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Citation: Hussain ZI, Hafeez K and Hussein S (2015) Minority entrepreneurs' exposure and journey in business: the underpinning assumptions and actions. In: Proceedings of the 8th International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development. 18-19 Jun 2015. University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK: 164-179.

Minority entrepreneurs' exposure and journey in business: the underpinning assumptions and actions

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we introduce Morgan's (1986, 1997) eight metaphors for *making sense* of entrepreneurs' motives and their view of 'reality'. Employing Burrell and Morgan's (1979, 2003) four paradigms for the analysis of organisational theory, we propose a methodology to capture the 'longitudinal' journey of minority ethnic entrepreneurs' original motives for setting up business; and, current and future perceived image. We use a deductive approach by developing a multiple-choice questionnaire based on eight metaphors. The data is collected from 30 small business owner managers/entrepreneurs based in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Our initial findings show that the assumptions of most of the respondents conform to the *"functionalist"* paradigm that place emphases on order, objectivity, rationality and tangible view of 'reality'. Accordingly most of the respondents selected the *functionalist* metaphors like '*Brain*', '*Machine*' and '*Psychic Prison*'. Interestingly, most of the respondents selected and re-selected functionalist paradigm to indicate their past and future aspirations, perhaps due to their need for business stability and to subside any insecurity feelings with regards to their future. However, interestingly many respondents selected *"radical Humanist"* or *"interpretivist"* paradigms to map their current situation. These paradigms portray relatively more entrepreneurial and explorative mindset, perhaps mimicking unease with the current situation and a *desire* by the respondents to introduce some kind of a change in their current business and social settings. We believe that their metaphorical assumptions could determine their decision making, policy and strategy setting, and, actions. In our view our research instrument is appropriate for conducting 'longitudinal' studies for eliciting past, current and future assumptions of entrepreneurs.

KEYWORDS: Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs, Metaphors, Paradigms, Bradford.

1. INTRODUCTION

Originally the term entrepreneur was used for a businessman (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990), however, after Schumpeter's seminal work on the topic (Schumpeter, 1951); many have accepted his definition of entrepreneurship to be associated with some kind of technical or financial innovation to generate some (irregular) economic growth. There are three different schools of thoughts with regards to entrepreneurship efforts. The first school considers a strong relationship between entrepreneurship and culture at macro level (national and regional) level (for example, see Morrison, 2000). The second school adopts a process driven attitudinal and external environment mix arguing that it is the external environment which shapes the behaviour of individual's attitude towards risk, work, money and individual goals (Robinson et al. 1991). The third school considers social and economic factors that affect entrepreneurship regarding availability of economic resource, quality of life conditions and health issues influence in decision making (Pennings, 1982).

There are other entrepreneurial push and pull factors that are found in the literature. For example, push factors are reported as redundancy, blocked promotion, recession, unemployment, frustration with previous employment, the need for creative expression, and need to earn a reasonable living (Watson and Hogarth-Scott, 1994; Davis and Gibb, 1991; Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986). Whereas, the pull factors include independence, being ones own boss, creative expression, choice of work and profit motives (Watson and Hogarth-Scott, 1994).

In this paper we explore the underlying motives and attitudes of ethnic minority entrepreneurs for setting up new businesses using Burrell and Morgan's (1979) organisational paradigms along with Morgan's metaphors (1986; 1997). This is to help make sense of the entrepreneurs' motives and their current and future image of their business. Metaphors create mental pictures, which are used to

interpret the world, such as working of an organisation as a machine (Ortony, 1975; Smith and Simmons, 1983; Oswick and Grant, 1996). Lackoff and Johnson (1980) and Morgan (1986) believe that metaphors affect our cognitive learning and structure, by creating certain types of realities within our minds and assist us to contextualise the world in ways that we may not have envisaged before. Metaphors encapsulate perceptions of the organisation held by individuals, and allow them to express their relationship to the organisation in terms of their motives, desires, attitudes, needs and dedication. Similarly, metaphors may express individual's perceptions of organisational structure, management control and style of management.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON METAPHORS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In this section we provide theoretical underpinning of our research methodology by reviewing literature on metaphors and paradigms. We also develop a link between metaphors, paradigms and motives of entrepreneurs to engage in a business activity.

2.1. Metaphors

Metaphors create mental pictures, which are used to interpret the world, such as working of an organisation as a machine (Ortony, 1975; Smith and Simmons, 1983; Oswick and Grant, 1996). Lackoff and Johnson (1980) and Morgan (1986) believe that metaphors affect our cognitive learning and structure, by creating certain types of realities within our minds and assist us to contextualize the world in ways that we may not have envisaged before. Morgan (1986, 1997) provides eight metaphors of organisations: *machine, organism, brain, culture, political systems, psychic prison, flux and transformation*, and, *instruments of domination*.

Morgan (1986) refers to metaphors as lenses through which one could view organisations in different ways. Additionally, in a rejoinder to Pinder and Bourgeois (1982) Morgan (1983: 601) stresses that a metaphor is not simply "A figurative device for the embellishment of language and discourse, rather [it is] a basic structural form of experience through which human beings engage, organise, and understand their world". Lackoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) highlight the psychological impact of metaphors, where metaphors affect our cognitive learning structures. Metaphors create pictures in our minds and affect the assumptions that influence our attitudes and behaviour (Ward et al., 2005). Therefore metaphors can be regarded as conceptual tools for communication of ideas/beliefs (Ortony, 1975; Sacks, 1978; Tsoukas, 1991; Safro and Segel, 2003; Lackoff and Johnson, 1980; Ricoeur, 1978(b); Tilley, 1999; Way, 1991). Metaphors also have an imagery value and affect our view of the world (1978; Sacks, 1978; Morgan, 1986, 1997). They are used in our everyday lives and they affect the way we interpret and *make sense* of the world (Oswick and Grant, 1996; and, Lawley and Tompkins, 2000).

The extent of the application of metaphors to organisational research is impressive. Many writers have used metaphors to understand and explore organisations. Examples include Gibson and Zeller-Bruhen (2001) who used metaphors to explain organisational teamwork in different contexts; Polley (1997) uses the metaphors of bifurcation and mathematical chaos to explain organisational dynamics; Sushil (2001) uses ten metaphors to describe managerial flexibility. Scholars such as Morgan (1980) and Bryant (1993), use metaphors as problem solving devices and for making general sense of organisations. Morgan (1986, 1997) of course uses eight archetypal or metaphorical images which capture researcher presuppositions and assumptive structure regarding the nature of organisations. Other examples of the application of metaphors to organisational research can be found in Table 1:

Table 1: Morgan's eight metaphors of organisation

Machine **(M)**	Views the world and organisations as having physical existence. Its values rationality and stability, where work tasks are programmed and sequenced, for example division of labour. There is a need for good planning and control over the workforce.
Organism **(O)**	Views the world and organisations as constantly changing and emphasises the necessity of paying better attention to human needs. It believes that more flexibility should be given to the workforce over decision to operate and work. The human factors are important for the survival and reproduction of the organisation.
Brain **(B)**	Views communication and decision making aspects as important. It holds a hierarchical view of operating and managing the organisation. It believes in continuous organisational learning and the need for more knowledge.
Culture **(C)**	Gives an importance to ideology, values and daily organisational rituals of organisations and their importance. Hence learning about employee behaviour and common beliefs is a key to organisational survival and success.
Political system **(Po)**	Views power and authority as important. It holds that the actual ability to allocate resources and then monitor their use that depends on the degree of political power.
Psychic prison **(Ps)**	Gives importance to conscious/unconscious and ideological beliefs of individuals. It believes that workers may have different ways of seeing management control and organisational structure and may see themselves as imprisoned by their organisation and its ways of working.
Flux and Transformation **(F+T)**	Views organisation as in a constant state of transformation and change. Thus depending on the organisation and its circumstances it may be better to give it greater degree of self-determination.
Instruments of Domination **(IofD)**	Emphasises the power and domination of management and the organisation over its workers and environment. The workers see management as behaving rationally and using humans as objects that are merely tools for production.

2.2. Burrell and Morgan's paradigms

Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe their organisational paradigms using five set of assumptions. The first one is *ontological* assumption, which concerns the existence of the social world. On one hand, the social world is considered external to the individual: 'reality' is objective (realism). On the other hand, the social world is considered the product of individual consciousness: 'reality' is subjective (nominalism). The second one is *epistemological* assumption, which concerns the grounds of knowledge. At one end, knowledge is hard, real, and tangible: it can be communicated tangibly (positivism). On the other end, knowledge is soft, subjective, and spiritual: it can only be personally experienced (anti-positivism). The third one concerns *human nature* with their social environment. At one extreme, humans are viewed as being conditioned or determined by their environment (*determinism*). At the other extreme, humans are viewed as the creators of their environment: they possess free will (voluntarism). The fourth one concerns the *method* used to investigate and obtain knowledge of the social world. Here again at one extreme, method views social world as external, objective reality (nomothetic). At the other extreme, method views social world as created by the subjective experience of individuals (ideographic). The fifth assumption concerns the nature of society. This entails the degree of *regulation* that focuses on whether the social world is stable, cohesive and integrated with underlying unity. There is an emphasis on consensus (voluntary) between humans and needs satisfaction and the stabilizing effect of structure on interaction involved in societal regeneration. The status quo is continually maintained or changes only slowly - conflict and differences are largely absent. *Radical Change*, assumes that the social world is unstable and divided, with deep-seated structural conflict, dissension and modes of domination. It emphasizes the unstable nature of structure or interaction that produces new structure. The status quo changes rapidly and forces exist that tend to change society radically. These assumptions are used to form four paradigms:

Functionalist paradigm: The organisation is a concrete entity rarely undergoing radical change, and it exerts influence on individuals to maintain the status quo. Within such organisation stability and the status quo are important.

Interpretivist paradigm: The organisation is a social construction created by the process of human interaction. Radical change is infrequent and consensus is important to maintain the status quo. The organisation exists as a result of consensus, which emerges from a social construction process of human interaction. Here the reality exists in human consciousness only.

Radical structuralist paradigm: Organisations are shaped by social conflict between production owners and labour which is experienced as objective reality by the oppressed classes (labour). This conflict has the potential for radical change. There is a focus on the ways in which power and domination perpetuate this reality, and there is also a focus on the tendency of society to create conflict and instability. The potential for radical change always exists and strong forces are pervasive in society.

*Radical humanist paradigm***:** Organisations are shaped by social constructions arising from the subjective views of their participants. Dissension creates radical change to status quo to potentially emancipate participants. The organisation exists as a social construction - social constructions are a product of human consciousness and are fragile and easily liable to change, such change is healthy and should be encouraged.

We believe that debates about the best way to elaborate specific paradigmatic locations (Sacks, 1978; Lackoff and Johnson, 1980; Miall, 1982; Vincent-Wayne, 1991; Soyland, 1994; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Tilley, 1999; Schreyogg and Hopfl, 2004) could be enriched by more discussions about the importance of 'multi-level' views of metaphor and their use in organisation.

In paradigmatic sense, a typical entrepreneur would fall into those paradigms that are based on change assumptions, such as *radical structuralist* and *radical humanist*. This is due to the fact that most entrepreneurs, at least theoretically, have a desire to change their current circumstances or would like to make a difference through their contribution to society. Furthermore, as at the initial stage most of the entrepreneurial activity starts off in a conceptual manner (rather than making a "physical" attempt to force others into their own 'mind frame'), entrepreneurs are more likely to fall into the *radical humanist* paradigm.

2. 3. Entrepreneurial Metaphors

There is some evidence of the use of metaphors to understand entrepreneurial activities. For example, Koiranen (1995) conducted an exploratory analysis of entrepreneurial metaphors and concepts to reveal the paradoxical nature of respondents' perceptions of entrepreneurs and their ventures. He grouped the entrepreneurial metaphors into following semantic categories: 'Machine (ry) and other Physical Objects', *'Warfare and Adventure'*, 'Sports and Games', 'Creativity and Activity', 'Nature', 'Disease', Food Items', and 'Special Features'. "The metaphorical analysis was used as a tool to make sense, to structure and to understand how people think and speak". Hyrsky (1999) extended this work via empirical analysis by collecting a sample of 751 respondents from a range of European countries. The main aims were to conduct a cross-cultural, cross-gender study of the European entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Overall results show that a majority of the metaphors contained very positive, even idealistic images as some kind of heroes whose actions are of priceless value to society. In a cross-cultural comparison, the Scandinavians held more favourable views towards entrepreneurship than their English-speaking counterparts. The North European view seems to be that an entrepreneur is linked with initiative, responsibility, motivation, and action, but it is not linked with hardness, selfishness, or insolence. For them "an entrepreneur is regarded as a self-confident, responsible, diligent and professional opportunist and risk taker but he/she is not considered to be a selfish power seeker, speculator or exploiter".

Dodd (2002) constructed a cultural model for the US entrepreneurs on the basis of the metaphors that entrepreneurs used in their daily life and business narratives. The model is argued to be internally consistent in providing more insights to entrepreneurial aspirations, perspectives and cognition process. This model can also be contrasted with the European mental model of entrepreneurship, including metaphorically derived models of organisational behaviour. Hill (1995) argues that

"entrepreneurs make an extensive use of metaphors both in developing a vision or mental model of their environment (*sense making*) and articulating that vision to others (*sense giving*). Hill concentrates more on the nature of entrepreneurial activity or process, rather on the traits of individuals.

However, some researchers also highlight the reasons for the limited use of metaphors in studying the entrepreneurship behaviour. For example, Cisgel (1996) provides a detailed critique of how the rigidness of the economic models and metaphorical representations used in the economic discipline, restrict somewhat flexible and fluid concepts and views associated with entrepreneurship. Jennings *et al.* (2005) has emphasised the need to look at entrepreneurship discipline through the lense of Burrell and Morgan's (2003) four paradigms. They argued that "within field of entrepreneurship, the vast proportion of theory and research is located within the bounds of *functional paradigm,* characterised by an objectivists perspectives and rooted in regulation. Contextualised within the range of alternative perspectives available to researchers, it becomes clear that the dominant paradigm of entrepreneurship research is based upon a relatively narrow range of metatheoretical assumptions".

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are many reasons why individuals embark upon and run business ventures. Their attitude towards taking risk depends on their motives and goals. There are studies which indicate that the decision to start a business by a member of an ethnic minority group may not simply be a matter of choice. In Bradford region, for example, it may be post-industrial struggle to survive, or a lack of opportunities in the main stream business sector. The latter is less likely to be the case for the second generation of ethnic minorities, as most speak fluent English, and are relatively more *aware* of the business opportunities around them compared with their predecessors. We believe that metaphor can facilitate to explore the entrepreneurship behaviour and assumptions, and how this can translate into business success. This would help to underpin the reasons and motivation for small business entrepreneurs to start up a new business venture. Also this research would help to make sense of the motives of the first generation ethnic entrepreneurs towards succession planning and passing it (including the 'know how') to second generation.

We used a deductive research approach in this research involving an operationalisation of Morgan's metaphors in a multiple-choice questionnaire. A multiples choice questionnaire, based on the eight metaphors of Morgan (1997), was administered to business owners in the Bradford district. The questionnaire asked for: (1) demographics data concerned with owner background, business details and location; (2) owners motives for setting up the business; their current perspective of their business; and, their future perspective of the business. We collected the data through paying a personal visit to each business and seeking access to the owners/directors. We sat with the respondents and explained the nature of research and the questions before they filled them in. We then remained with the owners while they filled the questionnaire and we clarified any queries that they had.

For data analyses, we will follow the example of Morgan (1980) to map metaphors to paradigms to help us devise effective method for data generation and analyses. We will map Morgan's (1986, 1997) metaphors against Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms by looking at the individual characteristics of each metaphor. The "longitudinal paradigmatic mapping procedure" has allowed us to plot the past, current and future metaphorical assumptions of respondents into form journey.

4. RESULTS

Our initial findings based on ten respondent returns are summarised in Table 2. The metaphorical journeys for ten respondents are shown in the Figure 1 (1a-1j).

Table 2: A summary of attitudes and motives of ten business entrepreneurs in the Bradford district

| Respondent number →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ethnic background of the owner	Pakistani	Indian	Pakistani	Kashmiri	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani	Indian
Country of ethnic origin of the owner	Pakistan	India	Pakistan	Azad Kashmir - Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	India
Background of majority of workers & number	- 1	Asian 2	Pakistani 1	Asian 15	Pakistani 4	Pakistani -	- -	Pakistani 6	Mix 15	Asian 1
Background of majority of customers	Asian	Mix	Mix	White	White	Mix	-	Asian	Asian	White
Nᵒ of family businesses	1	-	1	-	2	1	1	1	1	-
Age of business	10 years	10+ years	10 years	3 years	5 years, 2 months	9 years, 7 months	6 months	1 year	28 years	10 years
Is this your 1st, 2nd, 3rd…. business	1st	-	1st	3rd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st
Annual turnover	40K	-	60K	-	-	40K	40K	-	500K	-
Type of business	Milk Distribution	Domestic good retail	Car tyres	Foam for beds	Fast food	Post office	Textile outlet	Television channel	Accountancy	Ladies jewellery
Start up motives	Culture	Political system & Brain	Brain	Brain	Psychic prison	Instrument of domination & Psychic prison	Culture & Instrument of domination	Culture	Brain & Culture	Machine
Present motives	Culture & Organism	Machine	Machine	Organism & Machine	Psychic prison & Brain	Psychic prison, Machine, Political system	Culture	Culture	Brain	Machine & Brain
Future motives	Culture	Psychic prison & Political system	Organism, Political system, Psychic prison, Machine, Brain	Organism & Machine	Instrument of domination & Brain	Instrument of domination	Culture	Political system, Brain, Psychic prison Culture	Machine	Psychic prison
Home paradigm	Interpretivist	Radical humanist	Functionalist	Functionalist	Functionalist	Radical structuralist	Interpretivist	Interpretivist	Functionalist	Functionalist
Current paradigm	Radical humanist	Functionalist	Radical humanist	Radical humanist	Radical structuralist	Functionalist	Radical structuralist	Functionalist	Interpretivist	Functionalist
Key: M - Machine, O - Organism, B - Brain, C - Culture, Po - Political system, Ps - Psychic prison, F - Flux and transformation, IofD- Instrument of domination										

Figure 1: Journey maps for ten respondents

Key: M - Machine, O - Organism, B - Brain, C - Culture, Po - Political system, Ps - Psychic prison, F - Flux and Transformation, IofD- Instrument of domination
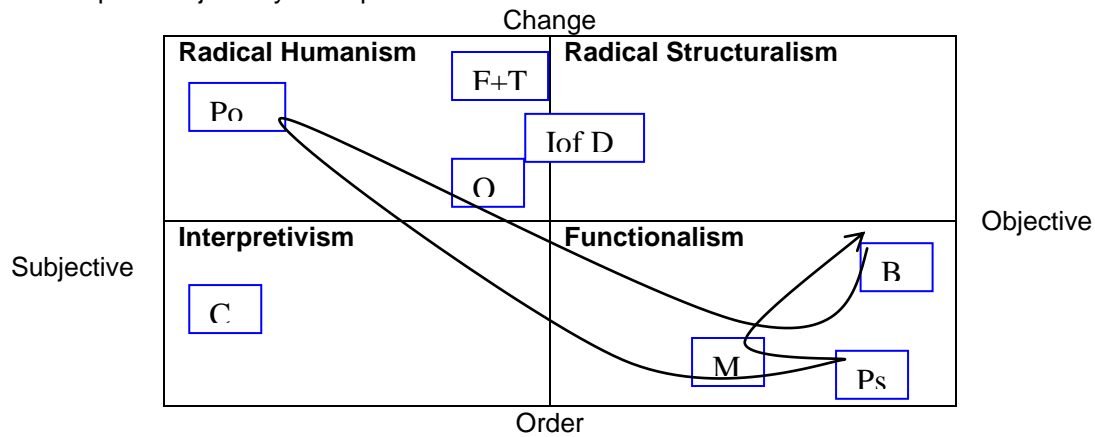
1a. Metaphorical journey of respondent 1
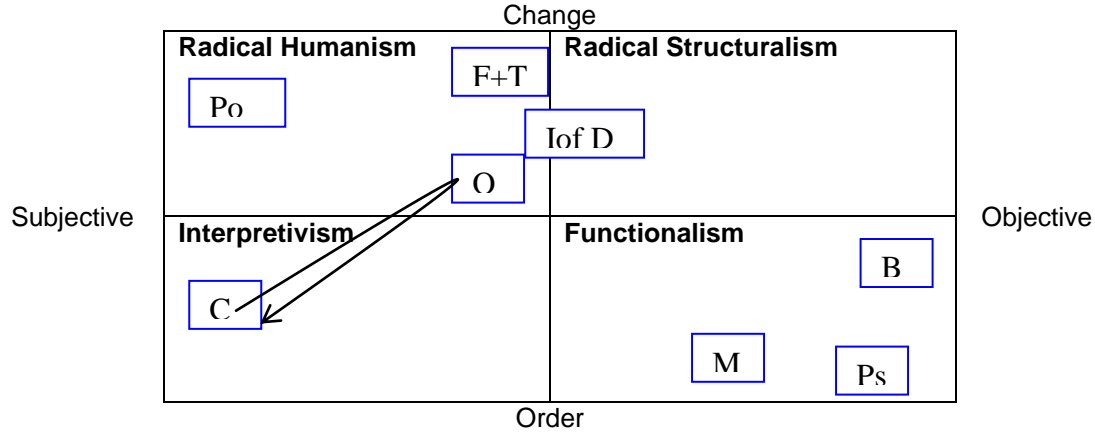
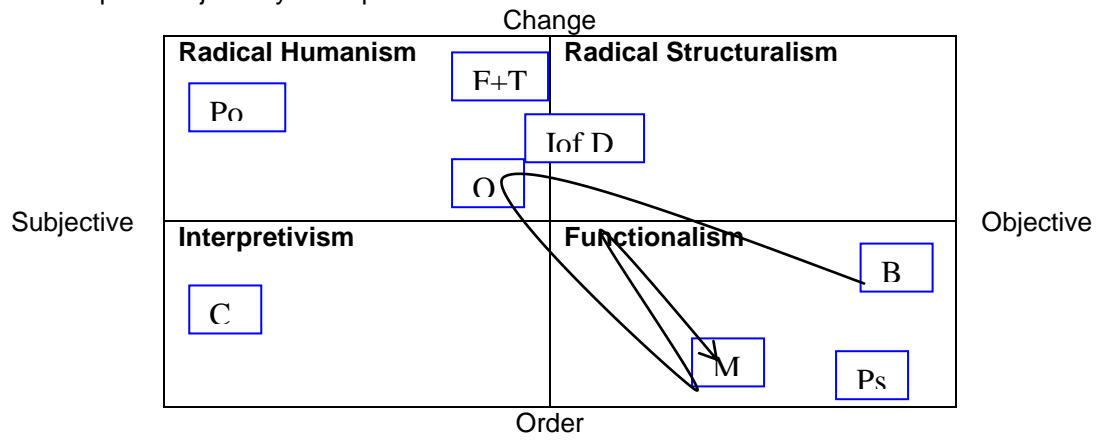1b. Metaphorical journey of respondent 2
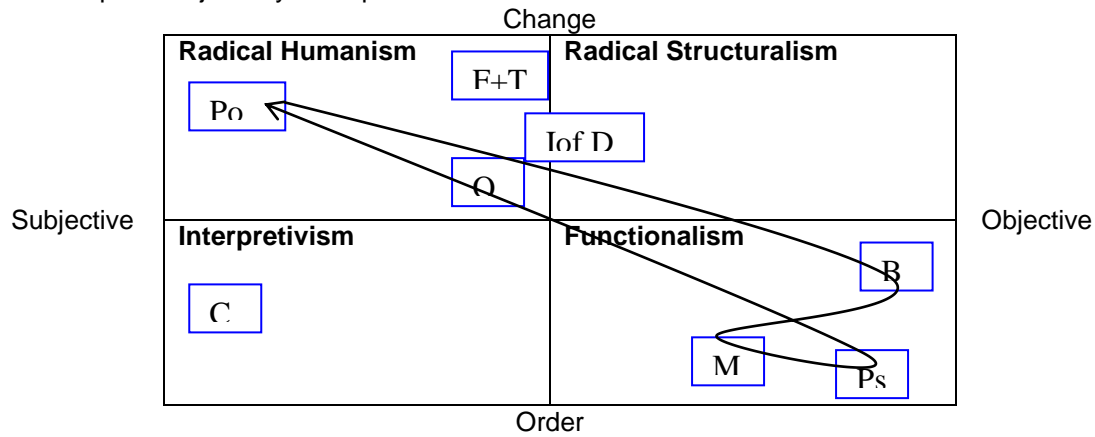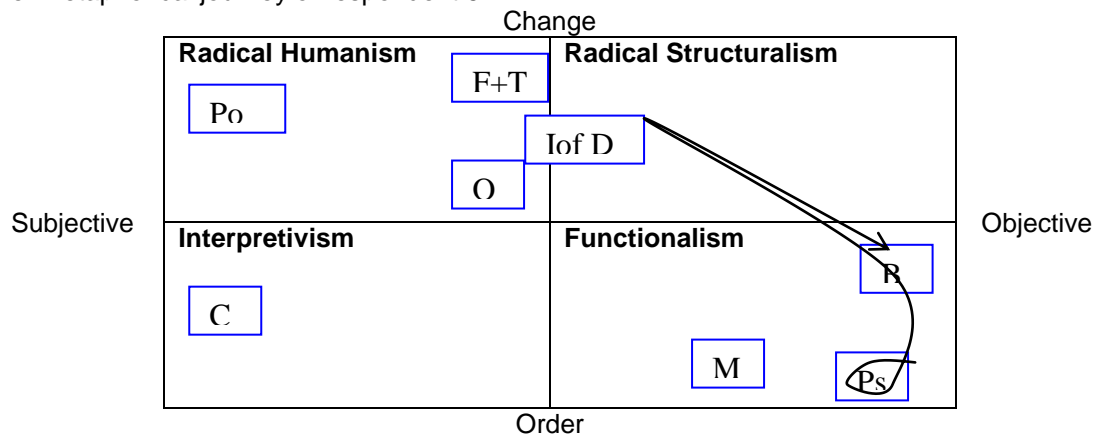

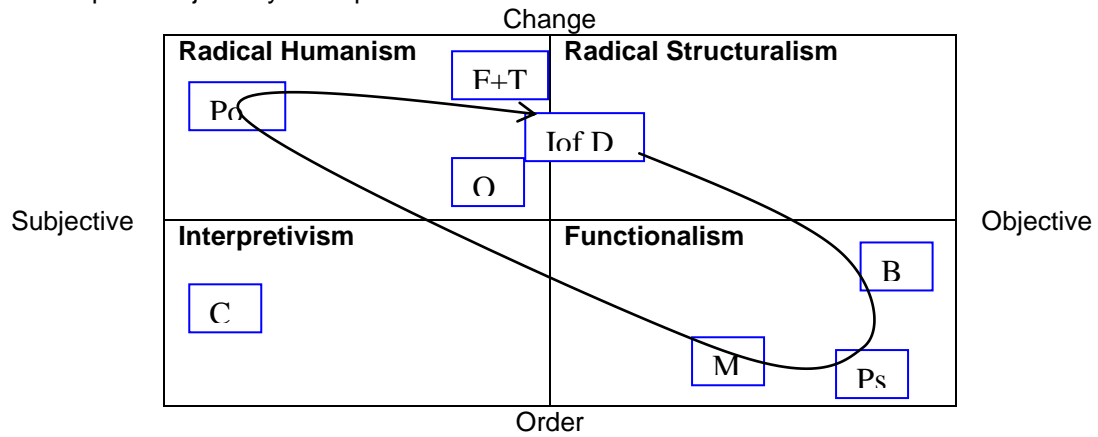1c. Metaphorical journey of respondent 3

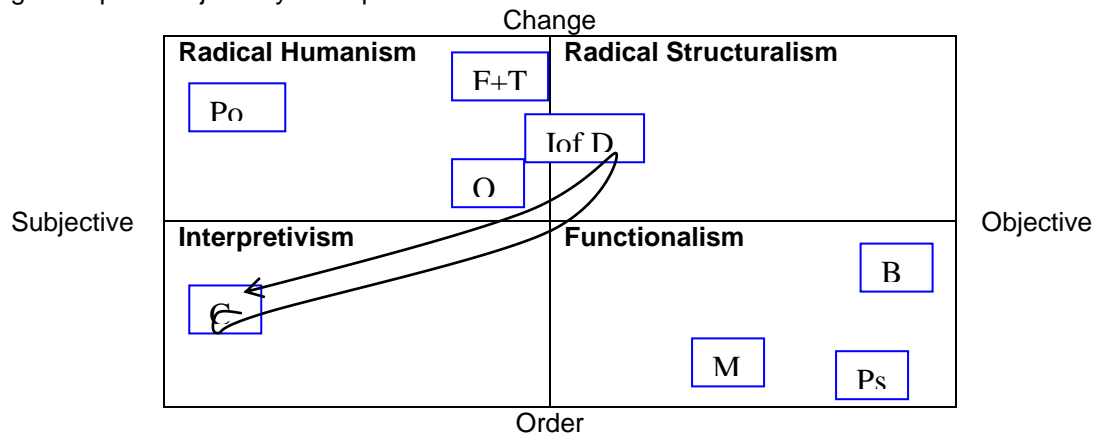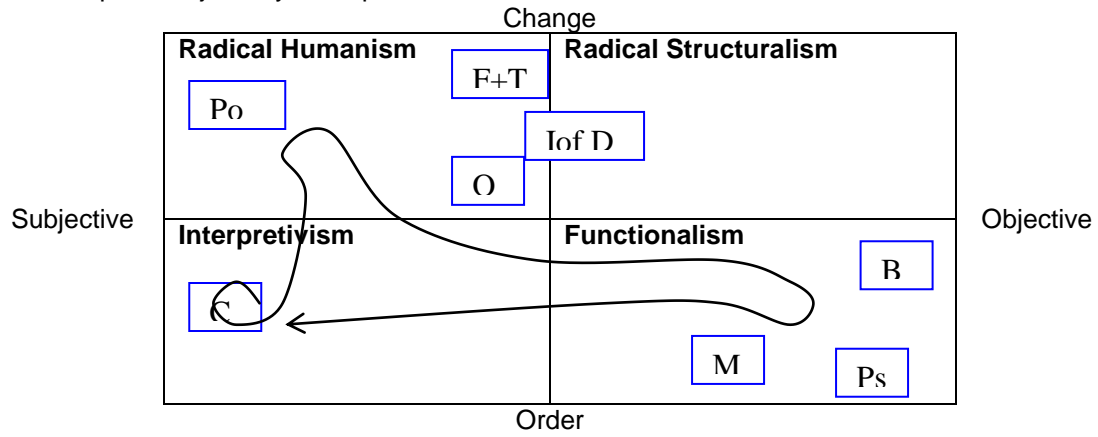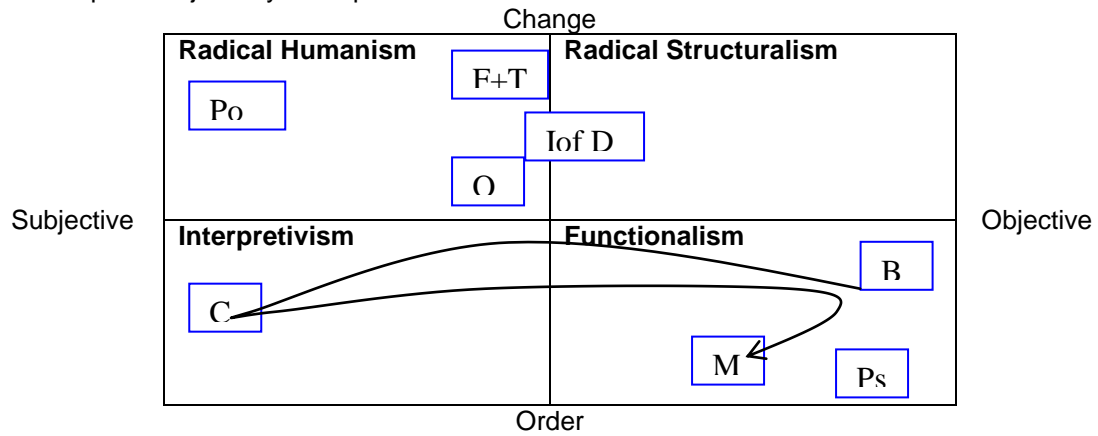1d. Metaphorical journey of respondent 4

1e. Metaphorical journey of respondent 5

1f. Metaphorical journey of respondent 6

1g. Metaphorical journey of respondent 7

Change

| Radical Humanism | | Radical Structuralism |

F+T

Po

Iof D

O

Subjective | Interpretivism | Functionalism | Objective

B

C

M

Ps

Order

1h. Metaphorical journey of respondent 8

Change

| Radical Humanism | | Radical Structuralism |

F+T

Po

Iof D

O

Subjective | Interpretivism | Functionalism | Objective

B

C

M

Ps

Order

1i. Metaphorical journey of respondent 9

Change

| Radical Humanism | | Radical Structuralism |

F+T

Po

Iof D

O

Subjective | Interpretivism | Functionalism | Objective

B

C

M

Ps

Order

1j. Metaphorical journey of respondent 10

Change

Radical Humanism	Radical Structuralism

F+T

Po

Iof D

O

Subjective   Objective

Interpretivism	Functionalism

C

R

M

Ps

Order

Our results have generated the following findings:

The past and future journey for almost all respondents have had a very strong single paradigm connection with many reverting back to the same paradigm. For most respondents there was one predominant or "home paradigm", in which most of their metaphorical choices fell into. Six respondents fell into overall *functionalist paradigm* indicating a strong routinisation and logical mindset for their start-up and future direction, perhaps due to their need for business stability and to subside any insecurity feelings with regards to their future. Three fell in the *interpretivist paradigm* with strong cultural bias, and one fell into the *radical structuralist* paradigm that may delineate "risk" taking attitudes. Apart from one respondent (respondent 10), there has been a shift in the paradigms choice of respondents from past to current. This may be due to instability and/or unease on the part of respondents when focusing on current situation. Only one respondent (respondent 10), who has been ladies jewellery business for almost 10 years stayed in the baseline paradigm of functionalism indicating a "psychic prison" metaphor. However, the metaphorical journey of seven respondents moved between at least two paradigms, and the journey of the remaining two (respondents 6 and 8) moved between three paradigms. Selection of more than one metaphor for future aspirations indicates that at least half of the sample respondents appeared to be unclear about their future motives. This could indicate a lack of vision and planning, perhaps boiling down to uncertainty associated with their business and social settings.

Perhaps the most relevant paradigm with regards to entrepreneurial activities is the *radical structuralist* homing in *IoD* metaphor indicating risk taking attitudes as often prescribed essential for entrepreneurial behaviour (Robinson et al. 1991). The other closer paradigm we would associate with entrepreneurial activity is *radical humanization* containing *Po, F+T* and *O* metaphors, representing power/conflicts, and inducing and managing change. Interesting , the two of the respondents belonging two start up companies in the sample (see respondents 7 and 8, for age of business six months and one year, respectively) fall within *interpretivism paradigm* indicating social and cultural aspects as the main motives and driving force for getting into the business. Interestingly, only respondent falling in the entrepreneurial *radical structuralist* paradigm was 6, who have been working for over 9 years in a post office business. With regards to the current position of the respondents, six of these (respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8) rested themselves in the *radical humanist* paradigm that closely matches with the entrepreneurial characteristics.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this research we aimed to investigate the motives of minority ethnic entrepreneurs. We looked at their original motives at the time of initiating the business venture, and also looked at their current and future motives to see if there had been a change in their perspectives. Our use of Morgan's (1986/1997) metaphors coupled with Burrell and Morgan (1979) helped us to elicit these motives better and to illustrate the change in motives in the form of journeys. Hence we provided a sketch of the thought process that entrepreneurs may have followed.

Our initial findings show that the assumptions of most of the respondents conform to the "*functionalist"* paradigm that place emphases on order, objectivity, rationality and tangible view of 'reality'. Accordingly most of the respondents selected the functionalist metaphors like '*Brain*', '*Machine*' and '*Psychic Prison'*. In contrast with the most of the respondents selection of *functionalist* paradigm to indicate their past and future aspirations, many respondents selected "*Radical Humanist*" or "*Interpretivist*" paradigms to map their current situation. This indicate some will from the part of these businesses to introduce some kind of a change in their current business and social settings. We believe that such metaphorical assumptions could determine their decision making, policy and strategy setting, and, actions. By introducing metaphorical journey approach, we have managed to encapsulate the emerging nature of the entrepreneurs motives.

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