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Introduction

This chapter considers the spatial nature of school choice and introduces the three areas in Greater Manchester in which the study took place: Cheadle Hulme, Chorlton and Whalley Range. In the UK, despite the diversification of different types of schools and modes of admission, schooling remains driven by location. Given that ‘choice’ is limited (discussed further in Chapter 3), the clearest way for families to exercise choice over schooling in the public sector is to move to be nearer a desirable school. Every year, newspapers run articles explaining the extra cost of buying houses near good schools. In just one example of this, in 2015, *The Telegraph* claimed that ‘house prices in the postcodes of the best-performing, non-fee-paying schools [are] around 28 per cent higher than their surrounding area’.¹ But of course this is a very uneven and unequal mechanism for choice – only some people have the means to move into the ‘right’ areas, whereas others are constrained by lack of resources, or, in the case of some migrant groups, lack understanding that this might be a way to exercise choice over schooling and that where you live might have a profound impact on your child’s schooling (see Byrne and De Tona 2012 for further discussion). Whilst (as will be discussed below) the primary schools selected in this study may not have exactly matched the demographic make-up of different areas in which they were located, the chapter will explore how experiences of going to particular primary schools also played a role in shaping interviewees’ perceptions of the area in which they lived. Running alongside questions of schooling itself, residential choices bring together spatial and social identities which are often heavily classed and racialised. Savage et al. (2005: 207) argue that ‘one’s residence is a crucial, possibly the crucial, identifier of who you are’. This intertwining of social and spatial identities

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means that where you live does not just reflect who you are: it also plays an important role in *shaping* who you are and – particularly when thinking about schooling – who your children become. In considering the spatial nature of school choice, this chapter will first explore the different features of the three areas of the study. The areas are not equally geographically close: Chorlton and Whalley Range are neighbouring areas in the south of Manchester, less than three miles from the city centre; Cheadle Hulme is ten miles from the centre, also in the south of Manchester. Yet, as with many cities in the UK, the demographic make-up of these small areas is relatively distinct, in terms of ethnicity and class. As the chapter will explore, these differences play out in how the areas are talked about by the interviewees. Having introduced the area, and the interviewees, the chapter considers the different narratives about place produced by interviewees in the different areas. It will show how, for some more than others, there was a sense of what Savage et al. term elective belonging, but should perhaps also be understood as affective belonging (Savage et al. 2005) in the areas in which they have chosen to live. Some interviewees have strong attachments to the area and do indeed feel that where they live in some way represents something about themselves – they are the kind of people who live in that area and have shared values and ways of being.

This has a knock-on significance for schooling as, even when they weren't thinking consciously about schools when they moved to the area, those with strong affective belonging are often reassured by the presence of people like them. As a result, they are relatively more happy with the choice of school which is available to them even if the process of choice can be stressful. As Michaela Benson argues, residential mobilities are entangled with the 'making and remaking of classed identities', even though it can happen with limited reflexivity, so that it appears to some as a 'natural' residential trajectory (Benson 2014). Thus, as we shall see, for some, the question of choice is exercised *before* children are considered. For some of the interviewees, their pre-children residential choices influenced by spatial as well as social identities mean that they are already in areas with sufficient 'people like us', so do not have to make moves into new areas explicitly with the aim of getting into the right catchment areas for their children's schooling – they are already there. Thus what was essentially a prior process of choice can make the decision not to move to get access to different schools appear like a non-choice, masking

how practices of race and class have shaped decision-making.² Simon Burgess et al. (2015), drawing on the Millennium cohort study, conclude that there is not a great deal of evidence that people move to get near better schools. However, it may not be possible in a quantitative survey to explore the complexities behind decisions to stay in, or move into, an area. Considerations about schooling may be enfolded into other broader questions of affective belonging which would not necessarily be accounted for in answers to a survey.

The happy ‘coincidence’ of finding oneself living in an area with enough parents like oneself is not the experience for everyone interviewed for this research; or present in each of the areas to the same extent. There are others who may move to a new area as a more conscious choice – in order to achieve for themselves (or their children) forms of social mobility through education. These practices fall less easily into a narrative of a natural, unreflexive, relationship between self and place as they require concerted effort and intention. In addition, as the chapter will show, it can at times risk feeling like ‘a fish out of water’ (Bourdieu 1991) where individuals can be made to feel that they are not sufficiently ‘people like us’. Thus the chapter enables the exploration of accounts of people who feel less securely middle-class, or less securely respectable (Skeggs 1997). As argued in Chapter 1, these voices tend to be overlooked in research on school choice which is focused more on the (white) professional middle class which is confident of its place in society and also entitlement. At the same time, we will consider how migrant parents may not initially have the knowledge to understand the relationship between schools and place and they and others do not necessarily account for their living in particular areas as the result of conscious decisions or choices, even when they are generally happy with and comfortable in the area. This chapter will begin with an introduction to the fieldwork element of the research, introducing the demographic characteristics of the three areas and of the primary schools through which the parents were contacted. It will also explain how participants were contacted and brought into the study and give a brief overview of the participants and the content of the interviews. The chapter then considers the question of geographical mobility in the lives of the participants and the extent to which they narrate it as connected to questions of their children’s schooling.

**Cheadle Hulme, Chorlton and Whalley Range:
the research sites and the schools**

In order to track the ways in which school choice is a spatial process, we sought to interview parents in three areas in Greater Manchester: Cheadle Hulme, Chorlton and Whalley Range. These areas were selected because of their socially mixed populations and different class and ethnic compositions. Chorlton and Whalley Range are neighbouring wards³ within central Manchester, and Cheadle Hulme is in Stockport, part of Greater Manchester. Ward-level census data for 2011 show that Chorlton has a large middle-class population (with 47 per cent of residents employed as managers, directors or professionals). As we shall see, the local perception is that it is dominated by a particular kind of middle class, what has been referred to as the 'new middle class', who as parents are 'liberal-minded, favouring more progressive forms of educational provision that are based on implicit forms of control' (Power 2004: 25–6). Whalley Range and Cheadle Hulme have similar occupational profiles, both with around 35 per cent of residents who are managers, directors or professionals. In terms of the ethnicity of residents in the areas, Whalley Range is most ethnically mixed, followed by Chorlton and Cheadle Hulme. Ward-level statistics from the 2011 census show that 90 per cent of Cheadle Hulme residents, 82 per cent of Chorlton residents and 48 per cent of Whalley Range residents were white. This compares with the Manchester average of 67 per cent white. Thirty-one per cent of Whalley Range residents were Asian/British and 10 per cent Black/Black British. International migration also figures more strongly in Whalley Range, where 26 per cent of the population were born outside the United Kingdom or EU, compared to 9 per cent of those from Chorlton and 7 per cent from Cheadle Hulme.⁴ In terms of religion, the majority of residents in Cheadle Hulme were Christian (65 per cent) with the next largest group being those of no religion (22 per cent). In Chorlton, residents declaring no religion were a larger group than in Cheadle Hulme and of a similar proportion (around 40 per cent) to Christians. Muslims made up 8 per cent of the population in Chorlton. In Whalley Range, Christians and Muslims each made up about a third of all residents (with another third having no religion). Cheadle Hulme has a particularly high rate of owner-occupation (83 per cent – compared to 57 per cent for Chorlton and 45 per cent for Whalley Range) and a higher rate of married residents. Cheadle

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Hulme has voted Liberal Democrat in both local and national elections in the last couple of decades, whilst both Whalley Range and Chorlton consistently elect Labour representatives.

Thus we have a series of comparisons which the three areas offer. All are residential, more-or-less suburban areas with fairly good public transport to the city centre. Chorlton is the most prosperous area, with higher house prices, a higher percentage of professional and managerial residents and a higher average income. It has a relatively large white population compared to the Manchester average, but with fewer white people than Cheadle Hulme, which has a similar average income to Chorlton, but cheaper housing (with more owner-occupiers) and a slightly older age profile, with markedly more married residents. Whalley Range, by contrast with both Cheadle Hulme and Chorlton is the poorer area, with lower house prices and lower owner-occupation and lower average income (although a similar number of managers and professionals as Cheadle Hulme). It has markedly less white residents than either Chorlton or Cheadle Hulme and has a large South Asian, Muslim population. The demographic characteristics of the areas were broadly reflected in the school populations, although, as will be discussed below, ethnic minorities are overrepresented in all three areas schools compared to the general population of their ward.

In order to locate parents living in these areas who were in the process of choosing secondary schools for their children (currently in the last year of primary school and therefore ten to eleven years old), in September 2009 we approached three primary schools (one in each area) to locate parents. One headteacher made the very helpful suggestion that we should come to a parent-teacher evening and approach parents or carers⁵ there. Although this provided a self-selecting group (those parents who chose to come to speak to teachers about their children's progress), all schools confirmed that there was generally a very high turnout for parent-teacher evenings, especially in the last year of primary schooling. In terms of the primary schools⁶ which the children were already attending, in Whalley Range (Heath Primary School) the large majority of children came from ethnic minorities and there was a much higher than the national average take-up of FSM.⁷ In Chorlton (Longford Primary School), just over 50 per cent of the children were from ethnic minorities and there was a below-average eligibility for FSM.⁸ Finally, in Ashover Primary School in Cheadle Hulme, under 25 per cent of the children

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were from an ethnic-minority background, few of whom were at an early stage of learning English, and there was a lower than average eligibility for FSM. It is clear that the schools cannot be simply read off as representing the larger areas in which they are found. So, for example, taking just one characteristic, Whalley Range has a population of which 48 per cent are white, whilst at Heath Primary school only 11 per cent of students are classified as white. Equally, whereas the ward level statistics show 79 per cent of Chorlton residents are white, at Longford Primary, this figure is 51 per cent. For Cheadle, the figures are 87 per cent of residents are white whilst 76 per cent of students at Ashover Primary School are white. The differences between area statistics and school-level ones will be influenced by different age demographics for the different ethnic groups, with older residents tending to be white. But they may also indicate the effect of parental choice of primary schools and it may be that, in Whalley Range in particular, there is an element of 'flight', by parents who sent their children to schools in neighbouring areas. One parent who lived in Whalley Range did tell us that he had lied about his address in order to get into Longford Primary in Chorlton.⁹ In addition, as school catchments do not coincide with ward boundaries, school populations may reflect this. Heath Primary also draws pupils from neighbouring areas with higher numbers of ethnic minorities (such as Moss Side). Nonetheless, although the schools do not represent their very local areas exactly, this chapter will consider the parents' perceptions of those broad areas in which the schools were set and how they talked about how they came to live in the areas and therefore in the catchments for different schools. The next section will describe the characteristics of the sample and the interviews themselves.

The parents

Following the suggestion of the headteacher and approaching parents at primary school parent-teacher evenings proved a successful way of locating research participants. There was plenty of time to introduce the research as parents waited to see the teachers and the fact that we had been given permission to approach the parents suggested a school endorsement of the research which helped establish our credentials as researchers. We had more interviewees from Chorlton (19) and Cheadle Hulme (19) than Whalley Range (14). The Appendix provides a table providing key features of all the participants who were interviewed between October 2009 and March 2010. Some

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Whalley Range parents did not want to take part in the interviews as they were not confident in speaking English. However, 50 per cent of the interviewees from Whalley Range were migrants, and almost all were ethnic minorities. Therefore we would argue that language, whilst an important factor, did not skew the sample too heavily (see Byrne and De Tona 2012 for a further discussion of the experience of migrants in choosing schools). In general, the ethnic mix – as well as the social class position – of the interviewees broadly matched that of the schools in all areas. Once we had explained the nature of the research, and interviews, we then arranged to actually interview the parents later, generally in their own homes for their convenience. The interviews were conducted either just before or soon after the deadline for parents to submit their school choices for their children to the local authority. Thus, experiences of open days and weighing up the options were fresh in their minds. The majority of the 45 interviews (with 51 participants, as in some cases both parents were present at the interviews) were conducted by Carla De Tona, with a minority done by Bridget Byrne. Both Carla and Bridget are white and broadly middle-class and Carla was a migrant (from Italy via Ireland). The majority of the interviews were conducted with women, with only 11 men taking part, often in the form of joint interviews with their partners. This mirrors other research done on school choice and reflects perhaps women interviewees' greater willingness to volunteer for research as well as their greater involvement in their children's lives and schooling (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). In some cases, women either did not work outside the house or worked part-time, so had more flexibility in being available to be interviewed.

The interviews ranged over a series of topics, including how long the respondents had lived in the area; when and why they had moved there (if they were not born in the area). We explored the choices they had made around the primary schooling of their child and asked about their experiences of visiting schools and navigating the process of choosing a secondary school. We also asked what they were looking for in the schools and how they came to the decision in the family – who had a voice and who made the final decision. The interviewees were prompted to compare their processes of choosing schools with what they remembered of the choice around high school for themselves as children. Finally, we elicited their views of the whole process of arranging secondary schooling. In general, the parents had a lot to say about these issues. They were in the 'thick of it' in terms of visiting

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schools, talking about them with friends and family and making the choices. They seemed to respond with enthusiasm to an opportunity to discuss their experiences although, as we shall see, some were more reluctant to talk directly about issues of race and class. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, for many the process of choosing a school for or with their children was quite a stressful process which they wanted to talk about. However, not all the parents were making the choice for the first time – for those with older children, it was often the case that the younger sibling would follow the older one and the decision was effectively made. These parents also had the security of knowing that their child was guaranteed a place because of the sibling policy. They were also able to reflect on the process of choosing school having also got to know the secondary schools a bit better through their children attending them. Some who had older children were able to compare the processes of choosing now with several years ago. As the next section will discuss, there were different broad trends in the ways in which interviewees in the three areas accounted for their experiences of geographical mobility and stasis and how they related to their localities.

Moving for schools

The respondents in this study, although living in relatively close geographical areas, had different characteristics in terms of their geographic mobility and quite distinct profiles in terms of movements into the area – whether these were international migrations, movements within Britain or coming from within Manchester. As we will discuss in more detail in this chapter, the interviews in the areas also gave quite different reasons for moving into the areas in question. Cheadle Hulme had noticeably higher rates of interviewees who had grown up in the area, or only moved relatively locally, while Whalley Range was characterised, as might be expected, by more international migration, and Chorlton by a mixture of local, national and international migration. It should be noted that these reasons were given in response to a question which asked whether local schools had been a factor in them choosing to move into or stay in the area. Thus it inevitably relies on their memories of their motivations. In addition, in responses to these types of questions, there may also be an element of performative parenting and/or belonging. For some, saying that you planned your move into the area on the basis of schools demonstrates serious and conscientious parenting and is a way of stressing the

importance of education. However, for others, a more relaxed attitude about schooling (particularly at primary level) can be a demonstration both of confidence in one's own capacity as liberal middle-class parent to be able to ensure the good education of their child whatever the school, and a more 'right-on' attitude about schooling, and, as we shall see in later chapters, about the 'mix' in school.

In Cheadle Hulme four respondents had grown up in the area (compared to two in Whalley Range and just one in Chorlton – who had moved between Whalley Range and Chorlton). Furthermore, of those who had moved into Cheadle Hulme, the vast majority had grown up in nearby areas of Manchester – most often other parts of Stockport. Only three of the interviewees who lived in Cheadle Hulme had not grown up in Manchester (one had migrated from China and the others from London and Oxford). This is perhaps reflective of the classed profile of the residents in Cheadle Hulme who tended to have working-class or lower-middle-class jobs that often require less geographical mobility. The respondents from Cheadle Hulme, although they had often moved only from nearby areas, were relatively recent arrivals to Cheadle Hulme, having lived there for an average of 7.6 years (compared with 10.5 years in Whalley Range and 13.0 years in Chorlton). This meant that most had moved since they had had children and the majority said that schooling had been a major factor in choosing where to live. This somewhat contradicts much of the literature on school choice which, because of its tendency to focus on (often professional) middle-class schooling choice, fails to see the ways in which other parents also use tactics of geographic mobility in order to get their children into 'the right' or perhaps 'better' schools. As we shall see throughout the book, these interviews show that many parents of relatively modest income paid a great deal of attention to which schools their children were likely to go to and they were also prepared to move into areas which had what they considered to be better schools. Whether schools were better was often read off the general population of the area being better as in 'quiet' and not 'rough', in ways which we argue are raced and classed. In many cases, this move was discussed in terms of avoidance of the wrong type of mostly classed, but sometimes also raced, others. In the following sections, we examine how the parents living in the different places described the areas in which they lived and in which their children's primary schools and prospective secondary schools were located. The following section focuses on the responses of Cheadle Hulme

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parents, who were more likely to say that they *had* moved to get their children into better schools. Their sense of what they were looking for (and particularly what they were trying to avoid) demonstrate a more liminal position in terms of class. Here, residential mobility is used to ensure that their children go to the right schools, with the right classmates, in order to achieve or retain a middle-classness that might otherwise be perceived to be at risk.

Moving to 'quiet' Cheadle Hulme and leaving the 'rough' behind

As mentioned above, many interviewees from Cheadle Hulme had moved to the area from other often quite local areas in the period after having children. The reputation of local schools – as well as the behaviour of other parents and children, as we shall see below, played a crucial role in their decision to move into the area. However there were also other children-related reasons which prompted the movement (or stasis). Staying closer to home meant that they were also able to draw on family support – including, importantly, for childcare. As Emily explained:

The reason we came back to this area was, it sounds awful, but it was childcare because I wanted to go back to full-time work. My sister, she had just had her two children, so they were quite young, and she had a part-time job in a school. So it was kind of like ideal because the kids would be with her when she wasn't at school. (Emily, Cheadle Hulme, white, council worker)

As they had mostly lived relatively locally, respondents were also able to draw on their local networks to gain further knowledge about schools. Nonetheless, this also meant that they had at times to grapple with the changing state of local schools, where school reputations shifted over time. For some interviewees, or their partners, it could be difficult to reconcile their own childhood experience of a poor school with its contemporary reputation of being a good and improved school. The interviewees in Cheadle Hulme stand out compared to those in Whalley Range and Chorlton because the majority of those who had not been born in the area, said that schooling *was* an important factor in their choice to move to Cheadle Hulme. This often involved moving into what was considered a 'better' area. Residential mobility here was central to social mobility. It was a conscious rather than an unreflexive choice and represented a strategy which was adopted

at the particular life-stage of having children and thinking explicitly about their education.

When describing the classed nature of Cheadle Hulme, the respondents perhaps inevitably also reflected on their own class positions and often demonstrated the ambivalence about class which was discussed in Chapter 1. For some there was a perception of overlap between the area itself and their own sense of themselves. Here we see the intertwining of residential and social identities (Savage et al. 2005, Benson 2014). Whilst some chose to describe themselves as 'working-class' and others as 'middle-class', there was a shared sense across the Cheadle Hulme parents that they were, as one interviewee put it, 'middling'. For example, Emma was a white secondary-school teacher who was married to a scaffolder. She characterised Cheadle Hulme as middle-class and her explanation of this shows the slip-pages that occur between considering the area and her own family:

I don't know why I would say middle-class. I think it's because we're not loaded. We've not got lots of money. It's not very posh. It's full of people who work, have enough money to get by most of the time. So it's not deprived. It's kind of in the middle. We're not up here with wads of money and social status, but we're fortunate enough not to be in maybe poverty or the lower band, if you like.

This narrative, where the social make-up of area could be summarised with reference to the self, was common in Cheadle Hulme as well as Chorlton and is indicative of forms of affective belonging where self and area are considered as mutually reflexive. However, as will be discussed below, this was not entirely sustainable for all the respondents as some had been made to feel that they didn't have the right kind of class markers (due to being 'young' parents or coming originally from a 'rough' area and having mixed-race children). Thus those on the edges of respectability (Skeggs 1997) could be made to feel that they perhaps did not have the same level of 'fit' with the area and were looked down upon by others. This produced an affective burden of a feeling of fish-out-of-water rather than the feeling of comforting sameness.

For many of those who had moved into Cheadle Hulme soon after having children, the explicit desire was to find a 'better', often 'quieter' area. They had often moved to Cheadle Hulme from relatively nearby areas, still within Greater Manchester. For example, Annette, a white mother who worked in a pre-school nursery, had initially come from

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the south of England to live with her husband in Wythenshawe, an area some five miles away in Manchester. She explained her reasons for wanting to move away from Wythenshawe:

It's a particularly rough area of Manchester. It's not very nice. He had a nice house but the area wasn't very nice. It didn't bother him 'cause he was at work all day, but I was at home with the children and I didn't want to live there. And I didn't want my children to go to school there either actually. [...] we moved because I had looked at the primary school in – our local primary school where my eldest daughter was starting, there was no way I would have sent her there. The school itself was fantastic. Marvellous equipment. But I waited while the parents picked up and I just didn't want – I just didn't want my child to be part of that.

Here we see that it is not the school (or at least the material resources of the school) itself that is the critical issue but the nature of the area: 'rough'. This is a territorial stigma (Waquant 2008) which is nonetheless attached to the people of the area – rather than causing a reflection on social factors such as levels of deprivation. But roughness has an important implication for what kind of education parents thought could be gained in local schools. Considering the schooling of children – as well as being much more based in the area as a full-time mother – gave Annette a different sense of the area than her husband, and possibly herself before she had children. Her lack of affective belonging was highlighted as a mother. For Annette and others, schools and the streets around them could also be one locus of identifying the nature of the area. An assessment could be made by observing the behaviour of the children and perhaps more particularly their parents where feelings of denigrated difference (and potential fears around contagion) were sometimes invoked. The question of the behaviour of the children as a marker of an area cropped up in other interviews. For example, Jessica was a childminder who had also moved from a nearby area into Cheadle Hulme to be nearer to better schools. She explained that an important element in assessing an area 'would be how sort of like rough and street-wise is a nicer way of saying it [...] Yes, children who like to play on the street a lot and know their way around.' Annette also described looking at the behaviour of children and young people to assess the nature of an area: 'Just looking whether they look like louts or whether they [...] You know, if they look like, you know, if they look very rough and whether they look very smart and stuff, I suppose.'

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The act of viewing the behaviour of parents and children at pick-up and drop-off times was a common way to assess a school. Undesirable behaviour (perhaps parents shouting or swearing or a lack of discipline) around the school or generally in the area is seen as dangerous – something that children need protecting from – but also potentially contagious – representing undesirable models that the children might follow. There is an urgency in the need to shield children who are being saved from the contamination of class and the risk of becoming the wrong kind of people. Diane Reay writes powerfully about denigrated schools in the education system which are seen as ‘beyond redemption’ often by middle, upper and working classes alike:

Working class bodies are marked as degenerate or deficient or, in many cases both. There were also shades of paranoia; a fear of contamination in which mixing with the ‘rough’ children is seen to pollute ‘nice’ sons and daughters who risk being led astray or worse. (Reay 2017: 61)

In this study, as in Reay’s, the term ‘rough’ functions as a euphemism for a classed perception of behaviours as well as styles of parenting – those who let their children play unsupervised so that the children become ‘street-wise’. As Annette saw it, schools reflected the population they served: ‘the reason they’re poor performing is because the sort of children that go there are parents who are not that bothered about what their children are doing in the evening or where they are’. In the case of Wythenshawe which Annette is referring to, the understanding of it as ‘rough’ is racialised as white – in the often disgust-filled category of the ‘white working class’ – but nonetheless we see the conjoined ‘stigmata’ between deprived places and racial and ethnic difference (Waquant 2008). In this case, there is an othering and moral judging of a category of the white working class which is cast out from the ‘right’ forms of parenting and that can be seen as responsible for the deprivation they suffer, because they do not care enough about their children (Skeggs 2005, Tyler 2008). At other times, there were different racialising processes behind the notion of ‘rough’. Despite living around eight miles away and otherwise not having any clear relationship to the place, in explaining what she means by ‘rough’ Jessica immediately thinks of Moss Side, an area of inner-city Manchester which has historically large numbers of African-Caribbean residents (and a reputation in the 1980s and 1990s particularly for gun crime). Moss Side functions as a referent for violence and risk:

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For me it's ... Sort of like Moss – do you know [...] There's places like round Stockport well not maybe as bad as that (laughing) with the shootings and things but it's got a reputation that way and there is – and there's areas that I feel in Stockport that have, for me, have got a reputation that I just wouldn't – I wouldn't move there. I wouldn't be happy there. So I didn't want my children being bought up there.

The affective response to Moss Side is clear here – it is a place that it would be impossible for Jessica to be happy in and where she couldn't imagine her children growing up.

Yet, for some respondents in the research, moving away from where they grew up to live in Cheadle Hulme was a conscious act of social mobility. Rachel, a white student nurse, had grown up in Gorton. She explained that, because her children were mixed-race (she was white and the father was black), she felt that life might be difficult for them. She had moved from Gorton, 'an area where it's quite ... a lot of things happen' to Cheadle Hulme: 'they need to have the best start ... I thought I want to give the children better than I had.' It is notable that Rachel does not fall back on the more pejorative language used by others and indeed hesitates to describe what she sees as the problem with the area she grew up in, falling back on the vagueness of 'a lot of things happen'. Nonetheless, despite her attempt to get something 'better' for her children, she found that the move to Cheadle Hulme had certain costs as her daughter had suffered for looking different from the other children:

See when we lived in Gorton,¹⁰ there was no problem because there's a lot of ethnic, different backgrounds, ... whereas when we moved to Cheadle Hulme there's not many. There's a few Asian people, I don't know if they're Indian, but not many mixed-race children. So I didn't know there'd be a problem, [...] I didn't even think she'd have a problem. Then children were saying you're brown, you know, just the things were you're brown or why does your skin look like chocolate? You know what children do.

As well as her daughter being made to feel different because of her racialised position – in a way that Rachel did not think would have happened in Gorton – Rachel herself experienced some of the costs of moving into an area which had more professional middle-class occupants than where she had grown up. She argued that 'we shouldn't really class people ... we're all equal'. Nonetheless, she felt that there

were times when class was imposed on her through being made to feel like an outsider:

I feel lower class when I go to football with my son and we go with the private school and it's just where they train, they're not from the private school, but then a lot of the children, which I didn't know, go to the private school. A lot of the parents are doctors and then when they ask me what I do, and I say I'm a student nurse. They say 'oh we're paediatricians, we're this we're ...'. Then I feel like ... then they ask a few things about me and I say 'well I'm from Gorton really' and then I feel even lower and then it ... Whereas really you know, I go to work, I go to university I'm kind of middle-class. But I feel even lower when I'm with somebody higher class.

It is possible to sense from this account how Rachel feels the emotional burden of carrying a sense of territorial stigma about where she comes from and how this puts her potentially out of respectability (Skeggs 1997). Rachel explains that she hadn't realised that the children going to the football club would be from private schools, suggesting that if she had known she would have perhaps avoided it. This indicates a 'tactic' (De Certeau 1984) which she perhaps used in other circumstances for navigating the classed and racialised city (and was possibly reinforced by encountering classed and racialised hierarchies within the NHS). In the following chapter, we will see how parents in Cheadle Hulme considered private education and the risks it posed for making their children feel socially, culturally or economically inferior. In Rachel's account, we see the double edge to the idea that judgements are made about schools and areas by observing the people in them. The risk arises that you might be the person whom others judge badly. Similarly, Steve, a delivery driver, and his partner Melanie, a beauty therapist, had grown up around Cheadle Hulme and moved back to the area because they also valued it being 'quiet'. They also considered it important that they were comfortable in the area. This again for them suggested a kind of 'middling' position. Steve suggested that people in Prestbury (a village in Cheshire) might not want their children to go to school in Cheadle Hulme. And equally, 'I wouldn't want mine to go to school in Cheadle Heath' (a neighbouring area to Cheadle Hulme which was considered less affluent). Cheadle Heath, as well as other areas associated with 'council houses and people on benefits', was a common reference point as an area to avoid. Thus Cheadle Hulme for Melanie and Steve stood

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somewhere in the middle of a social order. This is the Monty Python version of the class system, where there is a clear order of looking down on others and being looked down upon. Whilst they describe Cheadle Hulme as somewhere that they are 'comfortable', they also remembered how, by having children at a younger age than was the norm for the area, they had felt that they were looked down upon when their children were younger.

Melanie: Cheadle Hulme's always been known for being quite well to do. [...] The majority of people are hardworking, care about it, the area tends to be a lot nicer than where people don't care, yeah. I don't want to sound snobby or anything cause we're not rich or anything like that –

Steve: No, we both work and just sort of take each day as it comes so we're by no means, can criticise other people because we're no better than them, but like –

Melanie: We work and we just want the best for our kids. That's all there is really.

Steve: We were young when we had them and now we've got to – Yeah we were very young. In fact there's an interesting one for you, when we first had Morgan and we took him to school a lot of the parents looked down

Melanie: – Didn't even speak to me.

Steve: Looked down at Melanie because she was very young, about 18, 19 – [...]

Melanie: And going to school in this area whereas a lot of the other parents were say thirties – forties. Between like mid-thirties and forties they probably thought, young, baby – She must be on benefits, yeah it is a stigma attached.

In this account by Melanie and Steve, we see a multiple negotiation around hierarchies of value concerning parents and children. Having children young made them feel that others regarded them as one of those people 'right at the very bottom [... who] seriously don't care about their kids' education'. At the same time they suggest that they have a kind of affective belonging with an area which they distinguished from others because in Cheadle Hulme people 'care' about the area. In this context they claim respectability and affective belonging because they 'want the best for our kids'. Yet at the same time, they are situated as 'middling' because they 'take each day as it comes'. They are not like the 'rich' who have the means to plan for, and make investments in, the future.

All in the mix

This section has considered some of the accounts of respondents in Cheadle Hulme who had often moved to the area in order to enable their children to go to ‘better’ schools. The next section explores the accounts of parents from Chorlton who tended to say they had come to Chorlton before having – or thinking of – children.

Finding yourself in ‘a good place to have children’: Chorlton

As discussed above, the parents from Cheadle Hulme, who had often moved to the area after their children were born, were more likely to say that schooling was an important factor in their choice of where to live. However, this may in part be a result of a slightly different classed discourse in discussing schooling and the ways in which the reputations of schools and places are closely intertwined. The parents from Chorlton were more likely to have moved there before having children – often when they were students or soon after graduation. Thus, when they first moved to the area, the nature of the schools was not necessarily relevant to their lives. As Michaela Benson argues:

The choice over where to live appears to be remarkably unreflexive and it is almost second nature to live in a particular type of residential environment. (Benson 2014: 3103)

Thus the idea of moving to improve the choice of available schools doesn’t crop up significantly in Chorlton as the interviewees are able to narrate their move into the area as preceding children. Nonetheless, it was clearly related to the sense of moving to a place with enough ‘people like us’ or which in Bourdieusian terms, fits their habitus closely.¹¹ Thus, staying in Chorlton can then appear as a non-decision and a ‘natural’ residential trajectory (Benson 2014: 3104). At the same time, some of the parents in Chorlton may, as Kelly, a school teacher, explained, have stayed in the area more consciously, once facilities for children, including local schools, became more important considerations:

We stayed here because we were thinking of our children. [...] after we graduated, we got together at university and after we graduated we did have the opportunity to move away but we were always planning to have children and it’s, it’s a good place to have children.

As we shall explore further below, for those parents from Chorlton what makes ‘a good place to have children’ goes beyond simply the

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quality of the schools, but includes also a range of lifestyle and consumption choices available. Indeed, the original move may also have been motivated by living (and consuming) among people with similar outlooks and perspectives. Chorlton emerges from the interviews (as well as in local popular representations) as a place with a distinct identity – which is viewed as middle-class and largely white, but with an openness to difference and what might be billed as ‘alternative’ lifestyles. It is, according to Savage et al. (2005), a place of elective belonging where people can belong by choosing to live there. This might also be characterised as affective belonging where belonging can arise out of sharing a range of values and lifestyles. For example, Harrison explained that he and his wife had decided to always have one parent at home full-time, with Harrison working (in advertising) for the first seven years and then they swapped it around so that he gave up work and his wife returned to work in the NHS. He summarised this situation as: ‘we’re very Chorlton in this house’, taking it for granted that there would be a common understanding of what being ‘very Chorlton’ would imply. This sense of a shared understanding and identity in Chorlton contrasts with Cheadle Hulme which, as we saw above, is described as a pleasant and, more particularly, a ‘quiet’ place to live, but none of the interviewees give accounts of their local area as having a distinctive culture. It is interesting that, when describing why Chorlton is ‘good’ for families, there was almost no direct reference to schooling in the interviews. However, it may be that the importance of schools is so taken for granted that it is not regarded as worth commenting on. Chorlton was important for the way it contained like-minded people who perhaps were also engaged in the kind of ‘concerted cultivation’ which Lareau (Lareau 2003) identified.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature on class and school choice tends to focus on the kinds of professional middle classes which predominately featured in the Chorlton sample. The Chorlton sample was dominated by middle-class professionals, often working in the public sector. Despite what might be expected from the media coverage given to the links between house prices and school catchments, only one couple spoke about schooling as influencing their choice of moving into Chorlton. This stands in contrast to Cheadle Hulme, an area characterised by less securely middle-class and working-class interviewees, many of whom said that their main reason for moving to the area was schooling. This does not necessarily mean that the

quality of local state schools was irrelevant to the parents in Chorlton (indeed not a single interviewee in Chorlton was considering a private school for their child, so all were dependant on the local state school provision). However, perhaps they did not refer to schooling directly because it was implicitly behind other assertions about what they like about Chorlton, which include suggestions that it has 'enough' people 'like us'.

As suggested by Harrison, who saw his full-time caring role as 'very Chorlton', for many of the parents whose children went to the Chorlton school there was a sense of identity and a shared habitus connected to living in Chorlton. This was, as we shall see, a picture of a particular type of liberal and largely white middle-classness. At the same time, many expressed awareness that Chorlton was not exclusively white or middle class and the norm was to represent this mix as a positive aspect to living in the area. As we shall see in Chapter 5, mix was good (Savage et al. 2005, Byrne 2006a). In terms of class, Harrison explained that he was 'slightly different' from a lot of the people he knew in Chorlton because he came from a 'very working-class background'. He described how he had been 'plucked out of the terraces' to go to a grammar school and seen as 'a bit dirty' by the sons of solicitors and barristers who went to his 'very traditional' grammar school. Whilst he saw himself as coming from a different background, he was also comfortable living in and identifying with the area. As mentioned above, many of those whose children went to the Chorlton school had moved into the area before they had children. They had often come from other parts of Britain and had moved to Manchester as students and then stayed on. Some had initially lived in other areas of (south) Manchester. For some this could feel like a well-worn track, as Fiona, a white freelance project manager, suggested: 'Chorlton seems to be the place that you move to after you've lived in Hulme. I think Chorlton, Didsbury or Hebden Bridge. You know, it's the three places, either that or London.' Here we are presented with a very exclusive list of acceptable places to live for this imagined community, including only one other place in Manchester (Didsbury). Hebden Bridge is a mill town in Yorkshire where residents have a reputation of working in the arts and is sometimes dubbed as 'the lesbian capital'.¹² Fiona explained that she and her photographer husband had both become 'sick' of living in Hulme, a more inner-city area of Manchester (with some of the associations that the 'inner city' carries with it). For Fiona and her husband, Chorlton had various attractions

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which centre around consumption and lifestyle which made it an obvious choice (Benson 2014):

Chorlton seemed like the most interesting option. It's quite a pleasant place to stay and, as a parent not getting into the city at night very much, there's quite a good selection of bars and restaurants, so it's enough to keep everybody happy.

Other interviewees who also appreciated the area for its shops and restaurants also described Chorlton as having a 'friendly' and 'village-y' atmosphere. The portrait painted of the area went beyond ideas of friendliness to include a particular orientation towards the world and others. Kelly, a white primary school teacher, explained that:

It's a good place to have children [...]. There's a lot of families with kids the same age and families with the same ideals, the same way of wanting to bring their children up. [...]. Things like, we're vegetarian and there's lots of vegetarians around which doesn't sound like a big issue, but if you want a vegetarian school dinner, you need to be at a school where there's other kids having that.

Kelly went on to say that:

I like the mix in Chorlton. [...] There's all kinds of people in Chorlton, which I like about it. But I also like that people are very accepting of each other. You can be a vegetarian and that's fine. Or you can be, I don't know, you can speak a different language and that's fine, or your parents can be gay and that's fine.

This was a view shared by several others of the Chorlton interviewees who found Chorlton, in the words of Fran, a white midwife, a 'nice place to live':

There's quite a diverse culture in terms of like people are quite alternative here. There's a lot of people that are maybe like, into like other things like lots of musicians and arts ... nice bars and cafés and you know people with the same sort of ethics I suppose ... like we don't eat meat. There's a lot of vegetarian places around here. A lot of people we know around here that are similar to us – we met at uni so it's just sort of the natural place to be really.

In a similar way to Fiona quoted above, it felt 'natural' for Fran to live in Chorlton where there were other people like her with similar values, and who were catered for by the local shops and restaurants.

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This is a celebration of diversity which seems to be represented by a particular bundle of ethical and consumption choices that could be summed up in the notion of 'alternative' (see Chapter 5 for further discussion). Chorlton benefits from being on good transport routes to the centre of Manchester but was, as described by several of the interviewees, 'friendly' where there were plenty of bars, shops and facilities which meant that people could stay local.

However, the interviewees were also conscious that the middle-class Chorlton that they described was not the sum total of the area. Whilst it was described frequently as 'friendly' there was also a sense of class division in the area which was characterised by geographical separation. Fran's husband Ken, who had not gone to university and worked as a courier, explained:

Well it's very much the two-tier thing that we said – there's this end of Chorlton where it's all middle-class and there's the other end of Chorlton near the school where there's a [...] lot of council – two big council estates near there and it's definitely a two-tier feel to it.

This feeling of the two sides to Chorlton was shared by others.

Nonetheless, as perhaps indicated in the euphemistic feel of the quotation, in Chorlton, as with Cheadle Hulme, there was sometimes a reluctance to talk about class difference, compared to other differences which can be embraced under the rubric of 'diversity' (Byrne 2006b). Terri, a white health worker, when asked about the class make-up of the area, hesitated at answering a question which she felt was asking her to take a superior or judgemental position:

Erm, class, I don't know, I mean it's difficult, I mean there's a lot of professionals who live in Chorlton but then you've also got areas like the Nell Lane estate where that's a council sort of estate, so I don't know, you don't like to make judgements on people's class do you? But it's quite, there are a lot of professionals in Chorlton, but it's mixed I think. [...] Well I mean just because you live on a council estate doesn't mean you're not a professional does it?

It's clear from the hedging and hesitation in Terri's quotation that class is something that she would prefer not to talk about, or thinks that it needs to be spoken about with care and delicacy. One exception to this reluctance was the project manager Fiona, quoted above, who volunteered a classed picture of the area without having to be prompted:

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It's quite a deprived area, really. It's a funny place. It's a mix of real arty-farty types and, you know, real kind of traditional working-class people. It's quite nice. [...] there's lots of sort of ex-students there as well. It's a, you know, it's an interesting mix because it's really quite – you know it's got its feet on the ground but also there's a real arty [scene].

Here we get a sense of a more unusual rendition of Chorlton being a comfortable or interesting area to live in *because* of the 'mix' in terms of class that it provides. This question of how class can and cannot be talked about will be returned to more generally in Chapter 5 which examines how parents talk about the social mix in prospective secondary schools. The chapter will also explore the experiences of a few ethnic-minority respondents who feel that they are excluded from this mix, despite the discourse of valuing a multicultural as well as a class mix.

The following section will explore how the residents of Whalley Range spoke about the area and how they had come to live there. In contrast with both Chorlton and Cheadle Hulme, where moving to the areas is presented as a positive choice, those parents who lived in Whalley Range tended not to talk about their move to Whalley Range using a discourse of choice. They were largely happy with the area and the primary schools their children are in (as will be explored in Chapter 3). However, as migrants to Britain, many have 'ended up' in the area in ways (drawn by factors such as the availability of cheap housing or joining family in chain migration) which tended to preclude a presentation of their move as an expression of choice. This also meant that their children's potential schools were not on the agenda when they thought about how they came to live in Whalley Range. Interviewees cannot necessarily give a storied narrative (Byrne 2003) of their 'decision' to move to Whalley Range, as it was not necessarily such a purposive decision. Nonetheless, some do describe their reasons for wanting to stay – many of which are associated with the convenience, support and safety provided by living in an area with high numbers of ethnic minorities, and, in particular, Muslim concentration. Whalley Range provides them with shops that sell the food they want to cook with, with mosques to pray in and with feelings of safety from hostility or racism as they walk the streets – and, as we shall see in Chapter 5 – for their children in schools.

**Whalley Range (and Moss Side):
accidental and affective belonging: 'I didn't have a clue'**

As mentioned above, the majority of parents in Cheadle Hulme said that schools had been a major factor in determining their move to the area. In contrast, in Whalley Range, almost no parents said that schools had been a factor in choosing Whalley Range to live (although as we shall see, some regretted this). The majority of the interviewees in Whalley Range were international migrants.¹³ This reflects the make-up of the school, rather than the area of Whalley Range (see the discussion on the research sites above). The majority of the parents had moved to Whalley Range before they had children, and residence in this area was often presented as accidental or perhaps fortuitous, rather than the result of a considered choice. Some of the more recent migrants did not have the requisite knowledge to think about the impact that where they lived would have on the schools their children attended – or have the information about schools to make that kind of judgement. As Fauzia, a homemaker from Bangladesh, explained: 'I didn't have any clue at that time'. When her daughter reached school age, she consulted her GP and landlord about schools and chose the nearest one as she didn't drive (see Chapter 3 for further discussion about knowledge and choice). In a similar way, Samer, who lived in Whalley Range, although his son went to the Chorlton school, explained: 'I wasn't aware how important the school is really. We bought the house and thought everything will come after, whereas it should have been the other way around' (Samer, chemical engineer from Iraq, Whalley Range). As we shall see in Chapter 5, Samer had moved into Whalley Range to escape the racism that he and his wife faced in a more white area of Manchester.

Helen, a teaching assistant of African-Caribbean descent, was one of the few parents in Whalley Range to talk about considering schooling in reference to where she lived. Helen had moved to the borders of Whalley Range and Moss Side to be near her parents. She laughed that, for her elder daughter, she had started thinking about high school 'when she was one or two years old'. She explicitly linked this to thinking about area:

You always worry about secondary schools and their reputation and [...] you have to think about where you're living and the schools close to where you're living at the time so you kind of have to think about in

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advance. Is it okay to stay, I think, here or should I get lost, go and move somewhere else where there's a better school around?

Helen was initially worried about living on the borders with Moss Side, with similar concerns as to those raised by Jessica (from Cheadle Hulme) above. In particular, she was concerned about its association with drug-dealing:

That was in the past I don't know – to be honest [...] To me, it's a very quiet suburban area but maybe to somebody else who knows the sort of people that are involved in that sort of thing it might not be such a quiet area.

Helen uses the same term as several of the respondents in Cheadle Hulme, of 'quiet' for what is desirable or attractive about an area. However Helen recognises that what she sees as 'quiet suburban' would not necessarily be the same for others – perhaps such as Jessica and others in Cheadle Hulme. Helen has not seen – or doesn't know the signs, she suggests – evidence of criminal behaviour. Thus, for her the area is 'quiet'. Jessica by contrast didn't have to see Moss Side to know its reputation. Nonetheless, what they share is a caution about behaviour and playing on the streets. As Helen explains, 'I didn't make it a habit to send my eldest on to the streets to play'.

Concerns about the area of Moss Side were not confined to Helen. Leyla, who came from Somalia and lived in Moss Side, worried that it wasn't particularly safe for children: 'sometimes they fighting, black people [...] many times the police come'. On the other hand, she felt that she had good neighbours and friends, particularly other Muslims. Thus we see that racialised understandings of areas are certainly not confined to white respondents. In fact, in the interviews, it was often non-white respondents, and particularly relatively recent immigrants, who were most explicit in talking about race. This may well be a factor of a slightly less good command of the English language producing more straightforward, forthright speech. It could also be that these respondents had yet to absorb certain cultural codes about a reluctance to name race (Harries 2014). By contrast, with interviewees who have grown up in Britain, it is necessary sometimes to 'decode' some of their language about class and race (Byrne 2006b). As with the respondents in Cheadle Hulme, there were references to other areas being 'rough'. In a similar account to Annette in Cheadle Hulme, Marion, a white domestic worker bringing up her grandchildren, described Clayton, where she had lived before, as

'rough, so rough [...] and the children were so rude, horrible there'. Moving to Whalley Range constituted for Noreen an escape. However, responses to the ideas of children 'playing on the street' varied. For some, it posed a threat perhaps both to the 'quietness' of an area, and also might suggest that local children were 'rough'. Yet Halima, who had grown up in Whalley Range, felt that the Whalley Range of her childhood was more 'child-friendly' because children could 'play freely' and 'not care'. In contrast, where she now lived in Chorlton:

is very quiet, people go to sleep earlier, so kids can't play out that much. There are children playing but even though we've got a park behind us, it's just still, it's different, not many children are around there.

In Halima's account, being 'quiet' was seen as negative and there is a sense that perhaps the quietness also involved scrutiny which made the children less free. Thus not only are there differences in how 'quiet' any particular area may be perceived as; there is also a potential dispute in the value of quiet. For the respondents from ethnic minorities, busy-ness and the presence of other ethnic minorities made Whalley Range an easier, safer place to live, forming an elective belonging which was different from those in Chorlton. There is also perhaps a racialised element to this difference of opinion on whether 'quiet' is something to be desired in a local area. In contrast to other areas which she saw as 'quieter', Fauzia, originally from Bangladesh, liked where she lived, close to the South Asian groceries near to her:¹⁴

Here, because all the shops are in Clarendon Road, this road is always busy, and the mosques are there. So people go to pray five times [a day]. So I feel safe walking through Clarendon Road [...] because there's all these people moving around.

The ethnic mix, and the provisions and affect that it produces, was what attracted many of the respondents to Whalley Range. That Whalley Range was not characterised by any particular ethnic group was attractive to Margie, a fashion designer, who came from Ghana but had moved to Britain from the Netherlands. She said she didn't want to live in an area which was mostly inhabited by what she referred to as 'black people'. In the Netherlands, she felt that in these areas 'they just want to get closer to themselves so they could help themselves'. In contrast, by living in a whiter area in the Netherlands, she and her husband 'discovered that we could teach our children to learn from both cultures'. At the same time, she was also wary of

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areas which might be ‘full of pure British people [...] who don’t want to get mixed up with other races’. Other interviewees in Whalley Range had expressly moved out of other, whiter areas where they had experienced racism and said that Whalley Range felt safer or more ‘comfortable’ because there was less fear of racism in general and Islamophobia in particular.¹⁵ For Margie, Whalley Range offered a mix with which she could feel ‘very comfortable’. As we saw in the previous section, this language of mix and the ‘right mix’ was something shared by the residents of Chorlton. However, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, the relatively flat language of ‘mix’ can be used by different people to describe sometimes startlingly different demographic situations.¹⁶

The interviews with parents in Whalley Range are notable (in contrast to those in both Cheadle Hulme and Chorlton) for the relative absence of mentions of class in discussing the area – as well as a general avoidance of class-talk, even when asked directly about it. This was also the case when it came to talking about schools. For Helen and others, as will be explored further in Chapter 5, ‘it’s difficult to apply class to racial groups’ and it would seem that this also applies to areas which are regarded as occupied by large numbers of ethnic minorities (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012, Vincent et al. 2012). Whilst many of the Whalley Range parents had things (generally positive) to say about living in the local area, references to class, or what one might see as classed talk (such as Marion’s reference to Clayton as ‘rough’ above) were the exception. In perhaps the only other extended classed discussion, Nasreen, a British-born woman of Bangladeshi origin, used the differing housing stock in Whalley Range and Moss Side to make distinctions. That Whalley Range’s housing (described as ‘leafy’ by another interview) does have some streets of large detached and semi-detached Victorian houses (often divided into flats and some in disrepair) was important to Nasreen, compared to the smaller red-brick terraces of neighbouring Moss Side. Nasreen, a Bangladeshi translator, explained why she preferred to live on the western side of Alexandra Park (which forms a boundary between Moss Side and Whalley Range):

It’s more about culture [...] even just the houses; when you look at the houses they’re very old and they’ve got character. Whereas when you go to the other side of the park, I’m sorry but it’s just plain boring terraced houses and I shouldn’t really judge. But you can kind of imagine the

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type of people who would live there, do you know what I mean? [...] You have a standard and you stick by it. I have a standard and I stick by it. This part of the park I really do like and I'd like to stay on this side of the park.

This is an account laden with notions of classed judgements of culture, 'interesting' versus boring, and also of the clear slippage to conditions of living and the nature of people. However, it is worth remembering that this is an exceptional account in terms of the parents from the Whalley Range school. In Chorlton and Cheadle Hulme, as we saw in previous sections, narratives of class were much more readily provided, and they were also linked to ideas of ethnic difference as well as consumption and lifestyle.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the fieldwork on which this empirical study is based, covering more than fifty parents in three areas of Greater Manchester, including detailing how the respondents were contacted and the nature of the interviews. It has shown how the respondents largely reflected the demographic characteristics of the areas in which they lived – or more particularly the primary schools which their children went to. The three areas of Cheadle Hulme, Chorlton and Whalley Range offer the study the possibility of examining the ways in which race and class arise in the interviews with parents who live in, and whose children attend schools in, areas with distinct patterns of ethnic and class make-up. This then allows examination of the interviews in the known context of both the areas in which the parents live, the primary schools their children attend and the high schools they hope their children will get into (or those they most fear getting placed in). In the analysis of the interviews, the chapter has also explored the varied ways in which residents described different areas. It shows how spaces are constructed as both racialised and classed – and sometimes through oppositions to other places. In this way it begins the exploration of the intertwining of discourses of class, race or ethnicity, religion and other kinds of difference which feature in the different constructions of affective belonging (or alienation for those who are positioned more liminally). The participants were asked about what they thought of the area they live and how they came to be there. This provides an opening into the

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question of how spaces come to be placed in a biographical narrative and how this shapes what is said about them.

Much of the literature on school choice tends to focus on the professional middle classes and their concerns around schooling. This chapter argues that working-class and intermediate middle-class participants also put a great degree of emphasis on education and, in Cheadle Hulme, had moved into the area explicitly in order to be in the catchment for what they considered 'better' schools and as a move away from schools attended by a demonised working class. Thus the move into Cheadle Hulme was characterised as a transition from a 'rough' to a 'quiet' area where those who lived there were described as 'middling'. What is interesting about the material from Cheadle Hulme is that it suggests that we need to rethink the sometimes implied assumption from the literature on school choice, that this is a particularly middle-class obsession. In the interviews with parents from Cheadle Hulme, who have a variety of occupations and do not necessarily identify themselves as 'middle-class', we see that they have intense interest in their children's schooling and also frequently made schooling the primary factor in their residential movements. These accounts are largely absent in a literature which tends to focus on the more securely middle-class and their concerns around schooling.

By contrast with those living in Cheadle Hulme, the parents in Chorlton had often moved into the area earlier in the life course, before the schooling of children was a consideration. These participants had often moved into the area after university and were attracted to its location near the city centre, and the eclectic mix of bars and cafés as well as shops. They also enjoyed what they experienced as a concentration of like-minded people, who shared similar values and lifestyles – creating a different kind of affective belonging. Once they had children, they had decided to stay in the area (or did not feel the need to move on) partly because they were confident that the schools reflected their values. Finally in Whalley Range, the participants did not have the same discourse of choosing the area in which to live. Many had arrived in the area as migrants, following a range of routes, but often found themselves in a diverse area which felt comfortable. The idea of choosing an area because of its schooling was also not present. These parents' narratives of their relationships with where they lived provided a less secure narrative of choice and deliberation, although they were in general happy with living in Whalley Range. It

is clear that places are frequently understood as both racialised and classed. This can produce different responses of belonging or outsiderhood and, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, responses of desire and fear. Thus Cheadle Hulme is felt by some to be comfortably 'middle' whilst others feel marked out by having had children 'too' early, or because they came from the 'wrong' area. Some Chorltonites were able to recognise themselves almost as part of a branded group with a set of liberal attitudes and consumption patterns. Some religious and ethnic minorities feel a security and comfort in Whalley Range in which some appear to have almost accidentally ended up whilst others positively chose to live in an area where the density of other ethnic minorities offered protection from racism.

The following chapter, 'Choice, what choice?', examines in more detail what the parents from the different areas of the study said about the process of choosing primary and secondary schools for their children and how they expressed frustration at what they saw as a lack of real 'acceptable' choices. It will also explore how responses to schooling differed by class and ethnicity as well as religion.

Notes

- 1 www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/house-prices/11811580/Mapped-the-price-of-living-near-the-best-schools.html, accessed 06 July 2017.
- 2 See also Byrne (2003) for a discussion of where a 'natural' life-course trajectory can appear almost unnarratable.
- 3 As they are neighbouring wards, many, but not all, children from the schools in both Chorlton and Whalley Range are likely to get into some of the same high schools.
- 4 Office for National Statistics, <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>.
- 5 We use the term 'parent', although in one case a child had a grandmother as his main carer, so she took part in the research.
- 6 The names of the primary schools, high schools and interviewees (but not the areas) have been changed to protect anonymity.
- 7 This information comes from the relevant Ofsted reports for the schools, but is not cited in more detail to maintain anonymity. The Ofsted reports do not give detailed statistics, but overview figures as have been reported here.
- 8 See Chapter 1 for further discussion of FSM.
- 9 One of the most likely options for parents seeking to avoid the schools of Whalley Range would be to go to Longford Primary in Chorlton. As the interview with Tej and Jas discussed in Chapter 3 illustrates, this 'flight'

Imagining places

from particular ethnic-minority concentrations is not confined to white residents.

- 10 See Harries (2017) for discussion of the reputation and lived experience of Gorton.
- 11 This contrasts with Byrne's research in Clapham, Byrne (2006b), where some interviewees suggested that, although Clapham was an attractive area to live in, because many more middle-class neighbours sent their children to private schools the mix was not right in the local primary schools (see also Byrne (2006a)).
- 12 www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16962898, published 2012, last accessed 9 December 2017.
- 13 See Byrne and De Tona (2012) for further discussion about migrants choosing schools.
- 14 See also the literature on the positive effect on physical and mental health of living in an area of ethnic density, for example Bécaries et al. 2012.
- 15 See Byrne (2014a) for discussions of migrant experiences of racism and the development of understanding of geographies of racism.
- 16 See also Byrne (2006a).