

**Recruitment of South Asian research participants and the challenges of ethnic matching: age,  
gender and migration history**

**Priya Khambhaita, Rosalind Willis, Pathik Pathak and Maria Evandrou**

**March 2017**

Centre for Research on Ageing, Faculty of Social, Human and Mathematical Sciences,  
University of Southampton, UK.

CRA Discussion Paper no. 1701

CRA DP/1701

## **Centre for Research on Ageing**

The Centre for Research on Ageing (CRA) is an international and multi-disciplinary research centre examining key issues in ageing and the lifecourse, informing policy and debate at the national and local level. Through high quality research and postgraduate training, the Centre contributes to a better understanding of the experience of ageing amongst different societies, which will in turn place us in a better position to improve the quality of life of older people. In addition to research, the Centre contributes to capacity building of future academics and professionals by teaching different postgraduate programmes in Gerontology. The Centre is directed by Prof. Maria Evandrou.

### **Authors:**

Priya Khambhaita, Rosalind Willis, Pathik Pathak and Maria Evandrou

© Priya Khambhaita, Rosalind Willis, Pathik Pathak and Maria Evandrou March 2017

All rights reserved. Short sections of the text, not to exceed two paragraphs, may be quoted without explicit permission provided that full credit, including © notice, is given to the source.

### **Centre for Research on Ageing Enquiries:**

Administrator, Tel +44 (0)23 8059 5367, Fax +44 (0)23 8059 8649,

Email: [ageing@soton.ac.uk](mailto:ageing@soton.ac.uk) Web: [www.soton.ac.uk/ageingcentre](http://www.soton.ac.uk/ageingcentre)

Contact Address: Centre for Research on Ageing, Faculty of Social Human and Mathematical Sciences, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the participants who volunteered their time and shared their experiences with us. We would also like to thank all the members of the advisory panel for their guidance, and the social services staff and members of the community who helped us to carry out this project.

## **Funding**

This paper presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Social Care Research (SSCR). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the SSCR, the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.

## **Abstract**

A researcher's position as an outsider and/or insider in relation to the population under study is important and can affect the research relationship. This paper is based on an NIHR SSCR funded research project on attitudes to social care services. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with members of the Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) ethnic groups in the Southampton, Portsmouth and Hampshire areas. Barriers to recruiting older South Asian participants into this study were encountered. Researchers and their participants are often matched by ethnicity during recruitment and data collection in social research on the basis that researchers are able to empathise with their participants in a manner that others cannot (Bhopal 2001). As we found, however, even when shared ethnic identity exists in the research process, other differences can have significant impacts not only on communication, but also the interpretation of data. There is a need to be cautious of the risks associated with matching and to be wary of making implicit assumptions on the basis of aspects of partially shared identities (Bhopal 2010). With this project, even where researchers were matched to potential interviewees with regards to ethnicity and language, rapport with participants was still affected by differences in gender, migration, age and status. The authors argue that care must be taken when thinking about which characteristics should be prioritised when matching a researcher to potential participants. Where matching by gender and age are not possible, the advice of gatekeepers becomes ever more important. Matching should be understood on a scale (Grewal and Ritchie 2006). This scale could be understood as intersectional where the point on that scale depends on particular facets of identity that become less or more important in specific settings, and with specific research topics. Finally, recognising these challenges contributed to the analysis of issues that young, female carers and social care practitioners might have in facilitating access to, and provision of, high quality care.

## Introduction

This paper contains reflections from a two-year NIHR SSCR funded project. More specifically, it is a discussion of challenges to ethnic matching as experienced by the authors. The study in question was a case study exploration of attitudes towards adult social care services in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. Data from national user experience surveys have shown that people from minority ethnic groups tend not to be as satisfied with social care services as the white population. The survey results do not however reveal why this is the case (The NHS Information Centre, Social Care, 2010).

In terms of Southampton, the second largest ethnic group is the South Asian (SA) (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) group. The South Asian population residing in Southampton originates mainly from the Indian states of Gujarat and Punjab whereas in Portsmouth, more South Asian residents originate from Bangladesh. Many residents can speak English, but not all have English reading skills. This group makes up 6.9% of the city's population according to 2011 Census data (ONS, 2012). With regards to Southampton's wards, five of them contain 10% or more minority ethnic residents (Mead & Gamblin, 2008). Minority ethnic groups in the predominantly 'White' South of England have been under-researched.

The main research question that was being addressed was: What are the reasons why minority ethnic groups report low satisfaction with social care services? Qualitative in-depth interviews were carried out with South Asian service users and carers. South Asian participants were of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. We also interviewed White British (WB) participants as an important comparator group and service providers (e.g. social workers, care staff, community workers) as part of this project. However, this latter group of participants will not be discussed in this paper.

Racial and ethnic identity can and does affect the research process (Bhopal 2001). The lead author was recruited to the project specifically for both her relevant language skills and experience in successfully recruiting South Asians to research studies. However, project staff encountered challenges to researcher-participant ethnic matching in the recruitment of older South-Asian research participants. This paper is a discussion of methodological reflections, and contributes to academic knowledge and extends current literature in five important ways:

- 1) Much of the debate on ethnic matching has been focussed on the collection/generation of data and not on recruitment (Grewal and Ritchie 2006). We address this important gap in existing evidence.
- 2) We draw on experiences of recruiting ethnic minorities in Hampshire where little ethnicity research has been conducted previously relative to that conducted in other UK areas such as London, Birmingham and Manchester.
- 3) We highlight that there is still work to be done in including ethnic minorities in research. We reiterate the need to continue to reflect on, discuss and debate methods issues around matching and recruitment and that theories such as intersectionality can help us to analyse these issues.
- 4) We share strategies for overcoming barriers that could be useful for other researchers conducting follow-on work in the future.

5) We demonstrate that experiencing barriers can enhance our understanding of the research topic being studied and to reiterate Acker's (2000) point that we must be creative with insider/outsider tensions in research.

The paper begins with a discussion of intersectionality theory, 'insider/outsider' status and an overview of ethnic matching with reference to wider literature. This is followed by an explanation of recruitment activities and then a discussion of the research methods and analysis. Challenges to ethnic matching and some strategies for overcoming barriers are then covered. This is followed by a discussion of how these barriers added to the understanding of dissatisfaction with social care services with the final section of the paper drawing conclusions from the key findings.

#### Intersectionality theory, Insiders/Outsiders and Ethnic matching literature

The positioning of the researcher as an outsider and/or insider can affect the research relationship, and this can be related to ethnic and race identities. Intersectionality is an important theoretical term relevant to understanding insider/outsider status as it encapsulates the multi-layered and crosscutting nature of oppression, disparity and disadvantage (Nash, 2008). Crenshaw (1989) is one of the earliest scholars to use the term 'intersectionality'. Crenshaw (1989) describes it from the perspective of a woman from a minority group who, for example, has to try to navigate not just one but multiple forms of oppression to do with different aspects of her identity, including both racism and sexism. The effects of race, ethnicity, class and gender should not be understood as isolated. Instead they can be recognised as operating simultaneously and as intersecting. Social class can have a bearing on people from all ethnic groups both in terms of their experiences and outcomes. Rigid, hard and fast ethnic divisions are unsatisfactory not only when considering ethnic minority groups but also when examining the White ethnic groups (Phoenix and Husain 2007).

It is because intersectionality emphasises these unclear and shifting lines around ethnic divisions that it is an important theory that can be applied to exploring blurred distinctions around insider/outsider status. Being an insider of the group or sub-group that you are studying can be a useful and privileged position from which to engage in the research process. Identity and experience can create a shared empathy and a shared understanding between the respondent and the researcher in which trust and rapport can encourage respondents to open up and discuss their personal experiences (Bhopal 2010). An outsider is seen as someone who cannot draw on the shared learned behaviours or folkways, linguistic anachronisms, and cultural traditions that naturally emerge in and influence the relationship between an insider researcher and insider study participants (Kanuha 2000).

Bhopal (2010) is an Asian female researcher, and she discusses the status of the researcher whilst studying Asian women and gypsy travellers. Gender and shared experience played an important role in her research with Asian women. Bhopal recounts feeling that she was an insider, she was an Asian woman who had mutual experience and knowledge of particular aspects of cultural identity and that the shared identity enabled her to speak to her participants about common stories in relation to the racism they had experienced, for example. Basit's (1997) paper resonates with Bhopal's (2010) findings. Basit (1997) highlights that intrinsic knowledge of a subject can bring great insights into the culture of the interviewees being studied.

The discussion of the practice of ethnic matching follows on from these outsider/insider tensions. In terms of recruiting participants, these factors such as ethnicity, gender and age can all combine and work together to make a researcher seem more accessible, more like someone who is trying to do some positive work for their 'own' community and help to diminish the possibility of seeming like an 'outsider'. Furthermore, employing a member of research staff who could speak a community language relevant to the group under study could help not only with translation but also in building trust (Stirland et al. 2011).

A lack of culturally similar staff and culturally appropriate tools has been demonstrated in previous studies as having a negative impact on involving South Asian patients in clinical trials research (Hussain-Gambles et al. 2004). There are logistical difficulties in identifying ethnically similar researchers, given the variety of languages and religions of the South Asian populations. Some South Asian respondents feel that, since most clinical trial investigators are white, it follows logically that it would be easier for researcher investigators to recruit members of their own ethnic group, even if translation and interpreting services were on offer (Hussain-Gambles et al. 2004).

Discussions of insider/outsider status have now moved on from earlier understandings. It was assumed in earlier debates that the researcher was predominately either an insider or an outsider and that each status carried with it certain advantages and disadvantages. More recent discussions have uncovered the complexity inherent in either status. This complexity can be related to the core of intersectionality theory where the effects of different aspects of identity need to be recognised as multi-faceted, as operating simultaneously and as intersecting. Race, class and gender are important aspects of identity. They are historically- proven consistent relations of dominance that affect nearly all aspects of life. They therefore hold a central status in intersectional analyses (McCall 2005). There are multiple and conflicting effects of race, gender and other identity factors such as socio-economics, and an intersectional analysis is important for dissecting these (McCall 2005).

If we comprehend, in line with intersectionality, that identity is multi-layered, then it follows that there should be an acknowledgement that the boundaries between insider/outsider status in research are not all that clearly defined (Merriam et al. 2001). Lee and Kee considered themselves to be insiders when interviewing people from their own respective cultures (Merriam et al. 2001). However, they both discovered that factors like age, gender, social class and education rendered them less of an insider than they had originally anticipated (Merriam et al. 2001). It can be difficult to distinguish between the effects of, for example, gender and insider/outsider status (Horn 1997). One cannot assume that being an insider to a cultural group necessarily means that the insider researcher has an intimate knowledge of the situated experiences of all members of the group (Kanuha 2000).

What an insider perceives and comprehends will be different from (but just as valid as) an outsider's understanding (and vice versa). The views of both insider and outsider must be accepted as legitimate attempts to understand the nature of culture. Drawing from contemporary perspectives on insider/outsider status, it can be argued that in the course of a study, a researcher will experience times of being both an insider and outsider. However, these positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants (Merriam et al. 2001). Indeed, Acker argues that the insider/outsider dichotomy is a continuum with a number of dimensions, and that

researchers constantly move back and forth along a number of axes, depending upon time, location, participants and topic of study (Acker 2000).

### Recruitment

In this study, a service user (SU) of social care services was defined as someone receiving assistance or support with their activities of daily living (ADLs) and that help they were using was being provided by a formal service pre-arranged by the public sector. This support can encompass daily visits from a domiciliary care worker, delivered cooked meals, a placement at a day centre or respite care, home adaptations, and long-term residential care, for example. A carer (CR) was defined as someone who provides help and support to a partner, adult child, relative or friend who may be using these services. A target of interviewing both South Asian and White British participants was set.

In this study ethnic matching is discussed as the matching of project staff and prospective participants by ethnicity. The lead author is a British born-Indian whose family are twice migrants from India to East Africa and then to the UK. Matching in this study refers not only to other similar East African migrants but also those directly from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan as well. The matching then is in relation to South Asian ethnicity rather than specifically East African Indian. Ethnic matching can help overcome language barriers and in the case of this study the languages in question are Gujarati and Hindi.

One of the identified potential reasons from previous literature for the lower levels of satisfaction with social care is that there may be a mistrust of ethnocentric, Western-oriented services (Atkin, 1992). In light of this it was considered important to match the culture and language of at least one of the researchers (namely PK) with some of the participants. There were two phases - recruitment and then at a later stage, the interviews. The researcher doing the recruitment was not necessarily the same as the interviewer.

The importance of overcoming participant's concerns about coping with English or with the aid of an interpreter has also been highlighted by other researchers (MacNeill et al 2013). It has been argued that 'ethnic matching' between researchers and participants can produce more accurate details in the research process and an insider view will encourage 'ethnic sensitivity' which individuals who are not members of the communities will be less able to bring to the research.

A White Irish interviewer (RW) was also involved in the recruitment and interviewing of both SA and WB participants as this facilitated a useful discussion of cross-ethnic working. Some studies show that interviewing across ethnicity, gender, or other lines can in some cases be more productive than matching the backgrounds of researchers and the researched. This is on the assumption that respondents must explain insider information to an outsider more purposively (Kanuha 2000).

A range of strategies were used for recruitment. These included meetings with gatekeepers from adult social services, carers' groups, community action groups and faith groups. The types of gatekeepers included Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Managers and Community Development leaders. Invitation letters with stamped addressed envelopes were posted by service providers to clients/carers. Informal presentations were also made to community groups such as pensioners' forums, Black and Minority Ethnic health groups, and disability forums. Group members also had the opportunity to ask any questions about the project or what their participation would involve. Day

services, a friendship group and day centres were also attended. Information stands at temples, churches and a mosque were also a good way to circulate information about the project to members of the public. Electronic flyers were posted to Facebook interest groups. Flyers were also translated into some of the south Asian languages (Gujarati, Hindi and Bengali). People who had agreed to participate were also asked to suggest others that they thought might be interested in taking part by way of a snowballing strategy.

We encountered difficulties in recruiting people despite our experience with researching 'hard-to-reach' groups. These difficulties related to ethnic matching are documented here. However, the sample we achieved was large for a qualitative study, and we did succeed in recruiting people from all of the target South Asian groups: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi; and Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Christian religious groups. Furthermore, the interviews yielded a wealth of data, covered a range of issues, and the similarities in themes identified across transcripts indicate that we reached theoretical saturation. Therefore, these data are valuable and contribute to the knowledge in this area.

In total 82 people were interviewed for the study. Forty-six of these were SUs and 36 were CRs. 39 of these were from South Asian ethnic groups and 43 were from White British groups. A number of faiths were represented within the service user and informal carer participants. The faiths that were represented include: Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Evangelical and Methodist. The SU group included SUs using services fully- or partly-funded by Adult Social Services in the local authorities making up the project geographical area. The SU group also included people who had a need for services but were not currently using them. The types of services provided by or funded through the local authority that SU's used included day centres, domiciliary care, meals-on-wheels or respite care. Some informal CRs attended carers' groups, some of which were culturally specific services including Asian or BME day centres and carers' groups.

#### Overview of Interview methods

Stirland et al. (2011) explored strategies being employed by researchers attempting to recruit minority ethnic participants into research. They found that involving the community groups that were being studied early on in the research process also helped to cultivate a sense of ownership of the project. One researcher reported employing community leaders as research personnel, whilst others described communicating through a link person who acted as an ambassador between the community and investigators. In keeping with this strategy highlighted by Stirland et al. (2011), a project advisory group was established at the beginning of the project with representatives including community leaders as well as informal carers and service users, local authority staff and academics. The advisory group had opportunities to feed into all stages of the research project. They were asked for advice on all aspects of the research process throughout the different stages of the project. The group had a key role throughout the life-course of the project and the study design, instruments and recruitment progress were regularly discussed at meetings. Their advice was sought on how to involve other community leaders in the research.

Two interviews were conducted as pilot interviews (carer and service user) in order to test the instruments. The translations of questions were also discussed and reviewed with the advisory group. Incentives are often used in qualitative research. The original design for this research project did not include the use of incentives. However, incentives were discussed after the first six months of the

project due to relatively low recruitment rates, and the advisory group were asked to give their guidance on how to improve it. Many gatekeepers and community leaders recommended that we should offer an incentive. They had previously acted as gatekeepers for other research projects and had found incentives to be useful. Members of the advisory group also recommended that incentives be offered. In keeping with the participants that took part in the study exploring the views of South Asian people with asthma conducted by Rooney et al. (2011), many participants that took part in this project also felt that the offer of incentives would have a positive impact on study recruitment. This also relates to MacNeill et al.'s (2013) findings on South Asian participants that the recruitment and retention of research subjects is strongly driven by the perceived likelihood of personal benefit. Ultimately, we took a decision to offer incentives by way of a shopping voucher during the latter stages of recruitment.

Interviews took place at a venue and time that was convenient for participants. Interviews were between 30 and 90 minutes in duration. Participants were interviewed only once, with the exception of two South Asian service users who requested second interviews. One of the participants wanted to be re-interviewed in Hindi as the first interview was conducted in English and she felt she had not expressed herself fully despite being a fluent English speaker. The second participant wanted to update us on her changed circumstances. She had originally been interviewed in Gujarati but was happy to do the second interview in English.

It is an important requirement in research to gain informed consent. It is imperative that researchers qualify commitments to confidentiality prior to obtaining consent and ensure that these are fully understood (Vickers, Craig and Atkin 2012). The original research plan included an option for written informed consent only. Once the recruitment activity was under way, project researchers were losing potential participants, particularly elders from the Asian communities, who did not wish to sign a form and give written consent. This barrier was then discussed amongst members of the research team and the advisory group. The next step was to revisit the original SCREC ethical agreement and request that verbal consent also be offered as an option to participants, and this amendment was approved. This was an important amendment as this option was taken up by many participants who would otherwise not have offered their time or allowed us to hear their stories. The experience that the research team has had confirms the points made by Culley et al. (2007) and Johnson et al. (2009) and Symonds et al (2012). They highlight that particular issues may arise when securing informed consent whilst conducting research with ethnic minority groups; mainly around verbal commitments being potentially more meaningful than commitments that are written. This was the case with some of the Asian elders in the sample. Amending our strategy and offering the option to give verbal consent improved our recruitment rate.

### Challenges of matching and strategies for overcoming barriers

#### *Age*

The response from an initial informal presentation to an Asian carers' cafe about the project was disappointing. There was a distinct lack of interest in participating. The advice from staff facilitating this group was for me (the lead author) to keep attending and volunteer by serving tea and food. This was also helpful as it positioned me as a younger member of their own community that understands paying respect to older people as elders are often served first in a South Asian household at the dinner table. Serving them directly was an act that shifted the higher status

position back to the participants as this is a respect that they have earned gradually over time. The advice to volunteer was good as it allowed time for better understanding of the dynamics of the group. Furthermore, these activities are similar to visits made by Kee to Korean restaurants and shops frequently visited by potential interviewees in a bid to position herself as an insider (Merriam et al. 2001).

In terms of ethnic matching, I was an 'insider', a British Indian, who shared experiences and knowledge of particular aspects of cultural identity, but on the other hand was also an 'outsider' as a woman who was not a migrant and much younger (particularly important in a culture where older age can command respect and is associated with wisdom). We also found, similar to Kee, that in a culture that places greater value on age and being male, being a young woman created other interesting dynamics. Kee's older interviewees highlighted on several occasions that only people in their own (older) age group could understand their views and that young people were completely unaware (Merriam et al. 2001). In line with an intersectional analysis, it is possible then that if interaction with social care services as a service user and carer becomes more important in older age, age as an identifying factor is more pertinent than other identifying factors. In this context, an older male link researcher of any ethnic background may seem less threatening and appear to have the potential for a greater shared understanding to English-speaking Asian elders on account of particular aspects of his identity: being semi-/retired, a service user and older.

Our experience resonates with the experiences that are discussed by Lloyd et al (2008). A British Asian project researcher reported difficulties recruiting face-to-face, and the authors argue that it may have been due to her youth and dress style. These difficulties were faced in spite of the fact that the researcher had always lived in Birmingham and had a comprehensive knowledge of the target community in that particular area. She also had to try various strategies in order to encourage greater participation. She attempted to reverse roles and reposition herself in a way that respondents would not feel over powered by a younger woman (Lloyd et al 2008).

### *Gender*

I (PK) also encountered barriers to recruiting older South Asian men. The following is an extract taken from field notes. It relates to a trip made to an area in Southampton where there are a number of Asian grocery shops and a Sikh temple in close proximity. The aim was to enter these shops with a view to posting flyers (both in English and translated) in the shop windows or on the shop counter for customers to take. This seemed a good way to disseminate knowledge of the research project into the community. What was happening at the shops was similar to the experience at the Asian carers group mentioned above:

*I then moved on to the two international food stores opposite me. Both are next to each other. They sell a variety of world foods. They have a number of flyers on their door and their windows already advertising various things. I explained what the project was about to the men behind the counter at both shops. I was slightly concerned due to their negative body language as all staff in both shops, of which there were about 10 staff in each shop, were men. They begrudgingly agreed for the flyer to go up on the door and said that I would have to stick it on the door myself. This links back to my experience at the Asian carers' cafe where the men were all segregated in one area and it did not seem appropriate to approach them on my own as it was evident that they had*

*voluntarily sat away from the female attendees and this was further exacerbated by an older Asian male volunteer advising me not to serve them tea and lunch and to let him do it instead.*

Even when shared ethnic identity exists in the research process, other differences, in this case gender and age, can have a significant impact on recruitment. There is a need to be cautious of the risks associated with matching.

The Asian carer's cafe referred to in the above extract also serves informally as an Asian elders group. It is made up of Punjabi (Sikh and Hindu) and Gujarati (Hindu) men and women. Men were in the minority in this group. The fact that men were a minority only compounded the idea that it did not seem appropriate to approach them on my own. Volunteering activities were undertaken to enhance recruitment success at an Asian carers cafe. Suggestions were made by the only male volunteer (himself an Asian elder) that it would be more appropriate if he served the men in attendance of the group, further exacerbating these barriers. This limited opportunities for direct interaction with these men. The subsequent success of the repeat visits and volunteering to break down these barriers and gain trust were limited.

However, the end result was that these follow-up visits were still useful for generating further interest in the project. One male participant and two female participants were recruited to the project from that particular group. Alongside visits and volunteering activities, incentives in the form of £10 vouchers were also offered where they had not been offered previously. This as well as the repeat visits and volunteering made the prospect of participation in the project more attractive to potential participants.

#### *Migration history*

Approaches need to be tailored to specific minority populations, with researchers taking consideration of their distinctive characteristics where possible (Symonds et al. 2012). Ethnic identities are complex and fluid and the groups that were the focus of this study are heterogeneous (Salway et al. 2009). Diversity can in some cases be greater within ethnic groups than between them. There can be differences in terms of traditions of community involvement, Religious/sect affiliation and practice, migration history and age profile (newly-retired vs. older retirees). It became apparent over the course of recruitment activities and interviewing that many of the attendees were direct migrants from India. Indeed a number had been in the UK for less than 10 years. PK was often asked which part of India her parents originated from and it was explained that although the family originated from Gujarat, they had been living outside of India for 4 generations. This was met with indifference and often limited the opportunity for rapport to enable further discussion around participation in the study. This is in contrast to those elders from Kenya and Uganda who had recognised the surname from the project flyers and shared stories of having once met PK's own (now deceased) family elders in Africa whilst visiting the family-run business.

Direct migrants from India are known to, at their point of arrival in the UK, have the disadvantages of not being as familiar with British institutions and customs as East African Asians that spoke fluent English and had strong links with the British system even before they came to the UK (Bhachu 1985). PK is British born and is from a family that migrated to the UK over 40 years ago. She is a part of the East African Indian community in the UK, specifically a community that have been settled in South London for over four decades. Although the diversity between direct and twice migrants was

understood based upon previous research experience, these specific barriers to recruitment for a British-born Asian researcher, and the extent to which these barriers were pronounced, were unanticipated.

### *Bangladeshi community*

Gatekeepers were integral to bridging the gap between researchers and potential participants. They along with community leaders were able to put us in direct contact with participants. They also informed us of community events and new networks that would help us recruit for our project. In many cases the gatekeepers were themselves from the South Asian communities of interest and were aware of potential participants through their personal friend and family networks.

However, the Bangladeshi group was a particularly hard to reach group in our study. It was found that even where Bangladeshi gatekeepers were able and willing to inform potential participants in their networks about the research, not one participant from this community was able to be recruited through this method. This was not a problem that was found amongst the Pakistani, Indian or White British groups. Ultimately, only one Bangladeshi participant was recruited. She was a young, British-born member of the community and was recruited through a recruitment stall held at a community event. These research findings are resonant with barriers to recruiting from the Bangladeshi group highlighted by other authors in the UK and the US (for example see Shelton and Rianon 2004).

Potential recommendations for future research with South Asian communities include targeting young, British-born members of the community to reach elders. The barriers to recruitment may not be so pronounced amongst younger members of the community. It is possible that it is these young people that might prove the vital link between researchers and further participants. This is not just through snowballing but through the established trust they have with their families and other service users/carers. Potential sites for engaging the younger generations within these communities for this might be schools, colleges, universities and youth clubs.

### *Status*

It was perceived by the lead author that it was a particular barrier for male participants to be greeted by young women that were more qualified than them. Education status was a distancing factor. The research team had academic titles ('Dr.') as per the written recruitment materials. They were in most cases more qualified than the people they were trying to recruit. This is not dissimilar to the experiences encountered by Youngwha in Merriam et al. (2001). In line with the rigid hierarchy inherent in Korean culture, Youngwha's status as a doctoral student studying in the US was seen as more prestigious than that of her respondents.

Some first generation migrant Indian women have reported that they were not as supported in their further education aspirations than men in their family. This led to the men being in positions to take up opportunities for progression in education and the workplace while women were not (Khambhaita 2013).

### Discussion

The barriers faced in this study were similar to that of Mirza (1995). Mirza drew on her own experience as a South Asian woman researching the educational experiences of South Asian women

and girls, questioning a number of approaches to resolving the ethical and practical dilemmas of research, including feminist and anti-racist approaches. She expected to be able to connect with British South Asian young women due to being a woman from a similar group (Mirza 1995). However, in line with intersectionality theory, gender is only one aspect of a researcher, and her relationship with the researched is influenced by many additional factors (Horn 1997). Intersectional theory highlights that identity is not one-dimensional. With Mirza (1995), other aspects of her identity other than race including her independent and non-married status, her residence in a different area of England and her appearance in terms of her relatively short hair were all more significant and they were seen as marking her out as an outsider. The girls and women she initially approached for the purposes of recruitment were cautious of her. She sensed that her presence was an unspoken criticism of these women's lives and social worlds. Similarly, status served as a limitation to recruitment in this study.

The experience of undertaking this project and encountering barriers to recruitment has reinforced the need by authors like Bhopal (2001) to question the value of an ethnic matching model and to guard against making implicit assumptions based on shared identities. Furthermore, the need to question and challenge the relationship between our own cultural expectations and the narratives that we share with people of different backgrounds to ourselves has been reiterated.

Grewal and Ritchie (2006) argue that a second generation Indian born in the UK may be less likely to have a shared history or cultural values than a first generation interviewer with the same religious and regional background as a participant. They will however perhaps have more of a shared history and cultural values than a White interviewer. The authors therefore argue that matching should be understood on a scale from not matched to perfect match. There is always a point at which an insider will be an outsider and vice versa (Grewal and Ritchie 2006). This scale could be understood as intersectional where the point on that scale is dependent on particular aspects of identity that become less or more important in specific settings and/or with participants of particular profiles.

We hope that in this paper we have contributed to unearthing some of the complexities of insider/outsider status. The fieldwork experiences shared and discussed here in this paper have revealed a number of insider/outsider positionalities and complex dynamics in relation to some key identifying factors, some of which often receive relatively little attention like education and migrant status.

Despite it being important to acknowledge the importance of heterogeneity and hence ample opportunity for being rendered an outsider in research with the Asian communities, the within-Asian group differences in this case did not eliminate the experience of between-group differences (see McLean and Campbell 2003). Broad similarities exist between the Asian groups in terms of food, culture and family and there was still great value in being from the South Asian group. There were also a number of advantages to ethnic and language matching. For example, gatekeepers encouraged the use of incentives with these participants in particular. Providing incentives can compensate for power differentials between researchers and the researched. Incentives need to be culturally appropriate (Thompson 1996). Insider knowledge through ethnic matching contributed to understanding that, where possible, images on voucher cards should be as neutral as possible. This knowledge was applied to select supermarket vouchers that had images of dietary products that were in keeping with the religious and cultural sensitivities of the communities.

Furthermore, having the relevant language skills was very important as recruitment presentations, events and materials were delivered in South Asian languages as well as in English. Many interviewees were interviewed in their mother tongue even when they had a working knowledge of English. For example, even though participants were only interviewed once, two South Asian service users requested a second interview. One of these participants wanted to be re-interviewed in Hindi, despite being very fluent in English. It was important that the language skill was available as otherwise this participant's full account would have been unheard.

It is important to remember that when working within limited research resources, it is not possible to employ staff from every religious/language/gender/age group that is being sampled. Ethnicity and language were the two key factors that could be matched with the participants. It is important to take care when thinking about which identity characteristics must be prioritised when matching. This decision is likely to be driven by the research questions.

In terms of recommendations for future studies, it may be important to evaluate the allocation of time for recruitment when thinking about research design and project timelines. This is to allow researchers to become even more familiar to potential participants through volunteering/community involvement in order to build that trust between researchers and potential participants. For example, when presenting results as part of dissemination to the particular Asian group at which the lead author volunteered, the group members all clapped (including those that did not participate) to convey their acknowledgment of our appreciation when it was reiterated that without their help the project would have been unsuccessful.

This is in line with recommendations made by Rooney et al. (2011), that fostering and maintaining trusting relationships with minority ethnic communities is crucial for the long-term recruitment and retention of these groups into clinical studies. Additional time can also be an important resource when trying to gain a more in-depth understanding of advice given by gatekeepers. Where matching by gender and age are not possible, focussing on the nuances of appropriate behaviour and the advice of gatekeepers become ever more important.

#### Recruitment challenges and understanding dissatisfaction

In line with Acker's understanding of insider/outsider tensions, it is important to try and be creative with the insider/outsider tension (Acker 2000). The authors of this paper concur with this advice. It is important to stop and study these barriers not only from the point of view that they are problematic in achieving the research you set out to do, but from a number of different viewpoints. An example of being creative with the insider/outsider tension is to look at it as a positive as it has helped in gaining a richer understanding of what is being addressed in the research study (Acker 2000).

Coming up against these barriers in recruitment was useful for understanding dissatisfaction amongst elderly Asian male service-users and gave an insight into considering issues that might be faced by young, female carers and social care practitioners. This links back to difficulties in facilitating the provision of high quality care particularly if for example male care workers might be preferred but cannot be found. It is well known that the care industry is highly female orientated. As of September 2013, 82% of jobs in the adult social services were filled by female workers compared to the 18 per cent of jobs filled by males (Health and Social Care Information Centre 2014). Facing

barriers in recruiting older Asian men assisted us in the interpretation of the answers to our research questions.

Coming up against these barriers gave us a first-hand experience that illuminated our understanding of participants' discussions around gender-specific services. Indeed, this was a theme that emerged in our analysis of the interview data. A preference for gender-specific services was highlighted by both SA and WB Service Users and Carers. It should be stated, however, that other concerns were more pronounced for both groups in terms of satisfaction with social care services. Cross-cutting issues for both SA and WB Service Users and Carers. included: continuity of care, timing (e.g. of domiciliary care staff visits), staff interpersonal skills, expectations of social care and understanding of the social care system. The main concerns specific to SA SUs and CRs were: language needs, appropriate food, expectations of family care, preference for culturally specific services, racism, and discrimination.

### Conclusion

The research team as a whole has ample experience in recruiting from and researching Asian participants, both from an insider and outsider perspective. This reiterates the point made by Merriam et al. (2001) in that there is no substitute for building up experience in the field where positionality issues are personally encountered in at times unanticipated and often subtle ways.

As much of the debate on ethnic matching has so far been focussed on the collection of data and not on recruitment (Grewal and Ritchie 2006), in this paper we have addressed this important gap and added to the growing literature on recruitment. In drawing on our experiences of recruiting ethnic minorities in Hampshire where little ethnicity research has been conducted previously, we have deliberated on important issues including the initial engagement of participants, incentives and concerns around consent.

We highlighted that there is still work to be done in including ethnic minorities in research. There is increasing international concern about the persistent under-representation of ethnic minority participants in research (Stirland et al. 2011). We reiterate the need to continue to reflect on, discuss and debate methods issues around matching and recruitment. We have shared strategies for overcoming barriers that could be useful for other researchers conducting follow-on work in the future. These include engaging younger members of these groups for whom traditional barriers may not be as profound to generate interest in the research and access older participants.

Finally, the authors have demonstrated that barriers can enhance our understanding of the research topic being studied and to reiterate Acker's (2000) point that we must be creative with insider/outsider tensions in research. More specifically, facing these barriers in recruitment was a valuable experience to draw upon in understanding dissatisfaction amongst elderly Asian male service-users and gave an insight into considering issues that might be faced by young female carers and social care practitioners. This insight was an important resource for making recommendations to social care professionals that could have a positive impact on the practical, grass-roots level in a way that would improve social care practice.

### References

- Acker, S. (2000), "In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research", *Resources for Feminist Research*, 28(1 & 2), 189-208.
- Atkin, K. (1992). Similarities and differences between informal carers. In Twigg, J. (Ed.), *Carers: Research and Practice*. London: HMSO.
- Basit, T.N. (1997), "I Want More Freedom, but not too Much: British Muslim Girls and the Dynamism of Family Values", *Gender and Education*, 9, 425-39.
- Bhachu, P. (1985), *Twice Migrants: East African Sikh Settlers in Britain*, New York: Tavistock.
- Bhopal, K. (2010), "Gender, identity and experience: researching marginalised groups", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33(1), 188–195.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989), *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Culley, L., Hudson, N. and Rapport, F. (2007), "Using focus groups with minority ethnic communities: researching infertility in British South Asian communities", *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(1), 102–112.
- Grewal, I. and Ritchie, J. (2006), "Ethnic and language matching of the researcher and the research group during design, fieldwork and analysis", *Health and Social Research in Multi-ethnic Societies*, 65–78.
- Health and Social Care Information Centre (Adult Social Care Statistics team) (2014), *Personal Social Services: Staff of Social Services Departments, England*, Health and Social Care Information Centre.
- Horn, R. (1997), "Not 'one of the boys': Women researching the police", *Journal of Gender Studies*, 6(3), 297-308.
- Hussain-Gambles, M., Leese, B., Atkin, K., Brown, J., Mason, S. and Tovey, P. (2004), "Involving South Asian patients in clinical trials", *Health Technology Assessment*, 8(42).
- Johnson, C.E., Ali, S.A. and Shipp, MP-L. (2009). "Building community-based participatory research partnerships with a Somali refugee community", *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 37(6), 230–236.
- Kanuha, V. K. (2000), "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider", *Social Work*, 45(5), 439-447.
- Khambhaita, P. (2013), "Indian mothers' perceptions of their roles in their daughters' university course choices", *British Educational Research Journal*, DOI: 10.1002/berj.3124.
- Lloyd, C.E., Johnson, M.R.D., Mughal, S., Sturt, J.A., Collins, G.S., Roy, T., Bibi, R., Barnett, A.H. (2008), "Securing recruitment and obtaining informed consent in minority ethnic groups in the UK, *BMC Health Services Research*, 8:68 doi:10.1186/1472-6963-8-68.

- MacNeill, V., Nwokoro, C., Griffiths, C., Grigg, J., Seale, C. (2013), "Recruiting ethnic minority participants to a clinical trial: a qualitative study", *British Medical Journal Open*, 3:e002750, doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-002750.
- Mason, J. (2002), *Qualitative Researching*, (2nd ed.) London: Sage.
- Mead, V. and Gamblin, D. (2008), *Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007*. Southampton: Southampton City Council.
- Merriam, S.B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., Muhamad, M. (2001), "Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures", *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405-416.
- McCall, L. (2005), "The complexity of intersectionality", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 3(3), 1771-1800.
- McLean, C.A. and Campbell, C.M. (2003), "Locating Research Informants in a Multi-ethnic Community: Ethnic Identities, Social Networks and Recruitment Methods", *Ethnicity & Health*, 8(1), 41-61.
- Mirza, M. (1995), 'Some ethical dilemmas in fieldwork: feminist and anti-racist methodologies' in Griffiths, M. and Troyna, B. (eds.) *Antiracism, Culture and Social Justice*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.
- Nash, J. (2008), Re-thinking intersectionality, *Feminist Review*, 89(1), 1–15.
- ONS (2012), *2011 Census: Key Statistics for local authorities in England and Wales*. Titchfield, Hants: Office for National Statistics.
- Phoenix, A. and Husain, F. (2007), *Parenting and ethnicity*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Rooney, L.K., Bhopal, R., Halani, L., Levy, M.L., Partridge, M.R., Netuveli, G., Car, J., Griffiths, C., Atkinson, J., Lindsay, G. and Sheikh, A. (2011), "Promoting recruitment of minority ethnic groups into research: qualitative study exploring the views of South Asian people with asthma", *Journal of Public Health*, 33(4), 604–615.
- Salway, S., Allmark, P., Barley, R., Higginbottom, G., Gerrish, K. and Ellison, G.T.H. (2009), "Researching ethnic inequalities", *Social Research Update*, 58.
- Shelton, A. J., and Rianon, N. J. (2004), "Recruiting Participants from a Community of Bangladeshi Immigrants for a Study of Spousal Abuse: An Appropriate Cultural Approach", *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(3), 369-380.
- Stirland, L., Halani, L., Raj, B., Netuveli, G., Partridge, M., Car, J., Griffiths, C., Levy, M.L., Sheikh, A. (2011), "Recruitment of South Asians into asthma research: qualitative study of UK and US researchers", *Primary Care Respiratory Journal*; 20(3), 282-290. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4104/pcrj.2011.00032>.
- Symonds, R. P., Lord, K., Mitchell, A. J., Raghavan, D. (2012), "Recruitment of ethnic minorities into cancer clinical trials: experience from the front lines", *British Journal of Cancer* (2012) 107, 1017–1021. doi:10.1038/bjc.2012.240

The NHS Information Centre, Social Care (2010). *Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England - 2009-10*. London: The Health and Social Care Information Centre.

Thompson, S. (1996), "Paying respondents and informants", *Social Research Update*, 14.

Vickers, T., Craig, G., Atkin, K. (2012), "Research with black and minority ethnic people using social care services", *NIHR SSCR Methods Review*, 11.