Making the link: households and small business activity in a multi-ethnic context

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ABSTRACT   *The 'family' is frequently mentioned in assessments of the apparent distinctiveness of ethnic minority enterprise. Family involvement can account for the 'success' of some ethnic groups, and low rates of small business activity in others. Implicitly, such debates are recognition of the importance of the nature of the household and small business. However, few studies in Britain make explicit the link between household dynamics and ethnic minority business activity. This paper examines how households from a variety of ethnic communities impinge upon 'family' enterprise operating in the independent restaurant sector. In-depth interviews with family members from 37 micro-business households are drawn upon to illuminate three particular issues: the role of family members in the business; the impact of household dynamics on business activity; and the nature of 'second-generation' involvement in the family business. The findings highlight the gendered nature of roles within the micro-business household, and the importance of extended family ties to small business activity. However, the involvement of predominantly second-generation family members could not be regarded as an example of uncomplicated family collectivities at work. Rather, their presence was more a product of limited labour market choices, socialisation, and power relations within the household.*

KEY WORDS   *Small businesses; ethnic minority families; household dynamics*

RESUMEN   *La participation ded la familia en la empresa puede explicard 'exito' de algunos grupas etnicas, y a vez el numero reducido de las PYMES entre algunos otros drupos. Implicitamente tales debates manifestan la importancia de la naturaleza de la familia y la pequena empresa. Sin embargo, pocos estudios iievados a cabo en Gran Bretana senalan explicitamente la conexion entre la dinamica dentro de la familia y la activdad de las pequenas empresas de las minorias etnicas. Este papel examina como las caracteristicas de la vida domestica de diversas comunidades etnicas afectan la empreesa 'familiar' en al sector de los restaurantes indepenientes. Se refiere a una serie de entreuistas cualitativas con los miembros de 37 familias involucradas en micro-negocios y sirve para iluminar tres temas específicos: el rol*

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desampenado por los miembros de la familia en la empresa; el impacto de la dinamica familiar del compromiso de la segunda generacion en la empresa de su familia. Los resultados de estas investigaciones destacan los lazos que existen entre las caracteristicas de las tareas dentro de las empresas y el sexo de los individuos que las üevan a cabo. Tambien demuenstran la importancia de los extendidos lazos familiares para las activadades empresariales. Sin embargo la presencia de tantos individuos pertenecientes a la 'segunda generacion' no puede considerarsed simplemente ejemplos de unas comlectiuidades familiares tvabajaundo juntes. En efecto, la presencia de estos inividuos es mas bien producto de la falta de oportuniududes en el mercado del trabajo, la socialiacion, el poder y las relagiones dentro de la familia.

P<small>ALABRAS</small> C<small>LAVES</small>   *Familia; etnicidad; genero; restaurante; segunda generacion.*

Introduction: linking households and ethnic minority business activity

It has been well documented that the notion that work and family life are distinct and separate spheres is problematic (Andrews & Bailyn, 1993; Finch & Mason, 1993). This is particularly evident in the literature on 'family businesses'; as Kepner (1983, p. 57) notes, 'the strands of the family system are so intertwined with those of the business system that they cannot be disentangled without seriously disrupting one or both systems'. This association often appears to be even more pronounced in the case of ethnic minority firms. Indeed, ethnic minority business activity is reputed to be embedded in 'forms of solidarity different from those typically found among indigenous entrepreneurs' (Mingeone, 1999, p. 109). The family, in its various guises, is deemed to account for the 'success' of some ethnic groups (notably, South Asians) and the comparatively lower level of small business activity in other communities (Boissevain & Grotenberg, 1987; Boyd, 1990). Familial ideologies are also thought to imbue particular ethnic communities with 'cultures' supposedly conducive to entrepreneurial activity (Kibria, 1994; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Werbner, 1990).

Although previous research has recognised the importance of the family, it has not asked the question 'do household dynamics impinge upon the nature of small business activity?'. This issue is addressed here through an examination of the experiences of micro-business households from a variety of ethnic communities. In-depth interviews are drawn upon with 'business families' operating in the independent restaurant sector located in Birmingham, England. Three issues are examined. First, who is involved in the micro-business and what roles do they perform? This question acknowledges that the household unit varies according to particular economic and cultural contexts (Mulholland, 1997; Wheelock & Oughton, 1996). Second, how do household dynamics shape activities within the small enterprise? Finally, to what extent does second-generation involvement in the 'family' business represent an unproblematic continuity of the enterprise, or an unstable accommodation of different interests within the household?

Families, households and ethnic minority businesses

Ethnic-minority-owned enterprises, particularly those involving the South Asian community in Britain, are often seen as exemplars of the 'family' business. A series of empirical studies (Basu, 1998; Jones, McEvoy & Barett, 1994; Metcalf, Modood & Virdee, 1996; Ram, 1994; Werbner, 1984) have pinpointed the pivotal role that the family usually plays in the start-up and maintenance of the small enterprise. Of course, the resource of the family has been portrayed in different ways. For example, Werbner (1984, p. 168) found that the source of 'absolute trust' within Pakistani firms was the family unit, which is seen to function collectively for the common good. Members of the family are expected to provide labour for the business and exemplify the Pakistani ethos of self-sacrifice, self-denial and hard work in order to ensure its success. However, studies by Hoel (1984), Mitter (1986), Phizacklea (1990), and Ram (1994) demonstrate the capacity of the family to serve as an arena of exploitation, in which the role of women is often subordinated. Despite the different interpretations, it seems that 'the family facilitates the pooling of labour power and financial resources. Enterprising immigrants draw on these resources when establishing and operating small businesses' (Sanders & Nee, 1996, p. 261).

Focusing on the household

Although extant studies of ethnic minority businesses recognise the importance of the family, little attention been accorded to the dynamics of the household and small business activity [1] (particularly in Britain). Discussion of this issue has been more noticeable in the more general small firms literature. For instance, the interplay of familial relationships and small business behaviour has been addressed by Wheelock and colleagues in a number of recent studies (Baines & Wheelock, 1998; Wheelock & Baines, 1998a, b; Wheelock & Oughton, 1996). Wheelock and Baines (1998a, p. 200) argue that the survival, maintenance and growth of the micro-business cannot be fully appreciated without developing 'an understanding of the relationship within the household … in which the business person is based'. The importance of the family to the small firm is recognised within the ethnic minority business literature; but this is often depicted as a unified and uncomplicated entity. There is much less consideration of the processes of interaction within the household, and the manner in which they impinge upon the small enterprise. Yet a focus on 'the household and its members provides an essential counterweight to ideas that the household (or the micro-business) can be modelled as though a single economically rational individual were acting as a proxy for all' (Wheelock & Baines, 1998a, p. 200).

Accordingly, to operate at this level of analysis, it is necessary to examine the household and family organisation to develop a fuller appreciation of the pattern of economic adaptation. Kibria (1994) attempts precisely such an undertaking in her ethnographic study of Vietnamese refugees, who had recently

arrived in Philadelphia. The study shows that Vietnamese-refugee households that were most heterogeneous in age and gender composition were often well placed to gather a variety of resources from diverse social and economic arenas. This 'patchworking' strategy mitigated the instability and scarcity of available resources (Kibria, 1994, p. 82). Unlike the Kibria study, the current research focuses upon small business activity; nonetheless, it aims to build upon this comparatively rare example by examining how household members negotiate their involvement in the 'family' enterprise [2].

Household composition and small business activity

The competitive advantage that the family appears to afford to ethnic minority businesses seems to derive from an implicit acceptance that households are not universal in form. As Wheelock and Oughton (1996, p. 156) note, 'identifying and setting a boundary around the household unit will depend upon the cultural context … The cultural context will similarly determine the form and nature of the household's relationships with other households and individuals with the wider, formal economy.' Sanders and Nee's (1996, p. 28) study of South East Asian and Hispanic business activity illustrated how household composition affected the stock of family-based social capital, 'the presence of co-habiting marital partners and other related adults, such as in-laws, suggests a degree of mutual obligation and trust between household members and indicates potential contributors to group undertakings'.

Extant explanations of differential rates of ethnic minority involvement in small business activity allude to the importance of such familial resources. For example, Blaschke, Boissevain and Grotenberg (1990) suggest that the lack of such sources of support are important in explaining low levels of self-employment within the African-Caribbean community. Conversely, the conspicuous presence of such resources is often presented as an important contributor to the 'success' of South Asian firms (Basu, 1998; Metcalf *et al.*, 1996; Srinivasan, 1995). The current research aims to shed light on the relative importance of household composition by examining the experiences of a variety of ethnic minority households engaged in micro-business activity.

Second-generation entrepreneurs?

Current interest in 'second-generation' ethnic minority young people (Rumbaut, 1994; Waldinger & Perlman, 1998) can be seen as implicit recognition of young people's role in the process of economic adjustment. However, as Song (1997) has noted, much of this work has concentrated upon young people's cultural identities; very little has focused on second-generation involvement in small business activity. The current research focuses on the second generation in the family business. Much of the extant research on ethnic minority business activity draws on the experiences of first-generation small business owners (Basu, 1998; Metcalf *et al.*, 1996). Yet it is widely recognised that the motiva-

tions and aspirations of second-generation ethnic minorities might be different from those of their migrant parents. For example, Kibria (1994, p. 94) found that the Vietnamese-American ideology of 'family collectivism was in a state of flux and being moulded in often contradictory ways by the migration and resettlement process'.

Metcalf *et al.*'s (1996) study of 129 self-employed South Asians in Britain provides a further example of this phenomenon. The authors found that the respondents (who were first-generation South Asians) had markedly different aspirations for their children: only one-fifth of the sample wanted their children to take over the business. The onerous personal experience of self-employment persuaded many respondents to encourage their children into 'professional' careers. Interviews with second-generation business owners in the current research provide an opportunity to undertake a more detailed investigation of the contrasts between parental aspirations and children's expectations. The paper considers whether the involvement of children in the enterprise reflects a conscious and strategic decision to continue the practice of small business activity; or whether it is an unstable arrangement indicative of a lack of choice or opportunity.

Researching micro-business households

Rationale

Two processes informed the design of the current research: a comparative logic, and a qualitative orientation. It was important to have a comparative or 'multiple case logic' (Eisenhardt, 1991; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) that incorporated micro-business households from a variety of ethnic groups. As noted earlier, there is much speculation on the extent to which the 'shape' of the household impinges upon the small enterprise; but in the case of ethnic minority businesses, at least, this has not been underpinned by close investigation. The current research is based upon detailed qualitative interviews with 'family' members working in 37 restaurants located in Birmingham, England. The restaurants were owned by migrants from five distinct ethnic origins— Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and white (eight each), Indian (seven) and African-Caribbean (six). These five origins represent those groups on which the bulk of previous work in the field has been directed. The inclusion of a variety of ethnic groups, including white, guards against the tendency of isolating one community from the rest of the small business population. A single ethnic minority group focus runs the risk of accentuating difference (Jones, McEvoy & Barett, 1992; Mulholland, 1997; Zimmer & Aldrich, 1987).

An explicitly qualitative and exploratory orientation to the study is adopted, rather than the rigid testing of hypotheses. Although there is a significant body of quantitative research on work–family issues (see Devine & Heath, 1999, for discussion), qualitative methods have been widely adopted, particularly in studies of 'family' enterprise (Baines & Wheelock, 1998; Holliday, 1995).

Studies of ethnic minority businesses have often taken the form of large-scale surveys of owner-managers (see Ram & Jones, 1998). Qualitative methods were deployed here because of our concern with the *processes* of household dynamics and small business activity; the importance of context; and the need to capture the negotiated nature of the micro-business household.

Research context

A sectoral focus is important since it is well established that economic sector can be influential in shaping social relations at work (Rath & Kloosterman, 1999; Storey, 1994). Yet recent studies of South Asian business activity seem to have underplayed or even completely ignored the influence of sector (Basu, 1998; Metcalf *et al.*, 1996); and when sectoral comparisons are taken into account, inter-communal differences are often less acute than imagined (Jones *et al.*, 1994). The independent restaurant sector was chosen because it has been a popular activity for ethnic minority businesses in Britain, and further afield, for example, New York (Bailey, 1985), Toronto (Herman, 1979) and Brussels (Kesteloot & Mistiaen, 1997).

The city of Birmingham also provides an important setting for the study. Birmingham has a significant ethnic minority population (21.5%): Bangladeshis comprise 1.3% of the city's people, black-Caribbean 4.7%, Indians 5.3%, and Pakistanis 6.9% (BEIC, 1993). Many migrant groups have settled in Birmingham in the post-war era (Back & Solomos, 1992). They have settled in different parts of the city: 'Sparkbrook became a largely Pakistani area, the Handsworth area became the Caribbean centre of Birmingham, alongside the Soho area which was overwhelmingly Indian' (Rex, 1987, p. 104). The city is also historically significant as it is the place where the Enoch Powell 'Rivers of blood' speech was made in 1968, and the subject of significant academic study in the field of 'race relations' in intervening periods (cf. Rex & Moore, 1967; Rex & Tomlinson, 1979). The city is regarded as an important 'test case for the future of race relations in British society' (Back & Solomos, 1992, p. 329).

Access

Gaining access into small firms for the purposes of intensive research is a notoriously difficult process. Small business owners tend to work long hours; have a 'fortress enterprise' mentality; eschew non-trading networks; and are reluctant to avail themselves of external support, in the form of consultants, enterprise agencies or training (Curran, Blackburn & Kitching, 1995). This may explain why an absence of workplace conflict has been noted in such settings (Curran, 1991; Scase, 1995). Although statistical notions of 'representativeness' are not appropriate for the purposes of the current research, we wanted a reasonable spread of firms operating in the restaurant sector. Reliable directories of ethnic minority businesses in the area did not exist. Hence, we utilised a variety of sources, including business support agencies, personal contacts, and

'cold-calling'. Discussions with officers from local enterprise support organisations confirmed that a sample of 37 firms was typical of ethnic minority restaurants in the area.

The owner-mangers of all 37 restaurants were interviewed. Moreover, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it was possible to interview other family members who were directly involved in the family businesses. Typically, this would be the spouse of the usually male owner of the restaurant; the spouse would often be involved in part-time, or even full-time, work outside of the restaurant. In two of the Indian cases, wives of the owners played a direct role in the business; so it was possible to interview them. However, in case of the South Asian Muslims (that is, the Bangladeshis and the Pakistanis), the wives of the owners rarely had any direct involvement in the restaurant (although they performed key tasks in the domestic sphere that helped to maintain the micro-business household). We would have wished to interview South Asian Muslim women; but owners insisted that their spouses played no part in the business, and so we calculated that they would be very unlikely to consent to this request. Virtually all interviews with women (except for one African-Caribbean case) were conducted separately, without the presence of spouses.

A number of male family members who were often involved in the South Asian restaurants—brothers, uncles, and cousins (blood relatives)—were interviewed. In total, 63 interviews were conducted. Access to a variety of actors in the firms allowed for the investigation of the nature of family and employee experiences. The negotiated and sometimes contested basis of household relations is difficult to detect if a single source is relied upon (Moen & Wetherington, 1992; Roberts, 1994). During the interviews, the role of family, the division of labour within the household, and aspirations of family members were discussed. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, and was fully transcribed.

Who works in the 'micro-business' household?

The 'husband and wife' business

The prevalence of the husband and wife micro-business household has been documented in a number of studies (Adkins, 1995; Allen & Truman, 1993; Baines & Wheelock, 1998; Goffee & Scase, 1982; Wheelock & Baines, 1998a, b). In one study, Wheelock and Baines (1998a, p. 205) found that out of a sample of 104 micro-businesses, a significant minority (40%) were 'family businesses' in the sense that they formally involved family members as co-owners or employees; by far the most common family relationship was that of husband and wife. Studies of ethnic minority enterprise frequently allude to the importance of other family members, as well as husband and wife, to the business household (Ram, 1994; Ward, 1987; Werbner, 1984). The often vital contribution of children to business survival has also been recognised within such debates (Baxter, 1988; Kibria, 1994; Peace & Hulme, 1994; Song, 1997).

In this section, we consider which particular family members are involved in the restaurants, and the roles that they fulfil.

Husband and wife enterprises are thought to be particularly common within the independent restaurant sector (Ram *et al.*, forthcoming). With few exceptions, this pattern most accurately described the African-Caribbean and white-owned restaurants in the current research (although a few Indian-owned firms also operated in this way). Often, husbands and wives worked together in the restaurants; but it was not uncommon for spouses to have full or part-time employment elsewhere. Such non-restaurant employment was crucial to sustaining businesses and the household. For example, one of the white respondents explained that his wife's (Alice) income was vital to starting the business and ensuring that it was viable during the early stages; it was used for 'paying the mortgage on the house'. Alice elaborated upon her role in keeping the business household afloat:

> Of course the business is providing an income, but it has not done what we have expected it to do, so ... it requires my financial support as well as working here. Yes, we are just making ends meet ... The business requires me to put money in and to help out to reduce the staff costs. It has been a pressure ... but [we] want the business to succeed; though it has been difficult emotionally for us.

The position of women as 'owners' was a particular feature of the African-Caribbean firms. Women ran four out of the six African-Caribbean restaurants. This is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it is consistent with the finding that African-Caribbean women are more likely to be self-employed than women from other ethnic minority communities (Jones *et al.*, 1992). None of the other restaurants in the current research was owned by a woman. Second, a common feature of the micro-business household is the unrecognised and unacknowledged support that women provide for their male partners (Baines & Wheelock, 1998; Fletcher, 1997; Holliday, 1995; Ram, 1992). However, women owners in the current research tended not to report a similar level of support from their husbands. This could be a source of tension, as this exchange between husband and wife in an African-Caribbean restaurant indicated:

Wife: I think it is very hard, because ... I don't get enough time to spend on myself. It is just the restaurant really ... so that is hard.

Husband: Well on the restaurant side, she is more keen than I am ...

Wife: I am more involved. What do you mean 'keen'! I have got to be keen because it is *my* business.

Husband: The restaurant is hard work ... At this stage of my life, hard work is not really a priority.

Wife: If you have got that sort of an attitude, then you can see why it is harder on me ... I mean, everything relies on the restaurant ... It is our only income ... He is not working ... so I have got to put everything into it. I can't put less than one hundred per cent because

you have got all your overheads ... Most businesses are run by men, and at least the men have got their wives to back them up by being responsible for the home ... I have got to do both, so it is twice as hard for me ... You never switch off, because even when you are not in the restaurant you are thinking about what is next ... I suppose it does put a lot of strain on our marriage ... I think it brings out the worst in me, because I am expecting more support.

Extended family involvement

A rather more diverse pattern of involvement was discernible within South Asian firms in the sample. Members the South Asian ethnic groups were much more likely to rely upon the direct involvement of family members to staff and run the restaurants. This is clearly indicated in Table 1, which highlights the family members involved in South Asian firms. Whereas the direct involvement of family members (other than spouses) was rare in African-Caribbean white-owned firms, all the Pakistani and Bangladeshi firms (and some of the Indians) drew on wider relations, particularly, brothers, cousins and uncles.

The incorporation of such a wide range of family members in the business can be explained by a number of factors. First, many of the workers concerned were migrants, who had limited labour market choices on arriving in the country (Bailey, 1985; Baker, 1981). For example, Gurdeep explained how he found work through his brother-in-law, who owned a restaurant:

When I came [from India] I hadn't got that much education to find another job ... It was hard to find another job, so I came here [brother-in-law's restaurant] ... I just started learning things; so that was the way, developing a family business, good for you and good for them as well.

Second, as Table 2 indicates, 21 out of the 37 enterprises were 'second-generation' ethnic minorities; hence they comprised the majority of firms in the sample.

Most second-generation South Asian business owners had succeeded, or were currently working with, their fathers at the helm of the enterprise. Their involvement in the restaurant trade was rarely the product of an entrepreneurial motivation to participate, develop, and grow the firm. Rather, it was usually a far more ad hoc, piecemeal, and cumulative process reflecting a lack of educational and labour market choices, and parental pressure to contribute to the business when required. For example, Javed, the son of a Pakistani restaurant owner was 'pulled into' the restaurant by his father at a young age, working during peak hours. He helped in whatever capacity required. He emphasised that living upstairs meant it was easy for his father to draw upon his labour time:

How did you come to work here?

I wouldn't say I wanted to ... I was just told by my dad to come round

TABLE 1. South Asian family members and the micro-business

Restaurant	Ethnicity	Activities and other family members
1	Indian	Brother-in-law: waiter
2	Indian	Nephew: waiter
3	Indian	None
4	Indian	None
5	Indian	None
6	Indian	None
7	Indian	Two brothers-in-law: waiter and chef
1	Pakistani	Cousin: owner-manager
		Uncle: chef assistant/waiter
2	Pakistani	Cousin: waiter
		Uncle helps occasionally
3	Pakistani	Cousin: waiter
		Father helps occasionally
4	Pakistani	Brother: part-time owner/manager
		Cousin: part-time waiter
5	Pakistani	Brother: full-time waiter/general hand
		Pre-migration village member: part-time waiter
6	Pakistani	Brother: owner/manager assistant
7	Pakistani	Two brothers: full-time owner/managers
		Cousin: full-time waiter
8	Pakistani	Son: full-time waiter
		Father: recently retired from the business
1	Bangladeshi	Brother: waiter
		Father helps occasionally
2	Bangladeshi	Nephew: full-time waiter
3	Bangladeshi	Stepson: waiter
		Cousin: chef hand
4	Bangladeshi	None
5	Bangladeshi	Brother-in-law: full-time waiter
6	Bangladeshi	Brother: waiter
		Cousin: waiter
7	Bangladeshi	Nephew: waiter
8	Bangladeshi	Cousin: waiter
		Father helps occasionally

and give it a try; so as I got older I started learning what the restaurant business was like.

When did that start?

Since I was [a child] … I used to come in, do basic things. I used to help them out in the kitchen, cleaning up and whatever, making chutneys and things like that and then just … We live upstairs.

In the case of South Asian respondents, it was common for two or even three generations of the same family to be incorporated within a single household

TABLE 2. Generation of respondent

Generation	First (%)	Second (%)	Total (%)
African-Caribbean	1 (6)	5 (24)	6 (16)
Pakistani		8 (38)	8 (21)
Bangladeshi	5 (31)	3 (14)	8 (21)
Indian	3 (19)	4 (19)	7 (19)
White	7 (44)	1 (5)	8 (21)
Total	16 (100)	21 (100)	37 (100)

unit. This is consistent with the findings of a recent large-scale study of ethnic minorities in Britain, which found that 'Pakistanis and Bangladeshis led the field not only in the number of large families but also in the number of large complex households' (Berthoud & Beishon, 1997, p. 46). The facility of such physical, financial and moral support was undoubtedly a spur to business formation, and an important factor in the maintenance of these micro-business households. For example, one second-generation respondent described how his father started out in the restaurant business in the early 1970s. At that time, 'there were a couple of uncles in the kitchen'. The respondent himself joined the business in the mid-1980s along with his two brothers and a cousin. By drawing on this extended familial labour, they were able to open a further two outlets. At the time of the study, this household unit comprised at least three families.

'Hidden' women

Reflecting a wider picture (Basu, 1998; Metcalf *et al.*, 1996), the direct involvement of wives tended to be rare in the South Asian firms (particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani). In only two cases (both Indian Sikhs [3]) did wives play a direct role in the restaurants. South Asian Muslim firms are sharply distinguished from the others (Indian and non-South Asian) by the almost total absence of wives in the work of the restaurants. Not unexpectedly, 'religio-cultural' reasons for the absence of South Asian women's formal participation in the business were discernible in the responses of many of the Bangladeshi and Pakistanis owners:

> She [has been] a housewife all the time. Most of the restaurateurs'
> wives have never worked and are housewives. This is common in the
> Bangladeshi community … We as a family and community-wise, we do
> not like our wives to work. That's how the family goes.

This finding seems to concur with Metcalf *et al.* (1996, p. 34) on the matter of women's involvement in the family business. They found that four-fifths of Indians, compared with only two-fifths of Pakistanis, agreed that wives should work in the family business if they wanted; indeed, most Pakistani respondents

objected to married women performing any paid work. Although wives rarely played a direct role in these restaurants, it should be noted that they were often engaged in key 'enabling roles' (Wheelock & Baines, 1998b). This involved primary responsibility for the domestic sphere, including looking after the children and maintaining the home. A broadly typical response was provided by a Pakistani respondent. When asked if his wife worked, he answered:

> No, she is at home looking after the children … I am out all the time so she has to go out for the shopping or to see somebody or family relative; or to see somebody from school about the children, and to help the school do this and that … I have no time … so she has to do all that.

In addition to the responsibility for childcare, the references to maintaining ties with relatives and wider activities can be seen as a further resource that benefits the micro-business household. On this point Kibria (1994, p. 81) notes 'the work that immigrant women put into cultivating and sustaining the kinship and friendship ties that socially integrate a family into the ethnic community may be seen as an important form of labour, one that facilitates the access of the household economy to ethnic community resources'. In a similar vein, Papanek (1979, p. 775) found that 'women, as member of families and households, produce many goods and services that benefit other family members, whether their work is paid or unpaid. Their work also affects the family's relation with others in the community or reference group.'

By moving the gaze away from the 'entrepreneurial individual' (Mariussen, Wheelock & Baines, 1997), and towards the micro-business household, the findings of this section make clear that 'individual behaviour is … the outcome of complex processes of interaction within both household and micro-business depending upon social relations and the status of gender, generation, business ownership and earning capacity in the labour market' (Wheelock & Baines, 1998a, p. 200). Many of firms in the current research were kept afloat because of the formal and informal support of spouses. This could take the form of full- or part-time work outside the restaurant; or unpaid support within the business itself. This has similarities with Finch and Mason's (1993) work on unpaid caring in the family. Their study demonstrated that care giving is negotiated and contested through relationships of responsibility, trust and obligation. The Finch and Mason study also resonates with the current research in its illumination of the gendered nature of work and care roles; women usually occupied a subordinate role to men (see also Baines & Wheelock, 1998; Fletcher, 1997; Holliday, 1995; Phizacklea, 1990). However, the current study shows that even in cases where women effectively owned and ran the enterprise, they received little support from their partners (see also Allen & Truman, 1993; Ehlers & Main, 1998). As some of the case evidence indicated, this could generate pressure upon family relations. The 'hidden' role of many South Asian Muslim women did not preclude their involvement in activities conducive to the micro-business household (Papanek, 1979). By taking responsibility for the

domestic sphere, they too contributed to the maintenance of the family enterprise.

The South Asian firms appeared to exhibit a more diverse pattern of involvement, which may be indicative of differences of composition in the household. As Kibria (1994) noted in her study of Vietnamese refugees in Philadelphia, the composition of a household can have an important bearing upon the resources available for economic activity. The involvement of family members in the restaurants undoubtedly helped to sustain the enterprises in the current research. Moreover, restaurant work provided rare opportunities for the newly arrived migrants, who were often employed in the businesses. But the participation of second-generation family members was rarely the product of consensus decision making in support of a family collectivity. Rather, their involvement was negotiated and contested, and a reflection of the power relations and different interests of family members within the household (cf. Song, 1997). This challenges the romantic ideal of the extended kin by exposing differential power and opportunities across genders and generations (see also Finch & Mason, 1993). As Roberts (1994, p. 12) argues, within the household unit 'individual members are likely to have different interests based on their family status, on their gender and on their generation; and often what appears to be a household strategy turns out to be little more than the strategy of one member of the household'.

Continuity, change and household dynamics

Parental aspirations

The previous section has highlighted the importance of the household, in its various guises, to the survival of the family business. But how long is this modus operandi likely to continue? To address this question, it is necessary to examine the concerns and priorities of those involved in the business. In the context of ethnic minority businesses, the question is a timely one given the current interest in 'second-generation' ethnic minorities. For example, Song's (1997) study of children working in their Chinese parents' take-away businesses highlighted ambivalent attitudes. Children generally wished to 'help out' in the family business, but it was also very clear that they wanted to leave the ethnic business niche. Owner-managers in the current research echoed this sentiment. Few respondents wanted their children to succeed them in the business. Rather, they hoped that their children would perform well educationally and aim for 'professional' careers. Most restaurant owners worked particularly long hours for little reward. Many spoke of the 'sacrifices' and the pressures that they had to endure. For example, one Indian owner commented:

> Their education is more important … This [business] is very hard work and I don't want them to go through what we do; all the anti-social hours, from 4.00 p.m. to 1.00 a.m., seven days, seven nights. That is very hard.

Household dynamics and business change

Within the micro-business, the question of survival and future development is linked closely to the dynamics of the household. Conventional notions of business 'strategy' do not take account of such linkages. It was clear that survival and security was an overriding concern for most of the participants. The comments below from a Pakistani business owner emphasises this point:

> The business is for the family. Most of the people nowadays are just making a living … I haven't had a holiday for the last three of four years. I am struggling to make a living.

However, the preoccupation with business survival and 'making a living' should not be taken to imply that the micro-business household is static. Rather, events will occur during the household life cycle that will impinge upon the organis-ation of the micro-business. For example, the viability of Tom and Jenny's restaurant (drawn from the white group in the sample) was in considerable doubt in the early 1990s. The severity of the recession at that time forced Jenny to take up part-time work to supplement the household income. Moreover, the couple delayed trying for a baby because 'they could not afford' to look after another family member. However, when the baby did finally arrive, it prompted what Jenny described as 'a change in values', which entailed spending more time on the 'family'. She explained:

> I suppose the main thing is that before we would work constantly for the business thinking that, you know, this is so important. It is important because it's our livelihood, but at the same time you can push yourself so far and with having Emily you realise that your health and your life are far more important.

A change of outlook in the circumstances of Jaspal, the owner of an Indian restaurant, also involved a reappraisal of the business. He was aiming to sell his restaurant in 2 years. The business was successful, he was making a 'decent living', and had managed to pay off his mortgage. His main ambition was to train to become a gym instructor and cookery teacher in order to realise his personal goals:

> I would take the two courses [cookery and physical education] once I sold the business, because really financially there is not going to be that much of a need for me to go and work because I don't have a very expensive lifestyle … I should have enough money to basically take it easy. But I don't want to take it easy; I want to get that education that I didn't get in the first place.

Second-generation businesses: an unstable arrangement

The direct involvement of a wide range of family members in South Asian firms—uncles, brothers, cousins—has already been noted. However, although

such family ties were often critical to these enterprises, their continued presence could not necessarily be guaranteed. For example, Hussain, like many others in the current research, arrived in the country in 1993 for the purposes of marriage to a British-born Pakistani woman. He had never worked in the restaurant business before arrival. He found employment in his uncle's restaurant, and worked his way up from a kitchen porter to a Tandoori cook. After a period of around 3 years he left his uncle's business to join a (non-family) restaurant. The primary incentive for moving was better pay.

In the case of another Bangladeshi restaurant, the owner's younger brother hinted at intra-household conflicts and his intentions of opening his own business:

> When this restaurant started up I worked here, I have never worked elsewhere. I am thinking of leaving and starting up my own business. I have a family and two children. At the moment, we live with my parents, and there are too many people in the house. We get in each other's way and begin to quarrel. Sometimes, we don't agree on family matters. We are looking for a place of our own. I am 32 and have to think about my family.

Azhar was the chef and brother of the owner of a Pakistani-run restaurant. He spoke of being 'obliged' to work in the business, and the importance of key positions, especially that of chef, being set aside for the family because they could be 'trusted'. However, he also maintained that he would leave the restaurant if he was 'offered a job with more money … And everybody else would'. Azhar did actually leave the business for a short while to work in a supermarket, but he returned after a 3-month period.

Although owners articulated a desire for their children to pursue different careers, it was quite common for children to 'help-out' on a temporary or occasional basis. Shahzad's account of the co-existence of his restaurant work and educational activities illustrates well the situation of many children of business owners in the study. Shahzad first started work in one of his father's two restaurants; he was providing temporary cover for a waiter who had left suddenly. He worked there on a Friday and Saturday, whilst in the first year of a 3-year college course. However, the strain was beginning to tell:

> I had to leave the last job, because you'd come back from work at about two or three o'clock. You wake up again the next day and if you go to college, you have to wake up at six or seven o'clock in the morning … It just really messes up, you know. I told my father I couldn't work in the restaurant and study at the same time. He said, 'all right, you might as well just study and leave the restaurant'.

However, Shahzad was only too well aware of the outcome should he not be successful in his university studies:

> He [father] thinks the restaurant is for when you can't do anything

else. So say for argument's sake, if I hadn't studied, if I failed college, failed university, failed everything, then you come to work in the restaurant because you don't need any qualifications. But if you've got qualified, you can find a good job and get paid more … And at the end of the day I suppose its pay what counts.

From this section, it is clear that the development of the business owed much to the dynamics of relations within the household. Many households worked towards the survival of the family enterprise (although there were differences between family members). Such an imperative militated against the substantive 'growth' of the business. However, this did not mean that the business remained static; the key factor appeared to be the priorities of household members at any one particular point in time. This highlights the

> temporal nature of family strategies: their timing, duration, and sequence within the family cycle and the life course of the individual. Families are able to draw on various options across the life cycle, and are therefore differentially able to mobilise in response to external exigencies, contingent on the resources available and the subjective interpretations of family members. (Moen & Wetherington, 1992, p. 245)

The presence of second-generation family members within many South Asian firms can be suggestive of a degree of continuity. However, tensions documented in these firms imply that an uncomplicated transition form one generation to another, and smooth employment relations between family members, cannot be taken for granted (Goldthorpe, Llewellyn & Payne, 1980). Again, the 'life-course' of different family members will influence the shape and form of the micro-business household. As the case material indicated, second-generation family members were not necessarily intent on continuing the enterprise. Developments in their domestic life circumstances, disenchantment with the often onerous nature of restaurant work, and inter-family tension militated against unproblematic continuity of the family business. Conversely, although the children of many South Asian owners were pursuing higher education courses or 'professional' careers, their separation from the family enterprise was not immutable. Many 'helped out' whilst engaged in their studies. This temporary involvement could become more permanent if the routes out provided by education or better paid work were not available.

Discussion

African-Caribbean and white-owned restaurants resembled most closely the husband and wife micro-business household noted in the general small firm population (Baines & Wheelock, 1998). A gendered division of labour was in evidence in most of the firms. This could take the form of women engaging in full- or part-time non-restaurant employment in an attempt to supplement the

household income; or women would assume primary responsibility for the domestic sphere, as was the case in almost all the South Asian Muslim firms. This latter activity could involve maintaining links with other families and the wider co-ethnic community. Such 'networks' have been shown to be of benefit to business activity (Kibria, 1994).

The wider range of family members involved in many South Asian firms reflected the different household composition of these groups. The availability of wives, cousins, uncles and brothers was undoubtedly helpful in sustaining these enterprises. However, the involvement of predominantly second-generation family members could not be regarded as an example of uncomplicated family collectivities at work. Rather, their presence was more a product of limited labour market choices, socialisation, and power relations within the household.

The continuity of these businesses was again shaped heavily by household dynamics. The family shaped the direction of business developments as well as the nature of work. Further, the continuation of the family enterprise was not necessarily ensured by the presence of second-generation family members in these South Asian firms. Again, thwarted aspirations, and conflict within and between families in the household, made for an unstable future. Children, who wished to make good their escape from the 'safety net' of the family business, could still find themselves tangled in it if the opportunities provided by higher education and the wider labour market ultimately proved illusory.

Conclusion

The seemingly inextricable link between the family and small business activity is a particular feature of debates on the nature of ethnic minority enterprise (Barett, Jones & McEvoy, 1996; Ram & Jones, 1998; Sanders & Nee, 1996). The growing attention accorded to the role of the family within the small enterprise has continued in parallel with a comparative neglect of the ways in which the household may shape business behaviour. This paper has explored the impact of household structure on the business. It highlights the heterogeneity of links between families and the households of different ethnic minority groups. However, gender and power relations cut across the diversity of 'family business' forms, as demonstrated by the supportive role that women play in sustaining the enterprise (as traditional wives or through the provision of income from alternative employment). Men tended to support only other men in positions of kinship and rank (husbands offered little assistance in the cases where women owned businesses). There is a need for further research of work-life conflict for the self-employed, especially women who often chose to be self-employed to gain more control over working time. Finally, second-generation involvement in the enterprise has to be seen in the light of the wider processes of racial inequality, rather than an expression of a family business culture.

In the light of these findings, a number of wider points can be made on the

links between household dynamics and small business activity. Wheelock and Baines' (1998a, b) references to the 'micro-business household' are indicative of the inseparability of these two domains. The current research extends this framework by examining how the different compositions of households may impinge upon the organisation of work in the small firm. For example, the decision to recruit, grow, or close the business was often contingent upon the motivations and priorities of the household rather than a pure 'business' activity. Curran (1996, p. 4513) acknowledges this process by pointing out that the strategy in small business contexts is 'much less of a conscious process based on detailed prescriptive models or sophisticated techniques, and more of an instinctive, flexible approach to survival consistent with the owner's broad personal and business goals'. This point can be broadened by an incorporation of the owners' relations with others in the household. Moreover, these household relations are unlikely to be free of tensions. The idealised family collectivity that is sometimes seen as the spur to ethnic minority business activity can mask different interests based on gender, generation and status (Ehlers & Main, 1998; Finch & Mason, 1993; Folbre 1986; Peace & Hulme, 1994; Roberts, 1994). As the work of Kibria (1994) and Song (1997) indicates, such relationships and notions of family 'culture' are in a state of flux and subject to continuous negotiation.

The temporal and negotiated nature of household relations has implications for the issue of 'second-generation' ethnic minorities in business, particularly with regard to South Asians. The current research supports the findings of Metcalf *et al.* (1996), that few migrant business owners wish for their children to take over the business. However, second-generation involvement in these firms indicates continuing reliance on ethnic business as a source of employment. Importantly, the presence of these and other family members can often be precarious, since a combination of household tensions and changing domestic circumstances can lead to the initiation of a separate business or alternative employment. Moreover, the extent to which the children of owners can separate themselves from the business is often conditional upon educational and labour market success (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980). A lack of success in these spheres could lead to an unwelcome re-entry into the family enterprise. In essence, they too could be ensnared by the 'safety net'. Hence, in this context at least, the second-generation ethnic minority business was an inherently unstable arrangement.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] In the USA, Perez (1986) provides quantitative evidence to illustrate that the successful economic adjustment of Cubans is a family, rather than individual, phenomenon. Angel and Tienda (1982) also provide quantitative assessments of the relationship between household composition of income among Hispanics, blacks, and non-Hispanic whites. Kibria's (1994) ethnography of Vietnamese refugee households permits a processual analysis of the household's role in promoting economic adjustment. However, none of these studies focus specifically on households and small business activity, which is the principal focus of this study.
[2] The focus here is on households rather than families. Households are a locus of residence while families, in an anthropological sense, are a locus of meanings and relationships (Stacey, 1998, p. 17). Anthropologists draw a distinction between households—the residential units of everyday life—and families, the more ambiguous, symbolic terrain in which kinship is represented (Moore, 1988).
[3] The Indian firms in the sample were from the Sikh faith. There were no Hindus or Indian Muslims. All the Bangladeshi and Pakistani respondents were Muslim. Indian Sikhs did not offer religion as a reason for their spouses' lack of direct involvement in the business. The most common explanation was the need for someone to look after the children and the domestic sphere.

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