put the following question to Reed Herbert;

‘What I want to know about the National Front is who are they going to choose as second-class citizens when they’ve sent the Indians and Pakistanis back? Are they going to pick on the Poles, the Italians and the Czechs what came here? Are they going to pick on the Jews next?’⁷⁶

This particular *Crosstalk* programme caused debate in the next meeting of the BBC Radio Leicester Advisory Council as the minutes show;

The programme resulted in the resignation of Fred Blackwell. But the majority opinion was that Radio Leicester’s credibility was intact and its reputation not impaired.⁷⁷

Fred Blackwell was the chair of the Inter Racial Solidarity Group (IRSC) and felt his position to be untenable. Prior to the programme the IRSC had attempted to get the broadcast stopped, they lobbied local MPs Greville Janner and Jim Marshall, tried to jam the phone-lines while the programme went out and mounted a picket outside the radio station – all to no avail.⁷⁸

The last big set piece National Front march took place in Leicester on Saturday 21 April 1979 and as he was the reporter on duty that day Bharat Patel was tasked with taking the radio car out to broadcast live coverage. There was a violent clash between the marchers and Anti-Nazi League counter demonstrators which five thousand police officers struggled to control, with Patel caught in the middle of the battle;

‘I was in the radio car. Suddenly the protesters started picking up anything they could get hold of and lobbing it towards the National Front. We got most of the flack, so I was really terrified sitting in the radio car and thinking, why am I being attacked by the people who should be on my side’.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ BBC Radio Leicester, *Crosstalk* ‘National Front Phone-In’, broadcast 24 February 1978, (ROLL&R, uncatalogued).

⁷⁷ BBC WAC File R. 81/11/2, BBC Radio Leicester LRAC Minutes, 11 April 1978.

⁷⁸ ROLL&R, Periodicals, IRSC Newsletter, Spring 1978, p.2.

⁷⁹ Bharat Patel, (D.o.B. 25 October 1953), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 5 February 2013.

The same day a march by local group Unity Against Racism attracted five thousand peaceful marchers to Spinney Hill Park. Unity Against Racism had taken out a full-page advert in the *Leicester Mercury* to launch their campaign in April 1977 and prominent signatories to the advert included Owen Bentley. The general election of June 1979 represented the last stand by the National Front in Leicester as their vote collapsed to just 3,633. It is difficult to prove that local media coverage of the National Front played a part in its demise, but their policies only received on-air scrutiny on BBC Radio Leicester from 1976, while they also faced an increasingly hostile *Leicester Mercury*. Bharat Patel believes the policy of engaging with the National Front was an important one;

‘People have said to me why interview them? Why give them the oxygen of publicity? In a way it may have worked against them because by letting them speak people were able to get an idea of what they were really like and hopefully that may have turned the tide’.⁸⁰

In the 1979 general election the National Front put up 303 candidates across the country and lost every deposit.⁸¹ Roger Eatwell argues that one of the principal factors in the demise of the National Front was an inability of the party to get favourable coverage in the media – and certainly by 1979 this was not forthcoming from BBC Radio Leicester or the *Leicester Mercury*.⁸²

There had been no organised backlash against the daily *Six-Fifteen* programme and by 1978 the station had increasing the length of the programme to an hour. Now broadcast from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. the newly named *6-3-0 Show* was soon tackling difficult topics affecting the Asian communities in Leicester.

⁸⁰ OHI, Bharat Patel.

⁸¹ R. Ford and M.J. Goodwin, ‘Angry White Men: Individual and Contextual Predictors of Support for the British National Party’, *Political Studies*, (2010), Vol. 58, p. 2.

⁸² R. Eatwell, ‘The Esoteric Ideology of the National Front in the 1980s’, in M. Cronin, (Ed.), *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, (Macmillan; London, 1996), p. 101.

Figure 4-7 THE 6-3-0 SHOW; BBC RADIO LEICESTER MAGAZINE SPRING 1978.

THE 6-3-0 SHOW

THE 630 SHOW is not just a programme for Asians. It's a community programme. The programme does, though, have a very large audience among Leicester's 'majority minorities'. The programme provides an entertainment to one in six of Radio Leicester's potential audience.

And the programme provides information which is especially useful to those who are unaware of their rights and entitlements, and sometimes their obligations, because they don't have access to the other sources of information.

Now let me introduce the programme and its presenters.

On Monday Mira plays record requests, and gives snippets of information on such things as the proper way to use your doctor.

On Wednesday Vijay includes interviews with local people on topical topics. Also included is a more detailed look at one of the


week's major news stories.

On Thursday, in Don's Show, Helpline shares the air with a personality profile spot. Helpline is a regular phone-in debate on an important topic. It's designed to help people who have problems, whether they are public ones or private ones.


Mike on his Friday show plays music from the four corners of the world and includes the West Indian Luca spot.

Milan, which is broadcast on Tuesday nights, is a magazine programme specifically designed to meet the needs of Leicester's Asian population, many of whom do not understand English.


So if I was asked to sum up the 630 Show and Milan, then I would use the word variety. This variety allows everyone in Leicester to enjoy a programme that has as its aim the increasing of understanding and friendship in a multi-cultural city.




Greg Ainger.



Mira Trivedi.



Don Kotak.



Khartar Singh Sandhu.

BBC Radio Leicester Archive.

One of the aims of the programme was to try and connect with young people who felt themselves to be torn between two cultures. They had little direct connection with cultures that their parents brought from India, Pakistan or East Africa and also felt excluded by the white community; they were developing a new British Asian culture of their own. Producer Greg Ainger realised that airing some of the issues affecting young people may cause disquiet in the local communities;

My view was that we had to reflect the realities and there were difficulties which the younger generation, the teenagers, were actually experiencing because they were growing up between two cultures.⁸³

An example of this can be heard on a recording of a *6-3-0 Show* phone-in from 1979 in which presenter Don Kotak and studio guests are taking calls about relationships between young people;

⁸³ OHI, Greg Ainger.

Don Kotak: 'Let's talk to our next caller on the line, its Faizal, hello Faizal ...'

Caller: 'Hello ...'

Don Kotak: 'Welcome to the *6-3-0 Show* ..'

Caller: '.... The real thing is I'm a Muslim you see, and I've been going out with a Hindu girl for about ...'

Don Kotak: 'Well there comes a problem about different religions doesn't it?'

Caller: '.... Yes, but the same thing happens with caste you see, I've been going out with her for about six months you see, I am in love with her and she is in love with me. She comes from a high Hindu caste and she says if she tells her parents that I'm a Muslim boy then they would send her to India you see and that's not fair'.

Don Kotak: 'How do your parents feel about it?'

Caller: 'I haven't talked to them, but if I did, they wouldn't mind, there were one or two examples recently done and they were quite alright.'⁸⁴

This call goes to the heart of issues facing young people in Leicester as they straddled British and Asian cultures. The phone in followed an on-air discussion about a new local hostel for Asian women who had left home to escape abusive relationships or arranged marriage. Anita Bhalla, a CRE community worker who had set up the hostel recalled opposition from all quarters;

'On one day the National Front smashed up our offices, and the same night there was a meeting of the Community Relations Council and Asian men with placards came and demanded that I was sacked for daring to set up an Asian women's hostel'.⁸⁵

As a young articulate woman Bhalla often appeared as a guest on the *6-3-0 Show*;

'I would go on, not just on the hostel issue but also to talk about young people, around culture and events that were happening, and young people and their relationship with the police which wasn't good.'⁸⁶

In the mid 1980s Bhalla moved to Birmingham and became a freelance on *East in West* on BBC Radio WM and by 1988 was the lead producer in developing the programmes for the

⁸⁴ *The 6-3-0 Show*, BBC Radio Leicester, TX April 1979.

⁸⁵ Anita Bhalla, (D.o.B. 9 May 1955), Oral History Interview, recorded Birmingham, 5 May 2017.

⁸⁶ OHI, Anita Bhalla.

West Midlands side of the Midlands Asian Network. The drive by BBC Radio Leicester to widen the programme remit from requests, music and news of local events was spearheaded by the producer Greg Ainger, who within a few months of the launch of the programme had taken over the role of Education Producer. With just two presenters there was a need to expand the team of people who could work on the programme to record interviews, plan future programmes, studio produce and answer telephone calls from listeners. Regular listener Vijay Sharma was concerned enough about the early programmes to challenge the first producer, Paul Cobley, about its content;

‘I listened to it for maybe three weeks, and all I heard was very good, excellent music, but it was just music. So, I thought there is more to us than music and we need to do something about it’.⁸⁷

Without setting up an appointment Sharma presented herself at the reception of BBC Radio Leicester one lunchtime in late 1976 and waited to be introduced to Cobley. On his return from lunch she told him;

‘I’ve come to talk to you about the Asian programmes and he said what about them? I said there’s more to us than just wall to wall music, why don’t we have some interviews, information and health advice ... and he said right, well ok, if you think you are that good why don’t you do it, and I said yes, I will. And that’s how it started’.⁸⁸

Sharma went on to regularly present the programme, later becoming one of the first staff Asian producers and was the first Managing Editor for the national BBC Asian Network in 2002. By 1981 the now named *6-0-5 Show* was settling into a new regular broadcast time of 6.05 p.m. and covered Leicester as it changed rapidly into a multi-cultural city, as Sharma recollected;

‘The ability to be able to go and see films. Everything was becoming available, the food, the films, the music, the clothes. It wasn’t just embryonic developments it was significant increases, businesses setting up, Bobby’s opening an all vegetarian restaurant, and celebrations of events and festivals’.⁸⁹

Another new recruit to the programme was Mike Allbut who was a community worker at the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre in Leicester. He had become enthralled by Hindi film

⁸⁷ Vijay Sharma (D.o.B. withheld), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 7 September 2017.

⁸⁸ OHI, Vijay Sharma.

⁸⁹ OHI, Vijay Sharma.

music when as a teacher in a Leicester school in the late 1960s when the children in his class took him to watch Bollywood Movies at the local cinema.

Figure 4-8 MIKE ALLBUT, MEDWAY JUNIOR SCHOOL 1969



Source: Mike Allbut

This class photo from Medway school in 1969 also gives a flavour of the developing multicultural nature of Leicester. Allbut applied to BBC Radio Leicester after an advert for presenters appeared in the *Leicester Mercury* and on air;

‘I was a very extravagant young man, smelling of petunia, with Indian beads clattering round my neck and long purple hair, and I think I gave everyone a shock when I applied. I have a theory why they took me on. The National Front was very scary in Leicester and the city council and everyone else was very cautious about this new programme and my theory is that if they thought if they got a white guy it couldn’t be labelled as an Asian programme’.⁹⁰

Allbut proved to be very popular and was one of the main presenters through into the 1990s. An early photograph of him (third from the left with producer Paul Copley) in a live radio car broadcast from the home of the Sedani family in Leicester captures the genuine warmth of the programme and Mike’s popularity;

⁹⁰ OHI, Mike Allbut, (D.o.B. 14 February 1947), recorded Leicester, 13 February 2017.

Figure 4-9 MIKE ALLBUT, THE 6-3-0 SHOW, RADIO CAR BROADCAST, LEICESTER 1978.



BBC Radio Leicester Archive

An appeal in 2018 in the *Leicester Mercury* to find the family in the photograph took just three hours from the newspaper being published – and forty years on that warmth was still evident when we restaged the photograph at the *Six o'clock Show Live!* event;

Figure 4-10 MIKE ALLBUT AND THE SEDANI FAMILY 2018.



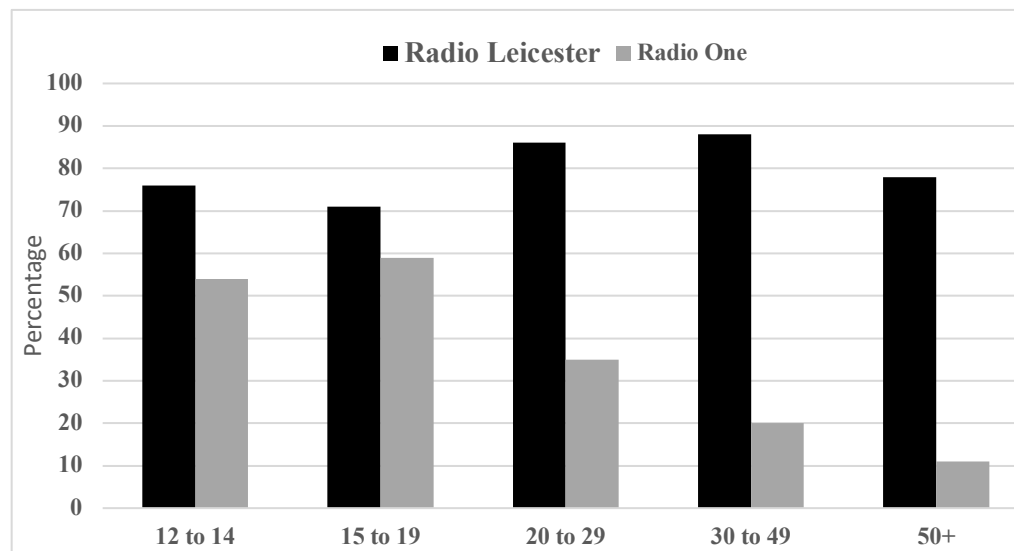
Source: University of Leicester.

Daksha Saujani (seated front row, right) remembered the programme with affection;

‘The reason the show was very important to me and my family was because we were connected to a community that came from Nairobi, Uganda or wherever, we felt connected and we didn’t feel that isolated’.⁹¹

The CRE carried out a detailed listener survey in Leicester from May to July 1977 and the results were by any measure impressive.⁹² The CRE report suggested that four fifths of respondents (83%) claimed BBC Radio Leicester as their ‘favourite station’, two thirds (66%) of Asians in Leicester were listening regularly and further quarter (25%) were listening occasionally.⁹³ The fact that only nine percent did not listen to the programme is astonishing - as is the fact it took the BBC another eight years to carry out any of its own audience research into Asian listening. Buried in the data is one crucial element about young people which had it been identified by the BBC centrally may have made an impression on future network radio programme policy. When analysing the CRE results it is clear that young people in Leicester were consuming BBC Radio One in large numbers. The aim of targeting parts of the BBC Radio Leicester programme at young people had also paid off – this was clearly family listening;

Figure 4-11 LISTENING TO BBC RADIO LEICESTER AND BBC RADIO ONE BY AGE.



Source: M. Anwar, Who Tunes into What (CRE)⁹⁴

⁹¹ Daksha Saujani, video interview with University of Leicester Press Officer, *Six O'clock Show live!*, BBC Leicester, 29 April 2018.

⁹² Anwar, *Who Tunes In*, p. 13.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Anwar, *Who Tunes into What*, p. 19.

An early understanding of this by BBC Radio One – if indeed any of the station management ever saw these results – could have initiated a range of programme ideas on the station. I would argue that while BBC Radio One should not have begun an Asian programme it could have targeted some of its news coverage to ensure it featured the voices of young British Asians; recruited young Asian reporters to its news team as role models; worked with BBC local radio to develop young Asian talent and even had an early chance to engage with new British Asian music such as bhangra.

Emboldened by this huge listenership BBC Radio Leicester embarked on some ambitious broadcasts. In 1980 it recorded an Asian Song Contest in front of a full house of nine hundred people at the Haymarket Theatre in Leicester.

Figure 4-12 ASIAN SONG CONTEST, HAYMARKET THEATRE, LEICESTER, 1980.



Mira Trivedi Private Collection

The surviving recording begins with the Town Cryer in Georgian Dress ringing his hand bell to welcome the audience in Hindi - much to their amusement, and delight. As the star guest, the Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar, is announced there is an audible hush and astonishment in the audience followed by wild applause. As Lata, known affectionately as ‘the Queen of song’, sings acapella there is a reverential quiet as she holds the spellbound audience. It is a wonderful recording, the production and presentation qualities are of a high standard, and it captures a moment in Leicester as the Asian

communities start to feel part of the city.⁹⁵ The fact that it was held in the main theatre in Leicester, the heart of Leicester's white cultural space, and not a community centre or the NATRAJ cinema also says something about the growing acceptance of the Asian communities in Leicester.

Daily Asian programming put a permanent strain on the programme budget of BBC Radio Leicester as Owen Bentley, the station manager, revealed to ATV's *Here and Now* in 1980;

‘About one eighth of the budget of the station, if you exclude news and current affairs, goes on the ethnic minority programmes. That's a fairly major investment for a station with a small budget’.⁹⁶

The majority of BBC local radio costs were spent on staff and fixed costs leaving a small programme budget. A lack of new money from the BBC meant Bentley was spreading his programme budget more thinly across all programmes to fund his Asian programming. New programme ideas therefore were difficult to fund and as the City and County Councils began to reach out to local community groups in the 1980s the radio station bid for funds to organise on air literacy courses. BBC Radio Leicester received £40,000 from the City and County Councils to run two literacy projects *Chalo Kaam Kare* and *Kahani Apni Apni*. This was not without criticism. The *Leicester Mercury* ran a story ‘Ethnic Minority Radio on the Rates’ and a leader column titled ‘Subsidy On The Air’ reproved the BBC and the ruling Labour group on the City Council;

The cash for all this work should be from a central fund and the Labour Party cannot pretend to have a mandate to spend either city or county ratepayers' cash on programmes with a special ethnic element, no matter how praiseworthy. We do not doubt the integrity of the journalists at Radio Leicester. But historically it is not unusual for those paying the piper to have a say in the tune he plays.⁹⁷

This was a fair point to make and the radio station was forced down this road by a lack of central funding from the BBC. There is a constant stream of memoranda from senior BBC management to the station manager at BBC Radio Leicester asking why the station was continually overspent. One correspondence in 1984 ended with Tony Inchley, the new station manager, partly in jest, suggesting a solution;

⁹⁵ BBC Radio Leicester, 1980 Asian Song Contest, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

⁹⁶ ATV, *Here and Now*, TX 16 October 1980, MACE Archive.

⁹⁷ Leader Column ‘Subsidy on the Air’, *Leicester Mercury*, 27 May 1983, p. 26.

You refer to being “increasingly anxious” about the overspend here I intend, therefore, to achieve economies by cutting the expensive ethnic minority broadcasts on the station from December 1st which will enable us to achieve your budgetary objectives.⁹⁸

Inchley had become a formidable champion of his Asian programming and was not likely to carry out this threat. Nevertheless, the one-off funding from the City and County councils was important to ensure projects such as *Chalo Kaam Kare* got to air. This series was designed as a radio programme of twenty-four, fifteen-minute episodes to be supported by literacy packs available from local libraries with a network of ‘community’ tutors. The programme topics ranged from form filling to information finding and from dealing with hospitals to unemployment benefits. Two thousand teaching packs were printed and by the end of the first month libraries had given out more than five hundred of the packs, with enrolments on language courses exceeding two hundred. The project evaluation noted that most people had heard about the project through BBC Radio Leicester and recommended further work with the station.⁹⁹

A second literacy project *Kahani Apni Apni* was therefore commissioned and ran as a ‘soap opera’ with eighty weekly episodes beginning in January 1983. This was hugely ambitious for a BBC local radio station. Local writer David Campton, a recognised Leicester playwright and a regular contributor of scripts to BBC Radio 4, was recruited to write it. A cast was assembled of local people, including station staff and freelances which gave the production a very local feel. *Kahani Apni Apni* received national press attention as Campton noted in a letter to his agent in March 1984;

The Observer a couple of weeks ago did say it was ‘about an Asian family whose wry humour beats ‘The Archers’ any day.’¹⁰⁰

As an unusual development for a BBC local radio station *Kahani Apni Apni* also received local television coverage on *Central News*. A report shortly after the launch of the series highlighted the role of local people in the production and how Campton was assisted by a

⁹⁸ Memorandum; Tony Inchley to Senior Manager Local Radio (Midlands) and Controller BBC Local Radio, 28 September 1984. BBC Radio Leicester File, Owen Bentley private collection.

⁹⁹ B. Hawkins, *Chal Kaam Kare* Project Report, 5 July 1983. BBC Radio Leicester File, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

¹⁰⁰ D. Campton, Letter to Agent, 9 March 1984, David Campton Archive, UoL Special Collections.

range of advisors to make sure the storylines were both credible – and technically correct. The producer Jo Reeve told reporter John Mitchell about the genesis of the serial;

I started the series at first to provide back up to English language classes in Leicester and we decided to put some humour into it to make it more entertaining and it grew from there.¹⁰¹

Figure 4-13 'KAHANI APNI APNI' CAST, BBC RADIO LEICESTER.



Leicester Mercury Caption; Mrs Jo. Reeve (right) writer David Campton (second right) discuss the script with the cast of *Kahani Apni Apni*, (Left to right) Asha Nathwani, Harold Morris, Harsha Trevedi, Sumal Kahanchaud, Julie Maynell, Mahesh Nathwani, Kishore Kotecha.

Source: *Leicester Mercury Cuttings File, University of Leicester Special Collections.*

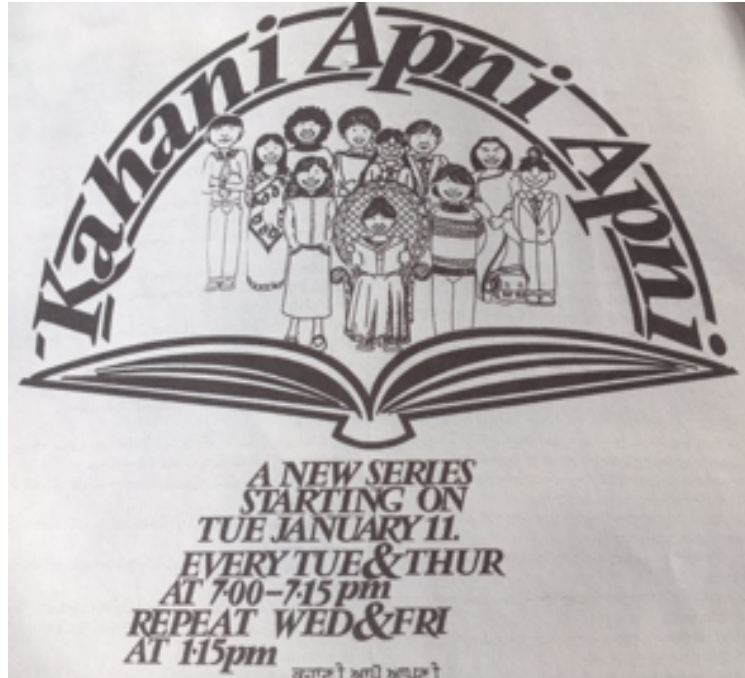
The last line from the reporter, 'This is John Mitchell reporting from the Patel's of Belgrave', used the station 'nickname' for the series. Two episodes survive and give a flavour of the production. The majority of the language spoken is English, but the Asian characters break into short shots of Gujarati when explaining new 'Leicester phrases' to each other. It really has an engaging feel and warmth despite the actors being amateurs. The fact that they struggle with some of the English lines is absolutely part of the point of the project.¹⁰² None of the local cast were members of Equity which caused the station

¹⁰¹ *Central News*, 'Radio Serial', TX 10 January 1983, MACE Archive, University of Lincoln.

¹⁰² BBC Radio Leicester, *Kahani Apni Apni*, Episode 14, TX April 1983.

some problems when a second series had to engage professional actors and was broadcast as a series of monologues as the only way of affording professional fees.

Figure 4-14 KAHANI APNI APNI FLYER



Source: BBC Radio Leicester Archive.

The programme was broadcast on Tuesday and Thursday each week after *The Six O'clock Show* to catch the Asian audience and given a daytime repeat on Wednesdays and Thursdays after the lunchtime news. *Kahani Apni Apni* was not hidden away but given a high-profile daytime slot as part of the commitment to bringing Asian issues and stories into mainstream programming - something the CRE had recommended to broadcasters in its publication about ethnic minority broadcasting in 1983.¹⁰³

Sue Ahern the producer of *The Six O'clock Show* was encouraged by station manager Tony Inchley to feed stories and guests to the main mid-morning programme *Crosstalk* presented by Morgan Cross;

I knew Morgan quite well, and I used to stand-in for him on-air. So, I had this campaign of stealth where we tried to get more stuff in the mid-morning show and at first Morgan was a bit resistant to it ... and he'd say, 'they're not my listeners, they've got their own programme'. I honestly don't think Morgan was racist he was just old fashioned. Eventually he did accept it, but I would really have to make sure the Asian guests were

¹⁰³ CRE, *Ethnic Minority Broadcasting*, p. 70.

really good talkers, that they spoke really good English and make them super-good before they went on to Morgan's show because I was terrified of them failing.¹⁰⁴

In journalism big stories can produce an editorial step change and the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 proved to be such a moment at BBC Radio Leicester. This major international story with huge interest for the Asian population in Leicester had to be carefully balanced – balance that was appreciated by the Police in the county who ‘were obviously anxious that problems could erupt in Leicester’.¹⁰⁵ The LRAC, which at the time contained three members from ethnic minority communities, wrote a note of appreciation to all staff.¹⁰⁶ Covering this story across the programme day from breakfast through mid-morning and on to the *Six O'clock Show* gave the staff in general programmes both the contacts and confidence to approach issues of concern to the Asian communities in Leicester.

The role of BBC Radio Leicester in combating poor community relations in Leicester was highlighted in the House of Commons by Sir John Farr, the MP for Harborough. Farr confirmed that local MPs had formed an all-party committee to consider the Annan Report and its implications for BBC Radio Leicester;

I remind the House that Leicester has a large immigrant population. This has been a problem, and still is at times. Several of the letters we received stressed the value of the work that BBC Radio Leicester is doing in community relations, which is a special and difficult area. Several letters stressed with real force what the radio station has been doing to unify these communities which comprise many thousands of people from different ethnic backgrounds.¹⁰⁷

A visit to Leicester in 1981 by parliamentarians from the Sub Committee on Race Relations in Parliament failed to include a visit to BBC Radio Leicester and Tony Higgins, the chair of the LRAC and future Chief Executive of UCAS, wrote to express his concern to the chair of the committee, John Wheeler MP. After outlining the range of ethnic minority programming at BBC Radio Leicester and its audience success, Higgins concludes;

¹⁰⁴ Sue Ahern, (D.o.B. 26 October 1954), Oral History Interview, recorded London, 16 May 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum, T. Inchley to DG, ‘Radio Leicester Coverage of Mrs. Gandhi’s Assassination’, 9 November 1984. BBC Radio Leicester file, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Sir John Farr, House of Commons Debate on BBC Radio Services, 14 December 1977, Hansard HC Deb, 14 December 1977 vol. 941, cc. 595-630.

I wish to register my Councils concern that your Committee's report is in certain ways deficient, since it ignores the very great contribution that local radio can, and does, make to good community relations.¹⁰⁸

The CRE certainly argued that ethnic minority programming was important in terms of establishing communities and 'the fact that their cultural values are now an integral part of a wider British society'.¹⁰⁹ Jones argues that in the late 1970s and the 1980s a switch occurred in Leicester from an atmosphere of the threat posed by the growing Asian communities to one of welcome which ushered in a new wave of multicultural politics.¹¹⁰ BBC Radio Leicester played its part in this community cohesion by exposing the policies of the National Front on air – and broadcasting a nightly Asian programme in English and therefore accessible to all listeners.

4.5 Conclusion.

In welcoming the delegates to the first BBC local radio conference on 'Programmes for Immigrants' in 1976 Peter Redhouse (DGMLR) said 'the whole question of broadcasts for immigrants was a difficult one'.¹¹¹ This rather set the tone for the stasis in BBC local radio Asian programming between 1976 and 1984 - except in Leicester. The Annan Committee on broadcasting forced the BBC to assess and review its policy towards broadcasting to minorities. However, in BBC local radio the future threats raised by Annan were more urgent, as the committee questioned if the BBC should be in local radio at all. Therefore, any discussion around financial and editorial commitment to programming for Asian programmes needs to be seen in the light of this very real threat to the service itself.

While the programme offering from BBC local radio remained static the Asian communities across England continued to grow. London was the major draw for Asian settlement, but BBC Radio London failed to recognise the need for more Asian

¹⁰⁸ BBC WAC, File R102/13/1, Programmes for Immigrants Part 2: 1980-82, Letter from Tony Higgins to John Wheeler MP., 17 August 1981.

¹⁰⁹ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ S. H. Jones, 'The 'metropolis of dissent': Muslim participation in Leicester and the 'failure' of multiculturalism in Britain' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2015, Vol.38(11), pp.1969-1985; See also: G. Singh, 'A City of Surprises: Urban Multiculturalism and the 'Leicester Model'', in S. Sayyid, N. Ali, and V. S. Kalra, (Eds), *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, (Hurst; London, 2006); and, R. Bonney and William Le Goff, 'Leicester's Cultural Diversity in the Context of the British Debate on Multiculturalism', *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 2006, 6.6, 45–58.

¹¹¹ BBC WAC File, R102/38/1, Conference on Immigrant Programmes.

programming as it had done in the case of *Black Londoners*. BBC Radio London decided to replace *Jharoka* and *Darpan* programmes, presented in Hindustani and Bengali but the new programme, *London Sounds Eastern*, never expanded or changed to reflect the growing Asian population. Geetha Bala, who presented the programme in the 1980s, and worked full time in the BBC as a radio and management trainer suggested this was a missed opportunity by the station;

‘Well if I look back, and if I had my time again, I would be more challenging, which I wasn’t. Because I still feel now it was tokenism’.¹¹²

BBC Radio Blackburn relaunched as BBC Radio Lancashire in 1981. The Asian programme *Mehfil* was off air for over two years from late 1974 to early 1977 during one of the most difficult periods of race relations in the town. It returned with a reduced budget and a reliance on the good will of presenters who worked for expenses only.

BBC Radio Birmingham relaunched as BBC Radio WM covering the whole of the West Midlands conurbation in 1981. The station was slow to build on its Asian output and decided not to protect *East in West* from cuts that were applied to local radio by Aubrey Singer, the Managing Director of Network Radio. It was the mid 1980s before BBC Radio WM increased its Asian output.

An accusation of tokenism runs through the existing historiography of Asian programming on BBC local radio and it is hard to refute. Hind and Mosco, writing in 1982, suggest that ‘ethnic groups can expect the usual tokenism slotted in between endless hours of sport and gardening’.¹¹³ Page, writing in 1983, points out that Asian programmes on BBC local radio are usually ‘between 30 and 90 minutes in length’ and consist mainly of record requests.¹¹⁴ Looking back Satvinder Rana from Radio Derby agreed that the programme he presented was tokenistic;

‘I think these programmes, not just here at Radio Derby but in other places as well, was kind of a Cinderella service in local radio. You get these community people coming in to

¹¹² Geetha Bala, (D.o.B. 22 July 1950, Oral History Interview, recorded Loughborough, 23 June 2017.

¹¹³ J. Hind and S. Mosco, Rebel Radio, *The Full Story of British Pirate Radio*, (Pluto Press; London, 1982), p. 62.

¹¹⁴ D. Page, ‘Broadcasting to Britain’s Asian Minorities, *Media: Response and Change*, (1983), 10.2, p. 168.

do a community programme and then they leave. So, you were never part of the BBC or the station'.¹¹⁵

A contemporary study by Husband and Chouhan in the early 1980s reveals that BBC local radio management did not prioritise ethnic programming, some felt that broadcasting in Asian languages was a form of 'ghettoising', making the programmes completely separate from the rest of the station.¹¹⁶ It is not surprising that as the 1980s progressed minorities began to turn their backs on BBC and ILR stations and turn to 'their own' pirate radio stations such as Asian People's Radio in London¹¹⁷. There is an air of being taken for granted in the Asian programme provision on most stations, with these programmes run by loyal volunteer teams generally bypassed as new production ideas and methods spread across local radio.

This evidence of tokenism has to be placed in a different context at BBC Radio Leicester. The station expanded its programmes by fifteen minutes a day in the face of the Singer cuts and faced the political challenge of the National Front head on. It is rarely recognised in the historiography which is often written from a community radio perspective of lobbying for Asian radio stations.¹¹⁸ The daily programme on BBC Radio Leicester developed in contrast to weekly programmes - or even bi-weekly shows in the case of BBC Radio Bristol – on other BBC local radio stations. By 1983 the programme had acquired its new regular name of *The Six O'clock Show* and its provision for the 63,000 strong Asian communities in Leicester accounted for 26 percent of all Asian programming on BBC local radio in 1976 rising to 30 percent by 1983.

With as much as ten times the output on other stations the format of *The Six O'clock Show* had space to feature a wider range of material and to cover controversial local topics. There was also a need for people to come and work on the programmes as presenters, interviewers and telephone operators. This brought a critical mass of new people to the radio station, bringing with them new ideas and importantly different outlooks on daily life in the city. The station was becoming less 'white' and the substantial Asian minority on

¹¹⁵ OHI, Satvinder Rana.

¹¹⁶ C. Husband and J. M. Chouhan, 'Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain', p. 287.

¹¹⁷ *Rebel Radio*, p. 62.

¹¹⁸ For example, P.M. Lewis & J. Booth, *The Invisible Medium: Public, Commercial and Community Radio*, (Macmillan; London, 1989), pp. 97-98.

the streets was now more visible on the station and on its airwaves as it set out to improve community cohesion in the city.

The next chapter will show that from the mid 1980s new technology allowed the number of hours of Asian programming to increase by a factor of five to ninety hours a week. New technological breakthroughs increasingly mean that Asian communities could turn their backs on the existing broadcasters to develop their own media. Continued demographic change brought new challenges as 'identity' in the form of a new phenomenon of 'Young British Asians' developed. BBC local radio had to manage these challenges with a new corporate structure that for the first time combined local television and local radio under regional management which accentuated the role of senior managers such as Owen Bentley in the midlands.

Chapter 5 1985-1990 Technology, Identity and Regional Divergence.

As the six o'clock news bulletins on BBC Radio Nottingham and BBC Radio Leicester ended on Wednesday evenings in April 1985 listeners were offered a new choice;

'Well now you've a choice of listening. On Medium Wave, there's the *Six O'clock Show* with Rabia Raza and on VHF, *Sixty by Sixty* with John Holmes, a selection of classic tunes from the 1960s'.¹

This was the first permanent split of VHF (FM) and Medium Wave (AM) transmitters in local radio and was possible through an evolving government media policy. In the late 1980s the Conservative government brought competition into radio by licensing AM and FM licences separately. For ILR this offered potential new revenue streams and for BBC local radio an opportunity to bring new programming to air. There was also an implicit threat that broadcasting the same programmes on AM and FM transmitters 'wasted' a scarce broadcast resource that could be offered to new licensees. Previously each individual AM/FM split programme transmission had to be agreed well in advance by the Home Office in writing and was therefore usually restricted to coverage of specific sports fixtures. By pushing at an opening regulatory door, the station managers at BBC Radios Leicester and Nottingham could now offer Asian listeners to BBC Radio Nottingham the opportunity to listen to the Wednesday edition of the *Six O'clock Show*. There was also the opportunity for listeners to BBC Radio Leicester to avoid Asian programming on Wednesday. This doubled the volume of Asian programming on BBC Radio Nottingham as the existing *Nawrang* programme in Hindustani continued unchanged. The *Six O'clock Show* presented in English was able target younger Asian listeners in Nottingham as the station tried to reflect the needs of the second generation.

This new listener choice in Nottingham and Leicester chimed with 1980s government media policy, which under Margaret Thatcher looked to find deregulated and competitive solutions for new digital technologies through the Peacock Committee on Broadcasting. While the government may have suggested that this was all about consumer choice, Chignell argues that the real driving force came from broadcast entrepreneurs who were

¹ Continuity Announcement, BBC Radio Leicester, TX 1985. See Recordings in Appendix One.

‘anxious to get into the market or to increase their stake’.² New digital technology led to the launch of the multi-channel Sky TV in 1989 and BSB in 1990 which began to reduce the dominance of the existing public service broadcasters. The BBC and the licence fee survived the Peacock Committee, but as part of the investment in the battle for the future of television, budgets across the corporation and especially in BBC local radio shrank. The comfortable local duopoly of BBC and ILR stations was changed by this new market driven approach. The technical and policy innovations that allowed AM and FM transmitters to broadcast different programming allowed the government to create the illusion of more choice for listeners. Removing AM transmitters from existing stations to end what the government considered to be ‘wasteful’ simulcasting offered the possibility of new national, regional and local radio services through competitive tendering of the released frequencies. For BBC and ILR local radio stations this potential loss of AM transmitters and the prospect of more commercial competition saw a rise in their innovative use. In ILR there was a concentration of providing new ‘Gold’ oldies services while in BBC local radio there was a drive to expand ethnic programming on AM transmitters to show the ‘scarce resource’ of broadcast spectrum was being well used. However, the failure of evolving media regulation to address what was seen as a lack of programming for minorities in general encouraged the development of successful pirate radio stations particularly in London. The emerging technologies were exploited by Asian ‘Thatcherite’ entrepreneurs keen to develop new media choices bypassing the existing public service broadcasters, something belatedly recognised by the BBC in its 1996 report *Race and Television in Britain: Channels of Diversity*.³

This chapter will explore these changes that were driven by regulation, technology, identity and new BBC management practices; firstly the regulatory environment increasingly championed choice; secondly, the use of technology to which the regulation was adapting; thirdly a changing Asian diaspora with an increasingly younger demographic; and fourthly, a regional approach to BBC local radio management.

² P. Holland, H. Chignell, S. Wilson, *Broadcasting and the NHS in the Thatcherite 1980s: The Challenge to Public Service*, (Palgrave Macmillan; London, 2013), p.201.

³ D. M. Newton, ‘A little Brit different? BBC America and transnational constructs of Britishness’ in S. Malik & D.M. Newton, (Eds), *Adjusting the Contrast: British Television and Constructs of Race*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2017), p.26

5.1 Media Regulation

There are two 1980s in the public consciousness, one of innovation, buccaneering entrepreneurial spirit and increasing consumer choice, the other of industrial decline, creaking public services and a dispossessed inner city 'underclass'. The media policy of the Thatcher governments impacted both of these worlds championing free media markets while at the same time erecting barriers to entry to ethnic minority 'inner city' radio. These barriers were very visibly erected in 1985 when the government tried to regulate the booming illegal radio market by offering pirate operators the opportunity to turn legitimate. First the Home Office under Leon Brittan organised a pilot of 21 community radio stations across the UK which attracted 286 applications including 90 from London. Then in the run up to the 1987 election the new Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, cancelled the experiment in what Lewis has described as 'an attempt to curb free speech'.⁴ The Home Office panel assessing the applications accelerated the cancellation of the pilot when it revealed there was 'the likelihood of licensing just the sort of "marginal" groups that the GLC would have favoured'.⁵ The cancellation of the community radio experiment was seen as a betrayal by pirate operators who had entered the bidding process, most of whom were black or Asian – and by their listeners.

However, in the unregulated (and illegal) world of pirate stations Asian radio proved popular and commanded high levels of audience loyalty. Research by the BBC in the West Midlands as late as 1994 found that the pirate stations Radio Sangam and Apna Radio were both reaching half of the Asian population each week.⁶ In Leicester, possibly because of the volume of daily Asian programming provided by BBC Radio Leicester and GEM AM, there were no targeted Asian pirate radio stations although researchers in the city in the 1990s found that some young Asians were experimenting with forms of bhangra on urban music pirate stations.⁷

⁴ P. Lewis, 'Finding and Funding Voices: The London Experience', *Information, Society and Justice*, (2008), 21.1, pp. 5-20.

⁵ T. Stoller, *Sounds of Your Life: The History of Independent Radio in the UK*, (John Libbey: London, 2010), p. 159.

⁶ R. Bristow, *BBC Radio WM: The Asian Network*, BBC Research Department Report, January 1994, p. 10, Owen Bentley Personal Collection.

⁷ A. Gilmore, 'Big up to the Braunstone Massive!': *An Examination of Pirate Radio in Leicester as Local Representation and Local Resource*, (Leicester University: Leicester, 1996).

Independent local radio (ILR) stations had developed their own popular Asian programming in the 1970s. BBC research on Asian radio listening across England in 1989 showed that Asian programming was more popular on ILR stations and pirate radio, (71% combined) than BBC local radio (34%).⁸ In the 1980s nine ILR stations produced a total of sixteen hours and thirty minutes each week of Asian programming.⁹

Table 5-1 ILR ASIAN PROGRAMMES 1980s.

STATION	PROGRAMME NAME	LANGUAGE
Radio Aire (Leeds)	<i>Third World Music (Includes some Asian Music) – 60 minutes</i>	English
Beacon Radio (Wolverhampton)	<i>Jhankar – 60 minutes</i>	Hindustani / Punjabi / Bengali
BRMB (Birmingham)	<i>Geet Mala – 90 minutes</i>	Hindi / Bengali
CBC (Cardiff)	<i>Saatrang – 30 minutes</i>	Hindustani
Centre Radio (Leicester), Then Leicester Sound from 1982	<i>Sabras: 3 hours 30 minutes</i>	Friday (English) Saturday (English) Sunday (Hindi / Gujarati)
Chiltern (Luton and Bedford)	<i>Sub Saath – 60 minutes</i>	English / Hindi
LBC (London)	<i>Geet Mala- 60 minutes</i>	Hindustani
Mercia (Coventry)	<i>Aakaash Deep – 60 minutes</i>	English / Hindustani
Pennine Bradford)	<i>Meeting Place – 1 hour every weekday</i>	Monday – Thursday (Urdu) Friday (Hindi / Urdu / Bengali / Gujarati)
Radio 210 (Reading)	<i>Sangeet – 60 minutes</i>	Urdu

Sources, Nottingham Community Relations Council Archive and CRE.

Half of this output was broadcast by Pennine Radio in Bradford (5 hours) and Centre Radio in Leicester (3.5 hours). In the West Midlands three ILR stations, Beacon Radio, BRMB and Mercia Sound, produced weekly Asian programming, suggesting that there was scope for BBC Radio WM to increase its offering from two hours a week. In West Yorkshire, Pennine Radio was able to produce a programme each week-night from the late 1970s, something that BBC Radio Leeds did not match until 1985. For ILR these programmes were a valuable source of advertising revenue; the *Sunday Times* reported that Pennine Radio was able to charge premium rates to advertisers on their Asian programming which was broadcast in off-peak hours.¹⁰ In Leicester in 1981 Don Kotak was persuaded to move from BBC Radio Leicester, where he had presented the *Six O'clock Show* since 1976, to the ILR station Leicester Sound. Kotak moved on the condition his new Asian programme

⁸ BBC WAC File, R9/327/1, BBC Audience Research, 'Media Survey Amongst UK Asians, November 1989',

⁹ Nottingham Community Relations Council Archive, File DD CR 295/1, Broadcasting, Local Radio; M. Anwar, *Ethnic Minority Broadcasting: A Research Report*, (CRE; London, 1983), p. 79-80.

¹⁰ K. Gosling, Local Radio, *Sunday Times*, 7 February 1980.

would be on after 7 pm when the *Six O'clock Show* had finished. This astute move increased the listenership in the early days and helped with its commercial viability;

We used to generate in the region of a ten-grand surplus every month from our three hours. We used to do our own adverts, cut them and get them ready and they just had to lock them into the system'¹¹

There was only minimal Asian programming in London with *Geet Mala* presented by Chaman Lal Chaman broadcast for an hour each Saturday evening. Chaman was another broadcaster from the Voice of Kenya who, like his colleague Bikram Bhamra, arrived in England in the 1970s to find a radio career impossible. Chaman worked in a local tax office in London but used a financial hook to persuade LBC to give him a show;

'Their commercial revenue between 7pm and 8pm on Saturdays was nil. I said your listeners are absent ...they said ok, you can play your Indian music, but the linking has to be in English. Most of the Kenyans knew my voice as the same voice they had heard in East Africa, so selling commercials was very, very easy'.¹²

Through the Peacock committee and constant lobbying, the ILR companies championed deregulation through the Association of Independent Radio Contractors (AIRC) who bristled at what they saw as interference by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in programming matters. The AIRC lobbied the government for a relaxation of controls and through the 1990 Broadcasting Act most public service conditions were removed from ILR stations in what Starkey argues was 'toxic to localness' in commercial radio.¹³ The government green paper in 1987, *Radio: Choices and Opportunities* was, suggests Stoller, a response to AIRC lobbying and led the way to ending simulcasting by ensuring that stations broadcast different programming on AM and FM transmitters.¹⁴ It also laid the foundations for a third wave of commercial radio, incremental stations that would broadcast to sections of existing ILR transmitter footprints. Through this system in 1989 ethnic stations could finally go to air legally, the first Asian station to do so was Sunrise Radio in West London.¹⁵

¹¹ Don Kotak OHI.

¹² Chaman Lal Chaman, (D.o.B. 15 May 1934), Oral History Interview, recorded Southall, 11 October 2019.

¹³ Starkey, *Local Radio*, p. 84.

¹⁴ Stoller, *Sounds of Your Life*, pp. 167-169.

¹⁵ Starkey, *Local Radio*, p. 116.

In the BBC the changing regulatory landscape was reflected in a five-year strategy for multi-ethnic broadcasting which argued first for a pause in any major new developments;

The future of ethnic minority programming, along with the rest of broadcasting, had to be reconsidered in terms of Cable, DBS [Direct Broadcasting by Satellite] and the increasing use of home video.¹⁶

Here was the BBC being cautious and non-committal on ethnic minority programming as the broadcast landscape changed around it. Doing nothing looked like the simplest way for the BBC. The CRE though argued that developing technology raised questions about media control, access by minority groups and changes in viewing and listening habits.¹⁷ The BBC's own new five-year strategy recognised this and acknowledged that criticism of the corporation was getting worse with a new generation having 'a sense of alienation and anger' against it. Even so this paper argued that the BBC should recognise ethnic minority programming as;

'an earnest goodwill on the part of the majority and thus an important step towards removing the barrier of suspicion and mistrust that exists between many of them and the majority'.¹⁸

Goodwill? Really? Should not ethnic minorities be treated the same as other minorities? Welsh and Gaelic language programming was not provided as a 'goodwill gesture', it had become part of the core provision of the BBC. It is also worth noting that while the BBC was suggesting 'goodwill' programmes should suffice it had argued to the Education, Science and Arts Committee in the House of Commons that there were more Gujarati speakers in Leicester than Welsh speakers in Wales.¹⁹ There was though no comparison in the amount of money spent by the BBC on each language.

5.2 New Technologies embraced by Asian Communities.

The 1980s witnessed the last hurrah of analogue technology and the first stirrings of the digital media ecology that has delivered a 'connected' world of hundreds of television and

¹⁶ BBC WAC File B193/5/2, Multi-Ethnic Broadcasting: A strategy for the Next Five Years, p.1.

¹⁷ Anwar, *Ethnic Minority Broadcasting*, p.9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁹ BBC WAC File R102/13/1 Part Two 1980-1983, Unattributed Press Cutting from 29 March 1982, re; Education, Science and Arts Committee, BBC / ITA Evidence, H.o.C. Paper 49.

radio channels and instant worldwide access to thousands of internet streams. Three key technologies were embraced by Asian communities, first in radio through ‘Asian owned’ radio stations on new frequencies freed up by the government and illegal pirate stations described above, secondly home video viewing of Bollywood movies through the new VHS technology and thirdly the printed media. These developments were fed by a divergence of tastes between the generations in the Asian diaspora with the younger second generation bridging both British and Asian culture. The young were less interested than their parents in ‘news from home’ and more attracted to general youth culture and home-grown movements such as the 1980s British Bhangra phenomenon – a hybrid of South Asian and British Asian music.²⁰

After radio the new home technology embraced by Asian communities was the VHS home video player which coupled with the easy availability of Bollywood films to rent was a game changer in Asian home entertainment. Watching Bollywood movies became the main family-centred leisure activity in Asian homes, taking over from live broadcast television and further reduced the reach of public service broadcasters.²¹ With the number of Bollywood film releases reaching around nine hundred per year Gillespie argues that their impact in Britain was a major part of the creation of a pan-Asian cultural identity.²² As well as pulling viewing from broadcast television the VHS machine had a devastating impact on Asian cinemas. The fate of the Natraj, the first purpose built Asian cinema in Europe was typical. Opened in 1974 on the Belgrave Road in Leicester just six years later in 1980 it was losing money and struggling to compete, as the manager explained to an ITV reporter;

‘Video has become so cheap and common, therefore all the people rent the videos out, machines and the films, and sit at home rather than coming to the cinema. You can hire two films for £1.40 whereas we charge £1.30 per seat.... Video piracy is to blame, and we can’t see any improvement’²³

It is hard to overstate the effect that VHS technology had in Asian homes. A BBC audience survey in Leicester in 1986 showed that seven in ten Asian households owned a VHS

²⁰ G. Khabra, ‘Music in the Margins? Popular Music Heritage and British Bhangra Music’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (2012), 20/3, pp.343-355.

²¹ See, M. Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, (Routledge; London, 1995), p.77.

²² Gillespie, *Cultural Change*, p. 77.

²³ *Here and Now*, ‘Indian Cinema’, TX 4 December 1980, MACE Archive, <http://www.macearchive.org/films/here-and-now-04121980-indian-cinema> (Accessed 7 October 2018).

player, compared with just four in ten of the UK population as a whole. Bharti Rajani, who had come to Leicester as a child in 1972 from Uganda recalled the importance of Bollywood films as a communal viewing experience;

When we used to hire the video, we'd all get ready and four or five films we would hire together. We got the recorder for twenty-four hours, so we tried to watch them all before we gave it back. The lady next door would hire films and we would sit on the floor to watch them.²⁴

A growing supply of pirate and ILR radio and the arrival of VHS were the first important signs that the BBC could not rely on Asian communities to use its services if it remained irrelevant to their daily lives. In a BBC news report filmed in Leicester in 1982, Surinder Sharma, then a City Councillor and working for the CRE in the city told a BBC reporter;

Among Asian homes, I think seventy to seventy-five percent of the people own videos, that is so because the existing media doesn't cater for the needs of the ethnic minority population in this country, never mind just this city. So, they are trying to fulfil an existing need with video.²⁵

Sharma became the first Head of Equality and Diversity for BBC Television in the 1990s. Asian media, and particular the written press grew during the 1980s. In 1989 *The Times* reported the rapid growth of Asian media in Britain, pointing out there were up to 50 Asian owned newspaper publications. Suggesting the new papers represented an 'Asian Invasion' the headline failed to grasp that this was a new indigenous British Asian phenomenon that was bought about, in part, by the failure of the mainstream media to connect with Asian consumers.²⁶ The developing split in the media choices and lifestyle made by young British Asians was evident in their consumption of this new wider choice of newspapers and magazines. Husband found that older people sought out papers like *The Yang*, with news from South Asia, while younger people read the *Asian Times* and *Eastern Eye* which developed a focus on British Asian culture.²⁷ In 1989 the Astra satellite, used by Sky, became host to a new satellite television service which for the first time offered Asian viewers a 24-hour dedicated channel, TV Asia.

²⁴ OHI Bharti Rajani.

²⁵ BBC News Report, 'Asian Video Shops in Leicester', Midweek, BBC 2, TX 1982.

²⁶ A. Lycett, 'Asian Invasion', *The Times*, 13 December 1989, p. 31.

²⁷ C. Husband, 'Globalisation, Media Infrastructures and Identities in a Diasporic Community', *Javnost – The Public*, (1998) 5.4, pp. 19-33.

The South Asian diaspora in Britain was increasingly young and new media tastes were developing.²⁸ When the BBC survey of Asians in Leicester in 1985 asked the same questions as the CRE in 1978 about what listeners wanted to hear more of, two answers showed the split between older and younger Asians that Gillespie had also found in her Southall study. Six out of ten younger people surveyed felt young people should have a greater opportunity to put their views on air, while six out of ten older people argued that more information should be broadcast for young people about life and culture in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.²⁹ This highlighted the same tensions between parents and children encountered by Gillespie in West London where teenagers were ready to rebel against their parents. Many felt that excessive home video viewing further separated them from British society ‘locking some girls into an Indian culture’.³⁰ In fact young people were becoming bi-cultural with Gillespie noting that without their parents they viewed mainstream television, and many were just as likely to have seen the latest Bollywood AND Hollywood blockbusters.³¹ This can be heard in a 1984 recording of *Aaj Kaal* from BBB Radio Derby in which a rundown of the top Asian music and films is liberally sprinkled with references to Burt Reynolds, Victoria Principal and Karma Chameleon by Boy George.³²

Having closed the door on the 1985 Community Radio experiment the Conservative government nevertheless continued to assess ways of deregulating media markets and opening them up to competition. The 1990 Broadcasting Act was fundamental to the deregulation of UK media market by the Thatcher and Major governments and Asian media companies took advantage of the new freedoms. The new Radio Authority removed most of the public service obligations from ILR stations and there followed a consolidation of licences to create a series of large national companies – which ironically dropped Asian programming from the schedules. The BBC as a public service broadcaster needed to engage – and be seen to engage - with all sections of British society, including by age, ethnicity, gender and geography. In radio, after BBC Radio 4 dropped its Asian

²⁸ Business in the Community Paper, Population of Ethnic Minorities in Great Britain, February 1994, p.3. https://race.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/paper_1_rfo_business_development_activities_of_ethnic_minorities_in_gb_paper_1_population_of_ethnic_minorities_in_great_britain.pdf (Accessed 18 March 2019).

²⁹ BBC WAC File, R/327/1, BBC Audience Research, Radio Listening Amongst Leicester Asians 85/92, p. 21.

³⁰ Gillespie, *Cultural Change*, p.79.

³¹ Gillespie, *Cultural Change*, p.77.

³² This recording of *Aaj Kaal* can be heard at 19’36” on the attached audio mix.

programming in 1986 this meant an even sharper focus for BBC local radio to connect with Asian communities in England as part of its remit. This became a more difficult challenge as Asian communities embraced the technologies that reduced their reliance on the BBC. BBC local radio had not only to navigate the competitive Asian media environment but work out how to offer youth focused programming and news from ‘back home’ for older people - without alienating both.

5.3 The Changing South Asian Diaspora.

The South Asian diaspora doubled in size during the 1980s and by the time of the 1991 census almost 1.5 million people of South Asian heritage were living in the UK. Over half (56.7%) were of Indian heritage, one third (32.2%) of Pakistani heritage and a little over ten percent (11%) were of Bangladeshi origin, although these communities were not evenly settled across the country.³³ Crucially, this was a young population; over half (51.9%) were under the age of 25 and eight out of ten of the under 25’s were born in the UK.³⁴ Driven by higher birth rates one third of ethnic minorities was under 16 compared to only one fifth of the white population.³⁵ As early as 1976 BBC Radio Leicester had identified a need to target young Asians trapped between two cultures and developed its *Six O’clock Show* in English accordingly. The 1978 CRE survey of listening in Leicester supported this decision by showing a split in listening patterns with younger listeners choosing to listen in English rather than Hindustani – which most did not understand.³⁶ New Asian programmes at Leicester were therefore broadcast in English including the new youth strand, *Weekend Bazar* launched in 1985. Further research by the BBC in Leicester in 1986 showed that this new and growing ‘Young British Asian’ demographic created a demand for a new type of programme, something different than their parents and grandparents had sought from the BBC.³⁷ This was a phenomenon that had been identified by Owen Bentley when he first arrived in Leicester in 1975 and reviewed the existing Asian programme *Milan*;

³³ Business in the Community, *Race for Opportunity*, fact sheet, February 1994, https://race.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/paper_1_rfo_business_development_activities_of_ethnic_minorities_in_gb_paper_1_population_of_ethnic_minorities_in_great_britain.pdf (accessed 29 October 2018).

³⁴ BITC, *Race for Opportunity*, Table 6.

³⁵ BITC, *Race for Opportunity*, p. 17.

³⁶ M. Anwar, *Who Tunes into What*, p. 22.

³⁷ BBC WAC File, R9/327/1, BBC Audience Research, ‘Radio Leicester: Listening Amongst Asians’, November 1986,

‘It was in Hindi/Urdu with three presenters. Kartar Singh Sandhu wasn’t very old then, I bet he was only in his forties ... and to me he represented an older generation. When I looked around the streets there were lots and lots of young Asians and the fact that it was in Hindi/Urdu was possibly a barrier too’.³⁸

Therefore, when BBC Radio Leicester launched its new daily programme in 1976 it was presented in English and Bentley made sure at least one of the presenters, Don Kotak, was from that young demographic.

During the 1980s BBC local radio responded to the growth of the Asian population by increasing the hours of programming from just seventeen hours in 1983 to over ninety hours in 1990. However, this provision was unevenly distributed across the country and the potential loss of AM transmitters was a key driving force in the consideration of increased Asian programming rather than solely an ambition to serve Asian audiences.

The following table shows the growth in the Asian population in key BBC local radio total service areas (TSA’s) in the 1980s and indicates that by 1991 over one million people of South Asian heritage (1,097,383) lived in just six BBC local radio TSA’s. The growth in these areas shows that in the BBC Radio Leicester TSA the Asian population grew by almost four fifths (78.1%) and might explain why the station remained at the forefront of developing Asian programming.

Figure 5-1 GROWTH IN ASIAN POPULATION

	Station	1981	1991	% Growth
1	BBC London/GLR	395,434	520,645	31.6
2	BBC WM	193,838	232,701	20.0
3	BBC Leeds	94,105	128,084	36.1
4	BBC GMR (Manchester)	61,473	91,180	48.3
5	BBC Radio Leicester	46,500	82,819	78.1
6	BBC Radio Lancashire	33,202	41,954	26.3

Source: Census Data 1981 and 1991.

The success of the *Six O’clock Show* in Leicester which reached over two thirds of the local Asian communities showed the potential of daily programming.³⁹ In contrast CRE research

³⁸ OHI, Owen Bentley.

³⁹ Anwar, *Who Tunes into What*, p. 22.

in 1983 had shown the existing weekly programmes in the West Midlands and London were much less effective. In the West Midlands *East in West* on BBC Radio WM was reaching some 39% (c. 75,000) of the local Asian population while at BBC Radio London the *London Sounds Eastern* programme was less popular attracting just 14% (c. 60,000) of the local Asian population.⁴⁰ Expansion to daily programming could have led to deeper local connections as was shown in the West Midlands in 1989 when the new Midlands Asian Network was launched by BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio WM.

The 1983 CRE research argued that despite targeted programming being ‘appreciated greatly’ by Asian listeners there was a recognition that these communities were not being fully served by the BBC.⁴¹ At public meetings the general level of connection with minority communities was heavily criticised, as some of the questions at a BBC public meeting at the Natraj cinema in Leicester amplify;

‘If the answer to our questions is ‘a lack of resources’, what is the point of us being here tonight?’

‘I think the BBC is a waste of time. The ethnic minority should get together and start an independent station and get rid of the BBC.’

‘Asian programmes are always directed by non-Asians. The producer, the director, the cameraman – all are non-Asian. Are there no qualified Asians?’

‘Let’s have some positive action and positive comments about employing blacks and Asians in the BBC’.⁴²

These questions give a flavour of how in the 1980s the BBC was generally judged to be failing to connect with ethnic minority audiences, who in turn were rejecting the corporation. The BBC was demonstrably aware of the concerns and needs of Asian communities across the UK through lobbying and its own public meetings, but there is little evidence of any remedial action. When Surinder Sharma was appointed Head of Equality and Diversity for BBC Television in 1990 he observed the magnitude of his challenge and the lack of a base to build on;

⁴⁰ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p. 23.

⁴¹ Anwar, *Ethnic Broadcasting*, p. 67-69.

⁴² BBC WAC File, R99/339/1, Programmes for Immigrants – General, Minutes of Public Meeting in Leicester, 21 July 1982.

‘One of the huge challenges was that the only black people you saw in television were either the cleaners, or the catering staff, or security. You didn’t see people in programme making or presenting that were from these communities at all’.⁴³

There was a growing media activism through such groups as the Black Women’s Radio Group formed in the early 1980s which carried out survey work on local radio stations in London and found little evidence of an inclusive news or programme agenda in mainstream output.⁴⁴ In London, local radio through BBC Radio London, LBC and Capital Radio left a vacuum into which this media activism - and pirate radio - flowed. The London Community Radio Development Unit, funded by the GLC, established the Black Women’s Radio Group and also launched an Asian Radio Studio Project in Islington to train radio practitioners. Khamkar argues that this latter group played a significant part in the later development of independent Asian media groups in London, though it closed after the abolition of the GLC and before it could initiate any direct broadcasting.⁴⁵ The literature suggests that public service broadcasters failed to engage with Asian communities and offered token programming;

Local radio broadcasting for ethnic minorities is a continuation of the shallow tokenism which has characterised British social policy over the last four decades.⁴⁶

This chapter argues that some BBC local radio stations were more effective in connecting with Asian communities. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that Asian communities became more self-reliant, leading to a growth in Asian owned and run media – and in the case of pirate radio new illegal media activity.

5.4 New Young Voices on Air

There was an identifiable and recognisable ‘identity gap’ between young people and their parents. This had been explored on television at the end of the 1970s in an ITV documentary filmed in the midlands. Young people interviewed for the programme included Pervais Khan, who told the reporter how he struggled with his identity;

⁴³ OHI, Surinder Sharma.

⁴⁴ Local Radio Workshop, *Nothing Local About it*, p. 124.

⁴⁵ G. Khamkar, The Greater London Council’s Initiatives: A Precursor to British Asian Radio Broadcasting, *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*, (2018), 25.2, pp. 337-347.

⁴⁶ C. Husband & J. Chouhan, ‘Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain’, p. 291.

‘My parents, and other people’s parents came here so they could go back, they only came for the money. I don’t see what I could go back to in my case, I came here when I was one, I’m seventeen now and I’m as English as you could expect to be’.⁴⁷

The programme commentary tries to outline the fears of parents and their worries for their children who wanted to live ‘English’ lives;

‘The elders are shocked and horrified that their children would want to consider this. If the young ones express a wish to identify with this country, then their own traditional influence would be weakened. They had done everything to create and sustain a harmonious, loyal and stable family system. Now if the young feel they are not even Indians or Pakistanis they would want to live alone, next they would want to give up their social and cultural customs, and next, who knows even religion?’⁴⁸

However, there was also a recognition by young Asians that they were not fully accepted into British society, as Khan suggested;

‘It there is any place we could fit in it’s here, but the colour of our skin will stop us, always. There will always be a point, even if we’ve lived here till we are ninety, when someone will say “hey you black bastard”’.⁴⁹

Young British Asians therefore developed their own culture. An example of this is the 1980s ‘daytimer’ phenomenon which spread across the country as young Asians attended daytime raves, arriving at events in school uniform changing into party clothes, having a rave and getting back home in school uniform for tea.⁵⁰ Even today the tension between the generations in the 1980s is still evident; when interviewed for an article on daytimers many contributors used false names, ‘I don’t want my parents to know their nice Muslim daughter went to daytimers, they were our little secret’.⁵¹ In this atmosphere BBC local radio provided a safe space for discussion around these inter-generational tensions. For the stations producing just one Asian programme a week there was a dilemma in how to bring new voices into the existing programmes without alienating the first-generation presenters and playing out the difficulties between parents and children in their own programme teams. BBC Radio Sheffield and BBC Radio Nottingham introduced an additional

⁴⁷ Zia Mohyeddin, ‘Here Today, Here Tomorrow: A Story of British Asians’, ATV, 1978/1979, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPvpVHO_Jf0 (accessed 10 April 2019).

⁴⁸ ‘Here Today, Here Tomorrow’.

⁴⁹ ‘Here Today, Here Tomorrow’.

⁵⁰ See; S. Manzoor, Strictly Bhangra: How daytimers got young British Asians dancing, *The Guardian*, 10 April 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/apr/10/strictly-bhangra-daytimers-british-asians> (Accessed 20 August 2019).

⁵¹ Ibid.

programme with presentation in English while some stations, such as BBC Radio London and BBC Radio Manchester, retained the status quo. Where there was more extensive programming at BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio Leeds it was easier to introduce new voices and new programme ideas. The accounts of five young broadcasters from BBC Radio Derby, BBC Radio Bedfordshire, BBC Radio Leicester, BBC Radio Leeds and BBC Radio Sheffield provide a contrast to the pioneer presenters and their programmes featured in chapter 2.

Satvinder Rana was born in the Punjab in 1959 and came to Derby with his mother in 1965 to join his father who had come to work in the city in 1961. When he began school in Derby Rana soon began to lose his fluency in Punjabi;

‘There weren’t many opportunities to keep up with Punjabi except at home, and my parents thought it was a priority for me to learn English. They thought I’d pick up Punjabi eventually but wanted to focus on what needed to be done’.⁵²

He was aware of BBC Radio Derby as the family used to listen to the weekly *Sangam* programme on the station, which was presented in Hindustani. A new station manager, Bryan Harris, took over at BBC Radio Derby in 1981 and insisted that *Sangam* switch to English presentation - as a consequence the programme team walked out of the station. So, initially by accident not design, BBC Radio Derby became one of the early adopters of a new young programme team through a public meeting that Rana attended;

‘There were probably about thirty or forty people there. They [BBC Radio Derby] said they wanted to re-hash the Asian programme, wanted it to be presented in English and be more in tune with the emerging generation of Asians. There was some opposition to this with people saying it should be in Asian languages. But I was young, and I thought we could do something here’.

After voice tests and interviews Rana became one of the new programme team of young broadcasters in their early twenties who were mostly at college in Derby. They were trained by the BBC in the summer of 1981 ready to launch the new *Aaj Kaal* programme, which faced protests about the new format once it went on air;

‘Once you do make that fundamental change you are going to get some people who are so used to one way of programming that they were going to say we don’t like this new format,

⁵² OHI, Satvinder Rana.

these new young presenters being trendy on air, we want the seasoned, very deferential presenters back on air'.⁵³

Nevertheless, *Aaj Kaal* became a hit show, regularly winning awards based on its coverage of the new music from the emerging British Bhangra scene, becoming a key outlet for new bands and artists. One regret Rana has is that he never felt supported by the BBC to try and take up a career in broadcasting;

'From when I started to about 1984, I wanted to build it as a career. When I went for my two weeks training at the BBC in London, I thought this is great I want to do this. But the opportunities weren't there, or if they were, we weren't able to access them ... nobody was mentoring you so that guidance wasn't there'.⁵⁴

The BBC's policy papers in the 1980s had highlighted the need to employ people from an increasingly multicultural Britain. But this experience showed there was a time lag between policy development and practice on the ground, it was part of a systemic failure by the BBC to actively structure an element of diversity in its recruitment policy.

In contrast Saadia Nasiri did receive support and guidance from the management at BBC Radio Bedfordshire gaining a BBC staff job in 1988 at the age of 24. She was born in Pakistan in 1964, lived in London until she was two and moved to Canada before the family finally settled in Luton in 1980. Nasiri told me hers was a relatively conservative Muslim family especially in relation to having social freedom;

'I just understood; I didn't even question it. If I wanted to go the disco or do something with my friends, there was no point in even asking because I knew the answer would be no, I was very accepting of that'.⁵⁵

Unlike her brother, who went to Cambridge University, Nasiri had to stay in Luton to attend a local FE college. While at college the new BBC Radio Bedfordshire began to search for Asian presenters to begin a new programme and she went to a BBC public meeting and confidently put herself forward;

'It was an evening do and people had orange juice and stuff and were chatting. Then I recall, I didn't even know who I was speaking to and I introduced myself to someone and I said, 'Hi, I'm Saadia', and he said, 'what do you do', and I said, 'I'm going to work for

⁵³ OHI, Satvinder Rana.

⁵⁴ OHI, Satvinder Rana.

⁵⁵ Saadia Nasiri, (D.o.B., 22 February 1964), Oral History Interview, recorded, London, 1 March 2019.

Radio Bedfordshire and I'm going to be doing their Asian programme'. And it was Mike Gibbons the station manager!'⁵⁶

She got the job and became full time member of BBC staff working on reception in the mornings and programmes in the afternoons. Teamed with Smita Barcha, a Luton based community worker, the two began a 'traditional' Asian programme. But having heard the *Six O'clock Show* presented by Mike Allbut, which was shared with BBC Radio Bedfordshire from BBC Radio Leicester, they wanted to try something more in keeping with this new energetic style. They persuaded the management to give them free reign to present a 'youth' programme titled *Smit' Petite and the Karachi Kid*.

Figure 5-2 POSTER FOR BBC RADIO BEDFORDSHIRE 1987



Source; Saadia Usmani (nee Nasiri) Right, Private Collection.

Within two years the programme was networked to the new BBC GLR in London and BBC Radio Kent, receiving very positive reviews in the *Times Educational Supplement* which

⁵⁶ OHI, Saadia Nasiri.

said it was ‘lively and unself-conscious’ and not afraid to tackle both light and difficult subjects.⁵⁷ Three early episodes have been digitised for this project and one from April 1988 is a vibrant mix of music and chat providing something of a safe meeting place for youngsters to pass messages to each other, a wonderful listen – even thirty years on. In one edition a phone-in section tackles the issue of arranged marriages and there is a surprising candour to the calls as both presenters take a deep interest in the contributions which bring to life the dilemmas facing both male and female callers as Nasiri explained;

‘I listened to that programme recently and I was amazed that so many of the young people were saying, ‘look we have to do it because it’s our family’s reputation’, ‘we have to do it because our parents know best’. I was surprised how good we were at saying “Look guys, we want you to talk about it, to look at the options and don’t feel uncomfortable about coming on air”’.⁵⁸

Nasiri left the BBC when she got married – an arranged marriage – in the early 1990s and went to live with her husband in Wales. She has belatedly taken up her radio career again in Hong Kong where her husband now works (2019).

Neeta Kara joined the *Six O’clock Show* team at BBC Radio Leicester in 1988 at the age of 18. She was born in Mombasa in Kenya in 1970 and her family moved to Leicester in early 1975 where she went to school. Her family spoke Gujarati at home, though English became more prominent after she began school in Leicester;

‘I remember growing up and going to school and college and you’d have youngsters or people of my age that didn’t know their mother tongue as well as I did, and my sisters did, and I do remember thinking that’s a bit poor. I’m ashamed to think that my own son now can’t speak in his mother tongue’.⁵⁹

Home entertainment was a television diet of *Dallas*, *Charlies Angels* and Bollywood movies. There was little radio listening except to the daily *Six O’clock Show* on BBC Radio Leicester which she said was very important to her family;

‘The *Six O’clock Show* was on all of the time in our house. It just made us really excited that we could hear something on radio that we connected with. So not only the music, but

⁵⁷ D. Self, ‘Bubbly Time with Bhangra Pop’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 24 March 1989, p.18.

⁵⁸ OHI, Saadia Nasiri.

⁵⁹ Neeta Kara, (D.o.B., 6 February 1970), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 11 January 2019.

also whoever the presenter was, and I remember distinctly Mike Allbut and falling in love with his voice'.⁶⁰

Her personal connection with the station was accidental and came through a chance participation in a live broadcast on the *Six O'clock Show*;

'There was a feature called 'Up Your Street' that Mike used to do live in the radio car. I'd written in for my Mum for 'Up Your Street' but she'd happened to go out that evening. I was cooking chapattis in my house clothes and I'm listening to Mike Allbut driving down this street ... and I'm thinking they're going to surprise somebody ... then the doorbell rings and I didn't connect it at all ... and I opened the door and there was Mike Allbut. Oh. My. God! This voice on the radio had come to life and he was on my doorstep'.⁶¹

The radio car that evening was driven by producer Deepak Patel and he invited Kara in to come and answer the phones on the programme. Within six months she was co-presenting with Mike and by the launch of the Midlands Asian Network in 1989 was presenting *Weekend Bazaar* on Saturday evenings and a Bollywood film music show on Fridays. Kara has a passion for the Hindi film industry and left radio in the late 1990s once the new BBC Asian Network widened out its film coverage in a direction she chose not to follow. The earliest surviving recording of Kara presenting the *Weekend Bazaar* is from 1994, it has high production values, displays her passion for Bollywood and still sounds fresh with its liveliness and pace. She still occasionally presents on BBC Radio Leicester.

Sanjiv Buttoo began working as a researcher on the Asian programmes at BBC Radio Leeds in 1989, rising through the BBC to become Managing Editor of the station in 2017. He was born in Halifax in 1967 into one of very few Indian families living in the town - most families were of Pakistani heritage;

'My school was ok because there weren't many Asian kids, so I was a novelty, and if you're a novelty you're treated ok. ... My language, my culture, my religion was different to virtually every other Asian walking the streets of Halifax. Of course, white people didn't know that - they thought we were all Pakis'.⁶²

After studying at an FE College for a qualification in textile technology, Buttoo tried the Army but left after a few weeks. Back at home he joined a local hospital radio station and

⁶⁰ OHI, Neeta Kara.

⁶¹ OHI, Neeta Kara.

⁶² Sanjiv Buttoo, (D.o.B., 17 May 1967), Oral History Interview, recorded Leeds, 12 July 2018.

ended up presenting the Saturday Sports programme. He replied to an advert in the newspaper for an Asian programme presenter at BBC Radio Leeds in the summer of 1989 and at the age of 22 was given a three-month contract as a researcher on the Sunday evening ethnic programmes.

‘Within a few months the producer of the ethnic programmes, both black and Asian programmes, decided to go back to India and recommended that I should take over. After three months or so the bosses told me I was very good and should become a journalist. So, I retrained as a journalist and joined the main newsroom and off I went’.⁶³

Buttoo spent time in the 1990s reshaping the daily *Connections* programme on BBC Radio Leeds, giving it more of a journalistic edge;

‘We were covering subjects like radical Islam back in the mid 1990s, we were speaking on air to groups who are now banned. We were tackling topics that were very controversial and I was saying to my presenters this is what we are here for’.⁶⁴

As a journalist, rather than a presenter, Buttoo was able to develop in a wide range of roles at BBC Radio Leeds across programmes and news. From Leeds, he spent time as Assistant Editor at BBC Radio Lancashire, and the Senior Correspondent for the North for the BBC Asian Network before becoming Managing Editor of BBC Radio York in 2014 and BBC Radio Leeds in 2015.

Shawkat Hashmi was sent by his family to England in 1973 from Bangladesh at the age of 16 to get away from the effects of the civil war. He joined his brother in Sheffield who was an engineering lecturer at the University of Sheffield. Hashmi was spotted taking part in a community event by Ali Rasul the Community Relations Officer for Sheffield and presenter of the Asian programme on the station. In 1976 aged 19 he was asked to present a fifteen-minute weekly programme in Bengali. As the only one of these younger presenters to broadcast in a mother tongue Hashmi nevertheless saw the BBC as a potential career and was encouraged in his endeavours by the station through training. He was given a contract as part-time producer for the Asian programming and also became responsible for BBC Radio Sheffield’s impressive range of language programming which in the late 1980s included Yemeni, Somali, Arabic, Cantonese and Spanish. Appointed to a full-time staff

⁶³ OHI, Sanjiv Buttoo.

⁶⁴ OHI, Sanjiv Buttoo.

role as community producer in 1992 Hashmi also became one of the presenters on the *Connections* programme which was shared with BBC Radio Leeds and still works at the station. One of his roles as a community producer was to make the content from his programmes available across the station and he believes things are now better than in the 1970s and 1980s;

‘Since Nigel Kay came to the station [as station manager in 1989] there was a wish to get more stories from ethnic minorities into the mainstream. I am working here full time - on most stations the other presenters and producers are not full time for the Asian community ... when we had conferences for black and Asian presenters, I heard lots of stories that other stations were not interested, but our station Radio Sheffield is the other way round’.⁶⁵

This editorial aim to connect with ethnic minorities on mainstream programmes in Sheffield highlights the value of employing full time Asian producers as community specialists. Nigel Kay had been News Editor at BBC Radio Leicester in the 1980s and is a further link back to the work of the *Six O’clock Show* in helping to unofficially spread good practice in local radio.

This younger generation offers a contrast to the pioneer presenters of the 1960s and 1970s. Educated in England they are as much career focussed as they are about serving their communities. In Leeds, Derby and Luton the BBC held public meetings and advertised for new presenters, but in Leicester the longevity of the daily *Six O’clock Show* and the critical mass of the programme team meant that there was organic growth, the team grew itself through contact with the audience. At BBC Radio Sheffield, BBC Radio Leeds and BBC Radio Bedfordshire there seems to have been an active plan to bring young Asians on to the BBC staff, but in Derby they were rather left out in the margins. A number of this generation have gone onto senior jobs in the BBC in television and radio which shows the potential for career progression – the wider BBC benefitting directly from the Asian talent developed in local radio.

⁶⁵ Shawkat Hashmi, (D.o.B., 12 January 1958), Oral History Interview, recorded Sheffield, 1 February 2019.

5.5 Regional Trends: Different approaches to BBC local radio Asian programming.

Michael Barton the former manager of BBC Radio Sheffield became Controller of BBC local radio in 1972 until he retired in 1985. At this point the BBC took the opportunity to reconfigure and combine local radio and regional television management on a regional basis across the country. This coincided with the culmination of a sixteen year campaign begun by network radio executives in 1969 to drop *Apna HI Ghar Samajhiye* from the BBC Radio 4 schedules and to shift responsibility for connecting with Asian communities to the local stations. The fact that BBC local radio was now the only BBC domestic radio service broadcasting Asian programming led to increased calls from local communities and professional bodies such as the CRE for an increase in the number and range of programmes. This new structure did indeed produce a huge growth in the hours of Asian programming from 26 hours a week in 1985 to 90 hours a week in 1989. However, there was no uniform growth across the country and two thirds of all Asian programming was produced in the new Midlands region.

Within this new programming two distinct streams emerged. Most new programmes were targeted at, and presented by, a new younger age group which supplemented rather than replaced the existing language programmes presented by the original teams. The drivers for this change were demographic and technical as new opportunities opened up more airtime in the form of split frequency broadcasts with separate programming offered on AM and FM transmitters. The legal, rather than technical ability, to split AM and FM transmitters came via the Peacock Committee on Broadcasting which reported in 1986. Peacock was radical in his radio policy proposals, suggesting a new Radio Authority with a light touch regulation that would remove most public service commitments from ILR.⁶⁶ For BBC local radio the loss of AM transmitters had the potential to cause programme difficulties with clashes of evening programmes featuring sport, specialist music and ethnic minority programmes – if only one frequency remained which of these genres would take priority? The answer in BBC local radio was to place ethnic minority programming on AM transmitters and to expand it where possible making sufficient use of the resource to make it politically difficult for the new Radio Authority to remove them. Owen Bentley,

⁶⁶ T. Stoller, *Sounds of Your Life*, p. 163.

Head of Radio in the Midlands in the 1980s, challenges the view that this led to a radio 'apartheid';

I was always slightly uneasy when it was decided we [Asian programmes] would come off FM, especially in Leicester because it had been so important to make sure it was available to all. I suppose it was realistic if you were going to have much more programming then it was probably the only way you could go. I think we made an effort in the stations that I was responsible for to ensure that Asian stories should be feeding through to the general output.⁶⁷

The powerful AM transmitters of the three metropolitan stations in London, Birmingham and Manchester all broadcast on 1458 AM and combined they could form the spine of a potential first national commercial station. Bentley was able to use the unease in the BBC about the loss of these major AM transmitters, and the threat of national commercial competition, to get one off funding to build an experimental Midlands Asian Network. This BBC funding for the West Midlands blocked any chance of an early national commercial competitor for the BBC. The growing threat to the medium wave transmitters of BBC local radio stations can be seen in their extensive use for Asian programming, by 1989 when almost all were broadcast only on AM.

By 1990 BBC local radio was producing 4,750 hours of Asian programming per year representing some three percent of all BBC local radio output and matching the 1991 census figures for the proportion of Asians in Great Britain. However, this figure masks huge regional discrepancies; BBC Radio London dropped all discrete ethnic programming in 1988 while BBC Radios Leicester and WM between them were broadcasting more than six in ten hours (62.4%) of Asian broadcasting on BBC local radio. This highlights a regional divergence in provision between the metropolitan areas of London, Manchester and the West Midlands and shows the influence of Owen Bentley.

The increase in programming came despite shrinking budgets in BBC local radio which fell in real terms during the 1980s. Compared to BBC Radio 4 in which the budget of the radio station and the cost per hour of broadcast rose in similar proportions over the decade, the cost per hour of BBC local radio rose much more slowly than the overall budget for the growing number of stations. If it had kept pace with BBC Radio 4 the overall budget of

⁶⁷ OHI, Owen Bentley.

BBC local radio would have been £72m, rather than the £42.2m it received.⁶⁸ This represented a significant budget cut on each station, a cut which made investment in any new programming problematic.⁶⁹ BBC local radio was not alone in this and across the corporation, as Barnett and Curry argue, finance played a crucial part in the shaping of the BBC in this period.⁷⁰ Indeed the closing of the BBC local radio HQ unit and passing management responsibility to regions was driven in part by cost savings. In what was perceived as an existential threat to BBC local radio itself the three metropolitan stations, BBC Radio London, BBC WM (Birmingham) and BBC GMR (Manchester) all faced closure because of their poor audience performance and relatively high cost compared to other local stations. Plans were drawn up giving the stations tough targets to dramatically improve their audience reach and share before closure was decided.⁷¹ All three survived and are still on air (2019), but only BBC Radio WM in the West Midlands placed a priority on attracting listeners from Asian communities with targeted programming.

Part of the cost pressure on local radio came from the opening of thirteen new stations across the decade. These were mainly in more rural locations and launched with fewer staff and lower budgets than the first wave of stations. Three produced Asian programming as shown on the table below; BBC Radio Cambridgeshire on its Peterborough transmitter, BBC Northampton and BBC Radio Bedfordshire which was based in Luton.

Table 5-2 New BBC local radio stations 1980-1990

1980	1982	1983	1985	1986	1989
Lincolnshire	Cambridgeshire	Devon	Bedfordshire	Essex	Hereford & Worcester
Norfolk	Jersey	York	Shropshire		Wiltshire
	Guernsey				
	Northampton				

Source: BBC Handbooks.

The new Midlands region was able to expand its Asian programming on local radio by redistributing some of its budget from television to radio, a process championed by David Waine the Head of Broadcasting for the region. When he moved to BBC Pebble Mill from

⁶⁸ BBC Handbook 1980, (London: BBC, 1980); BBC Handbook 1991, (London: BBC, 1991).

⁶⁹ The rise in the overall budget by factor of 4.68 to include funding for the new stations was not matched by a similar rise in the cost per hour which only rose by a factor 2.72 from £97 to £264 per hour, as shown in BBC Handbooks. Had it done so the cost per hour would have been £453 per hour.

⁷⁰ S. Barnett & A. Curry, *The Battle for the BBC*, (Aurum Press; London, 1994), pp. 96-109.

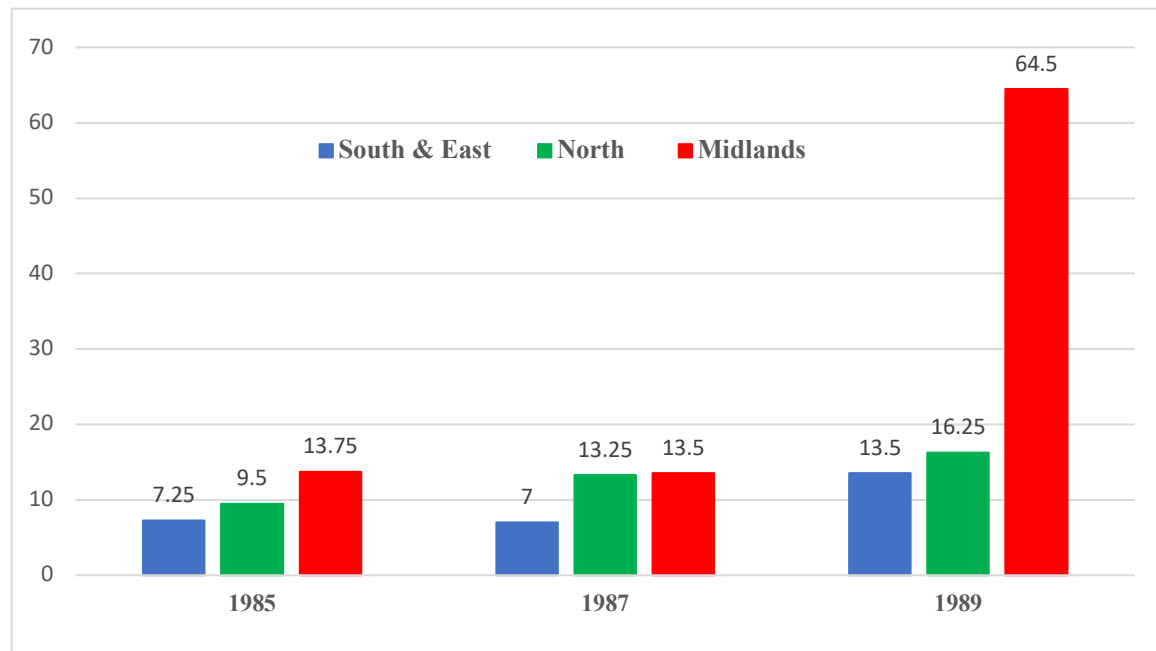
⁷¹ Starkey, *Local Radio*, p.48.

Plymouth in the mid 1980s he was clear on what the BBC should be doing in radio and television;

‘I saw a world in 1983 that was not represented on the screens ... What we ought to be dealing with was second generation Asians in particular ... people who had been born and bred in Birmingham’.⁷²

There were echoes here of the experience of Owen Bentley arriving in Leicester in 1975 to a ‘white’ radio station. Waine switched the presentation of television programmes from the Asian Programmes Unit to English and persuaded the BBC to move its black programming from Bristol to Birmingham to create a multicultural unit with the aim of getting programming into mainstream time slots on BBC1 and BBC2. He and Bentley recognised the need to drive up the hours of Asian programming on BBC Radio WM, which in 1987 was producing just two hours a week for the quarter of a million strong Asian communities. Together Waine and Bentley firmly established the region as the host of two thirds of all Asian programming on radio by 1989.

Figure 5-3 HOURS OF ASIAN PROGRAMMING BY REGION.



Source: Radio Times and BBC WAC.

⁷² Interview with David Waine from the BBC Oral History Collection, History of the BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/people-nation-empire/make-yourself-at-home> (Accessed 21 August 2019).

Nevertheless, despite the push to increase programming at BBC Radio WM senior producer Anita Bhalla told me she felt somewhat isolated at Pebble Mill;

We were based in Pebble Mill. The whole of Pebble Mill was predominantly white ... I remember sitting upstairs in the canteen on the seventh floor of Pebble Mill with Colin Prescott one lunchtime ... and we sat there one day and thought we don't see people like us. Colin's got dreadlocks and I'm obviously not white and a woman and we'd sit there and think where are the people like us? ⁷³

Because BBC Radio WM was based in a network centre producing the whole range of programming for network television and radio this gave the station access to resources unavailable to stand alone stations. However, as Bhalla outlined BBC Radio WM staff were also exposed to the prevailing conditions within the wider BBC in which black and Asian people found job opportunities limited outside specialist programme areas.

There was a consolidation of regions within England to three by the end of the 1980s and analysing the Asian programme output of each of the BBC's English regions shows how the approach of each region differed.

BBC South and East

This region accounted for over half (56.5%) of the ethnic minorities in Britain while Greater London itself was home to 44.8 percent of ethnic minorities. Therefore, the response of this region to Asian programming is significant. The chart above shows that by 1989 BBC South and East produced one eighth (14.2%) of the Asian programming on BBC local radio and in the context of the size of the population was underserving local communities. Analysis of the programming in the region shows that the total figure of 13 hours is misleading because by 1989 BBC Radio Bedfordshire was also broadcasting its Asian programming to the stations in London and Kent. Stripping out these rebroadcasts there was only a marginal increase in hours over the period with Asian audiences in London, Kent, Hampshire and Bristol all losing their local programming. It is therefore not surprising that the literature on ethnic minority programming written with London and the South East as a focus has a narrative which is profoundly negative about the BBC.

⁷³ Anita Bhalla, OHI.

Table 5-3 BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMME PROVISION 1985-89, BBC SOUTH AND EAST.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Bedfordshire	<i>Sounds Eastern</i> ; English 60 mins. <i>Asian Voice</i> ; English 60 mins. <i>The 635 Show</i> ; English 90 mins (TX Leicester)	<i>Yaadien</i> ; Hindi/Urdu, 60 mins. <i>Asian Voice</i> , English, 60 mins <i>Smit' Petite and the Karachi Kid</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Smit Petite & The Karachi Kid</i> ; English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice</i> ; English, 60 mins. <i>Yaddien</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins.
Bristol	Prog. Off air	Prog. Off air	Prog. Off air
Cambridge	No Prog. on air	No Prog. on air	<i>Sounds Eastern</i> ; English, 90 minutes. (Peterboro' AM only)
London / GLR	<i>London Sounds Eastern</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>London Sounds Eastern</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Smit Petite & The Karachi Kid</i> ; English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice</i> ; English, 60 mins. (AM Only)
Medway / Kent	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Yaddien</i> ; Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins. <i>Smit Petite & The Karachi Kid</i> ; English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice</i> ; English, 60 mins.
Northampton	<i>All Together Now</i> – English; 30 mins.	<i>Rona & Jona</i> ; English – 60 mins	<i>All Together Now</i> ; English – 60 mins.
Oxford	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Eastern Touch</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Sounds Eastern</i> ; English – 60 mins.
Solent	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 45 mins.	Prog. Off Air	Prog. Off Air
Total Hours	7 hours 15 mins	7 hours	13 hours 30 mins

Source; Radio Times and BBC WAC

As one of the three metropolitan stations threatened with closure BBC Radio London brought in a new management team who made radical changes. The station closed down for two weeks and relaunched as BBC GLR in October 1988 removing all ethnic minority programming from the air.⁷⁴ The former Asian programme *London Sounds Eastern* had rolled on from 1976 with little change or support, certainly no support team was brought

⁷⁴ Note the lack of black and Asian faces in this video clip of the launch of BBC GLR on BBC *London Plus*, TX 24 October 1988, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS1cl-4VPT4> (Accessed 18 September 2019)..

in from the local communities. When Geetha Bala, a BBC Radio Training staffer, took over presentation from Vernon Corea in 1984 the production effort remained unchanged;

There was no team. It was just me. I was supposed to have a nominal producer who wouldn't be there. Because there was nothing political, they didn't need to check it to see what I was doing. I used to come in the evening with my bag of stuff, record it, and leave it [the tape] in the pigeon hole for whoever was playing the tape out.⁷⁵

Having dropped the language programming in 1976 and been subject to much criticism for the switch to English it seemed the station management was content to leave things as they were. Listening to surviving Bank Holiday specials of the programme it is clear they were well researched and expertly presented, Bala was a staff trainer at BBC Radio Training so these were polished programmes. But *London Sounds Eastern* had little local content, did not engage with controversial issues affecting the growing Asian communities in London and with no programme team to lobby the station the programme remained tokenistic. This was in contrast with the daily *Black Londoners* programme, launched in 1976 and presented by Alex Pascall. This did engage with difficult issues facing communities in the capital and brought its own lobby to the station for more programming. The programme had a 'Black Londoners Action Committee' which 'argued that the BBC was racist in its policy towards the programme' by not giving black people editorial control. The picture below shows a young Jeremy Corbyn, two years before he was elected to Parliament, at a picket outside BBC Radio London to press home the case for *Black Londoners* to receive a bigger budget and more editorial control for the black freelances working on the programme.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ OHI, Geetha Bala.

⁷⁶ BBC File, RD25(A), *Black Londoners*, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

Figure 5-4 BLACK LONDONERS ACTION COMMITTEE PICKET 24 NOVEMBER 1981.



Source: *Morning Star Newspaper clipping (Owen Bentley).*

There was no similar Asian lobby for the expansion of *London Sounds Eastern* and no programme team to drive it forward. However, neither *London Sounds Eastern* nor *Black Londoners* survived the relaunch of the station as BBC GLR. Trevor Dann, the Assistant Editor of the new station explained the plan to drop the programmes was meant to be a positive one as the plan was to;

‘create a radio station for the whole of London. We wanted to invite everybody through the front door, not build ethnic minorities an annexe in the back garden’.⁷⁷

In the context of the time this argument made some sense, the aim to integrate Asian Londoners’ issues and voices across the whole output was a strong one. This was one of the first expressions of what is now accepted as the default policy position on diversity in British media – however, as Malik and Cottle argue the BBC continues to fail in this area.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Telephone conversation with Trevor Dann, 16 November 2018.

⁷⁸ See, S. Cottle, (ed.), *Ethnic Minorities and the Media: Changing Cultural Boundaries*, (Open University Press; Maidenhead, 2000) and S. Malik, ‘Keeping it real, the politics of channel multiculturalism, mainstreaming and mandates’, *Screen*, (2008) 49.3, pp. 343-353.

Significantly, within a year of the launch of BBC GLR the station began to broadcast the Asian programmes from BBC Radio Bedfordshire – and *Black Londoners* was reintroduced as a weekly programme. The largest growth in hours – and the most significant innovation – in the region came not from London but from BBC Radio Bedfordshire which launched by sharing *The Six O'clock Show* with BBC Radio Leicester and engaged Geetha Bala, the presenter of *London Sounds Eastern* on BBC Radio London to present a music programme. By 1987 it had recruited two young female presenters from Luton, Smita Barcha and Saadia Nasiri, known on air as *Smit Petite & The Karachi Kid* to target the young Asian demographic and Bhagwant Sagoo to present a more traditional Asian programme in English.

BBC local radio stations in Bristol, Kent and Southampton also dropped local Asian programming to try and integrate local Asian concerns and issues across daytime programming – and save money. In the case of BBC Radio Kent this meant the end of fifteen years on the station for Bikram Bhamra;

They didn't want me. There was a so-called reorganisation, they started broadcasting tapes. So that's it. In 1988 I presented my last programme and that's that.⁷⁹

It also shows the lack of recognition on these stations that the presenters and their programmes enjoyed. Husband and Chouhan captured this in their research in the mid 1980s;

Whilst the local radio stations have facilitated the participation of ethnic minority personnel in programme production and presentation, it is as subordinate auxiliaries who are maintained in a state of technical impermanence, regardless of the number of years work they have given to the station.⁸⁰

Two of the other new stations in the South and East region launched Asian programmes. At BBC Radio Northampton the presenter Jona Kotnis had come to England from India with her architect husband in the 1970s and despite having a postgraduate degree in journalism from the Bombay College of Journalism found it hard to get work in the media. When her husband moved to Leeds in 1972, she was able to get a job in advertising at the

⁷⁹ OHI, Bikram Singh Bhamra.

⁸⁰ C. Husband & J. Chouhan, 'Local Radio in the Communication Environment of Ethnic Minorities in Britain', p. 291.

Yorkshire Evening Post as the first non-white member of staff in the company. After moving to Northampton Kotnis began to work on *All Together Now* and was still on air with her Asian programme over thirty years later in 2019. BBC Radio Northampton did pull issues and interviews from *All Together Now* into its daytime programming, although Kotnis told me it was the late 1980s before she received a regular fee for her work.⁸¹

At Radio Cambridgeshire a new AM transmitter for the north of the county in 1987 meant that the station could target its broadcasts to the growing Asian community in Peterborough. The programme developed such a reputation locally that Ansar Ali, the presenter and later a prominent local councillor, was able to run a successful bid for a community radio station in the city in 2016. Two year later Radio Salaam was highlighted for its valuable community cohesion work in the national press and can trace its roots back to the weekly show on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire that began in 1988.⁸²

Figure 5-5 ANSAR ALI, SALAAM RADIO, PETERBOROUGH, 2018.



Source: Liam McCarthy

⁸¹ Jona Kotnis, (D.o.B. 15 October 1956), Oral History Interview, recorded Northampton 6 October 2017.

⁸² A. Bawden, 'Community Radio Breaks Down Barriers Between Faith, Gender and Sexuality', *The Guardian*, 21 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/21/community-radio-stations-digital-future-volunteers> (Accessed 3 November 2018).

BBC North

The potential loss of medium wave transmitters and a subsequent desire to ‘use them or lose them’ is shown by the fact that in 1989 all of the Asian programming in the North was broadcast on AM transmitters only. It also reflects a nervousness about expanding programming which was still predominantly in South Asian languages across all frequencies and inviting a possible listener ‘backlash’. Between 1985 and 1990 the total hours of Asian broadcasting in the region grew from nine hours to almost fourteen hours. BBC Radio Leeds with its daily *Connections* programme and Sunday evening language programming, which it had launched in 1968, was responsible for two fifths of all Asian programming in the region.

Table 5-4 BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMME PROVISION 1983-89, BBC NORTH.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Blackburn / Lancashire	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu/Gujarati/English – 60 mins.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu – 90 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujarati – 60 mins.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu – 60 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujarati – 60 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; English – 60 mins. (AM Only)
Cleveland	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 30 mins. (AM Only)
Leeds	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins. <i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 30 minutes.	<i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 45 minutes. <i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins.	<i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 45 minutes. <i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins. (AM Only)
Manchester	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English – 120 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English – 2 x 60 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; Urdu, 60 mins <i>Eastern Horizon</i> ; English – 60 mins (AM Only)
Merseyside	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins. (AM Only)
Newcastle	<i>Bridge the Gap</i> ; English – 30 mins.	<i>Asian News</i> ; English 5 mins.	Prog. Off air
Sheffield	<i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu – 72 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali – 18 mins.	<i>Asian News</i> ; English 5 x 5 mins. <i>Majlis</i> ; Urdu – 70 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali – 20 mins.	7.00 – <i>Iffat and Yasin</i> ; Bengali and Urdu – 60 mins 8.00 – <i>Eastern Air</i> ; English – 60 mins 9.00 – <i>Asian Youth Show</i> ; English – 60 mins (AM Only)
Total Hours	9 hours 30 mins	13 hours 15 mins	13 hours 45 mins

Source; Radio Times and BBC WAC

For Leeds though there was no big programme team for *Connections*, this was launched with financial frugality. The presenter, Manju Malhi, ‘became the eyes and ears’ of BBC Radio Leeds in the disparate West Yorkshire Asian communities seeking out stories;

The ‘Connections’ team isn’t very large – just me! Typically, I get into work in the morning, open the mail, then go out armed with my tape machine to talk to community leaders, organisers and perhaps even you.⁸³

This approach changed when the station expanded the team employing a full-time community reporter. Sanjiv Buttoo, was tasked with uncovering stories for broadcast on *Connections* in the early 1990s and also crucially for the BBC Radio Leeds breakfast programme. By the 1990s *Connections* was broadcast from the Bradford studios of BBC Radio Leeds and effectively became an Asian ‘drivetime’ programme with a heavy concentration on news and current affairs.⁸⁴

Despite the difficulties it experienced in managing Asian programme in the 1970s BBC Radio Lancashire expanded its output in the 1980s. It kept the *Mehfil* brand for the programmes but broadcast three editions on a Sunday, Wednesday and Friday evening. Sanjiv Buttoo was brought in from BBC Radio Leeds in the mid 1990s to review and change the three programmes and discovered that the deep levels of mistrust between local community factions which had been evident in the 1970s still existed;

You had the Urdu programme playing the same music as the Hindi programme and the English programme. They were like little islands. They didn’t talk to each other.⁸⁵

This comment goes to the heart of the debates about the management of Asian programming since the 1970s. On many stations they were left very much on their own, especially if they were broadcast in mother tongue languages. This approach is typified in a comment made to me by Mussy Abbassi a presenter of *Junction 774* an Asian youth programme at BBC Radio Leeds in the 1990s who felt strongly that some station managers did not give her the same recognition as other people on the station;

⁸³ M. Malhi, BBC Radio Leeds Promotional Diary, 1989.

⁸⁴ ‘Crossing the Cultural Divide’, *Yorkshire Post*, 21 September 1998, p.14.

⁸⁵ OHI, Sanjiv Buttoo.

One thing that stuck with me, and this was in the 90s when there was an appraisal and I remember I pulled up an Assistant Editor and I asked why I hadn't had an appraisal, and why wasn't I asked about my programme? She came back to me a few days later and said 'the Editor can't appraise you for something he can't understand as it's in languages', and I said I do *Junction 774* which is in English – 'Oh' was the response and that was that. And I thought if the Editor and the Assistant Editor on the station don't know what I am doing, why would anyone else on the station know what I am doing?⁸⁶

BBC Radio Leeds launched *Junction 774* late in 1990 as an additional programme to target young Asians in Yorkshire. This comment by Mussy Abbassi shows how Asian programmes depended on the interest and 'patronage' of station managers and that the support the programmes received changed with station managers.

Stations in the North region were slower to adopt 'younger' programming, but BBC Radio Sheffield did launch its *Asian Youth Show* in 1988 and go on in the 1990s to share the nightly *Connections* programme with BBC Radio Leeds.

BBC Midlands

The most significant increase in hours of Asian programming took place in the Midlands which saw programme hours grow from 10 to 64, co-ordinated and driven through by Owen Bentley with the support of David Waine. Under the new regional structure Bentley became Head of Radio (Midlands) with responsibility for both local radio in the region and network radio produced in Birmingham. Building on his experience in Leicester the region was also first to champion connections with the growing young Asian demographic.

A permanent system of programme sharing and transmitter splitting was developed in the Midlands in 1985 as a way of boosting Asian output. BBC Radio Bedfordshire based in Luton was able to take the Friday edition of the *Six O'clock Show* as a way of cost effectively establishing an Asian programming presence on the station. At BBC Radio Nottingham Kaval Vaseer, from the BBC Radio Derby *Aaj Kaal* team, was recruited in 1989 to launch *Dhamaka* aimed at younger Asians in the city and replace the shared *Six O'clock Show* from Leicester.

⁸⁶ Musserat Abbassi, (D.o.B, 14 June 1948), Oral History Interview, recorded in Leeds, 12 July 2018.

Table 5-5 BBC LOCAL RADIO ASIAN PROGRAMME PROVISION 1983-89, BBC MIDLANDS.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Birmingham /WM	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 120 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 2 x 60 mins.	25-hour weekly Service: Inc. <i>East in West</i> ; <i>Eastern Beat</i> ; <i>Gazal and Gold</i> . (Mon-Fri only on AM) BBC WS Hindi and Urdu News
Derby	<i>Aaj Kaal English</i> - 60 mins	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English - 145 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English - 90mins.
Leicester	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 3 x 60 & 1 x 90 mins. <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 60 mins.	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 3 x 60 & 1 x 90 mins. Hindi/Urdu- 60 mins. <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> ; English - 90 mins.	32-hour weekly Service: Inc. <i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; <i>Ankur</i> (Gujarati Prog.); <i>Milan</i> and <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> . (Mon - Fri only AM; Sat on FM and AM) BBC WS Hindi and Urdu News
Nottingham	<i>Six O'clock Show (TX Leicester)</i> ; English 60 mins <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 75 mins.	<i>Six O'clock Show (TX Leicester)</i> ; English 60 mins <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 120 mins.	<i>Dhamaka</i> ; English - 120 mins. <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 120 mins. (Both AM only)
Stoke	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 45 mins.	<i>Eastern Horizon</i> ; English, 120 mins.	<i>Samantha Meah</i> ; English 120 mins
Total Hours	10 hours	16 hours 15 mins	64 hours 30 minutes

Source; Radio Times and BBC WAC

The closure plan for the three metropolitan stations and the direct danger to BBC Radio WM was a problem for the region. The paper sent by Regional Broadcasting HQ to the Board of Governors about the proposed closures was devastating in its criticism of BBC Radio WM;

Radio WM has tried to do too much for too many – the editorial remit has been too wide and the audience too low. It has been seeking to serve a diverse range of communities without being able to be properly identified with any of them.⁸⁷

It had the lowest audience figures of the metropolitan stations and Owen Bentley drafted in Tony Inchley, who had replaced him at BBC Radio Leicester in 1983, to devise a rescue plan. A further complication was a plan by the new Radio Authority to advertise a new commercial franchise on the BBC Radio WM medium wave transmitter in the early 1990s. There was therefore only a short window of opportunity to establish a more extensive split

⁸⁷ MDRB Paper, 'The Metropolitan Radio Stations', January 1988, p.3. BBC Radio WM File, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

frequency service to the Asian communities in the West Midlands. This was something that Bentley did not have to persuade Tony Inchley about;

He knew from the Leicester experience that there's a big audience out there. If you are running a failing station, which WM was then, and you have the experience from Leicester that says here's an audience I can get anyhow then you would probably be propelled to stripping Asian programmes across the week.⁸⁸

The Asian programming at BBC Radio WM had been expanded in 1984 to a second edition of *East in West* and two new young Asian presenter / producers had been engaged on a freelance basis, Farah Durani Marsh and Anita Bhalla. Bhalla had worked closely with BBC Radio Leicester during her time as a Community Worker in Leicester. Farah Durani Marsh was to become the first Asian staff Community Producer at BBC Radio Leicester in 1986 with responsibility for Asian programming.

Figure 5-6 BBC 'EAST IN WEST' TEAM 1984



**Left to right, Farah Durani Marsh, Mohammed Ayyub and Anita Bhalla.
Source M. Ayyub.**

⁸⁸ OHI, Owen Bentley.

In 1989 Anita Bhalla became the Senior Producer tasked with setting up the Birmingham end of the Midlands Asian Network and is in no doubt about the link between saving the AM transmitter of BBC Radio WM and the new Asian programme service;

My challenge was, we have the 1458 [AM] frequency and we need to save it. We can't let it go to the Radio Authority, so we are expanding Asian programmes. It was overnight. I went around literally grabbing people off the streets to train as presenters for the drivetime programme, the language programme and the youth programme.

A key part of the new Asian service was to build a shared schedule with BBC Radio Leicester, where there was a pent-up demand and desire to expand programming further. A new innovation was to offer listeners the chance to hear live BBC World Service news programmes in Hindi, Urdu and Bengali on BBC local radio. This was coupled with a daily late-night youth programme *Eastern Beat* shared with BBC Radio Leicester.

Figure 5-7 RADIO TIMES FEATURE – LAUNCHING THE MIDLANDS ASIAN NETWORK.



Source: Radio Times, 28 October – 3 November 1989.

The Midlands Asian Network launched in October 1989 with money provided by MDRB (Managing Director of Regional Broadcasting) and from David Waine's regional budget. A memorandum from Waine in June 1989 to Bentley lays out the precariousness of this initial funding;

CRB has confirmed on the telephone, that £20,000 will be available in this financial year to start up the Ethnic Minority Service for WM and Leicester. If there is a need, I will add the extra £5,000. It should be said that there is no guarantee that this money will be there

in the next financial year, although, obviously, if the service works it is quite difficult to take it away.⁸⁹

This money would provide for six months output of the new Midlands Asian Network and mirrored the launch of the daily programme in Leicester by Bentley in 1976 with a grant of six months funding from the Leicester Council for Community Relations. Bentley told me this was a risk but one that he believed would work;

You take a risk. You think it's going to be successful. If it's successful you can't take it off the air. Essentially, it's a form of slow blackmail really. But in those days, you were able to go ahead and do things, if it was the right thing to do, if it was going to work and if you were reasonably responsible about the finances.⁹⁰

The risk worked as in March 1990 the Regional Directorate of the BBC decided to fund the Midlands Asian Network for a five-year period.⁹¹ The new funding stream in June 1989 allowed eighteen weeks to set up a workable shared schedule between BBC Radio WM and BBC Radio Leicester, confirm BBC World Service contracts for UK broadcasts of Hindi, Urdu and Bengali bulletins and engage additional staff to work on the programmes. The station managers of BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio WM could only confidently embark on this expansion because they had experienced producers in Vijay Sharma (Leicester) and Anita Bhalla (WM) to plan a coherent schedule. Both took the lead in establishing and driving the new programming to ensure it reflected the different religious and cultural trends across the midlands. Anita Bhalla concentrated on two key priorities with the expanded programming, firstly to reach out to poorly represented groups such as the Mirpuri community in the West Midlands and secondly to create a wider impact with the stories the programmes uncovered;

My aim was to get the stories we were putting out on the Asian Network on to 'mainstream', and I think I and my team achieved that. Often, we were leading the agenda in the mornings.... There was a 'lightbulb moment' for our colleagues in the newsroom at BBC WM ... we were able to get in young people like Rita Chakrabarti and Sonia Deol and train them to ask the difficult questions.⁹²

⁸⁹ Internal Memo, HoB Midlands to Owen Bentley, 16 June 1989, BBC File, Midlands Ethnic Network, Owen Bentley Personal Archive.

⁹⁰ Owen Bentley, OHI.

⁹¹ Internal Memo, Owen Bentley to Manager Radio Leicester and Manager Radio WM, 12 March 1990, BBC File, Midlands Ethnic Network, Owen Bentley Personal Archive.

⁹² OHI, Anita Bhalla.

The launch of the Midlands Asian Network took place at the Diwali lights switch on in Leicester on 17 October 1989 with John Tusa, Managing Director BBC World Service, accompanied by BBC South Asia Correspondent Mark Tully announcing the new service from the stage on Belgrave Road. The programme schedule reflected the changes within the Asian diaspora in Britain. To connect with traditional older listeners there were new language programmes - notably the first Gujarati programme in Leicester - and World Service bulletins from the subcontinent in Hindi and Urdu. The later part of the evening from 9pm was aimed squarely at a younger demographic with phone-ins, new music and a focus on entertainment. The first audience research into the new Asian Network by the BBC in the West Midlands in 1994 found that over half of Asians in the West Midlands were listening. Better though was the positive reaction the programming had within its target audience;

It is highly regarded – praised in particular for its friendliness and company, its local news and information, professionalism and caring about the community.⁹³

These are not epithets that were generally applied to the BBC by ethnic minorities in this period. Here then was part of the organisation in the Midlands reaching out and successfully connecting with Asian communities.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined four major themes that emerged between 1985 and 1990; how a new regulatory environment increasingly championed choice; the use of technology to which that regulation was adapting; the changing Asian diaspora with an increasingly younger demographic; and a new regional approach to BBC local radio.

Changing regulation and technology were key drivers of change of Asian programming on BBC local radio. Regulation that allowed frequency splitting brought competitive pressure on the BBC to maximise the use of its medium wave transmitters or to risk losing them to new commercial national and local rivals. The removal of public service obligations from ILR companies which saw many drop their Asian programmes, coupled with the cutting of

⁹³ BBC Audience Research, 'BBC Radio WM: The Asian Network', 20 January 1994, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

Asian programming from BBC Radio 4, added editorial pressures on BBC local radio to reassess its offer to Asian communities. Within a new regional management structure different priorities and policies emerged across England with starkly contrasting approaches to connecting with Asian communities. The 522,000 strong Asian population in London received just one hour a week of Asian programming in contrast to Leicester where less than ten percent of the Asian community in Britain received seventy hours a week of programmes by the early 1990s.⁹⁴ It is hard to refute claims of tokenism in many BBC local radio stations, but especially so in London. This however was not the case at BBC Radio Leicester, BBC Radio Leeds, BBC Radio Sheffield and latterly at BBC Radio WM. The demonstrable differences between BBC regional provision points to the importance of individual regional managers such as Owen Bentley and Tony Inchley to drive change in their regions.

In the Midlands the new Midlands Asian Network was aimed at improving the service of programming available and to add new listeners as part of the strategy to save BBC Radio WM from closure. It also had the effect of putting pressure on the new radio Authority not to take the AM transmitters from BBC Radio WM and BBC Radio Leicester – a strategy that worked as the BBC Asian Network is still (in 2019) broadcast on these frequencies in the midlands.

In the BBC North Region only BBC Radio Leeds and BBC Radio Sheffield seriously took up the challenge of beginning daily programming and developing the existing programming from the 1970s and 1980s. It would be programming from the developing Midlands Asian Network on northern AM frequencies that would dramatically increase content in the 1990s.

BBC South and East took a different route to the Midlands, where part of the approach to save BBC Radio London was to drop all ethnic programming on the station. The BBC then allowed the Radio Authority to take the AM frequency away from the station. But within a year the management at BBC GLR had reversed its decision and began to broadcast ethnic programming again, though this time with Asian programming networked from BBC Radio Bedfordshire. The contradiction of strategies in 1988 in the West Midlands and

⁹⁴ BBC WAC File, R9/1, 831, 1, BBC Ethnic Minorities Programme Strategy Review,

London would continue to play out across BBC local radio in the 1990s as it tried to ensure that all output reflected the diverse communities it served. This move towards a policy of ‘cultural diversity’ where ‘racial/ethnic diversity is just one of many diversities incorporated into the mainstream’ is still a live issue.⁹⁵

The changing Asian diaspora in the 1980s and in particular the growing importance of a young British Asian demographic was a challenge to broadcasters to adapt their programming. Not all station managers identified this change as a priority and preferred to retain their existing programme launched in the 1970s and presented by first-generation ‘immigrant’ presenters, many in south Asian languages. For those stations that regarded connecting with second generation younger audiences as part of their remit a range of innovative programming evolved providing safe communal spaces for young people living between two cultures. Programmes such as *Smit Petite and the Karachi Kid* in Bedfordshire with its regular phone ins, *Aaj Kaal* in Derby playing its part in the development of British Bhangra and *Weekend Bazaar* in Leicester with its high tempo bubbly presentation led the way in this new trend. By the time the Midlands Asian Network began in 1989 there was a firm recognition of the divergence of these two Asian audiences with a mix of BBC World Service News in Hindi, Urdu and Bengali for older listeners joined by a new late-night phone in and entertainment sequence. New younger Asian voices were therefore increasingly coming into BBC local radio and though they experienced mixed management support many were able to work their way into successful broadcast careers.

Nevertheless, there was an undercurrent of tokenism that ran through the BBC. Therefore, through VHS, pirate radio, commercial radio and early satellite television Asian communities became more self-reliant, developing new British Asian owned media. Pirate stations that became legitimate like Sunrise Radio in Southall, and those that remained illegal continued to attract large and loyal audiences. The VHS provided nothing short of a revolution in television viewing in Asian households providing an alternative to the schedules of the four terrestrial channels. In the 1990s to connect with Asian audiences the BBC needed to develop new policies on programming and employment, but in the Midlands a start had been made.

⁹⁵ A. Saha, ‘Scheduling Race’, in S. Malik & D. M. Newton, (Eds.), *Adjusting the Contrast: British Television and Constructs of Race*, (University of Manchester Press: Manchester, 2018), p.58.

Chapter 6 1989, Super-Serving Leicester.

Rupal Rajani was born in Uganda and arrived in Leicester via a Devon resettlement camp as a toddler in 1972. Like most of her friends as a child in Leicester she had to come to terms with twin identities; more English at school and more Indian at home. However, as a teenager in the 1980s listening to the *Six O'clock Show* on BBC Radio Leicester became crucial to her finding her own identity;

“It felt like home, it felt comfortable, it felt like you belonged. There were these people at the end of the radio who would identify with you and your culture and what you were about. That was really important for me growing up, and it gave me an identity and it made me feel ok to be who I am – to a huge degree in fact”.¹

The programme was launched in 1976 to address issues of identity, belonging and social cohesion in the city. The daily format of the *Six O'clock Show* gave it space to both play a role in the cultural reinforcement enjoyed by older listeners and develop new programme ideas to target a growing youthful British Asian demographic which, like Rajani, was adjusting to questions of identity.

By the late 1980s, despite the need to meet national savings targets across local radio, the station management at BBC Radio Leicester believed more airtime was needed to satisfy growing demand from the Asian communities in the city. Lobbying had even come from the BBC's own Asian Programmes Advisory Council which argued strongly that BBC Radio Leicester should begin a Gujarati language programme. Gujarati Community Associations in Leicester had even offered to pay the station for new programming. The new technical and policy innovations of split frequency broadcasting on AM and FM transmitters made it possible to offer more programming but the financial situation within BBC local radio precluded it. It took the drive of former station manager Owen Bentley to deliver a dramatically increased programme provision in Leicester and the West Midlands in October 1989 through a Midlands Asian Network. Bentley was able to draw in Midlands regional and national funds to build this new network to try and save two of the powerful

¹ Rupal Scarle – nee Rajani, (D.o.B., 8 January 1970), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 20 June 2018.

BBC local radio medium wave transmitters in Leicester and the West Midlands. Both of these transmitters were attracting interest from the new Radio Authority which wanted to remove them from the BBC for new commercial radio operators. The new Asian radio programming by the BBC in Leicester followed similar increases in commercial radio locally which had given Rupal Rajani an opportunity to develop a career in radio, first with *Sabras* on Leicester Sound and then BBC Radio Leicester. Inspired by those voices she first heard on *The Six o'clock Show* in the 1970s and 1980s she is still one of BBC Radio Leicester's regular presenters in 2019.

By the end of 1989 Leicester had a unique range of local media provision for its growing Asian communities. BBC Radio Leicester, ILR and the *Leicester Mercury* all offered significant bespoke targeted media;

The new BBC Midlands Asian Network on the BBC Radio Leicester medium wave transmitter had a schedule of 36 hours a week, representing a quarter (24.6 %) of BBC Radio Leicester output. The new service featured BBC World Service news bulletins in Hindi and Urdu, a new Gujarati programme and a nightly youth strand as the station tried to bridge a generational divide.²

The medium wave service of the local ILR franchise GEM AM increased its *Sabras* programming to a seven day, 28 hours a week service. It was developed by Don Kotak, one of the original BBC Radio Leicester *Six-Fifteen* presenters. This music-based service of entertainment was aimed at all of the Asian communities in the city, hence the name *Sabras*, which means 'All Tastes'.

In November 1989, and in part responding to the local radio competition, the *Leicester Mercury* became the only local newspaper in Britain to launch a six-days a week *Asia Edition*. By contracting news agencies in the sub-continent, the paper was able to add a significant English language news feed of relevance to older South Asians in Leicester and coupled it with lifestyle and local news features and stories aimed at younger readers.

² Analysis of Radio Times programme billings for 28 October – 3 November 1989.

This chapter will examine how the Asian communities in Leicestershire had become ‘super-served’ by the established local media. It will argue firstly, that Leicester had been conclusively changed by South Asian immigration in the previous twenty five years; secondly, that for the local media the substantially changed demographics of the city marked the new communities as potential consumers, and thirdly that it was innovative management in organisations across the city, including BBC Radio Leicester, that played a significant part in turning Leicester away from its 1972 epithet as the most racist city in Britain. It will contend that the existing historiography of immigration to Leicester ignores the significant role of the local media, and in particular BBC Radio Leicester from 1976, in improving social cohesion in the city through breaking down barriers between local communities and generations.

6.1 A Permanently Changed Demography

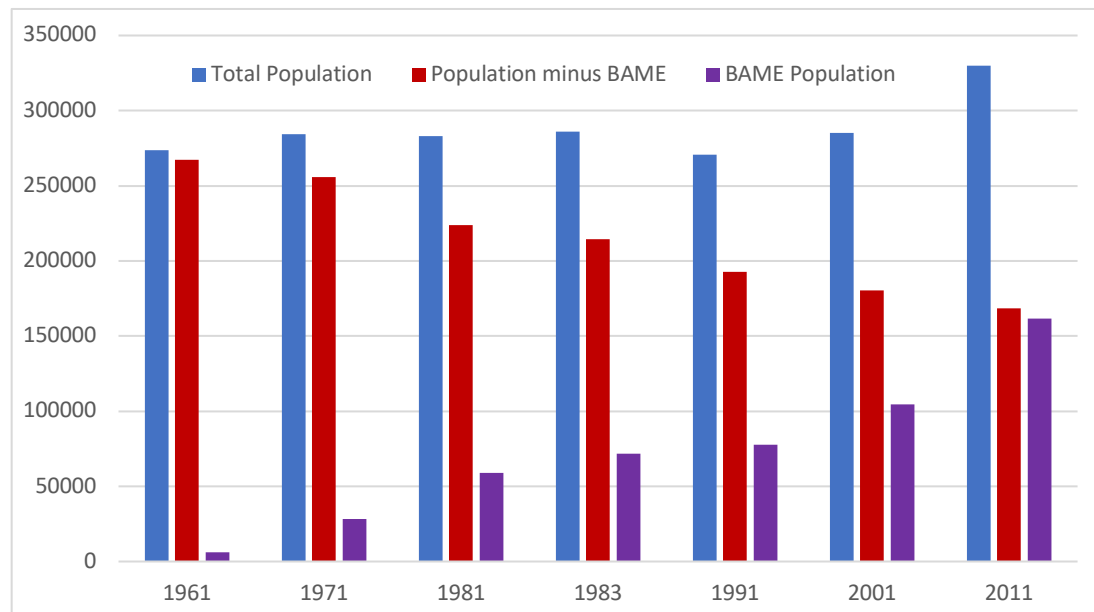
Twenty-five years of immigration to Leicester fundamentally and permanently changed the city. The 1991 census results revealed that the BAME proportion of the population had risen to 28.5 percent, some 77,900 people a rise of some 20,000 during the 1980s. Eight out of ten people from the ethnic minority communities were of South Asian heritage, including immigrants from African states such as Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania in the mid 1960s, and Uganda and Malawi in the early 1970s. The size of the Asian population in Leicester led to a ‘chain migration’ effect from within Britain and the Indian sub-Continent as the communities continued to grow with more people attracted to join relatives already living in the city. The South Asian population in Leicester during this period was largely of Gujarati and East African heritage and as such was atypical compared to other British towns and cities, particularly the northern mill towns.³ The ethnic demography in Leicester has continued to change and by 2011 BAME communities accounted for almost half (49 percent) of the population.⁴ Over time the mix in the Asian communities has changed but those of ‘Indian’ heritage still account for two thirds of the Asian population of the city and the influence of the East African Asian business community remains strong.

³ S. McLoughlin, ‘Discrepant representations of multi-Asian Leicester’, in S. McLoughlin, W Gould, A. Jahanara and E. Tomalin, (Eds), *Writing the City in British Asian Diasporas*, (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 89.

⁴ Leicester City Council, Diversity and Migration Working Paper, (Leicester City Council; Leicester, 2012, p.2, <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/177367/2011-census-findings-diversity-and-migration.pdf> (Accessed 8 July 2019).

The flip side of the growth in the BAME communities in Leicester was a fall in the ‘white’ population of the city, which between 1961 and 1991 fell by 73,968 (27.6 per cent) as people moved to the expanding outer suburbs administratively located in the county. It might be wrong to characterise all of this as ‘white flight’; Leicester is a geographically tight city in the centre of the county bordered by suburbs, such as Birstall, Thurmaston, Oadby, Wigston and Blaby where the majority of new private house building took place from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Figure 6-1 1961-2011: CHANGE IN THE ETHNIC MAKE UP OF LEICESTER



Sources: ONS; CRE; Leicester Council for Community Relations; Leicester City Council.

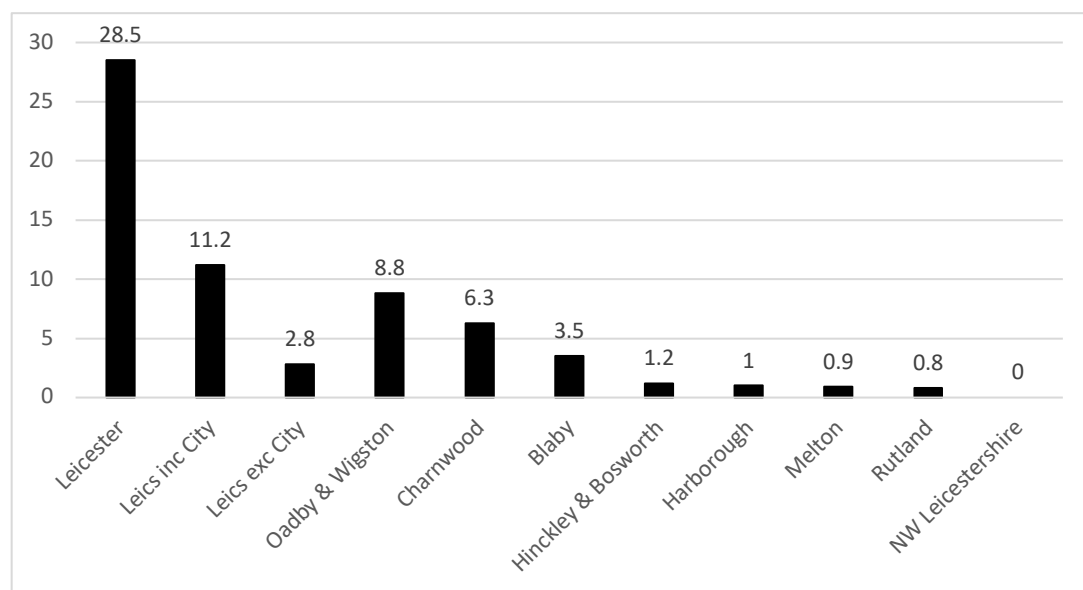
Most new arrivals in the 1960s and 1970s were concentrated in Highfields and Belgrave as they re-established their family and community life, but the majority of Leicester witnessed demographic change.⁵ The magnitude of the change is evident in the make-up of its twenty-eight electoral wards, by 1991 twenty-two wards had ethnic minority populations above the national average for England. In seven of these wards there was a BAME population of more than fifty percent and in three of them it was over seventy five percent. Just six wards had BAME populations that were below the national average; and all were white working-class local authority estates on the fringes of the city. This trend was later

⁵ See. P. Virdee, ‘From the Belgrave Road to the Golden Mile: The transformation of Asians in Leicester’, (2006), Working Paper WBAC 006, <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/writingbritishasiancities/assets/papers/WBAC006.pdf> (Accessed 20 May 2019).

described by Ted Cattle in his 2001 Community Cohesion report drawn up to examine the causes of rioting in northern towns as a process of communities living ‘parallel lives’.⁶

The editorial area of BBC Radio Leicester covers the whole of Leicestershire and Rutland and BAME communities were proportionately much smaller in the county. Only two borough council areas, Oadby & Wigston and Charnwood had BAME populations above the national average for England. Oadby & Wigston borders the city directly to the south while in Charnwood it is Loughborough that has a significant Asian community.

Figure 6-2 PERCENTAGE BAME POPULATION, BBC RADIO LEICESTER TSA 1991



Source: Leicester City Council

The human and physical geography of Leicestershire with a multi-ethnic city located in the centre of the county meant that covering the whole editorial area was complex. With ethnic minorities in Leicester representing 28.5 percent of the population and in the county proportionately ten times smaller at just 2.8 percent, successive station managers of BBC Radio Leicester had to constantly strike an editorial balance in the mix of programming. When Owen Bentley launched the new nightly Asian programme in 1976, he expressed a nervousness about a ‘white backlash’ from listeners, although this never came. However, the ability to split transmissions offered the station an opportunity to serve both sets of listeners at the same time with Asian programming broadcast on AM and general

⁶ T. Kushner, *The Battle of Britishness: Migrant Journeys, 1685 to the Present Day*, (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2012), p. 19.

programmes on FM. Without the possibility to split transmission in this way it is arguable there would have been no BBC Asian Network.

A key feature of BBC Radio Leicester's Asian programming was the manner in which it both recognised and reflected the needs of the younger generation. This is evident in surviving programming from the late 1970s through to the launch of the new youthful *Weekend Bazaar* programme in 1987. The age profile of the Asian communities in Leicester during this period mirrored national trends. The *Survey of Leicester* in 1983 recorded that over half of the Asian population in Leicester (51.3 percent) was under 25 years of age – compared to 38 per cent of the white community. Notably over half (55 percent) of this young demographic were born in the UK and many others, like Rupal Rajani, had arrived here as young children and were educated in the city.⁷ The early decision by BBC Radio Leicester to try and connect with this younger demographic was a key to its continued popularity into the 1980s, although audience research work recognised that the station needed to further reach out to younger Asians. For example a BBC survey in 1986 into radio listening by Asians in Leicester found that listeners to the *Six O'clock Show* were more likely to be over 35 with only a quarter of listeners being aged 16 to 25.⁸ The audience research and the changing demographics suggested to station management that any new programme expansion at BBC Radio should include programming specifically targeted at young people, as happened with *Weekend Bazaar* in 1985 and the new daily youth strand, *Eastern Beat*, in 1989.

No other BBC local radio area had witnessed such a rapid, and proportionate increase in its core ethnic minority population as BBC Radio Leicester. There were major increases in minority populations in other English conurbations including Greater London, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire, and major northern manufacturing towns such as Blackburn and Bradford. But in these cases, the BBC local radio stations covered much wider areas and the overall proportion of ethnic minorities was either smaller or more widely dispersed. With Bentley still having oversight of BBC Radio Leicester at a regional level, in 1989 he was able to lever regional and national resources to tap into BBC national concerns about

⁷ LCC, *The Survey of Leicester*, pp. 16-17.

⁸ BBC Audience Research, *Radio Leicester: Radio Listening Amongst Asians*, 1985, p.12, BBC WAC File, R9/327/1 Audience Research.

the big city stations such as BBC Radio WM to launch the ambitious Midlands Asian Network, shared between BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio WM.

The BAME communities in Leicester also reflected immigration to the city from the Caribbean through the 1950s and 1960s representing some 7,000 people or 3.4 percent of the population. In the 1980s there was also an expansion in black programme provision adding to the weekly *Herdle White Show* which featured Caribbean music and had been running since the early 1970s. The local African-Caribbean communities though smaller were also vocal in their desire to be represented through special programming. In 1989 a new gospel programme, *In the Spirit*, and a speech magazine, *Talking Blues* were launched. Together these black programmes accounted for a total of 5 hours per week, some 3.4 percent of the BBC Radio Leicester programme schedule. This compares favourably to the African-Caribbean programme *Back 'a' Yard* at BBC Radio Nottingham, in which this three-and-a-half-hour weekly programme was broadcast to an estimated 10,500 black people, around 3.7 percent, of the city population.

The challenge for the local media in Leicester was to provide services that captured the 'authenticity' of life in a multi-cultural city, representing what Scannel has argued was daily life as it is lived by the listener.⁹ Certainly the experience of Rupal Rajani was that the programming at BBC Radio Leicester related directly to her as she experienced it.

6.2 Local Media in Leicester, Super-serving 'New Consumers'.

In 1989 in Leicester the new Midlands Asian Network became part of a trio of services provided by the BBC, ILR and the *Leicester Mercury*. Nowhere else in Britain were Asian communities so targeted by the established local media. Asian 'consumers' in Leicester, for this is what they had become, representing less than seven per cent of the UK Asian population were receiving thirty-two hours of programming a week from BBC Radio Leicester, twenty-eight hours a week from GEM AM through its *Sabras* programmes and a six days a week a daily *Asia Edition* of the *Leicester Mercury*. Both radio services stemmed directly from the decision in 1976 at BBC Radio Leicester to launch a daily Asian programme and ultimately drove the *Leicester Mercury* to offer the daily *Asia Edition* as a

⁹ P. Scannel, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, (Oxford; Blackwell, 1996).

way of feeding new readers and advertisers to the paper – exactly the model set out by Owen Bentley fifteen years earlier. In the present day a ‘diaspora marketing strategy’ is something that businesses and media organisations adopt and is the subject of academic study examining how South Asian communities move between their Asian and British identities offering different marketing opportunities.¹⁰ For the BBC, as a public service body, the terms of the BBC Charter lay out its obligation to serve all communities. In Leicester in the 1980s the new Asian media offerings were a case of editors and station managers coming to terms with their demographically changed editorial areas.

Commercial Radio in Leicester.

Asian programming on ILR in Leicester began in 1981 at Centre Radio, which became Leicester Sound in 1983 and GEM AM in 1988. Each station owner valued the regular revenue this programming provided. GEM AM, an oldies pop service, was one of a new set of stations in ILR which had been developed to maximise the use of transmitters, both bringing in new revenue streams and protecting medium wave from being removed and auctioned by the Radio Authority. Since 1981 various iterations of the *Sabras* programme were presented by Don Kotak who had moved from BBC Radio Leicester to commercial radio. The profitability of the programme led to its expansion and by 1986 *Sabras* was on air for eleven hours a week. This was twice as long as BBC Radio Leicester but as it began broadcasting at 7 o’clock each evening it was not competing directly with the *Six O’clock Show*. BBC audience research in 1986 found that the Asian communities in Leicester listened regularly to both BBC Radio Leicester and *Sabras*.¹¹

Table 6-1 ASIAN PROGRAMME LISTENING IN LEICESTER, 1985.

	REGULARLY LISTEN	OCCASIONALLY LISTEN	COMBINED
<i>Six O’clock Show</i> BBC Radio Leicester	70%	22%	92%
<i>Sabras</i> GEM AM	47%	30%	77%

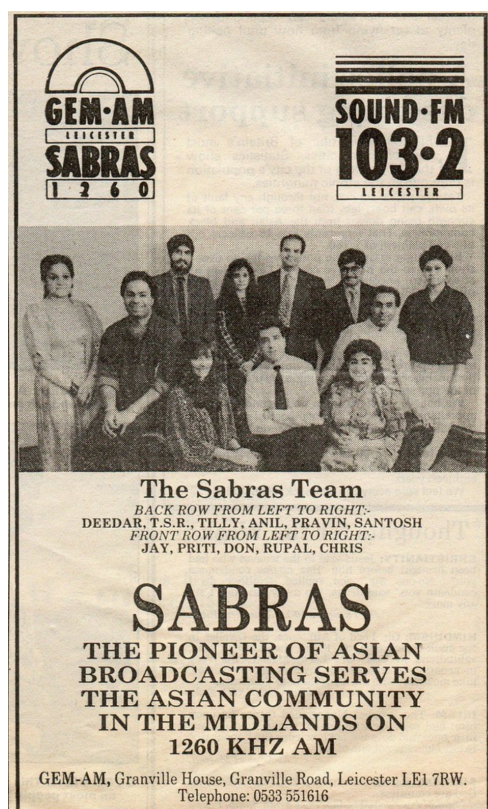
BBC Audience Research.

¹⁰ B. L. Dey, J. M. T. Balmer, A. Pandit, M. Saren & B. Binsardi, ‘A quadripartite approach to analysing young British South Asian adults’ dual cultural identity, *Journal of Marketing Management*, (2017), 33:9-10, pp. 789-816.

¹¹ BBC WAC File, R9/327/1, BBC Audience Research Report, *Radio Leicester: Listening Amongst Asians* 85/92, October 1986.

Both of these audience figures are astonishing. The reach into the Asian communities by each station is exceptional and there is no doubt that they were successfully connecting locally. Once Leicester Sound split its frequencies with GEM AM the Asian programming expanded under the *Sabras* banner and by the spring of 1989 the programmes were on the air seven days a week between 6 pm and 10pm. The ability to split transmissions on to the new GEM AM medium wave service allowed for a substantial expansion of Asian programming in Leicester, and a new presenting team was therefore established to cover the seven-day programming schedule.

Figure 6-3 SABRAS ADVERT



(Rupal Rajani is at the right of the front row), Source: Leicester Mercury.

The revenue stream from advertising built up by Kotak had shown there was a strong business case to expand Asian programming. The management of Midlands Radio plc, owners of GEM AM, led by Don Kotak approached the new Radio Authority (RA) to argue that the AM transmitter in Leicester could host a full time Asian station. Having already handed the first franchise for a full-time ethnic station in London to the Asian station Sunrise Radio in Southall, the Leicester management found the RA to be supportive. However, during these negotiations Kotak had a fraught relationship with Avtar Lit, the owner of Sunrise Radio, who had identified the possibility of combining any new Leicester

license granted by the RA with his existing station. This would allow Lit to save operating costs in Leicester and Southall by sharing programmes and specialist Asian commercial production, a common practice in independent radio. Once the license was granted to Midlands Radio in 1992, Kotak thought *Sabras* would go full time and set about drawing up programme schedules. However, without his knowledge Midlands Radio decided to ‘monetise’ the value of the licence by selling it privately to Avtar Lit. For Kotak this proved to be something of a shock;

‘I am preparing to launch a 24-hour radio station in Leicester for the first time. One evening I was presenting my programme and the doorbell went outside Leicester Sound and it was Avtar Lit. I thought fucking hell what the fuck does he want, so I put a long record on and went to see what was up. He said, ‘you are working for me’. What had happened was that the Chairman of Midlands Radio had signed a contract for Avtar Lit to buy *Sabras*’.¹²

As a result, within days most of the *Sabras* team walked out of the station and Sunrise Radio took over, developing a schedule with many programmes shared from its London station. Sunrise faced a significant local campaign to overturn the decision of the RA to allow it to take over the new Asian radio franchise without competition. According to a report in the *Leicester Mercury Asia Edition*, a ‘noisy’ demonstration of over 200 people protested outside the launch of the new Sunrise station with a key request being the reintroduction of a local Leicester station. The campaign was organised Jinesh Majithia, who told the *Leicester Mercury*;

This is a campaign to bring a local independent radio station back to the people of Leicester. We want a locally owned, locally based company to run our station. Why should we be deprived of our liberty to run our own station.¹³

¹² OHI, Don Kotak.

¹³ ‘Protest Greets Radio Launch’, *Leicester Mercury Asia Edition*, 16 September 1992, p. 3.

Figure 6-4 LEICESTER MERCURY ASIA EDITION, 16 SEPTEMBER 1992.



The RA finally advertised the AM licence in Leicester when it reached its original ten-year end date in 1995, Kotak won the franchise and has held it ever since operating from a converted church in the heart of the Asian community on Belgrave Road in the city. The fact that Asians in Leicester were prepared to fight for Sabras suggests that Marett was correct in her assertion that consciousness among Ugandan Asians of the ‘power of the media’ in the city was an important factor in retaining local control of commercial radio.¹⁴

BBC Radio Leicester and the Midlands Asian Network.

Given the continuing growth in the Asian communities in Leicester and the increase in programming at Sabras Radio there was a competitive element to the expansion of Asian programming at BBC Radio Leicester. The launch of the Midlands Asian Network at the Diwali lights switch-on in Leicester on 17 October 1989 was the culmination of a long-held ambition by BBC Radio Leicester to match Sabras Radio in hours, while offering a different type of service. The programme schedule tried to reach out to both older and younger listeners. There was BBC World Service News from ‘home’ and new language

¹⁴ V. Marett, ‘Resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Leicester’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6.3 (1993), p. 257. (248-259).

programming for older listeners, including for the first time a Gujarati programme, in the early part of the evening. Then from 9.30 *Eastern Beat* had a mixture of late-night music, chat and competitions aimed at younger listeners.

The desire to increase the hours of programming was evident in 1987 when BBC Radio Leicester had launched a new weekend youth programme, *The Weekend Bazaar*, which brought younger people to the station. Kamlesh Purohit joined in 1985 as a phone answerer for the *Weekend Bazaar*. He told me that young people felt that some of the programming such as *Milan*, presented in Hindustani, was ‘a bit boring’;

‘People like Mira, Rabia, Mike Allbut and Vijay started to become the veterans and we brought new energy and creativity. We were young British Asians who were listening to mainstream radio; Radio One, Atlantic 252 and Luxembourg, and we wanted to apply their ideas to Asian programmes’.¹⁵

From late 1983 the programmes were organised and managed by full time staff Asian community producers – the first in BBC local radio. Farah Durani-Marsh was recruited from BBC Radio WM and was followed by Vijay Sharma in 1985. A critical mass of freelance and BBC staff – presenters, reporters and studio assistants - from local Asian communities began to be built up within BBC Radio Leicester bringing with them new ideas and fresh editorial thinking to *The Six O’clock Show*. Vijay Sharma felt this was crucial in making the Asian programmes team integrated into the station giving the rest of the staff the confidence to tackle complicated cross-cultural issues.

‘I think the critical mass helped, it wasn’t just one hour a week, it was every day and at the weekend, that was one thing. There was also some staff support, apart from the producer. The leadership was good, they were aware of things, there was interest It says something when the station manager rings you up at home at 8 o’clock in the morning and says, “this is a big story, what are you planning to do today”’.¹⁶

This concept of a critical mass of ethnic minority staff in the production process as part of delivering a more diverse output was reinforced in later work by Mukti Jain Campion when addressing twenty first century diversity in the British media. Campion argues that only with a critical mass of diversity in class, gender and ethnicity can culturally conducive

¹⁵ Kamlesh Purohit, (D.o.B. 15 December 1961), Oral History Interview, recorded iLeicester 11 December 2018.

¹⁶ OHI, Vijay Sharma, recorded Leicester, 7 September 2017.

production environments develop.¹⁷ The experience at BBC Radio Leicester in the 1980s goes some way to supporting her argument.

Figure 6-5 BBC RADIO LEICESTER ASIAN PROGRAMMES TEAM 1987.



Back row from left, Marian Bhally, Amir Jamal, Deepak Patel, Mike Allbut, Hisam Mukaddam, Kamlesh Purohit, Neeta Kara, Asmita Thanki; Middle row; Rabia Raza, Shira Miller, Sujata Aum Barot; Front; Mira Trivedi, Vijay Sharma.

Source: BBC Radio Leicester Photo Archive

BBC Radio Leicester had been continually lobbied, both locally and nationally through the BBC Asian Programmes Advisory Council, to run a Gujarati programme to serve the substantial community in Leicester. In the late 1980s as the station faced ten percent funding cuts the station manager Jeremy Robinson had set up a 'Radio Leicester Education and Mother Tongue Trust' as a way of funnelling money from the Gujarati community into programmes.¹⁸ The trust was never used as it was overtaken by the setting up of the Midlands Asian Network which allowed the station to launch a new range of language programming. Had the trust become established it had the potential to have created community tensions over 'paid for' language provision that the station had sought to avoid since introducing English presentation in 1976. Therefore, when the Midlands Asian Network was launched on BBC Radio Leicester it did so with a Gujarati programme,

¹⁷ Mukti Jain Campion, 'Diversity, or just colour by numbers?', *British Journalism Review*, (2006), 17:1, pp. 71-76.

¹⁸ Memo, Jeremy Robinson to BBC Assistant Legal Adviser, 'Radio Leicester Trust', 12 January 1989, BBC Midlands Asian Network File (Owen Bentley Private Collection).

followed in the early 1990s by new Punjabi and Bengali programmes. New language provision also included BBC World Service news bulletins in Hindi and Urdu as part of an extended two hour daily *Six O'clock Show*. Scannel points out that the use of minority languages was an important expression of identity, but the balance for BBC Radio Leicester was to ensure that English was maintained as the primary language of most programming.¹⁹ This was important as the original intention of the *Six O'clock Show* was to foster community understanding and cohesion, introducing what Georgiou has called a 'shared commonality' where local, national and transnational spaces combine.²⁰ As Kamlesh Purohit recalled this new schedule was now a substantial offering;

‘It started to feel like a network, because we had the newsy elements in *The Six o'clock Show* from six till eight, then you had the language programmes sandwiched in between, and then you had the youth programmes that took you all the way till midnight. So, it was sounding like a network and we were offering lots of different tastes and sounds’.²¹

The new expanded schedule built on the BBC research from 1986 in which three quarters (74 percent) of those aged 55 and over most favoured programming in Asian languages while seven out of ten (69 percent) of those born in Britain, and therefore younger, were in favour of English language programming.²² The people who came to work at BBC Radio Leicester typify the different type of challenges the station had to meet as both its programming and the local Asian communities developed. For the early presenters like Mira Trivedi programme presentation was not a career choice but a service, a chance for cultural reinforcement in communities recently displaced;

‘I was working as a social worker at that time. I had a full-time job, and on top of that I was doing Radio Leicester, I was happy with what I had. I stayed with the BBC for twenty-seven years, I retired in 2007. It was part of my life's golden period my time with the BBC. I thoroughly enjoyed doing the programme and people recognised me wherever I went, I had a feeling of doing something for the community and preserving the culture’.²³

For the younger presenters who joined in the 1980s there was a different motive, inspired by the voices they heard, they recognised that they might make a career in broadcasting.

¹⁹ P. Scannel, 'Authenticity and Experience', *Discourse Studies*, (2001), 3, pp. 405-411.

²⁰ M. Georgiou, 'Diasporic Media Across Europe: Multicultural Societies and the Universalism-Particularism Continuum', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (2005), 31.5, pp. 481-498.

²¹ OHI, Kamlesh Purohit.

²² BBC Audience Research, *Radio Leicester*, p. 11.

²³ OHI, Mira Trivedi.

Kamlesh Purohit had come to Leicester as a ten-year-old from Kenya and was educated in one of Leicester's tougher schools.

Mundella [Secondary Modern] was next to the notorious Northfields Estate and there was a lot of skin heads who would descend on the school at a quarter to four. We had a tough time; the teachers didn't really understand racism and didn't understand what we as kids were going through.²⁴

Purohit and his friends connected with the radio, listening to both mainstream and Asian programmes and began to build up an appreciation of how the editions of the *Six O'clock Show* were targeted;

Milan was aimed at my parents. But the *Six O'clock Show* I could totally relate to ... Then Mike Allbut and Razia Raba came along and for me they were people I started to idolise. In those days Mike was young, the music he played was young, and the things he talked about were the things happening in my life.²⁵

Purohit joined the BBC staff in the 1990s and in 2019 was the Assistant Editor of BBC Radio Leicester. In contrast Deepak Patel, who had come to Leicester as a six-year-old from Zambia went to school in Belgrave and faced less racism at school;

You went to school and you were talking about chart music and movies. Then when you came home you were listening to what your mum and dad were listening to, which was primarily Bollywood music. At home we spoke Gujarati but over time it became fifty-fifty with English ... I can't read or write Gujarati, but I can speak it.²⁶

Patel came to BBC Radio Leicester on a six-month YTS (Youth Training Scheme) placement in the gramophone library in 1983 and never left, he joined the BBC staff in the late 1980s.

That's how I met Mike [Allbut], he used to come into the library and I used to help him find music for his programme. I started learning everything I could regarding the 'technicals'. One of things I consciously put my mind to was helping the presenters, who would come in from the community in the evenings and present their programmes, to become better technically.²⁷

²⁴ OHI, Kamlesh Purohit.

²⁵ OHI, Kamlesh Purohit.

²⁶ Deepak Patel, (D.o.B., 15.11.64), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 11 January 2019.

²⁷ OHI, Deepak Patel.

Patel recognised the importance of tackling issues that affected the younger, second generation Asians in Leicester –particularly difficulties between parents and their children;

It was the kind of stuff I don't think the community got from anywhere else. There was a certain amount of outrage, but that was a good thing. It was an eye opener to see that these things were going on in our community.²⁸

As the Community Producer in charge of the Asian programming at BBC Radio Leicester Vijay Sharma witnessed the change in the 1980s as a young generation began to see radio and the BBC as a viable career option;

There was a school of thought that Asians don't go into broadcasting. Well, that myth was soon dispelled because they did, they were knocking on our doors, but we didn't have jobs for them. Asian programmes became a conduit for these people to move into the rest of the BBC.²⁹

The Asian programming at BBC Radio Leicester was demonstrably popular in statistical terms but no qualitative data is available for what the listeners thought of it. During this project BBC Radio Leicester carried out research interviews for a documentary to celebrate its Asian programming which have been made available for this thesis. Even at a distance of some thirty years the programming is still regarded with affection. Raj Mistry came to Leicester from Kenya in 1971 and spoke about the communal listening within his family;

I remember listening to it. We used to gather round the radio quite often. We were used to it because we used to listen back home and that's why we were interested. Most of the time we were cooking and at six o'clock there wasn't anything else on for us. It was the only place we could hear Indian music every night.³⁰

Usha Daji also came to Leicester from Kenya in 1967 and noted the importance of the programme in linking people together.

It was really important. It gave us some sort of belonging. Radio did the trick playing our favourite songs. It was like a big link that was missing, and it gave that link to each other. Young and old had a connection with it. I remember my dad used to put it on and say "shh!".³¹

²⁸ OHI, Deepak Patel.

²⁹ OHI, Vijay Sharma.

³⁰ BBC Radio Leicester research interview with Raj Mistry, Leicester, 15 September 2018.

³¹ BBC Radio Leicester research interview with Usha Daji, Leicester, 15 September 2018.

Rashmi Joshi came to Leicester from Uganda in 1972 and says the programme served a real connective purpose;

It meant an awful lot. The upheaval of being displaced, the trauma and the anguish that people went through when they had ninety days to leave Uganda and to come with almost nothing and to suddenly be listening to your own favourite Bollywood songs on the airways is magic, it uplifts you. So, it was a huge moment, honestly. The BBC were embracing our culture and it helped race relations change for the better.³²

In 1989 Asian programming on BBC Radio Leicester and *Sabras* on GEM AM was still a service trying to break out of its 'minority programming' heritage. It still wasn't possible to listen to Asian programming before 6 pm each evening, although this does not seem to have damaged its reputation within the local communities. In 1992 after Sunrise Radio launched its full-time service in Leicester, Owen Bentley argued to BBC management that the substantial lack of local programming on Sunrise Radio offered an opportunity for the BBC to increase local Asian programming by four hours a day to offer a seventy hour a week service.³³ This was to be authorised in 1994, followed by an 18 hour a day schedule by 1996 when the Midlands Asian Network began to expand on to BBC local radio medium wave transmitters across the country and became a stand-alone station in its own right.

Leicester Mercury Asia Edition.

The *Leicester Mercury* is much criticised in the existing historiography of Leicester and immigration to the city in the 1970s. Joanna Herbert called it 'the racist local press' and Judith Vidal-Hall accused its reporting of the Ugandan crisis of presenting 'inflammatory headlines speaking of disaster' suggesting the paper showed the National Front in a positive light.³⁴ While some of this criticism is justified a more rounded critique of the paper would offer some balance. The paper did not endorse National Front policies, actively printing editorials against them, and by 1980 Leicester based academic Barry Troyna was arguing;

The reasons for the widespread rejection and denunciation of the National Front indicate that the news media have played an important part in its electoral decline.³⁵

³² BBC Radio Leicester research interview with Rashmi Joshi, Leicester, 15 September 2018.

³³ BBC File, 'Midlands Asian Network', Memo, Owen Bentley to CRB, Extending Splitting in Leicester, 11 September 1992, Owen Bentley Private Collection.

³⁴ See; J Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries in the City: Migration, Ethnicity and Gender in Britain*, (Routledge; London, 2008), pp. 28-29 and J. Vidal-Hall, 'Leicester: City of Migration', *Index on Censorship*, 32.2 (2003), p. 136, (pp. 132-141).

³⁵ B. Troyna, 'The Media and the Electoral Decline of the National Front' *Patterns of Prejudice*, (1980), 14.3, pp. 25-30.

It was not until 1982 that the *Leicester Mercury* recruited its first Asian journalist, Ather Mirza, as it actively tried to engage with the Asian communities. Mirza had arrived from Kenya with his family as an eleven-year-old in 1971 and received his secondary education in Leicester. He was not alone in suffering crude racism at school;

The name calling and being told to go home was commonplace. I remember one teacher saying they found our names too complicated and so I would be Charlie Chapatti and my friend who sat next to me would be Sammy Samosa. Now looking back that seems appalling but at the time it was the norm.³⁶

After University in Leicester Mirza applied to the *Leicester Mercury* and was appointed as a trainee journalist. He was placed in the reporter pool and was not used as an ‘ethnic’ reporter.

To the credit of the Mercury they just saw me as a journalist and eventually they assigned me to Market Harborough – a white enclave.³⁷

In the 1980s the paper embraced computer technology and new printing presses that allowed it to produce up to six daily editions of the paper. Initially these were geographically based and featured a set number of pages being printed with hyper local news for county towns such as Loughborough or Market Harborough. However, this technology also made possible the new daily Asia Edition of the paper, launched on 20 November 1989.³⁸ Mirza was invited to view early mock-ups of the proposed Asia Edition;

I was appalled. What they had done was model themselves on Indian newspapers with long single columns of news. I talked about the content they should have, because they were having entirely Indian news, and the balance they should have on South Asian news and the feature content that could be included.³⁹

From this conversation Mirza was appointed to edit the new edition. It was the first daily local Asian edition in Britain and whilst it received national coverage no other local newspaper followed suit. The *Leicester Mercury* signed a contract with news agencies in the sub-continent to provide news copy and images and a careful check on balance was maintained. The front-page below from 1990 shows the formatted layout with agency copy

³⁶ Ather Mirza, (D.o.B. 15 December 1960), Oral History Interview, recorded Leicester, 10 January 2019.

³⁷ OHI, Ather Mirza.

³⁸ S. England, *Magnificent Mercury: The First 125 Years of the Leicester Mercury*, (Kaiross Press; Leicester, 1999), p. 117.

³⁹ OHI, Ather Mirza.

from the subcontinent in a box on the left, local copy of interest to Asian readers in a box on the right and space for the lead – in this case the visit of film star Amitabh Bachchan to Leicester. The masthead, featured a map of the sub-continent but excluded borders between nations as they are nearly all disputed, and the target audience is set out not as Asian but;

An edition of the *Leicester Mercury* for people with a particular interest in news from Asia and East Africa.

As with all the local editions of the *Leicester Mercury* the Asia Edition was built around a format of three internal full pages and three part pages of the paper, plus the dedicated front-page.

Figure 6-6 LEICESTER MERCURY ASIA EDITION 1990

Tudor Oak
Fine English Oak Furniture
DUTTONS FINE FURNISHINGS

HI-FI COMPANY
10% OFF
1 YEAR WARRANTY
U.K. & OVERSEAS

Leicester Mercury
Asia Edition

MONDAY MAY 21, 1990 Price: 22p

News
25 drown in river tragedy
Action over news report
Hyderabad toll at 30
Girl bids for skate record

News Scan
Police bid for new recruits
Vandals attack city nursery
Detectives hunt for robber

Bachchan mania in Belgrave

Hero's welcome for Amitabh

Best in Leicester
TYRES, SHOCKS, EXHAUSTS, BATTERIES
GOODYEAR Vector
WALKERS TYRES, BATTERIES, EXHAUSTS & SHOCKS

The regular local features included health, films and wealth. On launch the potential for sales and advertising was thought to be high;

They felt there was a huge potential and that is why they invested in it. But it didn't get much beyond five to ten thousand in sales. I think there was a big passing around of the paper, so the readership was very high. It was left in libraries and community centres and people would read it there.⁴⁰

For Mirza the success of the Asia Edition was not in its sales figures but that Asian community 'stringers' were contributing local news and edited versions of their copy appeared in the mainstream newspaper, which Mirza suggests 'had never happened before'.⁴¹ A future Editor of the *Leicester Mercury*, Nick Carter, argued in an event held in Parliament that there was a strong moral and business case for the Asia Edition;

The moral reason is that a community will only welcome a newspaper that welcomes the community. The business reason is that large minority groups are important to advertisers and in a city like Leicester it is the Asian business sector that basically drives the local economy.⁴²

Both the *Leicester Mercury* and BBC Radio Leicester had independently assessed that there was an audience need for accurate and impartial news from the sub-continent. In the *Leicester Mercury* it was presented in English from news agency despatches and on BBC Radio Leicester it was presented in Hindi and Urdu via the BBC World Service. They also recognised that a younger second generation were more interested in music, film and celebrity as the features in the Asia Edition and the programme content on BBC Radio Leicester made clear. The aim of the Asia Edition was to bring the Asian communities in Leicester into contact with the paper. This was the approach of Owen Bentley at BBC Radio Leicester in 1976, to launch targeted programming to bring Asian communities into the daily programming of the station. BBC research in 1985 showed that the BBC Radio Leicester breakfast programme *Good Morning Leicester* had doubled its Asian audience compared to the CRE research in 1978 - by 1986 one in five were listening regularly.⁴³ The Asia edition ceased in late 2007 and BBC Radio Leicester completely split from the BBC Asian Network in 2000, though the local editions of Leicester produced programmes were

⁴⁰ OHI, Ather Mirza.

⁴¹ OHI, Ather Mirza.

⁴² D. Machin and A. Mayr, 'Anti Racism in the British Government's model regional newspaper, "the talking cure"', *Discourse and Society*, (2007), 8:4, p. 459.

⁴³ BBC Audience Research Leicester.

retained on the Leicester AM transmitter. Sabras Radio continues to the present day [2019] though it does not take part in the national radio audience research (RAJAR) as Kotak feels the methodology is flawed when dealing with BAME communities – exactly the argument used by Bentley and subsequent managers at BBC Radio Leicester.

In Leicester by the end of the 1980s it would have been difficult for the local media to ignore the growing Asian communities. For commercial organisations such as the *Leicester Mercury* and Leicester Sound not only would they be failing to recognise the changing nature of the city they would have been closing the door to commercial opportunities. BBC Radio Leicester as part of a public service organisation needed to reflect the Asian communities which by 1991 represented almost three in ten of the population. Each took a different approach to the editorial content, but all offered separate print editions or programming. For both BBC Radio Leicester and the *Leicester Mercury* part of the proposition of these separate services was to draw Asian listeners and readers into the mainstream radio station and newspaper. When the BBC Asian Network was split off as a regional station from BBC Radio Leicester and the *Leicester Mercury* ceased publication of the Asia Edition both were better placed to editorially connect directly with the local Asian communities.

6.3 Innovative and Creative Management in Leicester.

Within thirty years between 1972 and 2001 Leicester went from being noted in the national press as ‘the most racist city’ in Britain to being lauded as a model multicultural city.⁴⁴ The existing historiography attributes much of the credit for the change in fortune to two key factors; firstly a stable ruling Labour party in the city and in particular a left wing group that took over the local party in the late 1970s; and secondly the ‘social capital’ of its ‘single largest ethnic grouping - East African Asians.’⁴⁵ There is demonstrably little doubt that when Labour were in office from 1979 significant progress was made in terms of equal opportunities and managing multiculturalism. For example, between 1979 and 1992 the proportion of the City Council workforce monitored as ‘ethnic minority’ rose from just two

⁴⁴ S. McLoughlin, ‘Discrepant representations of multi-Asian Leicester’, in S. McLoughlin, W Gould, A. Jahanara and E. Tomalin, (Eds.), *Writing the City in British Asian Diasporas*, (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 89.

⁴⁵ G. Singh, ‘A City of Surprises: Urban Multiculturalism and the Leicester Model’, in N. Ali, V. Kalra and S. Sayyid, (Eds.), *Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, (Hurst & Co; London, 2006).

per cent to twenty-two per cent.⁴⁶ There was also a new engagement by the city council with ethnic minority associations and by the mid 1990s some 400 of these groups had contracts with the City Council for service provision in the community.⁴⁷

However, this narrative crucially misses the loss of power in the city by Labour when the Conservatives took control of the City Council, in the 1976 local election and a vibrant National Front campaign that garnered a fifth of the vote. The Labour party in Leicester had no formal power until it regained and kept control of the council from 1979, and it was local anti-racist groups, supported by younger left-wing Labour councillors that worked to defeat the National Front and support campaigns for racial tolerance.⁴⁸ Bose, Marett and Byrne also point to the importance of the businesses and social enterprises set up by ‘twice migrated’ East African Asians in the city who prospered economically in the 1980s.⁴⁹

In October 1976 the Leicester Council for Community Relations provided start-up funding to BBC Radio Leicester for the first six months of *Six-Fifteen* the new daily Asian programme, recruiting presenters Don Kotak and Mira Trivedi who both have East African backgrounds. After the 1979 elections the ruling Labour group on the City Council included three Asian councillors, one of whom, Gordan Parmar would become the first Asian Lord Mayor of the city in the late 1980s.

The 1980s was a period of innovative management in the community and public sectors in Leicester in which the historiography charts the rise of the city towards being more tolerant and racially cohesive. McLoughlin has examined the leading studies on how Leicester changed over the fifty years to 2014 to examine if there is a single dominant narrative and if there are gaps in the literature that are yet to be examined.⁵⁰ Change over time is identified in the City Council, Community Associations and the *Leicester Mercury*, and McLoughlin suggests a more nuanced history can be gained by ‘analysing ‘ the key texts side by side’.⁵¹ However McLoughlin suggests that taken together the existing literature is

⁴⁶ P. Winstone, ‘Managing a multi-ethnic and multicultural city in Europe: Leicester, *International Science Journal*, (1996), 48,1, pp. 33-42.

⁴⁷ Winstone, *Managing Multiculturalism*, p 38.

⁴⁸ See, V. Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, (Leicester; Leicester University Press, 1989).

⁴⁹ M. Bose, ‘*The Asians of Leicester: A Worldly Success Story*’, *New Society*, (1979), 49, pp. 339-41 and D. Byrne, ‘Class and Ethnicity in Complex Cities – the Cases of Leicester and Bradford’, *Environment and Planning*, (1998), 30, pp. 703-720 and V. Marett, *Immigrants Settling In The City*.

⁵⁰ McLoughlin, *Multi-Asian Leicester*, p. 110.

⁵¹ McLoughlin, *Multi-Asian Leicester*, p. 111.

still ‘full of holes’ with each part of the story representing partial views of a changing city.⁵² I contend that one of these holes is the contribution made by the local media, particularly BBC Radio Leicester in the difficult mid and late 1970s, in coming to terms with the demographic and political changes in the city.

Between 1976 and 1979 BBC Radio Leicester, through its station manager stepped into the policy vacuum in the city. This was creative management which developed two strands, an engagement with the National Front which had proved electorally significant in the 1976 local election and the launching of a nightly Asian programme, which as noted in chapter three, had as one of its aims improving community relations. Within three months the new Asian programme proved to be a cultural phenomenon with up to eight out of ten Asians in the city tuning in.⁵³ This was so out of step with other BBC local stations it would be another decade before BBC Radio Leeds followed with daily Asian programming. The *Leicester Mercury* had taken a stand against the National Front in its editorials, and in 1979 in trying to persuade local groups against attacking a National Front march in the city it argued;

The voters have rightly rejected their policies having been able to hear and scrutinise them. We repeat that the best way of dealing with intrusion into Leicester affairs by an organisation that so many find abhorrent (and which is strongly opposed by the Leicester Mercury) is to ignore them.⁵⁴

The demise of the National Front in Leicester began after the 1976 election. Appearances in debates and phone in programmes on BBC Radio Leicester coincided with a fall in its popularity. While some of this effect should be attributed to Mrs. Thatcher and her calls for stronger immigration controls in the run up to the 1979 election, Leicester still elected four Labour MPs and a Labour City Council as the Conservatives took over in Westminster.⁵⁵

In radio the *Six O'clock Show* was having a major impact by the 1980s. Night after night it featured what was effectively a local noticeboard in which community groups could appeal for new members and publicise events. For example, in 1983 in response to a major

⁵² McLoughlin, *Multi-Asian Leicester*, p. 111.

⁵³ M. Anwar, *Who Tunes in to What*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ *Leicester Mercury*, Editorial, 10 April 1979, p.13.

⁵⁵ *Leicester Mercury*, Election Results Pages, 5 May 1979.

earthquake in Gujarat it was able to mobilise listeners to raise £12,000 (around £40,000 in present day values) over the course of three one-hour programmes.

Figure 6-7 BBC RADIO LEICESTER MAGAZINE 1983.



Source: BBC Radio Leicester Archive.

The strong and decisive management in the BBC locally was continued through into the expansion of programming in 1989. By then the *Leicester Mercury* had embarked on its daily Asia Edition and the *Sabras* programme strand on local commercial radio was running seven nights week. Using his BBC management position of persuasion both upwards and downwards Owen Bentley was able to oversee the drawing up a new nightly schedule between BBC Radio WM and BBC Radio Leicester that was both extensive and complimentary to the other local media provision. The inclusion of BBC World Service bulletins in Hindi and Urdu marked out the early part of the BBC Radio Leicester schedule as different from the entertainment offering from *Sabras*. The BBC World Service bulletins

complemented the written reports in English in the *Leicester Mercury* Asia Edition. The youth programming later in the evening went on air as the Sabras service ended at 10 pm, again adding a new daily strand to Asian life in Leicester.

This extensive media provision for Asians in Leicester is not included in the historiography of Leicester. Where any media is included it is to highlight the ‘racist’ coverage of the *Leicester Mercury* during the Uganda crisis. It is impossible to measure if the local media had an effect in turning Leicester away from its racist reputation of the early 1970s. However, if the implication of the existing literature is that it helped build up racial tension in the city, it would be difficult to argue that it could not have had the opposite effect from the mid 1970s. Certainly the reflections of former listeners included in this study would support the view that the programming on BBC Radio Leicester was immensely important for Asian listeners to feel connected to the city. I contend that the measurable and demonstrative change in the local media, and particularly BBC Radio Leicester, should be considered as one of the ‘holes’ that McLoughlin identifies in the existing story of Leicester. Indeed, writing nearly twenty years after the arrival Ugandan Asians to Leicester, Marett writes of the ‘quality and extent of coverage by local radio’ for the Asian community.⁵⁶

More recent academic work into community media has shown how effective radio can be in reaching out to minorities – something high on the list of objectives of the new *Six-Fifteen* programme on BBC Radio Leicester in 1976. A policy study for the European Union by academics in this field has highlighted the role of community media in improving the social inclusion and political participation of marginal communities.⁵⁷ That community radio can improve social cohesion and combating extremism is now a recognised part of Government policy in licensing new radio stations in the UK through the Community Radio Fund administered by Ofcom. The Community Media Association champions the work of over 250 community radio stations across the UK in their ‘astoundingly important and brave work to heal divided communities and tackle extremism’.⁵⁸ Therefore I argue that the work of BBC Radio Leicester and the *Six O’clock Show*, and latterly Sabras and

⁵⁶ V. Marett, ‘Resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Leicester’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6.3 (1993), p. 257.

⁵⁷ Bellardi et al, *Spaces of Inclusion*, p.11.

⁵⁸ A. Bawden, ‘Community Radio breaks down barriers between faith, gender and sexuality’, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/21/community-radio-stations-digital-future-volunteers> (Accessed, 11 June 2018),.

the *Leicester Mercury* all played some part in helping to forge community cohesion in Leicester.

6.4 Conclusion

By the end of 1989 all three local media outlets in the city, BBC Radio Leicester, *Sabras* on GEM AM and the *Leicester Mercury* were targeting the Asian community with extensive services. This was down to innovative and creative management rather than any arguments about Leicester having an ‘atypical’ settlement pattern of South Asians compared to most towns and cities in Britain. Of course, during the period covered by this thesis from 1967 to 1990 the largest group in the Asian communities were of Gujarati and East African heritage.⁵⁹ But there is ample evidence in this study of significant daily programming on other BBC local radio stations in the West Midlands, Leeds and Sheffield where the Asian communities were different in make-up. It was management choices and actions that made this super-serving in Leicester possible, for example *The Times* reported considerable interest from other local newspaper groups in the prospect of introducing their own ‘Asia Editions’, though in the end no other editors did so.⁶⁰ Management at BBC Radio Leicester in 1976 and its continued faith in providing Asian programming at a time of social unrest and financial restraint led the way. The demonstrable success of the programming at BBC Radio Leicester in audience surveys in 1978 and 1985 drew further programme expansion in ILR through Don Kotak and his *Sabras* brand. The parent company Midlands Radio could see the potential for advertising revenue and subsequently were able to convince the Radio Authority that a full time Asian station in Leicester was viable. The *Leicester Mercury* were aware of the growing media footprint of Asian radio in Leicester and in 1989 at the same time as BBC Radio Leicester was drawing up plans for the Midlands Asian Network decided to launch an Asia Edition, including expensive news agency services from the Indian sub-continent. That this ‘snowball’ effect happened nowhere else is down to local management. Coupled with the rise of the home VHS and easy availability of Bollywood movies this gave Asians in Leicester a true multi-media environment, but according to Rupal Rajani it was the radio programming that was crucial;

⁵⁹ McLoughlin, *Multi-Asian Leicester*, p. 89.

⁶⁰ A. Lycett, ‘Asian Invasion’, *The Times*, 13 December 1989, p. 31.

Radio more than anything else, radio was the most liberating thing. There were real voices of real people who lived in the same city as you did and that you could relate to.⁶¹

In the mid 1970s Owen Bentley at BBC Radio Leicester became just one example of the creative and innovative management across the city in public and community organisations. These organisations and communities began to turn around the image of Leicester from being a city of ‘racial bigots’ in the 1970s to ‘Britain’s most ethnically harmonious city’ in the 1990s, though in reality both epithets were born of journalists shorthand.⁶² Interviews with former listeners do suggest that the focus placed on Asian programming by BBC Radio Leicester showed the Asian communities in Leicester that they were part of the city.

Therefore, BBC Radio Leicester played an important part in repairing community relations in Leicester, something the daily programming in 1976 was devised to achieve. It led the way for commercial radio to follow, training up the early presenters who moved across from BBC Radio Leicester to Centre Radio in 1981. This combined radio presence was part of convincing the *Leicester Mercury* to develop its own Asia Edition and ultimately marking out the Asian communities in Leicester as the most super-served in Britain by 1989.

⁶¹ OHI, Rupal Rajani, .

⁶² See *Leicester Mercury*, Editorial, 8 June 1973 on the label ‘racial bigotry’ and *The Guardian*, Side by Side, on Leicester becoming a white minority city, 1 January 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/jan/01/britishidentity.features11> (Accessed 21 May 2019).

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis contests the way in which the history of the relationship between the BBC and Asian communities has been presented. The inclusion of the role of BBC local radio in the existing historiography adds a more rounded picture. Where previous studies have concentrated on television and many of their themes of the ambivalence of the BBC towards ethnic minorities are valid, adding the role of BBC local radio provides a more nuanced picture of the organisation. This study shows that BBC local radio, often viewed as ‘Cinderella service’ within the BBC - and within academia - should be taken more seriously and this study adds new depth to the media discourse on ethnic broadcasting. The BBC has never been a monolithic organisation, rather it is series of ‘divisions’ that compete against each other for larger budgets and greater influence within the organisation. Asian programming attracted neither and was therefore pushed to the periphery of the corporation. The attempts by successive Controllers of BBC Radio 4 between 1968 and 1988 to get rid of Asian programming from the network is an example of just how little importance was attached to this programming at the corporate centre. However, this allowed a ‘free space’ for others to experiment and connect with growing Asian communities in England and local radio played an important but previously hidden part in how the BBC adapted to the changing nature of multicultural Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. Inspirational editorial leaders established Asian programming on BBC local radio and then adapted to the changes and inter-generational tensions within the South Asian diaspora by offering demonstrably popular and challenging programming. The history of this programming still has relevance in the BBC today as it develops its local radio policy with a renewed focus on reaching the full breadth of England’s diverse communities.

Asian programming on BBC local radio from the 1970s and 1980s is still undervalued by the BBC. The fact that none of the people prominent in its development such as Owen Bentley, Vijay Sharma and Anita Bhalla have been interviewed for the BBC’s internal oral history project is revealing of the importance attached to it by the corporation. Though David Waine, who led the Midlands region of the BBC in 1980s and 1990s and was responsible the BBC’s Multicultural Unit, has been interviewed. This study has recorded oral histories with 25 key managers, presenters and producers from across the country,

representing twelve of the twenty stations that broadcast Asian programmes.¹ Because this history fails to stand out in the corporate history it fails to feature strongly in the academic literature of Asians in Britain, both in media and social histories. The fact that it is hidden in the corporate memory of the organisation reflects the lack of importance and seriousness with which connecting with ethnic minorities was viewed by the BBC in its policy making and managerial processes in the 1970s and 1980s. This study shows the direct link from the daily *Six-Fifteen* programme launched by BBC Radio Leicester in 1976 to the BBC Asian Network launched on digital radio in 2002. It was BBC local radio station managers such as Owen Bentley at Leicester who championed Asian programming against the grain of accepted corporate policy that made the launch of the present BBC Asian Network possible. However, there are parallels with the campaigns by successive controllers of BBC Radio 4 for the removal of Asian programming from the station and more recent attempts to close the BBC Asian Network. Both campaigns surfaced after the departure of protective Directors General who had championed this work and show a continuing ambivalence within the BBC towards Asian communities.

7.1 Charting programme development

Previous studies have featured limited details of Asian output on BBC local radio by providing snapshots of individual programmes without placing them in the context of the rest of the ‘network’. This work has charted Asian output from the first fifteen-minute programme in Sheffield in May 1968, through to the launch of the BBC Midlands Asian Network by BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Radio WM in October 1989.² Analysis of this data provides demonstrable evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of Asian programming on BBC local radio, it highlights the significant contribution of BBC Radio Leicester through the *Six O’clock Show* and the Midlands Asian Network, points to major differences in provision between stations and regions and accentuates the role of individual managers in programme development. It reveals the lack of an imposed central policy on the provision of Asian programming which highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the editorial independence of BBC local radio station managers. Other features that stand out include the early adoption by most stations of an ‘unofficial’ policy of following the production lead set by the Immigrants programme Unit in Birmingham; presentation in

¹ See Appendix Two

² See Appendix One.

Hindustani, co-presenters representing Indian and Pakistani backgrounds and an avoidance of controversial topics. Language provision clearly changes over time and despite a push for a switch to English presentation in the late 1970s the opportunity for more programming on medium wave (AM) in the 1980s saw a resurgence of language programming. However, the greatest impact of these programming charts is to show the volume and range of output and therefore to demonstrate that not all ethnic programming on BBC local radio could be labelled as tokenistic.

This result of this research should ensure that the role of BBC local radio can no longer be ignored in wider studies about the BBC and race, challenging the academic understanding of how the BBC adapted to the increasingly multicultural nature of Britain of the 1970s and 1980s. Future research should do the same for black programming, which was much slower to develop, held back by the results of the 1965 meetings in London between the BBC and representatives of West Indian communities and High Commissioners which had argued against special programming.³

7.2 Innovative and Creative Management

This thesis reveals that innovative and creative management practices were responsible for many of the developments in Asian programming on BBC local radio. From the earliest days of the first eight experimental stations it was the accepted practice that station managers should be free to devise programming to meet local needs. This was evident in the first Asian programme launched by BBC Radio Sheffield in May 1968. Michael Barton the station manager took local soundings and decided that his programme, *Majlis*, would be presented in Urdu. Most other early programmes followed the example set by network television and radio of broadcasting in the colonial language of Hindustani, including *Jhalak* at BBC Radio Leeds and *Nawrang* at BBC Radio Nottingham which also began in 1968. Barton would go on to be appointed Controller of BBC local radio and rigorously defended the independence of station managers to make local decisions on programming and would therefore impose no central policy on programmes for ethnic minorities.

³ Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*, p. 52.

At BBC Radio Leicester Owen Bentley was able to take a six-month grant from the local Community Relations Council and launch a daily Asian programme with no intention of removing it from the air once the grant ran out. Instead he lobbied the BBC for more funding and managed to continue broadcasting the programme with a mix of new BBC money and subsidies from his own programme allowance. Bentley described this as calculated game of chicken with the BBC in which he rightly surmised that if he could prove the success of the programming – which he did through CRE audience research – the BBC would eventually provide additional funding. This was a tactic he used again in 1989 when, as Regional Manager for Radio in the Midlands, he set up the Midlands Asian Network service with six months of BBC funding. Bentley was also responsible for pushing at the regulatory boundaries by getting Home Office approval in 1985 to share BBC Radio Leicester's *Six o'clock Show* with BBC Radio Nottingham creating a rolling AM / FM split on both stations. Later in 1987 the *Six O'clock Show* would also be shared with the new BBC Radio Bedfordshire in an effort to establish Asian programming in Luton.

Mike Gibbons at BBC Radio Bedfordshire also displayed innovative management as his station developed its Asian output with both a language programme targeting older listeners and a show aimed at the second generation. In 1989 this foresight would give the new BBC South East region the opportunity to network Asian programming across BBC Radio Kent and BBC GLR, the newly branded BBC local station for London. Launched in 1988 BBC GLR had its own form of creative new management as all ethnic minority programming was cut from the schedules, including the daily *Black Londoners* and the weekly *London Sounds Eastern*. Managers Matthew Bannister and Trevor Dann argued that all of the stations programming should reflect all of London's diverse cultures, but whilst that is the policy now adopted by all of BBC local radio today it was deemed too radical at the time, and a year later ethnic minority programming was back in the BBC GLR schedule.

The small scale of individual BBC local radio stations, and in most cases their distance from BBC national and regional centres, allowed station managers to experiment and innovate in relative seclusion within the organisation. Without the editorial independence offered to the station managers in the 1970s and 1980s the development of Asian programming would almost certainly have taken a different path. The development of the Midlands Asian Network in 1989 and its use of BBC local radio medium wave transmitters to become a 'national' service in the 1990s offered incoming DG Greg Dyke a ready-made

digital network radio service in 2002 as he set about pushing his own radical agenda for greater diversity across the BBC.

7.3 BBC Radio Leicester as a pioneer

BBC Radio Leicester was a key focus of developments in Asian programming and revolutionised British Asian radio in 1976 with the launch of *Six Fifteen*. Both Schaffer and Khamkar argue that BBC Radio Leicester was a pioneer in this field but this study goes further by demonstrating its dominance in both the hours of Asian programming it produced and how it recognised and acted upon the need to connect with a younger second generation.⁴ The daily Asian programme *Six-Fifteen* launched in October 1976 was specifically devised to tackle the issue of toxic race relations in the city by increasing understanding between communities. I argue that through this programme BBC Radio Leicester played a part in the developing community cohesion in Leicester. The *Six o'clock Show* is still viewed with warmth and affection by former listeners forty years later. The BBC's own lobbying booklet *Serving Neighbourhood and Nation* published in 1977 clearly shows how BBC Radio Leicester regarded the positive role it should play in serving its increasingly multicultural city, putting it at odds with other stations such as BBC Radio Blackburn which in the same booklet suggested 'the immigrants' were a problem.⁵ *Six-Fifteen* which over time became the *Six o'clock Show* was demonstrably successful, consistently reaching two thirds of the Asian community in Leicester on a daily basis and influencing the content of the rest of the radio station to provide a platform for community interaction. Work by Marett and Herbert argue that the local press was able to increase mistrust and fear in the city in the early 1970s, so it would seem appropriate to suggest that the opposite could also happen later in the decade.⁶ Marett would indeed later praise the range and quality of the Asian programming on BBC Radio Leicester.⁷ More recent studies by funders and regulators of community radio have praised the ability it has to make social gains and to give diverse communities a voice – to feel accepted and included in society.⁸

⁴ See: Schaffer, *Vision of a Nation*; Khamkar, *Evolution of British Asian Radio*.

⁵ BBC, *Serving Neighbourhood and Nation*, p.46.

⁶ See, Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*; Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries*.

⁷ See, Marett, *Settling of Ugandan Asians*.

⁸ For example see; A. Everett, *New Voices: An Evaluation of Fifteen Access Radio Projects*, (Radio Authority; London, 2003); Ofcom Press Release, 'Small Stations Bring Big Benefits to Local Communities', 18 November 2010, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2010/small-stations-bring-big-benefits-for-local-communities> Accessed 1 July 2019; and Bellardi et al, *Spaces of Inclusion*.

It could be argued that as a case study into the connections between BBC local radio and South Asian communities it would be an outlier, with a simpler 'East African Asian' community structure making programming production less complex. This argument does not stand up to scrutiny, other BBC local radio stations with different community structures were later able to rapidly increase Asian programme hours. The key factor in setting up the programming in Leicester was creative management, not the structure of the Asian communities.

7.4 Reflecting the changing South Asian Diaspora

This thesis has highlighted the changing nature of the South Asian diaspora in the 1970s and 1980s which doubled to almost 1.5 million people by 1981. The demographic structure was much younger than the white population and there was an emerging gulf between first and second generations. This divide was centred on identity, between the desire by the older generation to reinforce cultures from 'back home' and the 'Young British Asian' identities of a later generation who viewed Britain as home. On BBC local radio this culture clash was evident in the language of programme presentation which became more, not less, important as the 1980s unfolded. Stations such as BBC Radio Leicester, BBC Radio Leeds, BBC Radio WM, BBC Radio Nottingham, BBC Radio Sheffield and BBC Radio Manchester had two targeted programme strands; one in mother tongue languages aimed at an older audience and one in English designed to connect with younger audiences.

The BBC had launched its network radio and television programmes for South Asians in Britain in 1965 in what it argued was an Indian 'lingua franca' of Hindustani to make the programmes accessible to as many people as possible.⁹ BBC local radio managers had to carefully balance their choice of language with local community structure and most opted to use Hindustani, taking the network programmes as a precedent. The five principle languages of the Asian subcontinent, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu were only gradually introduced to programme presentation after most local stations were

⁹ D. Hendy, 'One of us? Make Yourself at Home', History of the BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/people-nation-empire/make-yourself-at-home> (Accessed 27 June 2019).

continuously lobbied about the use of Hindustani. Stations increasingly recognised the need to broadcast in English to connect with the British born and/or educated second generation that did not have the language fluency in the Asian languages of their parents. Nevertheless, the ability to split programming on to AM and FM transmitters in the late 1980s releasing more programme time saw an increase in language choice. By the early 1990s all of the major South Asian languages were in use, but Hindustani was still retained by six stations that also broadcast programmes in English. BBC Radio Leicester did not broadcast a weekly programme in Gujarati until it launched its extended Midlands Asian Network in 1989 and together with BBC Radio WM was able to broadcast programmes in in Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Mirpuri and Bengali by the 1990s.

As this study has shown the aspirations of the presenters from the 1960s and 1970s and later younger presenters in the 1980s were different. Interviews with some of the first-generation pioneer presenters such as Pushpa Rao in Nottingham, Ali Hasan in Leeds and Mira Trivedi in Leicester revealed they all had one thing in common; they were all keen to serve their local community. Of course, they enjoyed the local ‘celebrity’ status, but their prime focus was service – at best many only received minimal expenses for their work from the BBC. All three continued broadcasting into the twenty-first century and maintained their language presentation seeing their role become one of cultural reinforcement. For a second generation of presenters while service was an element of their commitment many saw the programmes as a way into a BBC career. Two of those I interviewed currently (2019) hold senior positions in BBC local radio; Sanjiv Buttoo is Managing Editor of BBC Radio Leeds and Kamlesh Purohit is Assistant Editor at BBC Radio Leicester. Others such as Saadia Usmani, Deepak Patel and Shawkat Hasmi became BBC staff members. The fact that others were not supported and helped in their career ambitions harks back to both the independence of BBC local radio station managers and a general lack of urgency in the BBC to diversify its work force – as revealed in BBC policy papers. The different outlook between these two generations saw new programming emerge on BBC local radio stations representing a cultural shift. This study matches the work carried out in Southall by Marie Gillespie in the 1990s, which found an increasingly wide split between the cultural experiences of the younger generation, particularly males, and their parents.¹⁰

¹⁰ M. Gillespie, *Cultural Change*.

7.5 The Sound of the Programmes

This research has managed to locate around 20 hours of original programmes and clips broadcast on seven BBC local radio stations in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹ Previous studies have relied on written archives; Linfoot, for example, points to the view of BBC minority programme as ‘pure amateursville’ as this is how an edition of BBC Radio Leicester’s *Six o’clock Show* was described in a BBC programme review board in 1977. Most of the original programming was sourced from former presenters and station managers and its inclusion in the text of this thesis has added a new dimension to the history. It captures important elements of inter-generational tension and how stations developed their programming techniques and sound.

As a broadcast professional I have been able to include critical analysis of some of these programmes which I found to be far from ‘amateur’. The programmes reveal the growing confidence of young broadcasters such as *Smit Petite and the Karachi Kid* at BBC Radio Bedfordshire as they tackled subjects such as arranged marriages in the late 1980s. Similarly, the 1970s recordings from BBC Radio Leicester feature young teenage studio guests reflecting on the problems they encountered growing up between two cultures. I was struck by the enthusiasm and pace of some of these recordings, indeed, one complete *Six O Five Show* from BBC Radio Leicester displays the beginnings of a modern sequence programme with music, studio guests, recorded features, local information and the radio car out in the streets surrounded by inquisitive listeners. These recordings offer a window into the developing nature of multicultural England when in an analogue world of limited media choice BBC local radio played an important part in connecting with new Asian communities.

7.6 Implications for current BBC Policy

The developments in Asian programming on BBC local radio occurred because the station managers in this period were given unprecedented autonomy to devise schedules that they felt best served their local transmission areas. Linfoot argues that the stations adopted the character of the station managers and therefore this independence proved to be both a

¹¹ See: Appendix Three.

weakness and a strength.¹² Some stations offered only tokenistic Asian programming while as this research has shown some station managers offered a radically different option by grasping the opportunities of engaging and connecting with Asian communities as listeners and consumers – not immigrants with problematic programme needs. Since the 1990s the independence of BBC local radio managers has been subsumed into what Tony Hall, the BBC's Director General, has called a 'one-size-fit- all approach' with tightly defined audience targeting.¹³ On the fiftieth anniversary of the service Hall offered to 'give Editors more creative freedom', setting them a challenge 'to do more to reflect the diversity of our communities'.¹⁴ Hall argued that localness is becoming more not less important across England. BBC local radio is now the most significant funded local player following recent regulatory changes that have seen most of the major local commercial licences combined by their owners to replace local programming with national programming and very limited local news.¹⁵

The first iteration of Hall's new policy of creative independence has been seen across the 37 BBC local radio stations in England where a national evening programme has been replaced with new local programmes between 7-10pm. The evidence from the first year has seen one third (32%) of these newly opened up broadcast slots occupied by new BAME presenters, showing that with some independence Editors have felt free to encourage new talent on to the air in the 'nursery slopes' of evening broadcasting.¹⁶

The evidence from this thesis is that local creative independence for BBC local radio station Editors is just as important in the twenty first century as it was in the 1970s and 1980s. The Asian programming that developed both introduced local communities to the BBC and opened up the possibility of careers in broadcasting for young Asians. This is not to argue that rafts of new Asian programming should be launched by BBC local radio, not least because of the internet and its infinite choice of radio streams. What a renaissance in a carefully manged creative freedom could offer BBC local radio is new opportunities to

¹² Linfoot, *BBC local Radio*, p. 271.

¹³ Tony Hall on the Future of BBC Local Radio, 8 November 2017, BBC Media Centre <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2017/tony-hall-local-radio> (Accessed 27 June 2019).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ J. Waterson, Scores of UK radio stations to lose local programmes, *The Guardian*, 26 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/feb/26/scores-of-uk-radio-stations-to-lose-local-programmes> (Accessed 21 June 2019).

¹⁶ Analysis of BBC local radio schedules 24-29 June 2019, for example see BBC Radio Nottingham, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/schedules/p00fzl85> (Accessed 25 June 2019).

engage with people from young BAME backgrounds in new ways by opening up the BBC locally across England as a potential employer or broadcaster of new talent and music. The best Asian programming from the 1970s and 1980s provided a gateway into the BBC for new talent while demonstrably reflecting the needs of local Asian communities. Today the BBC benefits from this work through some of its creative leaders in BBC local radio and in major television broadcasters because local managers had the freedom to experiment.

This thesis adds important new strands to the limited literature about BBC local radio and Asian radio broadcasting in Britain. It makes a contribution to the study of the South Asian diaspora in terms of the emerging split between the first and second generations in the 1970s and 1980s and how this was manifested in the programming on BBC local radio. Having charted the development of Asian programming on BBC local radio it is possible to identify key step changes in the history; the introduction of daily programming in Leicester in 1976 and Leeds in 1985; the networking and sharing of programming in the late 1980s; and the growing importance of programming for a second generation within the Asian diaspora. BBC local radio in England is becoming more not less important in a regulatory era that has seen localness dissipated in commercial radio and in which the diversity of local communities varies widely across the country. This thesis argues that elements of this history, such as managerial independence, are as important today as in the 1970s and 1980s.

I therefore argue that this previously hidden history of BBC local radio and its Asian programming changes the way in which the BBC in this period should be viewed. Key local radio programmes demonstrated that the BBC made important and lasting connections with local Asian communities. These successful stations also offered an entry point for these communities to careers in the corporation. The experience at BBC Radio Leicester shows that this programming played an early part in improving community cohesion in the city and led other local media outlets in accepting the new Asian communities as local consumers.

Appendix One

BBC local Radio Programme Provision.

The following tables are based on returns from BBC local radio station managers to BBC local radio HQ and local radio billings pages in the *Radio Times*.

BBC Local Radio Asian Programme Provision 1969-1975

Station	1969	1972	1975
Birmingham	= not on air	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Blackburn		<i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujrati/Urdu – 30 minutes	<i>Mehfil</i> ; off air awaiting a re-launch.
Derby		<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindustani -30 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindustani -30 mins.
Leeds	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali – 30 minutes.	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali – 30 minutes
Leicester		<i>Milan</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes	<i>Milan</i> ; Hindustani – 45 minutes
London		<i>Jharoka</i> ; Hindustani and <i>Darpan</i> ; Bengali – 25 minutes each.	<i>Jharoka</i> ; Hindustani and <i>Darpan</i> ; Bengali – 25 minutes each.
Manchester		<i>EastwardsNorthwestwards</i> ; English / Urdu – 30 minutes.	<i>EastwardsNorthwestwards</i> ; English / Urdu – 2 x 30 minutes.
Medway			<i>Sangam</i> ; - Hindustani – 30 minutes fortnightly.
Newcastle			
Nottingham	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 40 minutes.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindustani – 40 minutes.
Oxford		<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindustani – 30 minutes.
Sheffield	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali – 45 minutes.
Total Hours	1 hour 45 minutes	6 hours 20 minutes	7 hours 5 minutes

Source: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.

BBC Local Radio Asian Programme Provision 1976-1983

Station	1976	1979	1981	1983
Birmingham /WM	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 90 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 75 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 30 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Blackburn	<i>Mehfil</i> ; off air awaiting a re-launch.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu & Gujarati - 60 mins	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu & Gujarati - 60 mins	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu/Gujarati - 60 mins.
Bristol	<i>Mehfil</i> ; - Hindi/Urdu - 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Hindi/Urdu/English - 30 minutes (Alt. Sundays).
Cleveland				<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu - 25 mins.
Derby	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi / Urdu -30 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi / Urdu -60 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English, 45 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English, 45 mins.
Leeds	<i>Jhalak</i> ; Hindi /Urdu - 30 minutes. <i>Jhankar</i> ; Bengali - 60 minutes	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali - 90 mins.	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali - 90 mins.	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali - 90 mins.
Leicester	<i>Six-Fifteen</i> ; English - 45 minutes x 4 <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 45 minutes	<i>6-3-0 Show</i> ; English - 60 minutes x 4 & <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 60 minutes	<i>Six-O-Five Show</i> ; English - 60 minutes x 4 <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 60 minutes	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 4 x 60 mins. <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 60 mins.
London	London Sounds Eastern; English - 60 mins.	London Sounds Eastern; English - 60 mins.	London Sounds Eastern; English - 60 mins.	<i>London Sounds Eastern</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Manchester	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English / Urdu - 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English - 60 mins.
Medway	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu - 30 mins fortnightly.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu - 40 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi /Urdu - 45 mins.	<i>Sangam</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 45 mins.
Merseyside			<i>Ijtama</i> ; English, 30 mins.	<i>Ijtama</i> ; English, 30 mins.
Nottingham	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 90 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 60 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 60 mins.	<i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 75 mins.
Oxford	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 30 mins.	<i>Sabrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 30 mins.
Sheffield	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali - 60 mins.	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu / Bengali - 60 mins.	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu - 45 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 15 mins.	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu - 40 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 15 mins.
Solent				<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.
Stoke	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 22 mins.	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 30 mins.
Total Hours	14 hours 15 minutes	16 hours 15 minutes	15 hours 52 minutes	16 hours 50 minutes

Sources: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.
Radio Times Local and Regional Editions.

In 1985/6 the BBC moved to a regional management system therefore the remaining charts are set out by regions.

BBC South and East.

BBC Local Radio Asian Programme Provision 1985-89.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Bedfordshire	<i>Sounds Eastern;</i> English 60 mins. <i>Asian Voice;</i> English 60 mins. <i>The 635 Show;</i> English 90 mins (TX Leicester)	<i>Yaadien;</i> <i>Hindi/Urdu, 60</i> <i>mins.</i> <i>Asian Voice,</i> <i>English, 60 mins</i> <i>Smit' Petite and the</i> <i>Karachi Kid;</i> <i>English – 60 mins.</i>	<i>Smit Petite & The</i> <i>Karachi Kid;</i> English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice;</i> English, 60 mins. <i>Yaddien;</i> <i>Hindi/Urdu – 60</i> <i>mins.</i>
Bristol	Prog. Off air	Prog. Off air	Prog. Off air
Cambridge	<i>No Prog. on air</i>	<i>No Prog. on air</i>	<i>Sounds Eastern;</i> English, 90 minutes. (Peterboro' AM only)
London / GLR	<i>London Sounds</i> <i>Eastern;</i> English – 60 mins.	<i>London Sounds</i> <i>Eastern;</i> English – 60 mins.	<i>Smit Petite & The</i> <i>Karachi Kid;</i> English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice;</i> English, 60 mins. (AM Only)
Medway / Kent	<i>Sangam;</i> Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Sangam;</i> Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Yaddien;</i> Hindi/Urdu – 60 mins. <i>Smit Petite & The</i> <i>Karachi Kid;</i> English – 120 mins. <i>Asian Voice;</i> English, 60 mins.
Northampton	<i>All Together Now</i> – English; 30 mins.	<i>Rona & Jona;</i> English – 60 mins	<i>All Together Now;</i> English – 60 mins.
Oxford	<i>Sabrang;</i> Hindi / Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Eastern Touch;</i> English – 60 mins.	<i>Sounds Eastern;</i> English – 60 mins.
Solent	<i>Intikhab;</i> Urdu & English, 45 mins.	Prog. Off Air	Prog. Off Air
Total Hours	7 hours 15 mins	7 hours	14 hours 30 mins

**Sources: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.
Radio Times Local and Regional Editions.**

BBC North.

BBC Local Radio Asian Programme Provision 1983-89.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Blackburn / Lancashire	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu/Gujarati/English – 60 mins.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu – 90 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujarati – 60 mins.	<i>Mehfil</i> ; Urdu – 60 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; Gujarati – 60 mins. <i>Mehfil</i> ; English – 60 mins. (AM Only)
Cleveland	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 30 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 60 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; English/Urdu – 30 mins. (AM Only)
Leeds	<i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins. <i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 30 minutes.	<i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 45 minutes. <i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins.	<i>Connections</i> ; English – 5 x 45 minutes. <i>Sursugar</i> ; Hindi/Urdu & Bengali – 90 mins. (AM Only)
Manchester	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English – 120 mins.	<i>Eastwards North Westwards</i> ; English – 2 x 60 mins.	<i>Jhankar</i> ; Urdu, 60 mins <i>Eastern Horizon</i> ; English – 60 mins (AM Only)
Merseyside	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins.	<i>Open House</i> ; English – 60 mins. (AM Only)
Newcastle	<i>Bridge the Gap</i> ; English – 30 mins.	<i>Asian News</i> ; English 5 mins.	Prog. Off air
Sheffield	<i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu – 72 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 18 mins.	<i>Asian News</i> ; English 5 x 5 mins. <i>Majalis</i> ; Urdu - 70 mins. <i>Balaka</i> ; Bengali - 20 mins.	7.00 – <i>Iffat and Yasin</i> ; Bengali and Urdu – 60 mins 8.00 – <i>Eastern Air</i> ; English – 60 mins 9.00 – <i>Asian Youth Show</i> ; English – 60 mins (AM Only)
Total Hours	9 hours 30 mins	13 hours 15 mins	13 hours 45 mins

Sources: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.
Radio Times Local and Regional Editions.

BBC Midlands.

BBC Local Radio Asian Programme Provision 1983-89.

Station	1985	1987	1989
Birmingham /WM	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 120 mins.	<i>East in West</i> ; English - 2 x 60 mins.	25-hour weekly Service: Inc. <i>East in West</i> ; <i>Eastern Beat</i> ; <i>Gazal and Gold</i> . (Mon-Fri only on AM) BBC WS Hindi and Urdu News
Derby	<i>Aaj Kaal English</i> - 60 mins	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English - 145 mins.	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> ; English - 90mins.
Leicester	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 3 x 60 & 1 x 90 mins. <i>Milan</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 60 mins.	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; English 3 x 60 & 1 x 90 mins. Hindi/Urdu- 60 mins. <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> ; English - 90 mins.	32-hour weekly Service: Inc. <i>Six O'clock Show</i> ; <i>Ankur</i> (Gujarati Prog.); <i>Milan</i> and <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> . (Mon - Fri only AM; Sat on FM and AM) BBC WS Hindi and Urdu News
Nottingham	<i>Six O'clock Show (TX Leicester)</i> ; English 60 mins <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 75 mins.	<i>Six O'clock Show (TX Leicester)</i> ; English 60 mins <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi / Urdu - 120 mins.	<i>Dhamaka</i> ; English - 120 mins. <i>Nawrang</i> ; Hindi/Urdu - 120 mins. (Both AM only)
Stoke	<i>Intikhab</i> ; Urdu & English, 45 mins.	<i>Eastern Horizon</i> ; English, 120 mins.	<i>Samantha Meah</i> ; English 120 mins
Total Hours	10 hours	16 hours 15 mins	64 hours 30 minutes

Sources: Various papers in BBC WAC File R102/38/1 LR HQ Minorities Programmes.
Radio Times Local and Regional Editions.

Appendix Two

Oral Histories: BBC local Radio Programme Presenters, Producers and Managers.

Station	Name (Alphabetical)	
Bedfordshire	Saadia Usmani	The Karachi Kid of <i>Smit Petite and the Karachi Kid</i> broadcast on BBC Radios Bedfordshire, GLR and Kent from 1988.
Blackburn	Siraj Patel	Presenter of the Gujarati section of <i>Mehfil</i> :1971-2008.
Cambridgeshire	Ansar Ali	Presenter of <i>Sounds Eastern</i> from 1988 on the Peterborough transmitter.
Derby	Satvinder Rana	Presenter of <i>Aaj Kaal</i> from 1981.
Kent	Bikram Singh Bhamra	Former Voice of Kenya staff member, presented <i>Sangam</i> :1974-1989.
Leeds	Mussy Abassi Sanjiv Buttoo Ali Hasan	Presented <i>Connections</i> and <i>Junction 774</i> from 1989. Producer of ethnic programmes from 1988, presenter <i>Connections</i> from 1992. Managing Editor of BBC Radio Leeds from 2015. Presenter <i>Jhankar</i> :1972-2003.
Leicester	Mike Allbut Greg Ainger Owen Bentley Neeta Kara Dave Kirkwood Don Kotak Deepak Patel Kamlesh Purohit Rupal Rajani Vijay Sharma Mira Trivedi	Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i> and <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> . Producer <i>Six o'clock Show</i> . Station Manager BBC Radio Leicester (1975-1983) and Head of Radio Midlands (1983 – 93) Presenter <i>Weekend Bazaar</i> . Producer <i>All Together Now</i> Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i> . Owner Sabras radio. Station Assistant, Producer then BBC Asian Network Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i> , Assistant Editor BBC Radio Leicester from 2015. Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i> , current station presenter. Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i> , then Senior Producer and Managing Editor BBC Asian Network. Presenter <i>Six o'clock Show</i>
London	Geetha Bala	Presenter <i>London Sounds Eastern</i> and BBC Trainer.
LBC London ¹	Chaman Lal Chaman	Presenter <i>Geet Mala</i> .
Northampton	Jona Kotnis	Presenter <i>All Together Now</i> from 1984
Nottingham	Pushpa Rao	Presenter Nawrang: 1972 - 2003
Sheffield	Michael Barton Shawkat Hashmi	Station Manager Radio Sheffield (1968-1973) Controller BBC local radio (1973-1985). Producer to present day.
WM	Anita Bhalla June Harben	Presenter East in West, then Senior Producer. Became Head of Diversity BBC English Regions. Education Producer.

NB: Full details of the interviews in the Bibliography.

¹ Commercial station for London.

Appendix Three

Audio: Archive Programmes and Contemporary Material.

The first table contains programme recordings from the 1970s – 1990s from a variety of sources although most were provided by the presenters themselves.

Station	Programme	TX	Duration (Minutes)
Bedfordshire	Smite Petite & the Karachi Kid	18 February 1987	55'00"
		2 April 1987	55'00"
		27 May 1987	55'00"
		10 June 1987	55'00"
		17 June 1987	55'00"
Blackburn	<i>Mehfil</i> – Assassination of Mrs. Gandhi – Siraj Patel	31 October 1984	54'04"
Derby	<i>Aaj Kaal</i> – Satvinder Rana	13 April 1984	91'00"
Leeds	'One World' Concert	11 May 1980	05'00"
Leicester	<i>Six O Five Show</i>	8 May 1977	54'00"
	<i>Six O Five Show Clips (Young People and Immigration)</i>	1978	15'36"
	Asian Song Contest – Highlights	September 1980	00'27"
	<i>Kahani Apni Apni</i> – Soap Opera, Episodes 14 and 20	Summer 1983	30'23"
	<i>Six o'clock Show</i> – Open & Close	April 1985	02,00"
	<i>Weekend Bazaar</i> Trailer	February 1987	00'30"
	<i>Weekend Bazaar</i> – Mike Allbut	7 February 1987	38'30"
	<i>Six o'clock Show</i> – Kamlesh Purohit	January 1989	42'42"
	<i>Weekend Bazaar</i> – Neeta Kara	16 July 1994	120'00"
	<i>Weekend Bazaar</i> – Neeta Kara	31 December 1994	47'39"
London	<i>London Sounds Eastern:</i>		
	<i>Bank Holiday Special</i>	Summer 1985	120'00"
	<i>Bank Holiday Special</i>	Summer 1986	120'00"
	<i>Eastern Ear: South Asian / Jazz Fusion</i>	1984	45'00"
WM	<i>East in West</i> – Feature on the decline of Asian Cinema in the West Midlands	1981	14'11"

This second table contains contemporary material broadcast as part of this project – or inspired by it, such as the anniversary programme at BBC Radio Leeds celebrating fifty years of Asian programming.

Station	Programme	TX	Duration (Minutes)
Leeds	Programme Celebrating Fifty years of Asian broadcasting on the station.	20 May 2018	90'00"
Leicester	Trailer for <i>Six O'clock Show</i> Live!	23-28 April 2018	0'59"
	<i>Six O'clock Show</i> Live!	29 April 2018	120'00"
	Breakfast Series 'Patels of Belgrave'		
	Based on this research and archive recordings of <i>Kahani Apni Apni</i> ;		
	Leela (Mother)	23 April 2018	04'06"
	Geeta (Daughter)	24 April 2018	03'16"
	Raj (Father)	25 April 2018	02'50"
	Navin (Son)	26 April 2018	04'08"
	Baa (Grandmother)	27 April 2018	03'29"

I am actively looking for an archive for these recordings. The BBC holds copyright in all of them as broadcast and most contain commercial music so they are not suitable to be hosted on the internet, unless on a BBC site. They will be temporarily stored on the University of Leicester research drive along with the oral history interviews from this project.

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