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British Sikh Entrepreneurs: Social Mobility and Transformations over Generations

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Abstract

We came with £3 in our pocket but with hard work and Waheguru's kirpa [God's blessing] we are now playing in millions [lakhan wich khailde haan]

The above quote from an 81-year-old Sikh woman encapsulates the essence of the research reported in this article. The study focuses on factors that have contributed to the socio-economic success and relative upward social mobility of British Sikh families. The research develops an original methodology: bilingual-bicultural ethnography, to analyse and document the perspectives and experiences of three generations of Sikh families. This article focuses on findings in relation to family trajectories of Sikh entrepreneurs. It highlights transformations in the families of individuals who came to England with '£3 in their pocket' and mobilised individual, family and community resources to enable second and third generation Sikhs to become elite professionals or owners and directors of global businesses.

Bilingual-bicultural Ethnography

This research deploys an innovative approach to investigating, interpreting and analysing the experiences and perspectives of Sikh families. The research is innovative in two respects, firstly it involves the use of two languages; English and Punjabi in data collection, analysis and interpretation using the technique of 'translanguaging'. Translanguaging is a concept that has evolved from cross-cultural language research and is discussed in more detail in the next paragraph. Secondly, our approach combines the dynamic interaction of insider and outsider perspectives in both the design and conduct of the research study to offer a more balanced insight into the British Sikh community. The methodology, which we term bilingual-bicultural ethnography, has been developed over the period from September 2013-September 2016 as we have jointly engaged in planning, piloting and data gathering. In ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Coffey 1999) it is the researcher(s) who are the key tools in the methodology and our engagement with each other has contributed to the rigour and validity of the analysis and the richness of the data we present in this article.

Translanguaging is a key aspect of bilingual-bicultural ethnography as it involves translation, interpretation and reflection on the data gathered through linguistic and cultural lenses. We have adapted the term from research on language use in multilingual settings, in particular recent work being undertaken by the *Translation and Translanguaging* research project (TLANG) which is investigating interaction in superdiverse settings in four UK cities (TLANG 2014). In offering a definition of translanguaging the project lead for TLANG discusses its origins from sociolinguistics and research on *language in use* which focuses on the speaker, the utterance and the context to convey meaning (Creese 2015). In multilingual interaction this means that speakers will draw on all the resources they have, including differing levels of proficiency in two or more languages to try to convey their meaning rather than respecting boundaries between languages. Superdiverse refers to 'an unprecedented variety of cultures, identities, faiths, languages, and immigration statuses' (IRiS 2016).

Superdiversity is an emerging field of study which recognises the complexity of developing policies for superdiverse populations. Our methodology incorporates translanguaging and superdiversity as they are recent concepts which reflect our experience as bilinguals living in culturally diverse areas of the UK and endorse the cultural aspects of language use. Language is a medium for conveying cultural as well as semantic meaning and translation alone cannot convey the full meaning of speech as some words and concepts in Punjabi do not exist in English and vice versa. The meaning of spoken language, our main source of data for this research, is mediated by differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, experience, education and occupation. In addition to these more tangible differences which can be linked to symbolic manifestations, such as wearing a turban or a *Kara* (steel bangle)¹, individual and family perspectives also carry implicit differences due to age, gender, class and differing degrees of adherence to cultural norms and religious values and practices. This diversity of experience and perspective is represented in the participants in our study and reflects the reality of change and transformation over generations but also the similarities amongst individuals and families who identify with being Sikh and British. Negotiating multiple identities and crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries is part of the lived experience of both the researchers, Dhillon and Thomas, and of the research participants who have agreed to take part in our study, which at the time of writing is work in progress. This is also our rationale for highlighting the role of the researcher(s) as the key research tool in bilingual-bicultural ethnography.

To assist the reader in making judgements about the validity, authenticity and trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and interpretations presented in this article we outline the linguistic, cultural and research skills of the researchers. In terms of linguistic skills, Dhillon is bilingual in English and Punjabi with native speaker proficiency in both languages and able to converse easily with Punjabi speakers who may have more limited proficiency in English, e.g. elder Sikh women. She also has knowledge of applied linguistics and has used techniques from conversational and discourse analysis in previous research (Dhillon 2009; 2013), especially in interpreting non-verbal communication as well as the actual words used by a speaker to convey meaning in spoken discourse, thus focusing on *language in use*. Thomas is bilingual in English and Welsh and so has experience and empathy with speakers of minority languages and is able to understand the meaning of aspects of spoken language from non-verbal cues e.g. being able to read the sadness in a Sikh woman's account of her early experiences of life in Britain even though the conversation was largely in Punjabi. This was an observation she made to Dhillon following the interview with Mrs D, commenting '...now she's had a sad life, I could see it in her eyes' (Field notes, 29 April 2015). This was a surprise to Dhillon who had known Mrs D for a number of years as a confident, articulate, fashionable woman who was a powerful decision-maker in her home, family and local community.

Regarding cultural knowledge, Dhillon is a second generation Sikh, having arrived in Britain in the 1960s with her mother and a cultural insider in relation to the researched community. Thomas is non-Sikh and thus positioned as an outsider in relation to the research participants but with experience of living for 56 years and teaching for 24 years in a superdiverse area in England. She also shares a history of migration in that she moved from her home country

¹ This is one of the five articles of faith for Sikhs. For further information, see <http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Kara>.

(Wales) to live and work in England, thus has experience of migration and adapting to multiple identities. In relation to research skills, Dhillon has undertaken educational and social research in the interpretive paradigm (Crotty 1998) using observations, interviews and focus groups in a range of settings (Dhillon 2001; 2004; 2007) and Thomas has undertaken interview based empirical research with adults, including parents, professionals and mothers of young children in a variety of social settings. She has also conducted interviews with people from different professions for a radio station. Dhillon and Thomas thus bring what other researchers have described as ‘multiple positionalities’ (Caretta 2015) to the research project.

The complexities and ethical issues raised by multiple positionalities and insider/outsider perspectives is more fully discussed elsewhere by the authors and other researchers (Dhillon and Thomas 2014; Mulligan, 2014; Perryman, 2011). For the purposes of this article we make them transparent in order to make the reader aware of our positionings, experience and skills in relation to the main research questions and the methods used for the fieldwork.

The questions that provide the focus for our study are:

1. How have Sikh families developed and changed their social and economic position in Britain over three generations, since they arrived as immigrants in the 1960s?
2. How has each generation deployed different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, religious, aspirational) to support members of their own and other families to achieve economic, educational and occupational success?

These questions have been framed through discussions with each other bringing insider and outsider perspectives to bear on the social phenomena of Sikh success in Britain over the last 50 years. Success is a contested term and material prosperity does not necessarily lead to well-being, as some of the empirical data we present in this article will show, but it is an indicator of upward social mobility and of Sikhs who have been described as ‘one of the most successful groups in the UK,’ (Cameron 2014, 3). According to the authors of *British Sikh Report (BSR)*, Sikhs contributed £7.63 billion to the British economy in 2014 even though they constituted only 0.7% of the population (BSR 2014). The statistical data used in BSR is largely drawn from the 2011 census and the report has been produced annually since 2013 by Sikh professionals and academics on a voluntary basis. A summary of the findings of BSR 2014 provide statistical data which affirms the economic position of British Sikhs:

Some of the key findings in the report related to the financial strength of British Sikhs. The report found that two-thirds of British Sikh households (66%) have pre-tax incomes above £40,000, and over a third (34%) have a household income in excess of £80,000. Taking into account the average size of the British Sikh household, the report values the Sikh contribution to the British economy at a staggering £7.63billion.

In terms of wealth and assets, home ownership is very high amongst British Sikhs with 87% of households owning at least a portion of their home. 30% of British Sikh households own their homes outright and only 9% rent their properties. A mere 1% of British Sikhs claim Housing Benefit.

According to the report, British Sikhs are clear net contributors to the British economy and have a strong entrepreneurial drive, with about one in three British Sikh families (34%) owning a business in the UK.

(BSR 2014, 1)

Although the data from BSR is based on self-reporting questionnaires and so may not be generalizable or reflect the experience of all Sikhs living in Britain, it does indicate trends and confirm anecdotal evidence and observations from both insider and outsider perspectives. This has influenced the framing of the research questions for our ethnographic investigation of the trajectories of Sikh families. Ethnography as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss does not have a precise or standard definition and overlaps with other terms in social research but it:

usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 3)

Our fieldwork has involved engagement with Sikh families in the Midlands over a two-year period during which we have gathered data through participant observations, field notes, informal conversations and in-depth interviews. This engagement has included participant observations of Sikh religious, cultural and family events, such as marriages (*anand karaj*), funerals (*saskar*), *bhog* (reading of the concluding parts of the Sikh Holy scriptures at Gurdwara following cremation at crematorium) and family celebrations at wedding receptions, engagement ceremonies (*kurmai* and *chunni*) and birthday parties in large purpose built venues and in Sikh homes. Celebrations of significant events in Sikhism e.g. *Vaisakhi*, *Gurpurabs* and smaller family functions such as *akhand paths* for birthdays held at Gurdwaras and in family homes have also been observed and recorded in field notes. During the fieldwork, Thomas (a cultural outsider) has participated in Sikh weddings and parties, both in ceremonies held at Gurdwaras and in banqueting venues and Sikh homes. She has visited different Gurdwaras in the Midlands, both at busy times when they have been full for marriages and when almost empty during the week but open for anyone to visit, come to pray and participate in different activities e.g. *seva* (selfless service), *langar* (free kitchen), Punjabi language classes. Thus, Thomas has experienced and observed social, cultural and religious aspects of Sikh family life along with Dhillon (a cultural insider) and together they have reached the interpretations presented in this article.

Sampling

In addition to observations and social cultural engagement with Sikh families over 'an extended period of time' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 3) we have explored the research questions in depth through face-to-face interviews with a purposive sample of twenty-five families. In purposive sampling it is the characteristics of a population and the objectives or research questions of the study that determine the choice of participants (Denscombe 2014; Crossman 2016). In this approach, researchers use their judgment to choose participants that they consider will add most meaning to advancing the research. In our purposive sample, Dhillon's knowledge of the Sikh community and her family, social and professional networks

provided access to potential Sikh families which was combined with Thomas' outsider perspective to provide a balance for choosing participants to approach for in-depth interviews. The two main research questions of the study, given earlier in this article (see p 4), were used to devise a semi-structured interview format as it provides both structure and flexibility to the interview process (Cohen *et al* 2007). This was important to ensure consistency across interviews as we used both individual and co-interviewing for data gathering to achieve triangulation of insider and outsider perspectives. This strategy was used not only to strengthen the validity of the research but also to reach the perspectives of different generations of Sikh families and to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, in line with ethical guidelines for research (BERA 2011). It also reflects our positioning as *co-researchers* rather than as principal investigator/lead researcher and research assistant, which is the more traditional hierarchical distinction embodied in many research projects.

The combined and complementary analysis of the ongoing fieldwork raised issues of interpretation and ethical dilemmas that emerged from the data and which as reflexive researchers (Le Gallais 2008) we discussed and resolved in our analysis. Some of these issues are outlined in Dhillon and Thomas (2014) and it is intended to provide further discussion in forthcoming publications. We argue that this interactive dynamic process constitutes a layer of interpretation which adds rigour and a critical edge to the narratives of family histories, experiences and perspectives we present in this article and contributes to the robustness and originality of the methodology.

Family Trajectories

To trace and explain the trajectories and socio-economic success of Sikh families in Britain we needed a working definition of 'success.' Whilst success is a contestable and value laden term, it is one that is used to describe the Sikh community in Britain and in other countries where Sikhs are settled (BSR 2014; Gairola 2010). Our aim was to investigate the relative success of these families over three generations, which meant that occupation was an appropriate indicator and starting point for purposive sampling. So for the purposes of this research 'success' is indicated as upward social mobility in terms of occupation, using the Social Class based on Occupation classification (Rose 1995; CeLSIUS 2016) shown in Table 1.

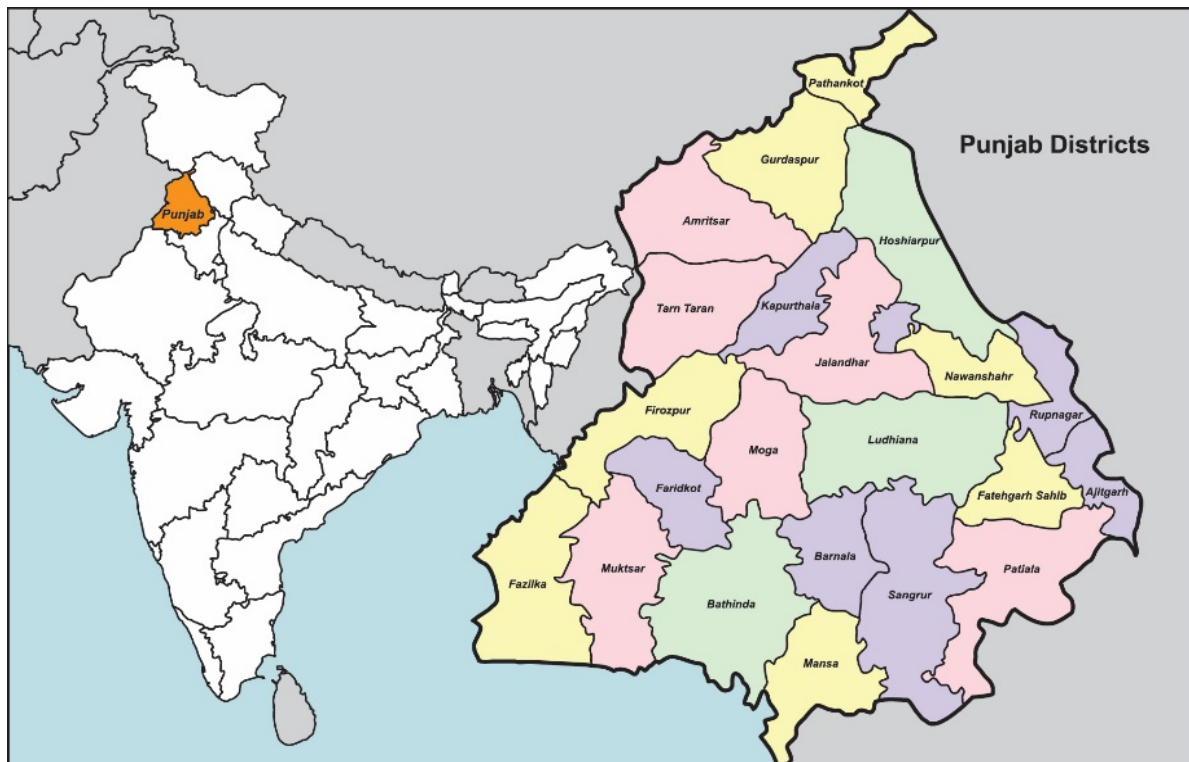
Table 1 Social Class based on Occupation ²

I	Professional occupations
II	Managerial and technical occupations
IIIN	Skilled non-manual occupations
IIIM	Skilled manual occupations
IV	Partly-skilled occupations
V	Unskilled occupations

² based on Rose 1995; CeLSIUS 2016

This classification is superseded from 2001 onwards by the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, or NS-SEC (Office for National Statistics 2016) but the framework shown above offers sufficient delineation for our purpose, which is to convey the generational trajectories of the Sikh families in our study. We do not attach value judgments to the numeric indicators (I-V) in the framework or assume that some occupations are more worthy than others in the classification. Our interest is in researching the conditions that have contributed to upward movement by occupation from unskilled occupations amongst first generation Sikhs to managerial and professional occupations over the 2nd and 3rd generations. The families we have studied are from the Midlands region of England and the first generation migrated to this region from the Jalandhar district of Punjab, India. For those readers who may be unfamiliar with the geography of Punjab, Jalandhar is both the name of a city and of a geographical region situated in the north west of India, one of the 22 districts which make up the state of Punjab in India. The geographical locations of these areas are shown in Figure 1 (Map of Punjab).

Figure 1 Map of Punjab



Some parts of Punjab are in Pakistan and a few of the families we interviewed experienced the traumatic events that followed the partition of India in 1947 and they had to move from the Pakistani part of Punjab to the Indian part of Punjab undergoing transitions from being affluent landlord farmers to becoming poor migrants during the re-settlement process. Two of our interviewees, from different families in our purposive sample, were born in Sheikhupura, in what is now part of Pakistan and were allocated farm land in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur (a neighbouring district) in the Indian part of Punjab. After establishing homes and livelihoods in the Indian part of Punjab both these families came to work in the Midlands; male heads of

households in the early 1960s and wives and children a few years later. They continue to live and work in this part of England but have extended family members living in other parts of the UK, Canada, USA and Punjab, India whom they visit regularly but they have never been to visit their place of birth, in what is now part of Pakistan. As researchers, we were surprised to hear vivid accounts about this period from emotional memories of life before and after the partition of India from individuals who had been in Britain since the 1960s, for example Mrs F aged 79:

Mrs F: When they came and said you have to go, my *mataji* [mother] started screaming... “I’m not going anywhere, this is my home, my land, where are my buffalo going to go?... and my wardrobes full of fine silk suits, shawls and jewellery and what is going to happen to my *naukar* [maids, servants and other household staff]? I’m not going to leave everything...we are staying”. But we did leave and I remember walking in the *kaafila* [protected organised group] feeling hungry and frightened and then when we did get some land it was very hard for us because we were not used to doing any manual work ourselves because in Sheikhupura, we had servants who did everything for us.

Another interviewee, Mrs H aged 71, also recalled how her late husband never settled after having to leave what is now Pakistan. Mrs H is unusual for a 1st generation Sikh woman in that the interview was almost entirely conducted in English and she was one of the participants we co-interviewed for triangulation of insider and outsider interpretations. Mrs H had come to Britain as a student in 1966 and her husband had come as an economic migrant, some years earlier. During the conversation about her own successful career trajectory and her husband’s reasons for coming to Britain she reflected:

Mrs H: He was born in Pakistan. Present Pakistan. And they had to move from Pakistan to India. So the life was completely, completely disrupted. He lost his mum. He lost his mum on the way. He just couldn't settle and that is probably why he came [to Britain] ...They had to move from the Pakistani side to what is the current Punjab... [*she paused and became quite emotional with tears welling up in her eyes*]

Interviewer 1: Are you okay to talk about it?

Interviewer 2: Yes, are you sure you want to carry on...

Mrs. H Yes... [*she paused to compose herself and continued*] ... But then you kind of think, actually it you know, most people there were so well off and then when they moved, they had nothing. It was so terrible. The migration was so terrible.

Interviewer 1: Yes, it must have been traumatic ... I remember my parents talking about it with their cousins... [*Mrs H was keen to carry on talking and continued*]

Mrs. H: We went into the Wagah border, you know the border of Pakistan and India, but I've never been there. I've never been to the Pakistan part. Because I had read so much, because I had heard so much, I just burst into tears and I could not stop crying. I became so emotional, it was terrible.

We did not expect to find accounts of such historic experiences in our study but the data gathered show the reach of the methodology in illuminating unexpected aspects of the

trajectories of the families who have participated in the research, as well as their common pathways to socio-economic prosperity, shared experiences and individual perspectives.

The families we have studied have largely followed two routes to socio-economic success over the three generations; education and entrepreneurship in business. This is a broad distinction and although there is overlap between those that have followed an education route and those that have taken a business route in their individual and family trajectories the two broad pathways are clearly discernible in the data we have gathered. This is well illustrated in the generational trajectories of two of the families in our study, Family A who have followed the education route and Family B who have followed a business route, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Family trajectories over three generations

Family A			Family B		
Factory workers			Grocery shopkeepers		
M		Steel making	M		Owner
F		Plastics factory	F		Assistant in shop
Professionals			Business men/women		
F	S1	Professor	F	S1	Deceased
M	S2	MD (IT)	M	S2	Joint owner/Director
M	S3	Consultant (Medicine)	M	S3	Joint owner/Director
M	S4	GP (Medicine)	F	S4	Teacher
M	S5	CEO (Banking)			
Professionals/HE Students			Global business directors/Professionals		
M	S1	Banker (Multinational)	M	S1	Director
M	S2	Banker (Hedge fund)	F	S2	GP (Medicine)
F	S3	Management consultant	F	S3	Accountant and director
		Others at University	F	S4	Hospital doctor (Medicine)

Table 2 shows the members of Family A and Family B by gender (M/F: male/female), position in family (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5: sibling 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 arranged in age order) and occupation.

Figure 2 shows pictures of their housing and illustrates movement from neighbourhoods over three generations. This is an indicator of growth in economic and financial capital over generations and of growing social integration into British society as Sikhs have moved from terraced houses in poor inner-city neighbourhoods to semi-detached and large detached houses in richer suburban and exclusive housing areas. 1st generation Sikh families predominantly lived in terraced houses in working class neighbourhoods, many of which are now superdiverse, and during their 2nd and 3rd generations became more geographically and socially distributed moving into middle class ‘leafy suburbs’ and sometimes being ‘the only Sikhs in the village’ typically as owners of the village grocery store.

Figure 2 Housing and neighbourhoods showing family trajectories



Image: (a) 'Gordon Street The Butts Coventry Jun12' by Ian Halsey (CC BY-NC 2.0); (b) 'Semi detached houses in Queens Road' by Basher Eyre (CC AQ4 BY-SA 2.0) and (c) 'A fine detached house' by Scrinariy (CC BY-SA 2.0)

In the case of Family B who exemplifies the business route to socio-economic success, they began as owners of a small grocery shop in a working class neighbourhood and have grown their business into a global brand. Their trajectory and experiences are more fully discussed in family vignettes (vignette 1) presented in the next section of this article. In the case of Family A who exemplify the education route to socio-economic success, they began as unskilled factory workers living in a working class neighbourhood and have become leading professionals in different sectors of the economy, including medicine, IT and banking. British Sikhs are well represented in these professional fields and the trajectories of families who have taken a predominantly education route will be discussed in a separate publication.

The rest of this article will present the trajectories of four families from the business route who have achieved significant success through entrepreneurship by growing a business, or businesses over two or three generations of their family. Their narratives and experiences are presented in the form of family vignettes which have been coded 1, 2, 3 and 4 to maintain the anonymity of the families.

The vignettes have been constructed from our fieldwork data which includes in-depth interviews with male and female members of first, second and third generations of these families. Interviews with the first generation of family 1, 2, and 4 were largely in Punjabi and with 3 predominantly in English, though both languages were used in all interviews as some words do not have a direct translation in the other language. Interviews with members of second and third generations of these families were all predominantly in English though some Punjabi words and phrases were used by both interviewer and interviewees to convey authentic meanings. This is reflected in the quotes from the interview data included in the vignettes.

Both individual and co-interviewing were used to conduct the in-depth interviews with at least one interview with each generation being jointly carried by Dhillon and Thomas as co-interviewers for triangulation of insider and outsider lenses. The interviews were carried out in the homes or workplaces of the interviewees; most chose to be interviewed at home. Each vignette consists of an introduction to the members of the family, transformations over each generation and a summary of the key influences in the family's trajectory. Before presenting the four vignettes we outline below our reasons for selecting these particular families for vignettes.

Selection of Families for Vignettes

The selection of the four families (1, 2, 3 and 4) for the vignettes reflects both generational transformations through the deployment of different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, religious, aspirational) and the changing patterns of occupational and geographical mobility in the Sikh community over the last fifty years. Some of these mobilities are seen in the trajectories of other Asian communities but our data focus specifically on Sikh families and relate to those settled in the Midlands. Vignette 1 exemplifies the most familiar and perhaps 'stereotypical' pathway of corner grocery shop to larger food retailer. This has been the predominant path for Sikhs as well as other Asians, as the Asian corner shop is somewhat of a stereotype though it reflects a dominant route to economic prosperity for Sikhs and other Asian groups in Britain. In fact, many of the corner shops set up by Sikh families, such as

Family B have been bought by Pakistani and Bangladeshi families as generations of future Sikhs have moved into other occupations as professionals or owners of larger business operations, e.g. food retailing and distribution in national and international markets. Thus, our prime reason for choosing Family B for vignette 1 is that they represent the predominant route to socio-economic success through entrepreneurship in business amongst British Sikhs.

Vignette 2 exemplifies the experiences and perspectives of a family who have become major players in food distribution, with the founder starting out initially as a foundry worker before starting his own business as a shopkeeper and growing it with his family into a food distribution enterprise. Vignette 3 focuses on a different sector of the economy; healthcare and presents the trajectory of a family that have engaged in entrepreneurship in a range of businesses and currently concentrate largely on healthcare. Vignette 4 shows a relatively unusual route as it presents the trajectory of a family who have achieved major success through farming and thus represent a 'minority in a minority' in that they are one of the few British Sikh families engaged in agricultural farming in England. Though farming is arguably 'in the blood of Sikhs', originating as all the ones in our study do, from the agricultural roots of villages in Punjab, India, few have made their economic and financial capital from agricultural farming in Britain. This is not the case in other countries, e.g. many Californian Sikhs in the USA are engaged in agricultural farming, but it is unusual in Britain as the majority of Sikhs followed 'their migrant employment roots in industrialised cities and in jobs such as manufacturing' (Jandu 2016, 7).

In the vignettes that follow, each family is coded by a letter (B, C, D, E) and each generation by number denoting 1st generation (e.g. Mr B1) 2nd generation (e.g. Mrs B2) and 3rd generation (e.g. Mr B3). Within each generation, additional numbering is used to denote sibling position in the family e.g. Mr B22 is the second sibling in the second generation of Family B. These codes are used to maintain the anonymity and privacy of the individuals and families.

Family Vignette 1

Mr and Mrs B1 [first generation of this family in Britain], started their food retail business in a corner shop in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood of a town in the Midlands, similar to the neighbourhood shown in the housing images for 1st generation families in Figure 2. Initially, they lived in the same property, above the shop, and all the family helped in the shop which sold Asian foods. Later, as they acquired more economic and financial capital from their business, they moved to semi-detached and detached houses of the types shown in Figure 2. Whilst they have lived in the same town since they came to the Midlands they have moved house a number of times. The pseudonym Middleton is used to refer to this town in the quotes from interview data. Mr and Mrs B1 have three children who live in the same town, sibling 2 and 3 are male and 4 is female; their eldest child (sibling 1) is deceased. Siblings 2 and 3 run the family business as joint directors of the company and sibling 3 is a teacher in a school. Their grandchildren have followed both business and education routes. The male grandsons have followed their fathers into the family business as accountants and finance directors whilst the females have taken professional pathways in medicine, accountancy and financial services.

Mr B1 had come to Britain via Singapore in 1956, a route many Sikh males followed before the voucher system opened up more direct routes to Britain for larger numbers of immigrants

in the 1960s. In his interview Mr B1, a smartly dressed turban wearing Sikh, who never cut his hair despite the difficulties of finding a job as a turban wearing Sikh in the 1960s reflected on his early experiences of coming to the Midlands:

Mr B1: when I first came [to Britain] I could not find a job and my friends said to me “you will have to cut your *kes*h [hair] to get work in the factories...the gaffas [bosses/employers] won’t take anyone who wears a turban” ...but I couldn’t bring myself to cut my *kes*h as it had never been cut since my birth...eventually I did find a job in a place where I didn’t need to remove my turban but it was dirty and hard work...menial work starting with sweeping the factory floor...not at all what I expected when I set off for *Valith* [England] ...because, as you know,

[he paused as he tried to find the right words to express the golden image of Britain that still persists amongst Sikh communities in Punjab, India]

Mr B1: there is so much...so much... attraction about *Valait* and *Valaitias* [Britain and those who have emigrated to Britain] even today in India ...

The reality and disappointment of work in the industrialised Midlands had to be borne as Mr B1, like others of his generation, had borrowed money from relatives and friends in India to fund his travel to Britain and this had to be returned from his earnings. So he worked long hours, saving the maximum possible to remit the borrowed money and a few years later had accumulated enough capital to fund the cost of travel for his wife and children.

Mrs B1 came to join her husband in 1960 with their three young children and recalls the sense of community and comradeship amongst Sikhs in the neighbourhood and more widely:

Mrs B1: when we came to live in Middleton there were hardly any Punjabi’s here ... if you saw an Indian in the street or in town you would run up to him and say “Sat Sri Akal Bhaji [*religious greeting taken to mean good morning brother in this context*] ... where are you from? ... When did you come and which *pind* [village] are you from?... You must come over to our house and meet other people from our district and region back home [Punjab]...” as you know, *beta*

[beta is a term of endearment meaning son/daughter but here used to show love and warm towards the interviewer, who is not a relative of Mrs B1]

Mrs B1.... we Sikhs have family ties with people from most *pinds*[villages] in the district and when we first came here we treated every Sikh Punjabi we met as a member of our family ...

This open invitation to anyone who looked like they may have originated from Punjab, India is a feature not just of this family and of their lives in the 1960-70s but of all the other first generation Sikh families we have interviewed. Mrs B1 now aged 81, continued to recall the early days of settling into a life in Middleton:

Mrs B1: the thing I most remember is that I spent a lot of time making *roti* [food] for everyone because we had so many people coming to stay with us...There were many relatives... my brother-in-laws... cousins... men we knew from our *pind* [village] and district [region] in Punjab...and because I was one of the first women who had come over from our *pind* [village] I treated them all like my family and I would have a

whole pile of *roti's* [chapatti's] to make every day ...it used to take me two hours to just make the *roti's* [chapatti's] and I had made dhal and vegetables beforehand but I enjoyed it...everyone was so grateful and we shared the things we had ...

The sharing extended not just to food but also housing, often there were 10-20 people sharing a terraced house and working in shifts in steel making factories and foundries in the Black Country sub-region of the Midlands, an area where steelmaking was highly concentrated at that time. As well as working in shifts they slept in shifts; one person sleeping in a bed whilst the other was at work and swapping over when he returned. These factories and foundries employed thousands of men as unskilled labours who later progressed to more skilled and better paid jobs but some, like Mr B1, left this type of work to set up their own small businesses, predominantly grocery shops in urban working class neighbourhoods.

Mr B1 had to pool his resources to buy the shop, using his own savings and money borrowed from relatives and friends. In addition to finding resources to run his business, he was financially supporting his extended family in Britain and back in Punjab by remitting money to support purchase of agricultural land by his father and brothers in his home village. On completing compulsory schooling, his elder son, Mr B21, left school to help his parents run the family business and a few years later his younger son, Mr B22, went away to university, returning after completing his degree to work in the family business. On returning from university and taking on his role in the business he said to his father and brother:

Mr B22: If you want me to work in the business you have to let me run it, in the way I want to...

As joint director, Mr B22 led the expansion of the family business and its growth into a multi-million-pound enterprise and a leading brand in the global Asian food market. His eldest daughter Mrs B3 gives an insight into the abilities and efforts of her dad when reflecting on her own success:

Interviewer 1: Do you see yourself as a successful person?

Mrs B3: That's an interesting question...I don't regard myself as being really successful yet...but my dad is...he's worked really hard and I remember when we were growing up he was always working...and my mum used to get us from school...because my dad's a business man and he's always working...but we've [the children] also all worked hard because although he could give us everything he taught us the value of money and we wanted to achieve things ourselves ...not just take what dad could give us...

Interviewer 2: now that's really interesting...

The interview with Mrs B3 was one of the co-interviews in our sample and both Dhillon and Thomas conducted the interview in Mrs B3's home. Family B have also invested in agricultural and urban land and property developments in Punjab, India and are an example of reverse flows of economic capital that non-resident Indian (NRI's) are typically engaged in. As this vignette shows the journey from being an Indian citizen to becoming a British one was certainly not an easy one but the transformations over the three generations for this family, like the others in our sample of entrepreneurs, have been enormous.

Family Vignette 2

Mr C1 [first generation of this family in Britain] came in 1963 on the voucher system and his family own a chain of food distribution warehouses located in the Midlands and in other parts of the UK. He is a widower and lives with his son and family in the Midlands but frequently travels to Punjab, India to look after his land and property there and to visit relatives and friends. His wife passed away ten years ago and throughout her life fully supported him in building up his business, working alongside him in the shop they started from, the expansion to a supermarket and the development to food distribution. As mentioned in Vignette 1 above, Mr C1 is one of the NRIs (non-resident Indians) who have invested in land and property in Punjab and as an Indian academic commented to Dhillon on one of her recent visits to Punjab ‘the NRI pound keeps the economy in Jalandhar pumped...so the impact of the recession is lessened for those living in the State of Punjab’ (Field notes, May 2016). Mr C1 owns apartments in Jalandhar as well as land in his home village and goes to Punjab at least once a year. He has four sons, who are all entrepreneurs with substantial wealth and all currently running businesses in food distribution, though the family have set up and run other businesses on route to their current positions. Mr C1’s grandchildren are at school or university.

Mr C1 is a very articulate man, aged 75 and in his interview, which took place in his enormous home, provided very detailed accounts of his life, experience in growing the business and his personal perspective on what had contributed to the success of his family in business. Thus, this vignette uses a large amount of verbatim interview data, and also illustrates the method of flexible and open style of interviewing that was used to probe for rich data and a deeper understanding of the conditions that contributed to socio-economic success. Mr C1’s current home is located on a private road in an exclusive housing area in the Midlands, where the average house price exceeds £1 million. However, despite his family’s obvious success, he remains humble, and began with the following response:

Mr C1: in business, ... I would say to you ...I can say it’s our good luck...when I got four or five shops people started to say you are middle class but I reject that...I didn’t go that way ...when we were looking for girls [potential brides for arranged marriage] I wanted girls who came from working families...I was a teacher in India and my wife was uneducated...she was a *jatti* [tough woman]...very strong, very honest and healthy and our *bache* [children] were very healthy [strong and well-built] so we wanted girls ...who were prepared to work ...you know, some girls say I am educated, from well off family, I don’t want to work standing at a till and ... I got smart sons

Interviewer: *hanji* [yes]...you have four sons?

Mr C1: Yes, one was born in 1963...then the other a year later ...by the time I was 28 I had a full family ...four sons...my wife and I were tall and our children are all over 6 foot and they worked in the shops with me ...and their wives ...the girls [Mr C1’s daughter-in-laws] looked after the tills ...I gave them the responsibility of looking after their own till... all the family lived together...we bought a big house because there were my sons, their wives, my cousin who had come over from India as well as me and my wife ...

During the interview the son that Mr C1 lives with came home from work and I could see what he meant as Mr C2 was tall and well-built and came over to greet me and speak to his Dad before doing anything else; it was evident that he deeply respected his Dad. Mr C1's daughter-in-law, Mrs C2, had come home earlier to pick up the children from school and whilst I was talking to her father-in-law had been busy preparing tea and snacks for us, as is the norm in Sikh families wherever anyone comes to the house. I protested that it was not necessary but she said "Dad likes a drink about this time and it's no trouble". Mr C1 smiled and said he was very lucky to have such girls [as daughter-in-laws] as he invited me to take the tea and have something to eat. After bringing the tea and array of snacks through to us, Mrs C2 excused herself as she needed to prepare the evening meal for the family. After the interview with Mr C1, we had a conversation about the aims of the research and she was very interested in being involved. As Mr C1 and I had our tea and snacks, we continued to explore his work history and route into business:

Interviewer: So you were a teacher in India. What did you do before you started the business?

Mr C1: When I came here I worked in a factory making drain pipes in Northton [pseudonym for a town in the north of England] ...4000-5000 people worked there ...it was very big ...there were 6 buses to take the workers to the factory from centre of the town... it was very heavy work and few *gorai* [white people] worked there it was mainly *apne bande* [Sikhs from Punjab] ...there were some *shokarai* [troublesome white youngsters] who used to strike a lot and I was a hard worker ...

Interviewer: Did you work long hours?

Mr C1: I worked 6 days 16 hours and Sunday as well... there was plenty of overtime... and I did a lot for the community, I got involved with establishing the Gurdwara...we went on demonstrations to London to protest about issues which affected the Sikh community,

Interviewer: You were very busy then...

Mr C1: Yes, I was young, after three years I brought my wife over and, you know, we came with £3 in the pocket...and then I bought a big house in 1980 it cost £61,000...not many people [Sikh immigrants] bought a house that cost that much then ...

Interviewer: *hanji* [yes], so when did you start a business?

Mr C1: In 1978 we started business...wife came [from Punjab to Britain] ... we keep the family unity, four sons their wives. We bought a big supermarket youngest son was only 20 when we started I encouraged them whoever was fast...we jats try to make everyone equal but I have learned from teacher training...if you take any family in there will be one who is fast...in my family it was my youngest son he was fast ... he didn't want to go to university ... I know that if I forced them they wouldn't stay...if he can fly and the whole family can...I was open...you know,

Interviewer: When you say 'open' ...you mean...looks like you took... took more risk?

Mr C1: risk is there but you need the confidence ...confidence is needed...when I bought the shop I haven't money, only had £500 and within a year I paid off £10,000...I filled the shops with stock, all the family worked hard and money was coming in...then we bought a bigger house, it cost £142,000 and it was very nice...I lost my father in 1981 and brought my mother over [to live with us] ... I put all my relatives into business, I bought a shop for my brother and set up his son in business and my sister ...shops, restaurants, properties... we now have 25-30 properties, wholesale warehouses ...and bonded warehouses... I have a lot of property all over the country...I got lot of money every month

Interviewer: How much influence did your wife have in your family success?

Mr C1: She was obedient...she never became a dominant person... she treated me like God's image [*Rab da roop*], whatever, I said she accepted...she was hard worker... she used to feel[grateful]...she was from a poor family and we were *wairas* we had come from Pakistani ...I was born in a well to do family, [*khula kam*], there was no hardship ...we had a lot of money and I was the eldest and *laadla* [a bit spoilt]

Interviewer: So what would you say contributed most to your success?

Mr C1: My family ...I don't know everything, I am learning, we try... family unity is the most important... my sons are learning by doing and as they got involved their links increased ...we had one purse...I am honest...I believe in God...honesty is a big factor ...and *mehnat* [honest hard work]

As the above extracts from the interview data show Mr C1 is a fascinating individual and the entrepreneurship which has been largely driven by himself and one of his sons has resulted in huge transformations for them as a family. The family and family unity has been a key factor in their family trajectory and success in business; the foundation of the transformations they have experienced during the last 38 years, from starting their route into business in 1978 with one shop to becoming owners of a network of food distribution warehouses and investors in other businesses and properties. The vignette also alludes to the development of the religious and political voice of the Sikh community in British society and culture.

Family Vignette 3

Mr and Mrs D1[first generation of this family in Britain] are entrepreneurs in healthcare and unlike the other families of the first generation featured in this article are both highly qualified graduates. They own and run nursing homes and have set up many other businesses in the Midlands, both for themselves and for other members of their extended families. Mr D1 came to Britain when he was twelve, travelling from India by himself and being the only child, and the only Indian, on the American Airlines flight. He was met at the airport by his uncle [*chachaji* – father's younger brother] and lived with this uncle in the Midlands during his schooling. Mr D1 has been an entrepreneur since he was a student at university. He has three degrees from different British universities as he wanted to prove that he could achieve a British degree after experiencing the institutional racism and low expectations that pervaded the culture of the school he attended in an inner city multi-ethnic neighbourhood, like the first image shown in Figure 2 (see p....). Mrs D1 is a graduate with three degrees from India and has never worked in Britain but has fully supported his entrepreneurial ventures and devoted all her time to bringing up their children and running the family home. Mr and Mrs D1 have

three children, two are doctors and one is an actuary and they are very proud of the achievements of all three children. Mr and Mrs D1 live in an exclusive housing area in the Midlands where average house prices exceed £1 million and like the first generation of other Sikh families regularly visit Punjab, India.

Mr D1's ambition and entrepreneurial drive became evident very quickly as he responded to the opening questions in the interview, which took place in his family home. This is also the place where he runs his business from, so that by the time most people start work he has already done a mornings work. He then takes a break to go for a mid-morning run before resuming work. He has owned and run nursing homes since 1989 and the extract from the interview data reflects his reasons for taking a business rather than education route to socio-economic success:

Mr D1: I have not worked for anybody ...

Interviewer: Right...

Mr D1: when I qualified I did my BSc from [name of a British university] My Masters and PhD from [name of a different British university] ... I decided to look around to see what sort of businesses, can I get into.... I did not want to work for anybody, and to be honest, I have not worked for anybody, ever!

[laughs... the confidence in his voice is very clear but it is confidence and not arrogance as his tone of voice, demeanour and non-verbal communication exudes an air of humble respect for his own and his family's achievements in education and in business without being bullish about the capital they have accumulated]

Interviewer: Right!

Mr D1: I have been self-employed from the day one.

Interviewer: Right, so since you did your first degree?

Mr D1: No my last, my third degree [his PhD].

Interviewer: Right...

[During this part of our conversation a woman brought tea and snacks for us and I did not bother to protest as knew that Mr D1 would insist it was no trouble, as is customary in Sikh households. I guessed she was either an employee or a relative as Mrs D1 had taken one of their grandchildren out for a walk so that we could have a quiet space for the semi-structured interview. Mr and Mrs D1 look after their 4-year-old granddaughter during the day whilst their eldest daughter and her husband, who live nearby, are at work. As we had our tea, Mr D1 continued with his narrative]

Mr D1: I qualified but I never worked...and ...so I decided rather than I work for somebody, I'd rather look into a business I can get into...but to get into nursing homes I required a lot of funds...

Interviewer...umm...

Mr D1: I decided to get there I need to get the funds accumulated...so I decided to go into a hotel.... which I bought actually while I was doing my Masters, and I put a

cousin of mine in that hotel as a manager to run that place with me. Then I will come back in the evenings... and give him a hand.

Interviewer: Okay....

Mr D1: At the same time, I started to import from India...um... lampshades, and then I was doing import, I was running a hotel and I was doing my Masters. And I got married.

Interviewer: Wow you did a lot of things then in that year... well... in that period.

Mr D1: Yes, in that period... like I said, I set up, I bought a hotel, I set up an import business, I got married. And during that period we had our first child, then the second child when I was doing my PhD and ... we were still in student accommodation!
[laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah...so how did you find time to do all these different things at the same time as study?

Mr D1: I hardly slept! ...being young and obviously, you have the energy...and you obviously have certain focus in your life. You want to achieve certain goals and that's what kept me going. That was my drive.

Interviewer: Yes, so was your motivation that you didn't want to work for anybody else?

Mr D1: Exactly.

Interviewer: Is that the motivation that kept you going?

Mr D1: Yeah, I tell you where I got that from, I seen Asian people arriving from India...and ... during that period there were some good graduates from India, and they were given, well, jobs in factories which weren't to their capabilities if you like ...and even as a child of twelve years old, I realised that that is something I'm not going to be able to live with.

Interviewer: Right, yeah...

Mr D1: I thought I had the capability and the capacity to take my life further, rather than just be a factory worker and work for somebody else ...that gave me the incentive...and my family...my family drives me, I enjoy looking after my family... not just my wife and my children, I'm talking about further afield... my cousins and so forth.

This extract constitutes a small section of the 23 pages of the transcript of the interview with Mr D1, which lasted one hour and three minutes. It provides a mere glimpse of his trajectory and the transformations he has experienced as a child migrant, a student, a very successful entrepreneur and a British Sikh. Key to these transformations are aspiration, hard work and serendipity - a chance meeting and the backing of a bank manager who Mr D1 described as an 'English gentlemen' - who trusted him and believed in his aspirational ambitions and capabilities, something which his secondary school clearly failed to spot. In Mr D1's trajectory both education and entrepreneurship were equally important as he wanted to prove

to himself that he was capable of obtaining a degree from a British university; actually achieving three in continuous succession (BSc, MSc, PhD) from leading Russell group universities. However, he chose not to use his degrees for employment and with the unreserved support of his wife, Mrs D1, began his entrepreneurial ventures beginning with the hotel he started as a student to a portfolio of post offices and the development of his nursing homes business.

Mr D1 attributes his success in business to the support of his family, in particular his wife, who said 'if that is what you want to do [start a business] I will back you'. This was at a time when he was a student with two young children and they were living in university accommodation. Like other Sikh families, Mr D1's family have taken an active part in establishing Sikh religion and culture in the communities where they have settled. Mr D1 is clean-shaven, [not a turban-wearing Sikh] but his Dad who came to Britain five years after Mr D1 wore a turban throughout his life, never had his *Kesh* (hair) cut and took the lead in establishing a Gurdwara in the town where they lived in the 1970s. Mr D1 no longer lives in that town but visits the Gurdwara and relatives who live in the neighbourhood regularly. When he passes the buildings which were his secondary school, he remembers his school days, but without bitterness, as his schooling experience was common to that of other Sikh and Asian children at that time, since it was assumed that lack of proficiency in the English language was a sign of low intelligence. By challenging the stereotypes of his teachers and careers advisor through his own determination and aspirational ambitions, drawing on the support of family, community and serendipity, Mr D1 shows what a boy who had come from Punjab to the Midlands by himself to live with his *chachaji's* (uncle's) family can achieve.

Family Vignette 4

Mr and Mrs E1 [first generation of this family in Britain] are 'a minority within a minority' in that they own and run a farm in the Midlands. As mentioned earlier in this article, in the section sub-headed 'selection of families for vignettes' (p.13), agricultural farming is a minority occupation for Sikhs in Britain and this is one of the reasons for focusing on this family's trajectory as a vignette. Mr E1's family are not only 'the only Sikhs in the village' as is a common experience for Sikh grocery shop owners in English villages but also often the only Sikhs at farming conventions and other gatherings of the farming community in Britain. Mr E1 is now a turban-wearing Sikh so thus easily identifiable in symbolic terms on the farm, in the village and the wider community and in his own words is 'now the gaffa' [the boss] but as the data from interviews will illustrate this has not been an easy journey. Mr E1 came to Britain in 1966 with '£3 in his pocket', bought 2.3 acres of land in 1996 and by 2012 had expanded the farm to 300 acres. He continues to expand and improve his farming business with one of his sons as commercial director, (Mr E22), other members of his extended family and his employees, who are from different ethnic backgrounds. As Mr E1 showed us around his farm after the semi-structured interview which was audio recorded and took place in the main office on the farm, it was evident that he was tremendously proud of his own and his family's achievements and his demeanour conveyed the confidence and persona of the landed gentry of the Punjab, who like to 'walk around their fields [*keeth*]' to get satisfaction from their wealth. The transformation from being a migrant in 1966 with hardly any financial resources to becoming the proud owner of an awarding winning farm in Britain and feeling like a 'Lord of the Manor' was clearly discernible in the walk and talk of Mr E1, as he waved

to employees on tractors, stopped to show us plants and discussed innovative farming techniques being trialled at the farm.

Mr and Mrs E1 have four children (three sons, Mr E21, Mr E22 and Mr E23) and one daughter who is the youngest sibling, (Mrs E24). Mr E22 is the commercial director of the farming business, Mr E21 and Mrs E24 are professionals who do not work in the family business. Mr E23 has worked in the family farming business in the past but is now engaged in other entrepreneurial ventures in the Midlands. Mr and Mrs E1's grandchildren are at school and before coming to the farm each morning Mr E1 drops his grandchildren at school so that Mr and Mrs E22 can go straight to work. Mrs E1 still makes food [*roti/parathas*] every morning for Mr E1 to bring with him to the farm which he shared with us after the interview and tour of the farm, as well as giving us boxes of farm produce to bring home with us. We joked that this was part of the Sikh tradition of *langar* [sharing food you have with others] and Mr E1 commented that his wife [*bachari*] is 'very good and still makes *roti* [food] for him to bring to the farm', implying that second/third generation Sikh women may not follow this tradition.

At the beginning of the interview, Mr E1 spoke about his journey to the Midlands and his work in a foundry where, like other Sikh males of his generation, he worked long hours, did overtime including double shifts working 5 days and 3 nights in the same week. This is similar to the experiences of Mr C1, though in a different part of the country. In reflecting on his own trajectory and that of other Sikhs Mr E1 identified some key characteristics which had contributed to his own success in business:

Interviewer: Why do you think Sikhs have been so successful?

Mr E1: ...I don't know about others but I can say we [Sikhs] are *amaandaar*...we are honest and support our family and we listen to our family. ...we never said no to our parents...if they said do this we did it...we know they worked hard and *apne bande* [our Sikh people] work at whatever they can get ...when I lost my job in the foundry...they closed all the foundries...there was a lot of talk about the fumes and so on in the 1980s... I thought I need to find work because going on social security [welfare benefits] was not something we could consider doing...

Interviewer: So, how did you try to find work...

Mr E1: I managed to find a job picking vegetables...and from that I managed to start to take gangs of pickers to the farms...

Interviewer: Did you live near farms?

Mr E1: No... we lived in.... [name of a city] ...and travelled to the farms to pick vegetables every day... sometimes we slept in the fields to save the time ...we could earn more money by working longer and saving the travel time ... then one day the owner of the farm came to talk to me... asked me to become his partner ...he said he could see I was a strong worker as I was picking twice as much as the others...and so he helped me and I became a gang master...

[gang masters are people who provide labour to fresh produce companies and Mr E and his family became involved in the legal licensing of gang masters, as well as other social enterprises which were largely led by Mr E23]

Mr E1: I remember driving down the motorway ...I used to do my *path* [prayers] all the way and then when we got to the farms wake up anyone in the van ready for work...

The theme of hard work is also mentioned by his son, Mr E22, who has been commercial director of the farming business since 2009:

Mr E22: My Mum and Dad used to work from 4 o'clock in the morning and get home at 12 o'clock the next day sort of thing. Well no, 10 o'clock at night. I literally never, ever saw them but the jobs they did are not like the jobs we do now....

Interviewer: They worked on farms?

Mr E22: They worked on farms...and did jobs like ...my Mum did sewing, and my Dad did ...they did all sorts...my Mum was never a supervisor or manager but she was the best worker...and helped us build all this... [points from his office at the farm to the fields where produce is growing] and now I want to build my foundations in it to be a success...

Interviewer: Do you see yourself as a successful person?

Mr E22: not yet...I have a plan where...it will come, not yet but in a bit...since joining the farm I'm seeing a lot more, I can see that you can achieve it.

Before joining the family farming business as commercial director, Mr B22 had worked as a cleaner in a supermarket for a short time, and before that in a pack house [the place where fresh fruit and vegetables are packaged for sale in supermarkets], working his way up from checkout assistant to production manager. In addition to the theme of hard work as a factor in the success of Sikhs Mr B22 also identified their ability to integrate. He said:

Mr E22: We [Sikhs] are adaptable, we integrate...Sikh's are like chameleons that adapt to situations...they are humble...they work hard...they have respect for a person and when you respect another person they give you respect back...

His younger brother, Mr E23, also commented on living in multi-ethnic communities:

Mr E23: ... because of my Dad's business surrounding labour [gang master work], we've always been around people from different communities, predominately Asian communities but also Middle-Eastern communities, Yemenis...but where we lived in the 70s I was the only Asian in my whole school year and there was one Pakistani lad in my brother's class.... all the others were White....

Mr E1 and his family lived in an inner city multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the 1960s and early 1970s but then moved to a more affluent largely White neighbourhood as they accrued financial capital through their entrepreneurial ventures. Mr E23 and his siblings thus moved schools and experienced racism but also learned to challenge it:

Mr E 23: but again when Dad started doing the farming we just carried on ploughing away not giving a toss that they [White people] don't like us...and now it's well ...like if I'm in a room full of White people I feel ... proud of what I am... well I'll say a Sikh does not feel under threat...but the problem for me is I don't know what I am, because sometimes I'm a Sikh, sometimes I'm British.

Mr E23 is an entrepreneur who whilst being involved in business and agricultural projects, has also branched out into various social and educational directions. He sees himself as a Sikh but also as a member of a wider community and his 'story' differs from others in his family and the other families. We co-interviewed him in his office above the children's nursery he runs in an inner city neighbourhood, resembling the one depicted in the first image in Figure 2 (see p....) after the children had finished for the day, though a few were in aftercare waiting to be collected by their parents after work. This is the type of neighbourhood where Mr E23 lived as a young boy before moving to a largely White area in the suburbs of the same city. Mr and Mrs E23 now live in a rural location in a house which resembles the one depicted in the third image in Figure 2 (p....) and are the only Sikh family in the village. Mr E23 is passionate about providing outstanding education for children from all ethnic backgrounds and though the nursery is a private business it is driven by a social conscience.

Mr E23: I know I can make money for people the problem I've got is, I find it difficult to make money in ways I think unethical...I think in our community we celebrate that a guy is rich, he is loaded, whereas I don't. That just doesn't appeal to me...I don't think children shouldn't have the best education 'cause they were born here [in a poor neighbourhood] so I want to do something about that...but I'm not stupid enough to think it's going to be my career ...I'm probably a disrupter...I see something is not right and with my big head and big mouth want to find a way of fixing it...

Interviewer: Hmm. So what to you is success then?

Mr E23: Success to me personally is family. Yeah? My own family.

After the interview which lasted one hour and twelve minutes, Mr E23 gave us a tour of the children's nursery and spoke with pride about his ambitions for the children and his passion for social entrepreneurship. He has received public recognition for his work by being awarded a prestigious national entrepreneurship award and is planning to open another larger children's nursery in the same neighbourhood.

Conclusion

To conclude, we draw together the key influences on the family trajectories of the participants in our research. As we stated at the beginning of the article, we are reporting on work in progress and bringing together insider and outsider lenses to analyse the conditions and characteristics that have contributed to the socio-economic success of Sikh families in Britain over three generations. The data presented here show similarities in the experiences and transitions of Sikhs from migrants to settlers and citizens and diversity in relation to their individual and family backgrounds, perspectives, personalities and trajectories as entrepreneurs in different sectors of the economy. During the two years of ethnographic fieldwork we have undertaken so far, Thomas, as cultural outsider has commented 'I can't believe how different they [our interviewees] all are.' This is not a comment which comes from cultural naivety or stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups but a genuine expression of how diverse our purposive sample of interviewees has turned out to be in the data they have shared with us in interviews, informal conversations and at family and social events. Dhillon, as cultural insider has also been surprised at discovering aspects of individual and

group experiences which were unknown to her and have given her deeper insights into the transformations that have shaped the trajectories of individuals, families and the Sikh community in the Midlands and more widely. Although an experienced social researcher, she has not previously focussed on researching the Sikh diaspora. Thus, the analysis and interpretations of the socio-economic success of British Sikh entrepreneurs offered in this article is one that has been systematically researched and reflexively developed by co-researchers with insider and outsider positionings.

The methodology we have pioneered has enabled us to reach deep and rich insights into the trajectories and transformations that three generations of British Sikhs have experienced over the last fifty years and to record the contributions of the first generation of aunts and uncles [*term of respect used in Indian culture for elders who are not necessarily relatives*] who came with '£3 in their pocket' and laid the foundations for socio-economic success and social mobility. Their hard work is evident in the data presented in the four family vignettes of entrepreneurship in business and the family trajectories of Family A and Family B, which show the two main routes: education and entrepreneurship in business, which British Sikhs have taken to achieve socio-economic success and social mobility over the generations of the families we have studied. Our purposive sample shows the growth in economic capital over the generations, as the financial capital generated through long hours of hard labour in low skilled occupations in factories and foundries endured by first generation migrants, such as Mr C1 and Mr E1, were invested in small businesses which provided the anchor for further capital accumulation through combined family effort. The preparedness of first generation males to take any job, even when as Mr D1 puts it 'jobs in factories weren't to their capabilities' illustrates a generic characteristic of Sikhs, which is well captured by Gairola:

The secret behind their universal success, is their willingness to do any job with utmost dedication and pride. A Sardar [a turban-wearing Sikh] will drive a truck or set up a roadside garage or a dhaba [a very basic eating place], put a fruit juice stall, take up small time carpentry, ... but he will never beg on the streets. (Gairola 2010)

Gairola's observations reflect the situation in India as there is reference to *dhaba's* and fruit juice stalls, which are typically found in Punjab and other parts of India, and serve good quality food but do not require the financial capital needed to set up a restaurant. However, it captures an essence of Sikh pride and moral values in that Sikh families believe in honest hard work [*kirat karna*] as a means to economic and social progress and not begging, an option that may be taken by others. Personally in my travels around the world, I (Dhillon) have not come across a Sikh beggar, at least not one that is symbolically easily identifiable as a Sikh; a *Sardar* [a turban wearing Sikh]. The symbolic capital associated with wearing a turban appears to be a strong mediating influence on the behaviour of Sikh males, though it is not possible to generalise this on the basis of the research we have undertaken. However, another indicator from our data which supports this interpretation is the view of Mr E1, who lost his job when the foundry he worked in closed in the 1980s : 'I thought I need to find work as going on social security [welfare benefits] was not something we could consider doing' (see family vignette 4). He went on to find work picking vegetables and now is the 'gaffa' [boss] of an awarding winning farm in the Midlands.

In addition to the characteristic of honest hard work [*kirat karna*] which is evident in the trajectories and transformations of all four family vignettes, the support and loyalty of the

immediate family, the extended family and the wider Sikh community is paramount and strongly represented in the data. For Mr D1, it was the unreserved support of his wife that gave him the assurance to start his entrepreneurial ventures when he was a student with no financial capital and living in student accommodation with his wife and two young children. He asked his cousin to run the hotel as a manager and came back in the evenings to 'give him a hand' (see vignette 3). This was Mr D1's first entrepreneurial venture and a means for building up the funds he needed to start a nursing homes business. His primary reason for asking his cousin to run the business was trust; since it was a cash business it was important to have a manager he could trust. Trust and reciprocity is a strong theme in all the socio-economic transformations over the generations and in the trajectories of all the families in our sample. All the first generation families in our sample have supported members of their extended family and other families from their *pinds* [villages] and more generally from Punjab in establishing themselves in Britain; by helping them to find work, buy houses, set up and grow businesses in different sectors of the economy and invest in social, cultural and religious aspects of life in Britain and Punjab, India.

Although our study did not set out to explore religious aspects of the Sikh community we found that our research participants mentioned fundamental principles of Sikhism as influencing factors in their family trajectories. Mr C1 and Mr E1's father were pivotal in establishing the first Gurdwaras, in the towns where they lived at the time and Mrs H's husband brought the first *Guru Granth Sahib Ji* to the UK when he came here by ship in 1954. This was an aspect of Mrs H's family that I (Dhillon) did not know until we co-interviewed her for this study, though I have known Mrs H, as *auntyji* for a number of years. Thus, for us as researchers this has been a fascinating journey which has uncovered broad trends in the family trajectories of British Sikh families and provided rich insights into the diversity of pathways that Sikh entrepreneurs have taken to achieve the socio-economic success, social mobility and transformations exemplified in the family vignettes presented in this article. Over the three generations the range of occupations in which Sikhs are employed has increased, as illustrated in Table 2 and mentioned in the family vignettes, and families have become more geographically distributed, for example Mr E1's eldest daughter lives nearby, his son lives in Singapore and his youngest daughter lives in London. This pattern is common to the trajectories of other families in our study and also correlates with data gathered by authors of *The British Sikh Report* (2014; 2016).

Finally, we leave readers with a summary of the key influences on the families we have studied. The entrepreneurial spirit that brought them as economic migrants to Britain in the 1960s has driven their socio-economic success and social mobility during the last fifty years as exemplified in the family vignettes of Sikh entrepreneurs in different sectors of the British economy.

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