eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/

Putting the agent into research in black and minority ethnic entrepreneurship: A new methodological proposal.

Steve Vincent, Jean Gardiner and Rob Wapshott[1]

Abstract

This paper considers what realist social theory (RST) adds to exiting knowledge about black and minority ethnic (BME) entrepreneurs and outlines a methodology for exploring the role of the BME entrepreneur. For this group embodied signifiers such as skills and abilities, cultural characteristics, social norms and value systems combine with structural antecedents, such as financial, contractual, professional and other national and regional institutional arrangements to create impediments on the progression of BME enterprises. Understanding such complex social arrangements presents significant ontological and methodological challenges. We argue that previous research has failed to capture the richness of the forms of agency BME entrepreneurs display and that, as a consequence, RST has much to offer this debate. The paper ends with a discussion of the methodological implications of analysing BME entrepreneurs in terms of their social agency.

Key Words: entrepreneurship, ethnicity, mixed embeddedness, structuration, research methods

---

[1] Steve Vincent is from the University of Newcastle, Jean Gardiner is from the University of Leeds, Rob Wapshott is from the University of Sheffield

Introduction

In the UK, those from BME backgrounds often choose self-employment and more entrepreneurial careers because they are excluded from and/or do not have the human capital to gain entry to the primary labour markets, where most "good jobs" are to be found (Virdee, 2006). It follows that the proliferation of small BME businesses in urban UK, as well as urban environments in the rest of Western Europe, is partially explainable by antecedent processes that exclude BME groups from the primary labour markets - opening up shop for yourself becomes the most lucrative option available. It is also noteworthy that BME business often cluster into overpopulated low-skill enclaves that are easier for them to enter (Ram, et al. 2008; Jones, et al, 2004), and that BME entrepreneurs typically achieving less remuneration than equivalent white groups (Parker, 2004; Cheung and Heath, 2007). Ultimately, the argument that push factors result in geographical and sectoral overcrowding, regardless of the strategies or perspectives of those affected is convincing.

Since explaining patterns in BME entrepreneurship requires an apparently "deep" or multilayered appreciation of the way societies evolves (wherein contextual conditions influence without determining local patterns of activity) it is surprising that few have analysed BME entrepreneurship from critical realist (CR) ontological position (cf. Ram, et al. 2014). After all, propositions that explain empirical tendencies in terms of antecedent causes that operate at other levels, such as within an external labour market, are entirely compatible with a CR ontology.

In this paper we start to tease out what a CR approach to studying BME entrepreneurship would look like. In the next section we offer an overview of the three major three perspectives which have been used by others to explore BME entrepreneurship: the ethnic communities approach, the mixed embeddedness approach and the Bourdieuian approach. Each of these approaches is briefly reviewed and critiqued from a CR position. The critique suggests that, whilst these approaches offer partial explanations of the social mechanism(s) that influence the social agency of BME entrepreneurs, none of them systematically unpack the forms of agency this group displays. Following from this, the approach to social agency extended within realist social theory (RST) is outlined and considered for what this can add to the debate. In the final sections, the methodological implications of adopting a critical realist approach are outlined, before the paper concludes which restates the contribution and considers the implications of the approach extended.

Exploring perspectives on BME entrepreneurship:

Early studies of BME entrepreneurship in the UK extended an ethnic communities approach. This approach has its genesis in British studies of established minority communities. It has been suggested

that this approach privileges ethnic identities over the structural context within which BME entrepreneurs operate (see Ram, et al. 2008) because it argues that certain ethnic groups are culturally more disposed to entrepreneurship and that their smaller communities resulted in narrow social networks, limited social capital and constrains potentials (see Rath, 2000; Rath and Kloosterman, 2000). Here, the focus is on the individual and the communities they reside in. Whilst culture and community structure certainly matter, a CR critique of this approach suggests these studies have resulted in an abstracted level view of the subject matter (see Elder Vass, 2010). An abstracted level perspective typically identifies some entity (the BME entrepreneur) and something of the mechanisms that operate through it (in this case, specific ethnic communities), but it fails to consider other causal forces that are deep or reside at other levels or elsewhere in social reality.

Interventions that result from this abstracted-level approach are also likely to be "supply sided", concentrating on what BME entrepreneurs do and what their communities bring with them to the market (Kloostermnan and Rath, 2001). The roles of broader institutional arrangements that structure specific national or regional markets, which affect demand, are likely to be ignored. The successfulness of supply-sided interventions is questionable. Activities that promote the development of self-help groups within more marginal communities can embed disadvantage in 'ethic enclaves' (see Bates, 1997). Similarly, whilst positive benefits have been associated with general business support activities for minority groups, problems have been associated with new forms of exclusivity, such as skewed and restricted membership, lacking leadership and ineffective support for new entrants (Fallon and Berman Brown, 2004). Arguably, it is because the ethnic communities perspective fails to develop an adequate explanation of the phenomena under scrutiny that these community-level intervention fail make a substantive difference.

Given the narrowness of the ethnic communities approach, it is unsurprising that others have sought to broaden the debate and account for the other social structures that influence outcomes for BME entrepreneurs. One significant contribution is the mixed embeddedness perspective which builds on the influential work of Kloosterman, et al. (1999). This perspective recognizes that entrepreneurs are not easily allocated to a single context or location in society. Whilst it recognises and acknowledges that BME entrepreneurs are locally embedded in the social networks of immigrant communities, this perspective also pays attention to 'their more abstract embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement' (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001: 190). People are thus understood to exist at a crossroads of multiple social, economic and institutional contexts, the constellation of which constrains and enables agential action in specific ways. From a methodological perspective, the agent comes to be viewed in relation to their specific institutional

circumstances (of their sectors, localities, financial needs, labour markets and other institutional supports), as well as for cultural factors that affect their choices (Ram and Smallbone, 2001).

The mixed embeddedness approach extends a stratified perspective on social structure which acknowledges national, regional, market based and community influences. As such, it represents a significant advancement on the ethnic communities approach. However, contributions from this perspective have a tendency towards material realism (Ram, et al. 2008) and so emphasise structural constrains rather than variations in the specific agential capacities of individual BME entrepreneurs. As such, from a CR point of view, it appears to represents more of a point of departure than a final destination.

Where an embeddedness approach does theorise agency it tends to be done so thinly, in terms of bricolage (Baker and Nelson, 2005). Where bricolage occurs actors are creative, to the extent that resources are acquired of bent towards new uses in order to exploit opportunities. Whilst this is a useful development, the concept remains substantially unpacked. Analyses that categorise forms of agency (or bricolage) in terms of their attributes or outcomes are notable in terms of their absence.

Movement towards a better understanding of bricolage can be been made using the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986). This approach, which is often used to explore entrepreneurial careers more generally (Grabher, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Ekinsmyth, 2002; Antcliff, et al. 2007; Adams and Demaiter, 2008), suggests successful bricolage depends on the nature of the resources or forms of capital at the disposal of BME entrepreneurs (see Ram et al. 2008). Bourdieu extends the term 'capital' to refer to all the material and symbolic goods that are rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation, discriminating between four types of capital: briefly (1) economic capital indicates access to material resources, (2) social capital indicates access to benefits and favours from more or less formal social ties, (3) cultural capital indicates knowledge and skills acquired via education and experiences, and (4) symbolic capital indicates prestige and honour derived from personal attributes, including qualifications and group membership.

These concepts provide a useful vocabulary for unpicking the types of resources at BME entrepreneurs' disposal. However, it is less than clear how the a generic forms of capital framework maps onto either the stratified constraints to BME entrepreneurs or the specific forms of social agency they display, as such it needs to be combined with a the mixed embeddedness approach to account for the institutional context (Ram, et al. 2008). Furthermore, embracing a strong form of Bourdieuian analyses may be unproductive to the extent that, similarly to the mixed embeddedness perspective, our analyses may end up overemphasising constraints on creative agency.

Bourdieu deals with the structure-agency dualism via the concepts of field and habitus. Field refers to the properties of the setting, whose properties are independent of the individuals who constitute them. This concept maps neatly onto notions of mixed embeddedness and the various constraints this places on BME entrepreneurship. Individuals are dynamically engaged with fields in an ongoing struggle for the resources, or capitals, which they need to prosper and develop. Habitus, in contrast, corresponds quite closely with notions of culture, or a system of transposable dispositions which tend not to be self-consciously reflected upon. This concept maps more neatly onto the ethnic communities perspective, in which BME entrepreneurial sensibilities are locally inscribed and limited.

Being part of a known habitus, or system of practice and belief, is empowering to the extent that actor is not riddled with anxiety prior to every decision that may affect others (for better or worse). However, our habitus also constrain us. Conforming with existing habitus leads to the reproduction of existing practices and structure of society with all its inequalities. It also suggests an 'apparent denial of conscious, deliberative or strategic decision making in the determination of human behaviour' (Elder Vass, 2010: 100), on which notions of bricolage depend. In short, we need to look beyond habitus to consider the ways in which BME entrepreneurship can be more generally emancipatory (or otherwise), from the point of view of the entrepreneurs themselves and the communities they relate to. It is only by projecting beyond cultural and structural constraints, towards a perspective that can exp[lore the transformative capacity of bricolage in more fine-grained detail, that we will be able to develop a more adequate account of the powers and potentials of BME entrepreneurship. Arguably, this is where a CR approach, with it transformative model of social action, has much to offer.

Towards a methodology for assessing the transformative capacities of bricolage:

A CR approach to BME entrepreneurship can and should draw variously on the perspectives outlined above. For example, as in the ethnic communities perspective, a critical realist approach should be sensitive to the cultures and structures of particular communities and the different ways that diverse groups are embedded within these communities. Likewise, as in the mixed embeddedness perspective, a critical realist approach should seek to understand the ways in which opportunities and constraints are affected by market and institutional arrangements, both within and beyond the markets BME entrepreneurs serve. Finally, and as in the Bourdieuian perspective, a critical realist approach should appreciate the resources at any BME entrepreneur's disposal, how these may be traded for comparative advantages, as well as the ways in which our cultural habits can limit our

projective capacities. However, and beyond this theoretical pluralism, RST (as outlined by Archer, 1995; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2006) offers a sophisticated appreciation of social agency that better enables insight into the transformative potential of BME entrepreneurs.

This section argues RST can contribute by enabling finer-grained analyses of BME entrepreneurship which can better categorise forms of bricolage in terms of their transformative potential. It will argue that it can enable this better appreciation in three ways. Firstly, it helps explain the extent to which BME Entrepreneurs are able to represent their interests within the field. Secondly, it helps explain tensions that emerge within the fields that BME entrepreneurs inhabit and how they relate to these tensions. Thirdly, it helps explain the different forms of reflexivity with which the BME entrepreneur is engaged and whether these are more or less likely to be transformative. In the following, subsections are dedicated to each of these conceptual developments.

BME entrepreneurship and corporate agency:

The very term, bricolage, suggests creativity and foresightedness which, in contrast to Bourdieuian approaches, are fundamental to an RST conception of social agency. Arguably, successful bricolage requires knowledge and foresight relating to potential futures, or the realisation of the unactualised potentials within the surrounding field of possibilities. Bricolage, thus conceived, involves projection and imagination concerning how our activities result in desirable outcomes. However, a CR theorist also argue that agents are not necessarily aware of the structures and cultures that constrain them. We might suggest, for example, that the insurers, police, parents, communities and employers of car drivers have conditioning effects on, for example, whether or not they stop at a red-light (even though drivers seldom consider these influences as the lights change). The driver might agree that obeying the rules of the road is a good thing and their previous witnessing of accents may have confirmed their opinions. However, they must have interacted with insurers, police, parents, communities, employers, and the like to reach this conclusion. What is more, the causal potential of insurers, police (etc.) to penalise any driver that transgresses the accepted rules may assert a (real or deep) affect on what we do without those powers being invoked or actualised. In this sense, the causal powers of can be transfactual in their effects (see Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

Arguably, this language takes us towards a conception of bricolage that embraces both the temporality of constraints to agency and a spectrum of agential foresightedness in relation to these constraints. When taking a temporal perspective our action and choices are thus best viewed as occurring in the wake of antecedent structural and cultural influences. As Archer suggests: 'structure

necessarily pre-dates action(s) which transform it (…) [and] structural elaboration necessarily post dates those actions which transform it' (1998: 375). Our agential potential (in this case, bricolage) is viewed viewed as separable from and temporally subsequent to structural and cultural antecedents. As Archer puts it:

> '[O]ur general potentialities and liabilities as human agents, necessarily inhabiting a social environment, are transformed into specific projects which agents, both individual and collectively, seek to realise in society. Thus, it is not agential properties that interact directly with social powers, rather, it is the project formulated by agents, in exercising their subjective and reflexive powers that do so (…) structural and cultural factors do not exert causal powers in relation to human beings, but rather in relation to our emergent powers to formulate projects. This is the logical implication of the fact that one level of properties does not directly affect another level of properties, but that it is always a matter of interplay between causal powers' (Archer, 2003: 132-133)

When considering the consequences of these constraints for the projects agents engage with, it is useful to categorise them as on a a continuum between corporate agency and primary agency (Archer, 1995). Corporate agents are in structural locations where they have the material, social, cultural and symbolic resources needed to pursue their vested interests. They are in a position to develop and enact strategies that meet their interests. Primary agents, whilst an identifiable group, do not or cannot pursue their vested interests. This is either because they are unaware of the constraints that impeded them or because they lack the resources to overcome those constraints. It follows that whilst all BME entrepreneurs are all corporate agents they will not be equally resourced, foresighted and institutionally enabled. Some of their interests, such as desires to enter 'mainstream' markets (see Ram, et al. 2008), may remain substantively primary. As such, RST provides a useful vocabulary for understanding the situatedness of social agency and for considering the extent to which the bricolage of BME entrepreneurs is self-aware and resourced in pursuing specific interests.

BME entrepreneurship and plural interests:

Another conceptual distinction implicit in the previous section, which can usefully illuminate aspects of bricolage, is RST's commitment to maintaining a dualistic and relational distinction between the world "out there" and the world, as it is perceived, "in here". The external universe is essentially intransitive. Social reality thus conceived is constituted of enduringly structured and transcendent

relations between social agents (such as those of gender, class, capitalist organisation, family, etc.) which continue regardless of the consciousness of participants. It is typically these enduring structures that the mixed embeddedness perspective principally speaks to. In contrast, the subjective conceptual schemas which actors use to understand this reality, including those of social scientists, are best viewed as essentially partial and transitive. This is not to deny the that transitive schemas are part of an intransitive reality: as individuals develop and employ conceptual schemas to represent themselves within the various social groups which they embody, so their representations become a constituent part of the intransitive social structure itself. However, analytical dualism would seem to be essential for being discriminating about the qualities of ideas and how these relate to the world "out there".

It is important to recognise, as the mixed embeddedness perspective adequately demonstrates, individuals are not neatly packaged into an internally coherent range of social groupings. Modernity is much more fluid, as we are often told. For complex social realities, such as those of BME entrepreneurs, it is important to recognise a range of agential interests and the inevitability of ideational diversification, or competing arguments about what to do and tensions amongst plural agents (Emirbayer and Mishce, 1998). BME entrepreneurs have particular economic interests. They have particular cultural interests and values. They may also be a parent to a teenager who is keen to integrate with the indigenous population and a mortgage payer who is dependent on a steady stream of income. To capture this complexity the social agent can be seen as a dialogical structure that makes subjective behavioural choices that are not consistent but based in individual experiences, preferences and the moment's opportunities (see also Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Put another way, social agent are reflexive beings who reacts to their circumstances with projects designed to satisfy subjectively defined needs and preferences, which are individually distilled via our own 'inner conversation' (see Archer, 2003).

The inner conversations of BME entrepreneurs may be particularly fraught and complex where their bricolage takes them away from traditional form of entrepreneurship and towards the 'mainstream'. Archer (2006) suggests that, where cultures collide, there are more likely to be tensions within the cultural system, which refers to the consistency of ideational relations across a social formation, and within socio-cultural phenomenon, which refers to local social interactions amongst actors. As Sayer (2005) argues, our habits are morally contested in terms of a 'politics of recognition'. In this struggle, our own interests are seen as "worthy" whilst "other" groups are often stigmatised as "unworthy" of the riches they have or cannot access. This is empowering, to the extent that his offers us a sense of who we are and the groups to which we belong. However, once we have identified our

self we need to decide how to behave, both in relation to the groups we identify ourselves with and those of others.

When BME entrepreneurs enter indigenous markets socio-cultural tensions may emerge in interactions with both the community of the BME entrepreneur and with the indigenous population. Archer (2006) suggests that where values cannot be reconciled people must confront cultural cleavages either by (1) finding a way of dealing with the inconsistencies through "containment strategies" that suppress values within socio-cultural interactions, and/or (2) engaging in more open ideological conflict that results in either the elimination of one set of ideas or the general acceptance of cleavage within one's world (Archer, 2006: 28-33). Whatever the outcome, RST adds to the debate by highlighting that value based tensions that are an inevitable consequence of bricolage. Arguably, this approach adds to our ability to understand and explain outcomes for BME entrepreneurs by encouraging the identification of the strategies BME entrepreneurs use to cope with the tensions that emerge in their respective cultural systems and socio-cultural interactions. Insights from such a perspective may suggest interventions that are more sensitive to local conditions: tensions will be community specific as will what "successfulness" means from the point of view if the BME entrepreneur.

BME entrepreneurship, reflexivity and strategic behaviour
Resultant lines of questioning relate to how inner conversations evolve, how the differentially structured tensions within our conceptual schemas come into play in specific situations and how BME agents are oriented to these in terms of their bricolage. In the effort to unpack forms of social agency and differentiate amongst these, Delbridge and Edwards (2013) bring together Emirbayer and Miche's (1998) treatment of agency with Archer's RST. Arguably, this offers a useful lens to consider the projectivity social actors display which is highly relevant to analysis of bricolage amongst BME entrepreneurs.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) outline three distinctive agential orientations. Firstly, an iterational element which 'gives stability and order to the social universe ... helping to sustain identities, interactions and institutions over time' (998). Secondly, a projective element, which involves 'the imaginative generation by actors of future trajectories for action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears and desires for the future' (998). Thirdly, a practical-evaluative element, which involves 'practical and normative judgement amongst alternative trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations' (971). These frames constitute ways of

seeing variation in the manner of conduct (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013) which may be held up against specific forms of bricolage, at specific times, to consider whether they are preservative of pre-existing forms (iterational), novel strategies that may be more broadly transformative (projective) or situational tactics (practical evaluative).

Archer (2003), in contrast, characterises reflexivity in four different ways. Firstly, communicative reflexives enact their reflexivity via conversations with others and so their personal projects reflect contextual continuity: others' opinions matter greatly and decisions reflect common concerns, interests and context. Arguably, where the bricolage of any BME entrepreneur innovates via reflexivity that is produced within her own community, local intra-ethnic frames of reference will be reproduced. Communicative reflexives may become BME entrepreneurs precisely because this is a normal response to more general processes of social exclusion within their communities. However, where the community in which the entrepreneur resides has little history of breaking out of specific niches or enclaves it is unlikely that bricolage will be more generally transformative.

Secondly, autonomous reflexives conduct their inner conversations in private, or at a distance from the groups they belong to, leading to tensions as these actors pursue their projects despite the social and cultural structures that surround them. This group are not defined in terms of stable relations or and prefer projects that might be possible despite the context within which they find themselves. Where agents display tendencies towards autonomous reflexivity, it is 'not just the conditioning of the social setting that explains action but both the individual propensity and strategic judgement for taking a particular path that needs to be explained' (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013: 939). In other words, agency is more causal in itself. When engaged with this form of reflexivity, the bricolage of BME entrepreneurs is very likely to create new tensions and cultural cleavages, both locally and, potentially, across broader social formations, which will require additional strategies for dealing with. However, autonomous reflexives are, arguably, more likely to be transformative in their capacities.

Thirdly, meta reflexives monitor both their personal projects and the experience of reflection itself. This involves thinking about one's experiences when deciding how to act, resulting in various potential outcomes. When employing this form or reflexivity, social agents refuse to engage with specific projects precisely because they hold ideal that they are unprepared to compromise when taking on a project. For example, a BME entrepreneurs may refuse to make a break into the mainstream precisely because they are committed to servicing their own community. However, if

any agent decides their reflexive needs are better service by transforming their projects, this remains a possibility.

Finally, fractured reflexives reflect the ideal of the category of primary agency. This group 'are the victims of society who are unable, for whatever reason, to engage in inner conversation. These actors are the closest to being 'social dopes'; it is because of their involuntary position in society that they are unable to change their situation' (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013). An example of BME bricolage that conforms to this type would be one that continues with a business in order to subside. The outcome is similar to that of a communicative reflexive type, but they will be less engaged with their own community when making this choice and less likely to engage with innovative practices that engaging with that community might bring.

At this point returning to RTS's temporal assumptions about the evolution of social relations is useful. It encourages us to reflecting on structural and cultural constraints and how these are perceived by the agents involved at any particular moment. This creates space to consider the texture of bricolage in the immediate context and the consequences of particular forms of activity for emergent social formations. In Table 1 the frameworks of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Archer are combined in terms of their temporal dimensions as a framework for understanding the transformative potential of forms of bricolage (see also Delbridge and Edwards, 2013).

[INSERT TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE]

A method for unpacking bricolage in terms of its (relative) causal powers:
Unfortunately, there are rather few text for CR scholars to draw on for practical guidance when conduct research (cf. Olsen, 2010; Edwards, et al. 2014). As a result, the remainder of this paper outlines a methodology for exploring the causal powers of social agency, as manifest in the bricolage of BME entrepreneurs. In particular, the approach of Vincent and Wapshott (2014) is reconfigured as an approach to this subject. This adaptation suggests four distinctive forms of analysis can be used to study bricolage (1) analysis of the field's structural and cultural configuration (2) analysis of projective tendencies of BME entrepreneurs (3) analysis of the relationship between (1) and (2) for how the context is reflected in bricolage (4) analysis of emergent processes and their consequences (i.e. the form and extent of any social transformation apparent) for whom these benefit.

Analysing the field in terms of its structural and cultural configuration involves a kind of 'thick description' of the cultures and institutions of the local environment the how BME entrepreneurs relate to these. The objective is not to elucidate, in detail, why behaviour is meaningful to the actors involved (cf. Stake 2005) but to set the scene in such a way as to account for the articulation of the particular social field or formation. There is no prescription as to which data are needed to undertake this analytical process, although interviews, observation, policy documents and population statistics are likely to be particularly useful. The goal is to abduct the basic constitution of the field, its cultural forms, business structures and the forms of institutional support (and constraint) available to the BME entrepreneur(s). The overall goal is to identify the general pattern of activities that is "normal" within any field. The outcome can be likened to a road map of the field explored. As the map is constructed and the data exhausted a point of field saturation is reached (see also Glaser and Strauss 1967). After this point, no new data about agents' various locations and activities will be discovered, and a specifically articulated set of actors will have been described.

Analysing the projective tendencies (the bricolage of BME entrepreneurs) involves an effort to explain how and why actors and groups of actors behave as they do in specific situations in accordance with the logics of the respondents themselves. The goal is to explore and understand their behavioural norms and expectations, as well as the extent to which specific norms are followed consistently. Matters are particularly interesting where there is a gap projective tendencies (what BME entrepreneurs are trying to do) and normative expectations (how people from particular social formations are expected to behave). Observations of difference highlight areas of cultural tension that are likely to be significant (see below). The goal is to develop an effective appreciation of how the projects of different BME entrepreneurs vary and to invite participants to reflect on how they frame their own situations. This stage of the analysis is complete at the point of agential saturation (see also Glaser and Strauss 1967), when the normative tendencies of all the groups of interest within the field are known and understood from the point of view of the participants.

Analysing the way in which structural and cultural configurations are reflected in the bricolage of specific BME entrepreneurs involves attempting to make a retroductive step 'backwards' from the projective tendencies observed to the contextual features that help better explain why matters are so and not otherwise. For example, if we observe an apparent lack of cultural tension or conflict where particularly innovative forms of bricolage are apparent, we might then reflect on various conditions, external to that innovative behaviour, that help explain this outcome. Some causes, such as the a prevalence or "normalness" of innovative strategies within a particular community, may suggest themselves as more salient or important in affecting what is observed than others, such as the

availability of support from the local Chambers of Commerce. Whilst the availability of this support may say something about conditions of existence of the specific observations, the analysis of the configuration of the local community may offer a more persuasive explanation of the lack of cultural tension. As we (theoretically) explore potential causes of specific patterns of events it becomes possible to assemble a range of contextual features that can be combined to articulate a generative mechanism that better explains the patterns of activity in the specific field, whilst leaving space to consider the separable powers of the social agent herself.

Finally, as CR has an emancipatory research agenda it is important to understand how different forms of bricolage (re)condition the fields within which they reside (4), for better or worse. The previous three forms of analysis concentrate on different elements of this objective: (1) reveals more about the circumstance of the entrepreneur, (2) reveals more about the forms of bricolage BME entrepreneurs are engaged with, (3) reveals more about how specific forms of bricolage are related to the contexts entrepreneurs operate within and the extent to which specific forms of bricolage are novel for a setting. Arguably, by combining these forms of analysis analyses we can build an understanding of whether forms of bricolage are locally beneficial and whether they have transformative potentials.

The problem comes to be that of how to assessing the qualities of change immanent within bricolage. In this area Sen's (1992, 1997) capabilities theory provides a useful framework for considering the value of projective change. Capabilities are both internal and external to the individual. This is highly consonant with a realist position on corporate and primary agency. Individuals may be more or less 'ready to act' on the opportunities they are offered, yet they are also confronted by organisational or societal factors that enable or restrict their freedom of opportunity to act. For Sen, freedom of opportunity exists where individuals are enabled to act in accordance with their values. It follows from this that bricolage are beneficial where they satisfy the values of the BME entrepreneur and the communities to which their relate, and that forms of bricolage are emancipatory where the specific social transformations instantiated better serve the values and interests of the BME entrepreneur and communities to which they relate.

However, progress on towards better forms of bricolage may be particularly difficult. For example Sen recognised that values are socially constructed and that disadvantaged groups may lower their aspirations, adapting their preferences to the context of disabling environmental factors. Individuals routinely redefine outcomes they do not choose for themselves as beneficial, or even preferred, in order to retain some self respect and sense of control over their lives: respondents' perspectives on

their own agency may be a part of the "problem" grappled with. Gould and Sarama (2004) investigated early retirement patterns and found that even where early exit was the only realistic option available to older employees they often interpreted this as a choice rather than a compulsion in order to retain some sense of personal control over their lives. The complexity and ambiguity of choices of this kind is confirmed in research investigating the redundancy experience of older men (Gardiner et al. 2007), wherein interpretations of post-redundancy experience often emphasised the opportunity it provided to develop new forms of self-development and self-respect.

Acknowledging problems of perception throws up various methodological challenges. For example, semi-structured interviews offer the opportunity for participants to provide an account of changing subjective interpretations over time and to explore the ambivalence and complexity of their 'choices'. However, this poses ethical dilemmas around the right of the researcher to "violate" or "contaminate" the subjects' value systems with their own insights and interpretations. As Collier explains:

> 'When it is just a set of false beliefs that enslaves, their replacement by true beliefs is liberation. But the vast bulk of human bondage, misery and repression is not like that. The extension of emancipatory critique from cognitive error to unsatisfied needs makes it clear that false belief is not the only chain that binds us (…) unemployed workers, homeless families, bullied wives, tortured prisoners, may all know exactly what would make them free, but lack the power to get it (…) Hence cognitive enlightenment is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition of their emancipation' (Collier, 1998: 461).

When 'enlightenment' results only in a strong sense of injustice and greater knowledge of one's relative powerlessness, dissonance may result (see Bhaskar, 1986). The point is that emancipation often depends on the transformation of structures, in the sense that to be 'free' from previous bondage requires both self-awareness and the ability to choose wanted and needed sources of determination. Such "in gear" freedoms require 'hard work, transforming recalcitrant structures, with the technical and social means at our disposal, into other, more congenial structures' (Collier, 1998: 464) – in other words, researchers need a means to act on the world and change the world themselves.

In our view, this places a moral obligation on the researchers in this area to try to make a difference. It is not enough to stop at identifying and labelling the non-emancipated or disempowered, who may have already formed their own subjective self-defence for their circumstances. For CR research to be

truly emancipatory it need to understand the susceptibilities of the specific social formations observed, in this case, to assess which forms of bricolage are better, from the point of view of the communities with which they relate, and then to promote these.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper offers theoretical and methodological contributions to the debate about BME entrepreneurship. Theoretically, we have offered a detailed critiqued of existing perspectives in this debate from the point of view of RST. We have also outlined what a CR position can add. Existing perspectives were found to be wanting because they lack a rich view of social agency, which RST extrapolates. As a consequence, the paper outlines how the use of RST might result in better analyses of the bricolage of BME entrepreneurs. In particular, we demonstrated how RST can be used to breakdown and unpack the different forms of social agency that can be apparent within BME entrepreneurship. Methodologically, we suggest that four interrelated forms of analysis can be used (i) to understand different forms of bricolage and (ii) to consider which forms of bricolage are better, from the point of view of the individuals and communities affected. Arguably, the approach outlined has emancipatory potential, in that beneficial and potentially transformational forms of bricolage might be better identified and promoted.

However, the difficulties associated with such a project should not be underestimated. Some of these challenges are associated with the practicalities of research. In contrast to this orderly analytical logic suggested in RST, research practice is messy and non-linear, with assumptions and understandings constantly re-examined as new data is collected (see Berg, 1989). Whilst our analytical assumptions might suggest an orderly movement towards abduction and retroduction is possible, the world that we are seeking to understand and the data we collect is neither orderly nor easy discovered. To a certain extent orderliness can be imposed upon our methods, such as through stratified sampling techniques and ordering interview schedules in such a way as to move from discussions about fields to discussions about projects, to discussions about rationales for projects and so on. In this regard, Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest interviews follow a 'teacher-learner' pattern in which the interviewer teaches the respondent what the interview is designed to find out and their current views about how the world "works". The respondent learns and applies this conceptual structure to their own perspectives and experiences, and the conversation then revolves around how the conceptual schema might be developed in view of the respondents' independent insight.

However, "solutions" will be bound by the researchers' and the respondents' subjectivities, so will inevitably be partial and contentious. The researcher is bound to take a position within social debates that are active within society at large and the interventions they suggest will inevitably affect various interest for better and worse (for an example of action research that relates to BME entrepreneurship see Ram, et al. 2014). This may bring the researchers frame of reference into contestation with those of agents within the field. Inevitably, the researcher will be confronted with the realpolitik and local vested interests of specific community groups, so the researchers will need to take sides within these debates. However, as Pawson and Tilly (1997) argue, 'whilst programs [and projects] comprise of multifarious thoughts and deeds of a variety of stakeholders, evaluators can find objective ways of choosing between rival accounts' (158). That which we have outlined above represents an approach that may do so.

References:

Ackroyd, S. and Fleetwood, F. (2000) 'Realism in contemporary organisation and management studies', in Ackroyd, S. and Fleetwood, F. (eds.) Realist Perspectives on Management and Organisations, London: Routledge.

Adams, T.L. and Demaiter, E.I. (2008) 'Skill, education and credentials in the new economy: the case of information technology workers.' Work, Employment and Society, 22(2):351-362.

Antcliff, V. Saundry, R. and Stuart, M. (2007) 'Networks and social capital in the UK television industry: The weakness of weak ties', Human Relations, 60(2): 371-393.

Archer, M. (1995) Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. (1998) 'Realism and Morphogensis', in Archer, M. Bhaskar, R. Collier, A. Lawson, T. and Norrie, A. (eds.) Critical Realism: Essential Readings, London: Routledge.

Archer, M. (2000) Being human: the problem of agency, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Archer, M. (2003) Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Archer, M. (2006) 'Structure, Culture and Agency' in Jacobs, M. and Weiss Harahan, N. (eds.) The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Culture, Oxford: Blackwell.

Bates, T. (1997) Race, Self-Employment and Upward Mobility An Inclusive American Dream, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Berg, B. (1989) Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bhaskar, R. (1986) Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation London: Verso

Bourdieu, P. (1977) Outline of a theory of practice , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P (1984) Distinction, Oxford: Polity.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in: J. Richardson (ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York: Greenwood Press.

Cheung, S. Y. and Heath, A. (2007) 'Nice work if you can get it: Ethnic penalties in Great Britain', in Heath, A., Cheung, S. Y. with Smith, S. N. (eds) Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets. Proceedings of the British Academy, 137. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.507-50

Collier, A. (1998) 'Explanation and emancipation' in Archer, M. Bhaskar, R. Collier, A. Lawson, T. and Norrie, A. (eds.) Critical Realism: Essential Readings, London: Routledge.

Delbridge, R. and Edwards, T. (2013) 'Inhabiting Institutions: Critical Realist Refinements to Understanding Institutional Complexity and Change', Organization Studies, 34(7): 927-47.

Edwards, P., O'Mahoney, J. and Vincent, S. (2014) Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism, Oxford: Oxford University Press:

Elder Vass, D. (2010) The Causal Power of Social Structure, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ekinsmyth, C. (2002) 'Project organization, embeddedness and risk in magazine publishing'. Regional Studies, 36(3):229-243.

Emirbayer, M. and Mische, A. (1998) What is Agency? American Journal of Sociology, 1998, 103(4), 962-1023.

Fallon, G. and Berman Brown, R. (2004) 'Supporting Ethnic Community Businesses: Lessons from West Midlands Asian Business Support Agency', Regional Studies, 38(2): 137-148.

Gardiner, J., Stuart, M., Forde, C., Greenwood, I., MacKenzie, R. Perrett, R. (2007) 'Work-Life Balance and Older Workers: employees' perspectives on retirement transitions following redundancy'. International Journal of Human Resource Management. 18, 3, March, 476-489

Glaser, B. and Straus, A. (1967) The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Chicago: Aldine

Gould, R. and Saurama, L. (2004) 'From Early Exit Culture to the Policy of Active Ageing: The Case of Finland' in Maltby, T., de Vroom, B., Mirabile, M. L. and Overbye, E. (eds) Ageing and the Transition to Retirement: A Comparative Analysis of European Welfare States, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp.67-92.

Grabher, G. (2001) 'Ecologies of creativity: the village, the group, and the heterarchic organization of the British advertising industry'. Environment and Planning A, 33:351-374.

Grabher, G. (2002a) 'Fragile sector, robust practice: project ecologies in new media'. Environment and Planning A, 34:1911-1926.

Grabher, G. (2002b) 'Cool projects, boring institutions: temporary collaboration in social context'. Regional Studies, 36(3):205-214.

Jones, T. and McEvoy, D. (1986) 'Ethnic enterprise: the popular image' in Curran, J., Stanworth, D., and Watkins, D. (eds.) The survival of the small firm, Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Ltd.

Jones, T. Ram, M. and Edwards, P. (2004) 'Illegal Immigrants and the Asian Underground Economy in the West Midlands' International Journal of Economic Development, 6(2): 92-113.

Kloosterman, R. and Rath, J. (2001) 'Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored', Journal of Ethnic and Migrant Studies, 27(2): 189-201.

Kloosterman, R., Van Leun, J. and Rath, J. (1999) 'Mixed Embeddedness: Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Informal Economic Activities', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 23(2): 253-67.

Olsen, W. (2010) Realist Methodology, London: Sage

Parker, S. (2004) The Economics of Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pawson, R and Tilley, N. (1997) Realistic Evaluation, London: Sage

Ram, M., Edwards, P., Jones, T., Kiselinchev, A. and Muchenje, L. (2014) 'Pulling the Levers of Agency: Implementing Critical Realist Action Research' in Edwards, P., O'Mahoney, J. and Vincent, S. [eds.] Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 206-222.

Ram, M. and Smallbone, D. (2001) Ethnic Minority Enterprise: Policy and Practice. London: SBS.

Ram, M., Theodorkopoulos, N. and Jones, T. (2008) 'Forms of capital mixed embeddedness and Somali enterprise', Work, Employment and Society, 22(3): 427-446

Rath, J. (2000) 'Introduction: immigrant businesses and their economic, politico-institutional and social environment' in Rath, J. [ed.] Immigrant Businesses. The Economic, Politico-Institutional and Social Environment, Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1-19.

Rath, J. and Kloosterman, R. (2000) 'Outsiders' business: a critical review or research on immigrant entrepreneurship', International Migration Review, 34(3): 657-81.

Sayer, A. (2005) The Moral Significance of Class, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Sen, A. (1992) Inequality Re-examined. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sen, A. (1997) Development as Freedom. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Stake, R. (2005) 'Qualitative case studies', in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.), The Sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed.), London: Sage: 433-466.

Vincent, S. and Wapshott, R. (2014) 'Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study: A Guide to Discovering Institutional Mechanisms' in Edwards, P., O'Mahoney, J. and Vincent, S. [eds.] Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 148-167.

Virdee, S. (2006) '"Race", employment and social change: A critique of current orthodoxies', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 29 (4): 605-28.

Table One: The transformative capacity of bricolage

Agentic Orientation	Action orientation	Form of bricolage	Potential outcomes
Past	Iterational: communicative reflexive/fractured reflexive	Local, reproduction of existing patters of business	Taken for granted continuity/ reproduction of 'ethnic enclaves'
Present	Practical evaluative: meta/autonomous reflexive	Self-interested continuity or tactical change	Negotiated continuity and/or change
Future	Projective: autonomous reflexive	Strategic move away from traditional forms of practice	Change

(adapted from Delbridge and Edwards, 2013)