An outsiders' inside view of ethnic entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper (developed from a wider study) is to reflect on the complexities, difficulties and successes of a qualitative research strategy adopted by an outsider, namely the author (Hawkins, 2010; Bucerius 2013) whilst investigating business practices of 48 [insider] first and second-generation male South Asian (Sikh, Pakistani Muslim and Hindu) entrepreneurs from both family and non-family owned micro – small businesses situated within the Greater London area. The rationale and context for the said study was informed by the notion that the author, like many other observers became increasingly aware of the ever present and changing face of a vibrant and multi-cultural Britain and the impact thereof on ethnic entrepreneurship. Particularly, there was a need to know why UK based South Asian businesses, compared to that of any other UK ethnic-minority group, were held-up as beacons of ethnic entrepreneurial success. And whether such success was due to the entrepreneurial skills of the first-generation (many of whom arrived in the UK during the late 1960's and beyond), so being cultural/ethnic/South Asian specific. However, motivation for this paper was not restricted to this one issue, on the contrary, there was a lack of understanding as to whether the second-generation offspring [of such entrepreneurs] are able to emulate the business success of their fathers, if indeed how, if not why not? In fact, given the embedded nature of the second-generation South Asians in the UK, did the present entrepreneurial landscape afford the same opportunities for the offspring as it did their fathers? Alternatively, were such offspring emulating business practices to be found within mainstream firms, so moving away from the ethnic label? Moreover, what role did religion, culture, family and community, and identity play within the whole ethnic-entrepreneurial process?

Despite the rationale and context, confusion abound. Throughout the author's formative years (1970s-1990s), contact with the South Asian community was limited, stereotypical and perhaps tainted by prejudice. By this it is meant, observations of South Asian entrepreneurial activity were restricted to low order retailing namely, newsagents, and corner shops/taxis/restaurants. Any understanding of South Asian offspring noted that they appeared to be studious and good at maths/with money. Equally, extended families lived within one home, and the community, as a collective were tightly knit and mixed little with outsiders. From a research perspective, although respondents were all male, the background between author and respondent could not be more diverse. For instance, respondents shared similar lives to one another in terms of educational motivation, family values, religious dedication, shared cultural cues and, locality. Whereas the author is not from a South Asian background, so displays a number of different personal and cultural characteristics for instance: (i) of Irish/Jamaican immigrant parentage, (ii) did not (at the start of the study) speak Punjabi, Urdu, or Hindi, (iii) not of the same religious background (iv) had little knowledge or association with the communities, and (v) had a small number of personal South Asian friends.

More telling also was the sense of resentment felt by the author towards the South Asian community for no other reasons than they appeared to be doing very well both socially and economically, were hard working, and generally law-abiding. This perception contrasted with the Afro-Caribbean community whom appeared to struggle in terms of maintaining community/family cohesion, and whereby many mainstream commentators considered the male offspring to be an under-achiever at school, excelled at sports/music/dancing, but generally troublesome within society. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that the lack of inter-community support and networks within the Afro-Caribbean community contribute considerably to the low levels of self-employment, unlike their South Asian, Chinese, Jewish and Cypriot counterparts (Bonacich, 1973; Ram and Hillin, 1994; Basu A, 1995; Dhaliwal and Amin, 1995; Chan, 1997; Ram and Jones, 1998; Bieler, 2000). This one-sided view suggested that the South Asian community were everything the Afro-Caribbean community were not. As a result thereof the author embarked upon a part-time doctoral programme to examine the notion of first and second-generation South Asian entrepreneurship, from the participants' own frame of reference, with him as the unit of analysis

Despite the ethnic dimension prominent throughout, an issue to impact upon the study was not the study itself, the methodology nor the outcomes, but the role of- and interactions between a non-South Asian researcher vis-à-vis South Asian informants, namely, outsider/insider status (MacAlpine and Marsh 2005; Bucerius 2013; Chuang and Roemer 2013). In essence, the extent to which ethnicity/cultural background and any assumed pre-conceived notions of both the researcher and informants espoused a certain behaviour, attitude, and response toward one another. Although the author was an outsider looking in, there was a need to build rapport, trust, confidence, and allay misgivings with those under investigation; and if by going native would help develop a clear understanding of any cultural/religious/community/family nuances particular to each research group. Finally, it was important to ensure that the development, implementation and success of an outsider strategy did not compromise the overall integrity of the study.

To this end, working within the stated aims, the paper provides insight, along with practical advice, into the research strategy adopted to investigate ethnic-minority entrepreneurship. The paper is organised as follows. Firstly, evident is a brief review of the ethnic literature that informed the overall study. Highlighted is a synopsis of the research methodology, a backdrop against which the study was conducted. The creditability of the authors' outsider status and, the impact thereof on one's ability to negotiate access into the various ethnic communities is addressed. Within this section the notion of personal and structural power relationships between researcher and informant is introduced. Following this, the complex interchange of personal and structural power relationships from an outsider's view is highlighted. Examined also are the implications of such complexities on the research instruments used within the study. Conclusions, limitations, further research, along with some practical advice to researchers whom do not share the same ethnicity as the participants under investigation, bring the paper to a close.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnic Entrepreneurship
To appreciate the outsider/insider perspective within this paper, it is important to understand ethnic minority entry into self-employment/entrepreneurship. Certainly from this aspect, the notion of 'power relations' as a manifestation of the 'journey taken' by the entrepreneur becomes that much clearer. To explore the ethnic dimension further, as well as, aid our understanding of the 'ethnic entrepreneur', it is noted that empirical evidence into ethnic entrepreneurship espouses four main themes: (i) contextual theories, (ii) cultural perspectives, (iii) the structural approach, and (iv) mixed embeddedness (see Table 1 below). Essentially, these four themes not only describe communal and family solidarity as a means of competitive advantage over indigenous firms. But go onto provide the wider socio-ethnic context in which the ethnic entrepreneur is embedded. Interestingly from these themes, evidence suggests there is the development of particular cultural insider attributes. Attributes such as community loyalty, religion, motivation, behavioural and attitudinal traits, social background, education, a sense of duty, respect, family and community honour, thrift, tolerance, drive, energy, willingness to work long and unsocial hours, self-sacrifice, and general life experience. As a collective, contribute both to the 'journey' taken by -and any outsider/insider relationships of -the ethnic entrepreneur (Kets de Vries 1977; Chell 1985; Carson, Cromie, McGowan and Hill 1995; Ram, Jones and Patton 2006; Ram 2006; Jones and Ram 2007).

Table 1: Theoretical Underpinning

Ethnic Minority Business: Four Main Themes	Authors
Contextual Theories • Middleman approach • Deals with contemporary social relations • Migrant entrepreneurs viewed as sojourners • The myth of return • An illusory belief of thrift, business activity and rapid accumulation of money will help speed return • Belonging to a distinctive community with different religion/cultural practices • Concentrated in small ethnic enclave businesses • Ethnic solidarity through informal and formal social networks - friends and community • Effective mobilisation of resources - such as capital and labour in terms of immediate and extended family	Bonacich (1973); Anwar (1979); Jones (1981); Ram and Hillin (1994); Basu A (1995; 1995a); Dhaliwal and Amin (1995); Srinivasan (1995); Basi and Johnson (1996); Metcalf, *et al* (1996); Chan (1997); Ram (1997; 1997a); Ram and Jones (1998)

Cultural Theories	
• Cultural distinctiveness by way of factors to determine business entry • Inseparable link between the immigrant entrepreneur and his/her immediate environment • Places culture, tradition, family, religion, and community at the heart of ethnic business development • Ethnic businesses serving ethnic enclave economies • Informal and formal social networks - a source of competitive advantage • Cultural psychological qualities: ambition, drive, patience, thrift, hard work, trust, loyalty and perseverance • Cultural thesis fail to take into account that community traits are not static and homogeneous	Rafiq (1985; 1992); Boissevain and Grotenberg (1987); Khan, G (1986); Jones (1989); Werbner (1980; 1984; 1990); Waldinger, et al (1990); Ram and Hillin (1994); Srinivasan (1992; 1995); Basu A (1995a); Dhaliwal and Amin (1995); Basi and Johnson (1996); Metcalf, et al (1996); Ram (1997; 1997a); Ram and Jones (1998)
Structural Theories	
• Entry into self-employment motivated by constraints - racism, lack of employment prospects, language difficulties - minorities face within the external labour market • Pull towards entrepreneurship: high need for achievement, a desire to excel, independence, control of their environment and own destiny, willing to accept responsibility for decisions • Stress the interaction of external opportunity structures and internal group resource dynamics • Influenced by factors such as: market conditions, demand for ethnic goods, access to business ownership, locality, sector, formal institutional support, government policies, and access to labour markets and other resources	McClelland (1961); Aldrich, et al (1981); Waldinger, et al (1990); Ram (1992), Jones, et al (1994); Deakins (1996); Chan (1997); Landstrom (1998); Ram and Smallbone (2001)
Mixed Embeddedness	
• Three perspectives: cultural, socially structured and institutional milieus	Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath (1999); Kloosterman and Rath (2001); Barrett, Jones and McEvoy 2001a; Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993); Ram and Smallbone (2001); Rath (2000); Schnell and Sofer (2002)

However, a noticeable gap within the literature suggests that given the UK's embedded ethnic communities, on one level, much of this research consider ethnic minority entrepreneurs as a homogenous group (Aldrich, Jones and McEvoy 1984; Jones, McEvoy and Barrett 1994a; Basi and Johnson 1996; Ram and Jones 1998). Whereas, on another level, other commentators have conducted comparative studies, on the basis of self-reported ethnic origin, of ethnic sub-groups to help differentiate between them - see Table 2 below (Chaganti and Greene 2002; McPherson 2008).

Table 2: Research into Various Ethnic Sub-groups

Ethnic Group(s)	Authors
• London-based Gujarati businesses	Lyon and West (1995)
• Pakistani-owned businesses in the Manchester rag trade	Werbner (1980; 1984; 1990)
• Chinese entrepreneurs in the UK	Bailey, et al (1994); Liao (1992); Parker (1994; 1998); Chan (1997)
• A comparative study of Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Greek Cypriot entrepreneurs	Curran and Blackburn (1993)
• A comparative study of Afro-Caribbean and South Asian owned businesses and white entrepreneurs / businesses	Wilson (1983); Basu, D (1991), Jones, et al (1994); Ram and Deakins (1995); Deakins (1996); Ram (1996); Metcalf, et al (1997)
• A comparative study of South Asian and white businesses within the retail sector of the Coventry area	Basi and Johnson (1996)
• A comparative study of African Asian, South Asian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslim entry into self-employment	Metcalf, et al (1996)
• A comparative study of Chinese, Afro-Caribbean, African Asian, South Asian, Bangladeshi, Hindu, Sikh and, Pakistani Muslim entrepreneurs - resource mobilisation, access to finance, networking and social capital, generational differences.	East Midlands Observatory Final Report (2001); Ram and Carter (2001); Ram and Smallbone (2000; 2003); Smallbone, Ram, Deakins, and Baldock, (2001); Smith and Wistrich (2001); Ram, Smallbone, Deakins, Baldock, Fletcher and Jones (2002); Smallbone, Bertotti and Ekanem (2003); Deakins, Ishaq, Smallbone, Whittam, and Wyper (2005); CEEDR (2007); McPherson (2008)

Although, tables one and two noted above contribute to our understanding of ethnic entrepreneurship. From a methodological viewpoint a vast majority of these studies are quantitative in nature, and centre typically upon first-generation migrant entrepreneurs within the UK's low order retail sector, and their myth of return (Anwar, 1979). Therefore, as literature acknowledges, attempts to understand ethnic minority entrepreneurs are numerous; endeavours to understand second-generation ethnic entrepreneurs appear limited at best (Deakins, Majmunder and Paddison, 1996). Why the second-generation? Essentially, second-generation South Asian entrepreneurs are seen to be moving away from traditional business sectors associated with the first-generation, into the services and professions with emphasis on quick returns and prestige (Deakins, Majmunder and Paddison 1995; Smallbone, *et al* 2001; Smallbone, *et al* 2003; Deakins, *et al* 2005). However, what evidence there is appertaining to these entrepreneurs in general consider attitudesa nd expectations of entrepreneurship, type of business established, impact of mixed embeddedness, and the mobilisation of resources (Smallbone, Ram, Deakins and Baldock, 2001; Smallbone, Bertotti and Ekanem, 2003; Deakins, Ishaq, Smallbone, Whittam and Wyper, 2005). This prevailing attitude challenges not only the traditional views of ethnic entrepreneurs in general, as well as, many of the embedded factors associated with ethnic entrepreneurship; but also how researchers respond in terms of leveraging access to- and understanding of- such individuals. This in turn has led to the adoption of a qualitative perspective that although growing in popularity, due to cultural nuances, is difficult to implement (Discussion Paper and Evaluation Report, 1997; Basu A. and Goswami, 1998; Tann, 1998; Ram, 1999; Ram and Carter, 2001; Peters, 2002; McCarthy, 2002; Barrett *et al.,* 2002; Smallbone, *et al.,* 2003; McPherson, 2004).

An Outsider / Insider Dimension
Irrespective of any changes to the research agenda and/or methodology a major consideration all researchers, particularly outsiders[1] of ethno-cultural / religious and ethno-familial studies must seek to address, is one of access, recruitment and understanding key informants within their natural environment ((familiar territory / respective ethnic communities (MacAlpine and Marsh 2005)). Therefore, would the notion of an outsider status provide both the level of access and credibility needed in the eyes of the targeted ethnic-community, so becoming a trusted outsider (Burerius 2013)? Interestingly, Ram, (1994); Chan and Lin Pang, (1998) highlight situations where difficultly in recruiting and accessing informants from ethnic communities can have a serious impact on the sample design/frame. For instance:
- Doubts raised about the researchers' aims among members of ethnic minorities
- The inability of non-ethnic minority researchers (outsiders) to understand reality (ability to relate to the experience of ethnic groups within alien environments) from an ethnic minority perspective.
- The inability of researchers to negotiate different cultural contexts – which many argue is crucial for operating effectively in the field (Ram 1994; Chan and Lin Pang, 1998). Certainly, Ram, (1994; 1998); Song and Parker, (1995) highlight the resistance by some ethnic groups to divulge information they deem sensitive to researchers.
- A lack of a suitable sampling frame due to the fact that information appertaining to ethnic business ownership in the UK is considered out-dated and not representative of the 'population' as a whole

Equally, Chuang and Roemer (2013) warn of the juxtaposition of conflicting cultural codes associated with insider and outsider signifiers. For example, identity, education, rationale intelligence, social cues et cetera, whereby such signifiers are used to reinforce one dominant culture over another (Chuang and Roemer 2013). Even with instances where an outsider has successfully gained access to suitable ethnic respondents, the notion of 'personal' and 'structural' power becomes an ever-present reality as the researcher/respondent relationships evolve. Consequently, the researcher's outsider status complicates the power relations between the interviewer and the participants (Hall 2004; Srikanth 2004; McAlpine and Marsh 2005). As Hawkins (2010) goes onto to point out, the researchers identity vis-à-vis participants can both hamper and help qualitative research. In contrast to such commentary, Burerius (2013) suggests, "*being an outsider is not a liability one must overcome, because achieving status as an outsider trusted with "inside knowledge" may provide the [sic..] with a different perspective and different data than that potentially afforded by insider status.*"

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for the wider study did not concern itself with testing theory, but generating / building theory (through exploratory research) from data in order to produce insight and enhance an understanding of ethnic entrepreneurship primarily from a second-generation perspective (Priporas and Vangelinos 2008; Priporas and Polmenidis 2008). Consequently, investigation was conducted within a phenomenological paradigm for three reasons. First, to identify similarities and differences within ethnic

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[1] Tables one and two above bear witness to number of outsiders conducting ethnic research

minority enterprises from the participant's own frame of reference. Second, to unravel the complexities of social, cultural and generational change so as to understand how internal and external factors impact on the effective operation of an ethnic minority business (Chan and Lin Pang 1998). Third, being holist the paradigm accepted that reality is socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Remenyi, 1995). Working within such a paradigm allowed much more complicated situations to be examined. Moreover, it presented an opportunity to appreciate, understand and explain the different constructs and meanings each informant placed on his particular experience (Remenyi, 1995; Malholtra, 1996; Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Scott and Rosa, 1997).

Research instruments used to carry out the investigation were face-face in-depth semi-structured interviews (with accompanying prompts) and a comparative case study method (semi-structured interviews, observer-as-participant and documentary evidence). Overall, the investigation was conduct within two key phases: phase one semi-structured interviews, phase two case study - see Appendix 1 for research design and methodological framework.

In terms of the sample size, informants were selected from a variety of industrial sectors situated within the Greater London area. In total 48 entrepreneurs (representing 37 traditional firms and emergent firms) were interviewed using an in-depth face-to-face semi-structured approach. Informants consisted of 9 first generation and 39 second-generation Sikh, Hindu and Pakistani Muslim entrepreneurs from both family and non-family owned businesses (see Table 3 below and Appendix 1 respectively). Interviewing all 48 informants was deemed necessary and considered a safety mechanism should the case study phase fail to materialise, given the aspect of voluntary selection (a total 11 case study firms were selected and examined - see Table 4 below). Within the context of a family business (FB), there was a need to understand whether the 'father figure' and 'family' informed business practices adopted by the second-generation entrepreneur. Equally, for second-generation informants from non-family business (NFB) backgrounds, did the lack of 'business influence' from both family and father have a detrimental effect on business practices?

Table 3: Semi-Structured Interview Stage

	1st Generation			2nd Generation			Total
	Sikh	Pakistani Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Pakistani Muslim	Hindu	
Family	4	4	1	9	8	2	28
Non-family	-	-	-	9	8	3	20
Total	**4**	**4**	**1**	**18**	**16**	**5**	**48**

For the purposes of comparison and discussion two key groups of second-generation informant were identified and used (as noted in Table 3 above). Thus:
- 19 informants involved within the family-owned business (FB), and working alongside the founder (father).
- 20 informants from a non-family business (NFB) background and managing a business established by himself and/or with a business partner. Parents of these particular informants were not involved with self-employment, instead worked in mainstream employment or otherwise.

The issues noted above were considered important as people with successfully self-employed parents have to their advantage access to financial resources and skills directly relevant to starting a business (Rosa, 1993). An advantage, it is argued, that offspring from FB backgrounds have over those offspring from NFB. However, it does remain to see whether offspring from FB backgrounds are able to capitalise on this advantage by displaying the range of skills necessary to develop a business further. Finally, the inclusion of culture, religion and identity noted that the study sought to provide insight into the extent to which these inform business practices on a personal and professional level.

Data Collection and Analysis
The research instruments were developed (questions and the interview schedule), tested and re-assessed before implementation. In addition, various documents were designed and used in order to record and cross-reference many aspects of the world under investigation. Very many informants consented to the use of a tape-recorder to capture the interview, and were supplied with a copy of the transcribed text thereafter - to check accuracy of discussion et cetera (Easterby-Smith, *et al* 1991; Silverman 1993). With regards to the interviews, on average, each lasted 90 – 120 minutes, with two lasting over 2hrs 30 minutes. The majority of interviews were conducted within the work location of each interviewee, with a minority at their private residence. The semi-structured interview phase generated over 900 pages of transcribed text containing no fewer than 250,000 words as a total sum, and in excess of 80 hours of taped interviews. This data were perused for accuracy and sentences coded for manual analysis. To complement the interview process, the

study selected 11 businesses to complete the multiple comparative case study phase – so providing me with the opportunity to be embedded within these firms (see Table 4). Duration within each case-firm ranged from 7 to 20 months (approximately 10 months full-time equivalent). All cases were conducted within the work location of each informant. Given the nature of the study, access to various informants was negotiated via a combination of purposive sampling, snowballing sampling, referrals and/or some form of exchange process.

Table 4: Comparative Case-Study Phase

	1st Generation			2nd Generation			Total
	Sikh	Pakistani Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Pakistani Muslim	Hindu	
Family	1	2	1	1	1	-	6
Non-family	-	-	-	2	2	1	5
Total	**1**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**11**

To analyse data the study employed a technique known as 'key-words-in–context (KWIC).' Ryan and Barnard (2000) note, KWIC finds all the places in a text where a particular word or phrase appears, then prints it out in the context of some number of words before and after it (ibid.). At the heart of this technique is 'coding' - tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study (Miles and Huberman 1994). Therefore, as the study wished to retain as much detail as possible (Malhotra 1996), codes were attached to 'chunks' of text of varying sizes (in this instance whole sentences) to connected or unconnected key words or phrases within specific settings/context.

Having set the methodological context, attention is turned to the occasions whereby the authiors outside ethnic-minority status met inside ethnic-minority status of the informants (personal and structural power (Hall, 2004; Spalek, 2005)). Before proceeding, it is important at this juncture to point out that although the study identified a very strong ethnic dimension, very many issues will not be rehearsed here as they have been the topic of other works by the author. Instead, discussion will focus only on those ethno-cultural, religious and familial aspects relevant to this paper, namely, personal and structural power relationship vis-à-vis the selected research methodology.

ACCESS NEEDED: OUTSIDER STATUS – HELP OR HINDRANCE?

For the purpose of this study, access needed to be gained not to one community, but three - Sikh, Pakistani Muslims and Hindu, with a primary objective to secure interviews with key first and second-generation informants, and to develop an opportunity to follow-up via the case study phase of the study (Yin 1984, 1989, 1994) as a secondary condition. In addition, by virtue of the authors' outsider status, there was a need not only to be aware of the impact ethnicity, class positioning/background, education, age, and integrity would have on the study. But also, that a complex interchange of power relations, namely personal and structural, coupled with an element of subjectivity could manifest (Hall 2004).

As Hall, 2004; Spalek, 2005 note, power relations between the informant and researcher do not have fixed dichotomies, but are more multi-dimensional and shift as the study unfolds. Consequently, qualitative research is not free from such contaminates of structural power because such outsider status has an unpredictable [both negative and positive] effect on the researcher / informant relationship (Hall 2004). Thus, there are always cost and benefits to be had as a result of being an insider and outsider by implication of one's group membership (Hall, 2004). Interestingly, this current situation appeared not too dissimilar to that of Hall (2004) and Spalek (2005), whom as white female researchers studying the plight of female Muslim women in the UK, began [in a negative way] by questioning their own privileged backgrounds and the impact thereof on their respective studies. Or as Carter (2004), noted it was not his 'whiteness' seen by the ethnic-minority sample as the inhibitor. Instead, it was his credibility as a researcher that was called to task by the sample group. In essence, the personal power held by the author in comparison to the informant at the start of the study, was in favour of the latter as they could refuse not only to be interviewed - as a minority had, but also refuse to take part in the case study phase, as a majority indicated. Equally, there was concerned that informants may withhold information, or say what wanted to be heard, rather than being objective and convey the information that was actually needed.

Negotiating Access
The outsider status caused the author to think long and hard in terms of an approach best suited to overcome any power obstacles, and help react to [unforeseen] situations should any materialise. Thus as the sample frame was informed by benefits derived from a pragmatic and opportunist approach (Ram 1994); rather than cold-calling organisations and/or individuals from a business directory and pleading for interviews, or informed by defined 'statistical' criteria (Ram, 1998). Instead, as stated earlier, two techniques were used purposive

sampling and snowballing sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Gummesson, 1991; Curran and Blackburn, 1992; Ram, Abbas, Sanghera and Hillin, 1998; Chan, 1997); such an approach was considered appropriate and extremely useful in gaining access to potential informants (Chan and Lin Pang 1998; Ram 1994; Ram, *et al.,* 1998; Basu and Goswami 1998).

As both purposive sampling and snowballing sampling needed to cover a range of business sectors, the former technique involved identifying and recruiting key informants whom, due to their experience and knowledge were well informed on the issues central to the study. Whereas, the latter technique was concerned with recruiting informants via network building (family/friends, business/professional contacts) - one informant suggesting other suitable informants, and making use of referrals from outside agencies such as Business Link, specialist ethnic enterprise networks, professional associations, community links, and so forth (Deakins 1996; Basu and Goswami 1998). To this end, the methodology used what Deakins, *et al.,* (1997) refer to as a bilateral strategy, namely networking via a combination of (i) professional contacts within two outside agencies – Minority Business Network and The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), and known (ii) business contacts and referrals, all of whom provided initial contact and leverage to help secure access and recruit key informants. As part of the negotiating process it was felt necessary to play a bargaining card (Ram 1994; 1998), so offering informant's free marketing and/or business consultancy. The duration of such free services (a number of allocated hours) was very much dependent on whether informants (i) committed to a semi-structured interview, and/or (ii) provided leads for additional suitable informants, and/or (iii) consented to be part of the case study stage. Employing such a negotiating process proved extremely effective and worked to the mutual benefit of both researcher and informant alike (Stockport and Kakabadse 1992; Ram 1998).

Appreciating the value of status/perceived standing within the South Asian community, and to ensure the success of the sampling and bargaining card techniques, it was important to espouse researcher credibility not only in the eyes of key informants, but with the ethnic business community also (Deakins, Majmundar and Paddison 1996; 1997). Such credibility had taken the form of:
- Christian sounding first name/surname
- Professional academic status
- Qualifications, as well as, being an academic and doctoral student
- Past business and consultancy experience
- The authors' marriage to a Sikh Punjabi girl. Interestingly, the marriage became a topic of immense curiosity and admiration
- The author's ability to speak, read and write Punjabi to an intermediate level; having spent a year or so learning the language during the early part of the stated doctoral studies. Again, informants extended the utmost respect towards the author for taking the time and effort to learn the language
- The author's ability to demonstrate an understanding cultural/religion/family/community nuances. A vast amount of time had been invested, as part of the 'going native' strategy, reading literature appertaining to the various communities. Also, time was spent within Sikh Gurdwaras (temple), Hindu Mandirs (temple) and Mosques, reading the various religious texts such as the Scared Nit-Nem, the Holy Qu'ran / the Bhagavad Gita, and visited India/Punjab and Pakistan.

Certainly, from the outset this approach helped overcome the authors' ethnic-minority status and challenge any pre-conceived prejudices held also. However, due to the outside status of the author, there was an acute awareness of the impact such credibility would have on personal and structural power relations. Consequently, many aspects of the outsider status, coupled with researcher credibility, were assets with elements a hindrance. All in all, the authors' minority status had become an object of curiosity more than anything else. By this it is meant, because time had been taken to understand the informants and their particular environment, be that Punjabi, Hindu or Pakistani, and a genuine interest had been shown in the informants as individuals, interest in the study became self-generating. Very many informants wanted to tell their story (particularly the second-generation), and were more than happy to have an outsider document their tale no matter how positive or negative it may appear. Thus, the silent had found their voice (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

POWER RELATIONS: FACE-TO-FACE AND CASE STUDY - AN OUTSIDERS' PERSPECTIVE

Despite the enthusiasm shown by informants toward the study, noted sooner than later, a range of complexities (personal journey) began to emerge appertaining to both personal and structural power. By this it is meant, as a result of four key areas (see diagram one below): (i) personal circumstances (the push or pull of entrepreneurship), (ii) education, (iii) sectoral experience, and (iv) experiential learning; had in fact informed and motivated entry by all into entrepreneurship, namely the personal journey of respondents. Moreover, not only did these four areas influence informants to manage and make the business a success (Boissevain and Grotenberg, 1987; Jones, *et al.,* 1994; Glancey, Greig and Pettigrew, 1998; Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Ram and Smallbone, 2001; Chaganti and Greene, 2002; Deakins *et al.,* 2005; Jamal, 2005; Shepherd and

DeTienne, 2005; Al Ariss 2010). These areas were central in the development by informants of a particular attitude and behaviour and, informed personal and structural power when dealing with outsiders also (Banerjee and Prasad 2008; Mahadevan 2011, 2012). As comments from the following respondents testify,

First-generation Pakistani:
"I wanted to be my own boss so that I could do things my way."

First-generation Pakistani:
"It seemed like a good idea at the time [to start a business] because the employment sector had quite a lot of racial discrimination and because of this I couldn't get to the top or make more than I was already earning."

Second-generation Sikh:
"I am attracted to it (self-employment) because it is exciting, it is a challenge, it gives me an opportunity to prove to myself that I can do it without all the support that you get in the existing organisation."

Second-generation Pakistani:
"I couldn't take people breathing down my neck, telling me what to do and when and how to do it."

Second-generation Hindu
"Being Asian and obviously with my background, where I live as well, impacts on the type of customer contacts I make, how that person perceives me and how I interact with that person."

Insert--------------- Diagram 1 ----------- Here

Consequently, the author learnt very quickly how to network and negotiate, and how to deal with family and business conflict – so becoming an objective listener and a silent witness - a trusted outsider (Burerius 2013).

The Semi-Structured Interview Process
Using a semi-structured interview process gave the study greater freedom in the sequencing and exact wording of questions, and flexibility in terms of time and attention given to different topics (Robson 1993; Deakins, *et al.,* 1996, 1997). To this end, the study developed what Robson (1993) describes as key elements of a thematic guide/interview schedule:
- Introductory comments
- List of topic headings and possibly key questions to ask under these headings
- Set of associated prompts
- Closing comments

All informants participated in the face-to-face semi-structured interview phase, wherein Robson's basic outline informed the parameters for the thematic guide/interview schedule used:
- The Business
- Management and Management of Resources
- Business Practice
- Marketing Practice
- Wider Influences
- Employment History
- The Entrepreneur: Personal Details
- Level of Education and Training

Each theme used a series of related open questions whereby answers were given as openly and honestly as possible, (commentary taken at face value), and were based on the knowledge each informant had to hand. In addition, complete confidentiality was guaranteed as refusal to divulge what was said about whom to whomever for whatever reason was assured. This approach allowed individual informants to provide a rich tapestry of events that led them into entrepreneurship, which in turn seem to justify their display of power relations. It was during the semi-structured interview process wherein it was noted by the study that such personal and structural power appeared to favour all informants, but in slightly different ways. For example, each informant felt the need to establish his own level of credibility and status on a not so equal footing with the author - albeit in a friendly / respectful and, a warm welcoming/open manner. This was not only done in an attempt for the author to develop and display a positive attitude toward them, but to ensure an objective and non-judgemental approach was maintained as their story was recorded.

In essence, it was found that the first-generation (unlike a large majority of their second-generation counterparts), were pushed into entrepreneurship after a substantial length of service within paid employment (engineering, manufacturing and construction), coupled with reaching middle aged (circa 45-50 years of age), These and other factors such as: (i) the prevailing economic conditions, (ii) personal circumstances, (iii) a loss of suitable paid employment, (iv) being overlooked for promotion, (v) the lack of occupational realisation, (vi) having experienced racism/discrimination at some point during their chosen career, (vii) the need to provide for the family, (viii) circumvent the lack of suitable trade and educational qualifications/language difficulties, (ix) age, and (x) 'cultural stigmatism of unemployment,' ensured informants gravitated toward sectoral opportunities like low order catering, retailing, wholesaling or construction. Even within these sectors, the cultural dimension was never too far away as informants had the ability to supply co-ethnic products/services, and gain access to both local co-ethnic and non-ethnic customers/communities alike (see diagram one above).

Interestingly, all but one informant stated entrepreneurship was not considered a natural career choice, but rather an alternative to paid employment when all other avenues had failed to materialise. Surprisingly a number of informants had still not dealt with issues resulting from the loss of paid employment. Also many appeared a little embarrassed having had to consider such an alternative as they failed to secure paid employment. As such, many did not wish to be perceived as *"just another Asian shop-keeper (Sikh first-generation)."* Having said this, informants were upbeat and proud of their achievements since starting the business. As each story unfolded it became evident that on exiting paid employment, informants had redundant occupational skill-sets on the one hand, and some transferable management skills on the other hand. It was the latter skill-sets, coupled with the need for informants to stress their level of seniority during paid employment, that was used to established (assumed by the study at the time as a defence mechanism) their level of power relations between themselves and the author. This was coupled with the issue of educational attainment. For example, knowing the author was from an academic institution and suitably qualified, this appeared to be important for these informants. So much so, the educational gap between informants and the author altered the power relations (Hall 2004). What is meant by this, all individuals stressed they had come to the UK to read for a first degree in engineering or telecommunications at university.

>   *First-generation Sikh:*
>   "Originally, my idea was to be an electronic engineer, do a BSc and that sort of idea."

>   *First-generation Pakistani:*
>   "I came here brought by my grandfather to be educated."

>   *First-generation Hindu:*
>   "I came here to study basically."

Sadly just one informant had completed his degree (*n=9*). Whereas, the others would reiterate they were *"Educated to MBA level"* via a series of in-company/short management courses and had held very senior positions. Informants would take care to reinforce the fact that*, "the key to business success came with life experience and not with a university degree (Sikh first-generation)."*

With regards to the second-generation informants *(n = 39),* the following factors defined credibility and status vis-à-vis power: (i) past work experience – employed within *"Blue-Chip companies in the City (n=15),"* (ii) education, and (iii) the type of businesses started. Interestingly, informants were not too impressed that the author was an academic. For these informants an academic occupation, although important, was considered a slight hindrance. Rather, the authors consultancy experience was the one key area many informants wanted to access – *"What management projects have you worked on and for whom (n=27)?"* was the question continually asked of the author. This appeared to be a test of both the authors' credibility and capability to deliver project results should any arrangement be made for a move onto the case study phase of the research – taking advantage of the bargaining card, namely, free consultancy. Again, as stories unfolded, it transpired the move into entrepreneurship by the second-generation was based on two motives. Firstly, a small number of informants (*n=11*) working within the family business displayed similar motives to that of their first-generation counterparts, and so were pushed into the family business. Although these informants made a conscious decision to move into the family business, they expressed a negative attitude towards entrepreneurship, and the pressure such a move placed on them personally. The study found these informants were influenced by (i) family obligation, (ii) lack of education, (iii) limited possibilities to explore other employment opportunities, (iv) natural progression within the family business, and (v) parents acting as role models.

In contrast to the above all second-generation informants from NFBs and a number of informants from FBs (*n=28*), were pulled by the potential intrinsic rewards entrepreneurship offered. These informants entered entrepreneurship with skill-sets, and from a platform different to that of their first-generation counterparts and peers noted earlier. A majority of informants developed businesses more akin to their skills and technical knowledge/expertise. For instance, over fifty percent of informants gravitated towards knowledge-based businesses such as Professional and IT High Technical Services. Whereas, a number of informants from FBs established businesses independent of the family business.

Coupled with the above, the study found that rather than personal skills or cultural norms informing the motivation towards entrepreneurship, other key influences were evident. For example, (i) level of education - class resources: qualifications obtained, and training courses attended to enhance technical/managerial knowledge, (ii) experiential learning: occupational and management/leadership skills, and self confidence helped prepare informants for the challenges of running their own business, and (iii) sectoral experience: skills and knowledge gained via exposure to some form of *"Corporate/Blue-Chip environment"* prior to entering entrepreneurship. In essence, these informants considered entrepreneurship a career rooted in autonomy. Where as for their peers (as noted earlier), security and stability appear to be the over-riding motivation.

On completion of this phase of the study, it became all too clear that any negative preconceived notions appertaining to the South Asian community were truly dispelled, and any positive accolades levied towards these entrepreneurs were warranted. However, feelings held by the author toward his own community in terms of wishing that there were closer community/family cohesion did not diminish. Never-the-less, because as a researcher one takes all interviews at face value unless proven otherwise, this phase taught the author to become an objective listener and thinker, and non-judgmental in one's outlook. A skill which provided a unique insight into the many facets that underpin ethnic entrepreneurship; for example, (i) the impact of experiential learning, (ii) how individual informants view their 'world' from a personal and social context, including the push or pull of entrepreneurship, (iii) educational attainments, (iv) sectoral experience, and how such facets inform the ability of the informant to make decisions and develop his business. Interestingly, even more insight was provided after the tape recorder was switched off. Here a small number of informants would continue to talk about more personal issues relevant to their situation within the business, family relationships, and the community.

Finally, the main conclusions drawn from time with the informants were, the crux behind their displays in power relations was the result of their personal journey. Seemingly, no less stressful, fraught with uncertainty, and no easier than any ethnic group struggling to establish itself within an environment that appears hostile toward them. These informants felt that they had proven themselves against all odds. Moreover, throughout this phase, power stayed very much with the informant as they had perhaps earned the right, where, as an outsider the author had not.

The Case Study Process

The most exciting and perhaps challenging aspect of the research was using a case study as a method of enquiry. Here the study found the method to be (i) flexible - it allowed the author probe by using multiple sources of evidence, and (ii) information rich – thus developing an understanding of the informants' dynamics and behaviour within a real-life context [at his place of work] (Yin, 1984, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1989; Robson, 1993; Remenyi, *et al.,* 1998; Merrilees and Tiessen 1999; Stake, 2000). Essentially this element of the research was a natural progression from the semi-structured interview process. Moreover, there was a need to allay fears expressed by various informants that investigate pertained to business practices as oppose to scrutinising *"goings on within the business and reporting them to the government (Sikh first-generation)."* Also, the fact the author had gone native prior to this phase helped establish a rapport, trust and confidence had been established between informant and author. At the start of this phase power relations favoured the informant. However, as time passed there was a noticeable shift from informant to author. Issues, which now needed to be addressed, beyond any outsider status and power relations, included being a silent witness to family and business conflict, sibling rivalry, deal making, and internal power struggles. Consequently, it was felt these themes were the most challenging in terms of implementing a case study strategy and how one deals with such testing moments.

The 11 case study firms produced a wealth of data that was both rich in content, and extremely informative. Given the author was embedded within these firms, one: (i) became privy to the internal workings of an ethnic SME, (ii) was placed within a position of privilege (iii) had access to information, (iv) observed management/team meetings, business negotiations, family and business conflicts and power struggles, and (v) discussed/listened to the concerns of family and business members. Therefore, the presence of the author within the firm was acknowledged but never challenged, and status as an outsider became very much secondary to the role of a confidential silent witness, and once again as an objective listener displaying a non-judgemental attitude. In essence, throughout this phase it was important that there were opportunities to

highlight discrepancies between what informants said they had actually done, or were going to do (Yin, 1989; Robson, 1993; Slack and Rowley, 2000).

An issue that presented the study with another challenge was the concept of researcher distancing (Flick 1998). Such a problem hinged on the question: how much participation is needed for a good observation and how much participation is permissible in the context of distancing (Flick, 1998)? Consideration needed to be given to whether the informant ought to be aware, or know of researcher presence, or whether the actual purpose of observation ought to be hidden (Flick, 1998; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). In essence, the study decided observer-as-participant would be the preferred choice (Gummesson, 1991; Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000). The decision was informed by four factors. Firstly, the role allowed the author to interact casually and non-directly with those under investigation whilst at the same time remaining a researcher (Gummesson, 1991; Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000). Secondly, any relationship between statements and actions of informants could be verified – from initial semi-structured interview to observation. Thirdly, allowed access and time when conducting observations. Lastly, it was best suited to establishing behaviour of the subjects within a particular context (Baker, 2001). In this instance, such observations focused on informants during:
- Events such as chairing meetings and committees, and crisis management
- Their role within the organisation as a figure head and leader, and
- Their relationship with work colleagues, peers, founders, suppliers, customers and others.

Each of these situations above gave insight into the overall ethos and organisational culture that existed within the family business/non-family business setting. It also identified differences between both ethnic groups, and again identified discrepancies between what was said and what was done. Equally, having access to- and perusing in-company documentary evidence and archival records supported or discredited a number of key issues such as:
- The exact roles acted out by the offspring and founder (within FBs)
- The second-generation informant and his business partner(s)
- Likely direction of the FB/NFB
- Formal or informal management process
- Relationship between informants and internal/external stakeholders/wider publics and the like

Within the role of a silent witness, observations noted there were many aspects of individual businesses that played out in a positive manner, which, resulted in some equally positive outcomes. Equally, it was noted how much of this positive behaviour was modified for researcher benefit [a concern held by the author prior to the start of this phase]. For instance, emphasis on professionalism / customer care was a little over the top, individuals being extremely polite to one another appeared a little staged, and the like. This positive environment, although interesting, appeared to be in stark contrast to a minority of family and non-family businesses within this phase. Here, such displays in behaviour and mood swings certainly supported commentary highlighted in the semi-structure interview phase. Wherein some informants talk of a shift in emphasis that demonstrates *"Entrepreneurial weariness (Second-generation Sikh, Pakistani and Hindu)."* Consequently, as informants went on to suggest, the family business along with its constraints has become a burden for them personally, and although they *"wish to leave the business and go it alone (Second-generation Hindu and Sikh),"* they are not able to contemplate an alternative and so remained.

Noticeably, for second-generation informants within FBs, beyond the controlling influence of their respective fathers, other areas of business management cited wherein they had little to no influence, and which in their view constrained business growth were:
- Planning – lack of regularity, purpose and rigour
- A lack of open and constructive business dialogue
- A lack of regularity, purpose and monitoring of action points
- Reluctance by the father/founder to delegate essential tasks, and monitor business/employee performance
- An insistence by the father/founder for short to medium term business thinking and direction
- The inability of the father/founder to deal with confrontation/difficult situations between family members and/or the management team
- A lack of willingness to change
- The employment of mediocre workers from within the family/community
- Inadequate infrastructure and operating systems for stock ordering, accounting, sales monitoring/forecasting/planning

Interestingly, although the author knew the second-generation informants to be correct in their assessment of the situation, this did present an overall dilemma for the author. Thus, although there to help the author but did not wish, or could not be seen to take sides irrespective of the situation or potential outcome. Equally, the

author could not criticise or undermine the business decisions of the father no matter how wrong his son perceived him to be. Therefore, complete neutrality and objectivity had to be maintained. Interestingly, as months passed, and given the embedded relationship within all nine firms, author neutrality and objectivity played out beyond any father/son relationship. In fact it extended to witnessing clashes between the offspring and/or: business partner(s), sibling(s), the workforce, suppliers, et cetera. The author became the person in the middle, as individuals within the businesses would (i) engage in many off-the record discussions, (ii) sought advice/guidance on a number of issues [again off the record], (iii) and/or saw one as a safe pair of ears.

Situations of conflict are not unique to ethnic-businesses, in fact, as Armstrong, (2000) purports conflict is inevitable in all organisations, because the objectives, values and the needs of groups and individuals do not always coincide. Consequently, other than problems resulting from of a lack of succession planning, there will be at times clashes of ideas, tasks, projects, roles, and responsibilities due to such things as short-termism, lack of strategic focus/drive, lack of innovation and so forth (Armstrong, 2000; Johnson and Scholes, 2002). Fletcher, (1998), during her ethnographic inquiry of an engineering firm in the Midlands, observed a similar situation of family control where the owner/manager strong, paternal leadership and his two sons' style of management were continually in conflict with each other. The hostile environment faced by the author sat with findings in literature which suggest, due to the internal paternalistic managerial style, values, rigidity and closed minds of the founder member firm becomes bound in culture and traditional attitudes, as there is a reluctance by the off-spring to upset practices already established. Any attempt to change maybe interpreted as a lack of respect for the founder. Not to mention the image of the family as a whole (Stoy Hayward, 1989; Ram and Holliday 1993; Cromie *et al.,* 1995; Westhead and Cowling 1997; Fletcher 1998; Janjuha and Dickson, 1998; Ram *et al.*, 1998; Banerjee and Prasad 2008).

Finally, any reflections could not be complete without commentary appertaining to the bargaining card. At the start of the study, this offer was conveyed to each informant by way of soliciting participation within the study as a whole, and one was clear as to how such process would play-out. Certainly in terms of the semi-structured interview phase the free service was straight forward, and in the main involved helping informants with business and marketing plans, developing marketing positioning/branding strategies and the like. Approximately forty percent of informants, mostly second-generation, had taken up the offer. Particularly those informants that were in the early stages of business start-up, or felt they were at a crossroads in terms of business direction.

With regards to the case study firms, interestingly, entry by the author into FBs was initiated/driven by the son and not the father, as the latter did not appear to be particularly interested (in a nice way) maintaining contact beyond the semi-structured interview phase. In essence, involvement within all nine case study firms found the author becoming a guest employee outside of the role as a researcher - both were never conducted at the same time or on the same day. In the main the role of the author was used for recruitment, designing and delivering short-training courses, on one occasion delivering a training course in Pakistan, helping with the development of a tender, and so forth. However, as time passed and given the continued embedded nature of the research, the role as guest-employee and researcher became increasingly blurred. Perhaps the author was naïve about the prospect of this happening, or thought it would not happen despite best efforts. However, the situation spiralled due to the notion of a being safe pair of ears as many respondents became relaxed and started to open up even more. Thus, it became increasingly difficult to separate roles, moreover concern grew as to the impact this may have on informants relationships vis-à-vis the study overall.

To sum up, the changing nature of author status throughout this particular phase was a concern for alarm in any way, to some degree it was expected. Clues and indicators as to the issues that appeared troublesome, or had the potential for conflict/cause confrontation were alluded to during the semi-structured interviews. Even more so during many discussions after the tape recorder was switched off. What was note worthy whilst acting, as a silent witness again not unique, was that individuals would appear to base decisions on emotion. Equally, they consistently ignored the bigger picture from a business perspective or became oblivious to the impact such situations were having on those around them. So much so, emotion and business became clouded and neither created transparency nor were ever fully resolved to a satisfactory level.

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the deeper issues appertaining to ethnic small business management, particularly from a [first and] second-generational South Asian perspective, are clearly absent within current small business literature and debate. Therefore, the richness and depth of feelings and attitudes from each informant, resulting from this depth of investigation made any contribution to knowledge that much more unique. To this end, the paper presented and explained a multi-methods approach used to overcome the reality of an outsider looking in when researching ethnic entrepreneurship. Moreover, the paper critically reflected upon the complexities,

difficulties and successes that such research strategy espoused. Attention was drawn also to the impact of personal and structural power relations between researcher and interviewee, as well as, potential research problems as a result thereof. The paper stressed the need to ensure the preservation of researcher integrity, credibility and confidentiality, as s/he will encounter situations wherein s/he will be tested to the fullest.

In terms of practical advice when conducting research such as this note, instances where the researcher does not share the same ethnicity as the informants under investigation, there are a number of considerations that have to be addressed. For example, there is a need to be more than aware of one's own background and how this maybe viewed by the targeted ethnic group. Not only viewed, but how it is handled by both researcher and informant. This is coupled also with researcher sensitivity to the personal journey appertaining to the informant, and the notion of credibility within the research process. Having to give way to the informant should not be viewed by any researcher as a sign of weakness, instead, it should form part of the transition process from prospective informant to actual informant. Equally, the researcher should invest care, time and effort to ensure not only that s/he (i) has grasped the essence of any cultural/religious/familial/cultural nuances that could impede a smooth transition, but is able to (ii) deal with the notion of emotional management should it present itself once the study in is full flow (Spalek, 2004). The extensive use of networking and going native may help the transition process on the one hand, and facilitated access on the other hand. Therefore, at the start of any ethno-cultural study, pre-planning, information gathering, and cultural awareness of the targeted ethnic-community, is just as important as other elements of the study itself. Also, one needs to be prepared to challenge any pre-conceived prejudices or notions one may hold, As the paper demonstrated, there is a need to develop a research strategy that is flexible enough to re-act to unforeseen circumstances, but stable enough to allow the study to maintain is trajectory without compromising either its overall integrity or that of the researcher. Finally, the overall study/paper may appear limited by the sample and methods used (Priporas and Vangelinos 2008). Certainly given the opportunity structures, and social and economic environment within the Greater London area, the findings discussed within may not be as generalisable when compared with other parts of the UK. Acknowledging this, the author feels there is a need to replicate a study of this nature on a wider scale, over a longer time frame, using mixed gender and/or ethnic groups, and beyond the Greater London area. Conducting a longitudinal study, of this nature, would greatly increase our understanding of the insider/outsider research experience.

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