First-generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain

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Summary

Nigerian families are overrepresented in child protection interventions in Greater London, drawing attention to cultural differences in childrearing practices. This research investigates the experiences of first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents regarding their management of childrearing issues, which are contextualised within a British child welfare polity and normative cultural milieu. The tension between Nigerian parents' childrearing worldviews and those attributed as 'British' constitutes the central theme of this thesis.

The study employs Bhaskar's (1998) critical realism as an epistemological and methodological paradigm, complemented by the use of Honneth's (1995) recognition theory as the principal substantive framework from which the findings are discussed. Qualitative data were collected from Nigerian parents living in Greater London through an internet blog, semi-structured interviews with 25 individuals, and two focus groups with four participants each. Template analysis was used to code and identify themes within the data.

The project gives rise to a series of findings. The first is that most participants in the study wished to uphold certain childrearing practices from their backgrounds. Biographical accounts of their own upbringing in Nigeria revealed a picture of caregiving for children occurring within communal and co-dependent family relationships, which emphasised expectations of obedience and respectful behaviour from children. Participants' accounts of the physical chastisement of children present this discipline measure as both *reasonable* and *not-so-reasonable*. The problematic status of the physical chastisement of children in a British context is the focus of the second key finding of the study. Participants communicated a collective view that Nigerian parents were commonly understood within British society as harsh and controlling, a view attributed to social workers in particular, and other child safeguarding professionals (teachers, child protection police, health professionals) and traditional media producers in general. The defence or disavowal of physical chastisement appears to have become the focus both of immigrant identity practices and the host country's conditions of belonging and inclusion.

A third finding was that parents were fearful in their dealings with child safeguarding professionals. Such fears were identified as linked to prior immigration experiences, xenophobia/racism within public discourses and activities, as well as ineffectual social work practices. Participants communicated the view that their values, knowledge, and experiences were not given proper consideration during child safeguarding interactions/interventions and that the challenges posed to the parent-child relationship by immigration were not acknowledged. Social workers and associated professionals were perceived as practicing in ways that could be described as not 'culturally competent' (Bernard and Gupta, 2008, p.476). Participants experienced social workers as overly prescriptive and threatening. They viewed contact with social services with intense suspicion. A fourth finding was the respect expressed by participants for the British government's efforts to uphold the rights of children. An invitation to participants to share their strategies for managing tensions between Nigerian and British parenting values provided insights to how active/passive influences contribute to everyday strategies of parenting in a context of immigration.

Drawing on recognition theory, the thesis offers a way of understanding these findings that recognises and *makes sense* of the dignity, resilience, fears, and aspirations conveyed by the research participants. The thesis argues for an approach that capitalises on shared values and acknowledges the strengths of Nigerian immigrants' parenting styles while promoting acceptable alternatives to practices that might have attracted child intervention. Recognition theory is offered to social work practice as a starting point for a strengths based approach to integration and wellbeing, suggesting that socio-political participation in the British child welfare polity would lead to an improvement in the confidence and wellbeing of these parents and their children. This conclusion has implications for British social work professionals and other authorities involved in child welfare policy and practice.

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To my extraordinary husband Nnadozie Okpokiri, you are simultaneously the *wind in my sails* and my *anchor in troubled waters*. To my daughter Nnenna Okpokiri, you are my beautiful and bright star. To my son Makanna Okpokiri, for the miracle you are. To my mother Mrs Love Igwe-Chinwo, in tender loving memory (Nov 1951-Aug 2015), who foresaw the completion of this thesis at a time when I found it difficult to imagine.

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Finally, my note-to-self: 'He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness'' (*Holy Bible,* 2 Cor. 12:9).

Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic groups
DoH	Department of Health
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (now Department for Education, DfE)
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council, UK
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus group discussion
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHS	British National Health Service
ONS	Organisation for National Statistics
SSPTW	US Social Security Administration's Social Security programs Throughout the World
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Educational Fund
UNO	United Nations Organisation (Same as UN)
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For the past twelve years, in my work as a child safeguarding social worker as well as other roles in the social care sector in London, I observed that Nigerian families seemed over-represented in the child protection referrals to social services across the London boroughs. Subsequently, I read literature in which I noted the problematic ways that sub-Saharan (black) African immigrant parents are depicted in the British media, public spaces, and child welfare polity (Gray, 2005: Bernard and Gupta, 2008). *Child protection* is a core 'social care function' whereby social services through social workers are legally required to intervene where children may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (Driscoll, 2009, p.334). *Child safeguarding* broadens the scope to include 'promoting the welfare of all children…', which makes it 'the responsibility of all professionals working with children' including child protection police officers (Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT)), teachers, nurses/doctors and other health and care professionals (Driscoll, 2009, p.334, citing Parton, 2006). The over-representation of Nigerians in child protection referrals would seem to indicate problematic differences in childrearing norms and practices between the parents and the host society. Yet, I noticed significant similarities in the legal frameworks of child rights of England and those of Nigeria; indicating that, legally at least, there should not be so many conflicts.

I have constantly wondered about what exactly 'render[s] [Nigerian] parents sometimes dangerously visible to apparatuses of the state' (Maier and Coleman, 2011, p. 450). I became concerned with understanding how their parent-child relationships were being shaped by distinct historical, socio-economic, and legal influences. I realised that there seemed to be some nuanced differences in the policies, values and norms of both countries that might be impacting individual first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents' childrearing practices. By norms/normative childrearing practices, I am referring to practices, values, and rules of socialisation that are generally accepted by a community such that they become binding to those who subscribe to them; laws

are usually developed from such normative practices (Gray, 2003). It is from this angle that my interest in the parenting experiences and values of Nigerian immigrants developed, with an emphasis on how normative childrearing practices create tension between them and their host society. While this research is not a comparative study of Nigerian and British child welfare systems, it problematizes the apparent disconnection between Nigerian childrearing practices and the British metropole's. This disconnection appears to be a factor in the high number of Nigerian children and families within British social services' realm.

With regards to cultural knowledges, some scholars (Trevithick, 2012; Kovach, 2015) emphasise the importance of involving researchers with relevant personal experiences of certain social phenomena in order to benefit from their perceptions of the problems they experience. My exposure to nearly every facet of this topic has provided me with a solid foundation upon which to carry out this research. I was raised in Nigeria. I am also a naturalised British citizen and have recently become a first-generation immigrant parent. I am therefore an *insider* researcher twice over, as I am both a Nigerian immigrant parent and a British social worker. These identities give me acute insights, but also introduce unique complications into my researcher role, as discussed in Chapter Three.

In Chapter One, the first section describes the focus of the study. The sections that follow provide the context, first through a presentation of the Nigerian locale and populations and then by discussing relevant areas of child welfare laws/policies in Nigeria. There follows a brief overview of the substantive existing research literature that examines black African/Nigerian immigrant parents' connections to the British immigration system. These discussions set the context in which the core problem and research questions addressed by this thesis are set out. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

1.1 Focus

Within social work literature, there is a reasonable amount of writing on child welfare concerns about Sub-Saharan African families in Britain, although not specifically on Nigerian families. Some, including Williams and Soydan (2005) and Bernard and Gupta (2008), are academic publications. However, others like *Africa Unite against Child Abuse* (AFRUCA, 2012) are NGO texts (supported by policy-makers) of the *self-help* variety aimed directly at Nigerian and other black African parents. Some of the literature, particularly, the non-research based publications provide a less than nuanced analysis of the normative values that influence the parents' childrearing practices, and those of the host country, or a critical contrast between both. However, such literature are no less prominent within policy-makers' purview than the academic ones.

Following the tradition set by prevailing public discourse on black African parent-child relationships, my original perspective at the inception of this research derived from a somewhat critical stance towards the parenting norms and practices of Nigerian parents in England. My initial position was based on the assumption that these parents experienced difficulties in parenting and with child safeguarding professionals in England because of their poor understanding of, and lack of compliance with, English child welfare policies and laws, though not excluding other constraints like racism and exclusion. The perception that Nigerian immigrants were somewhat deficient in parenting was reinforced during my practice as a children's safeguarding social worker for several London children and families' social services. Nigerian parents involved with those social services were likely to have raised child protection concerns relating to physical discipline and were often referred under the category of physical abuse of their children or wards (Barnard and Turner, 2011).

However, over the course of my research I became increasingly aware of the complexities of childrearing for Nigerian immigrant parents in England. My conceptualisation of 'the problem' and my thinking has deepened and accordingly evolved. I now consider that in order to gain a holistic understanding of Nigerian immigrants' experiences and practices relating to

child welfare, it is necessary to privilege the knowledge and experiences of those involved. Better insight into the problem can be attained not only by knowing more about Nigerian parenting values and practices but also by understanding how Nigerian parents comprehend and imagine that the norms, values and practices of *typical English childrearing* have guided English child protection policies and laws.

This study then uses these insights into Nigerian parenting cultures to problematise assumptions inherent in English public discourses and child protection interventions about Nigerian parenting. It critiques the perception by social workers of the moral superiority and universality of the host society's childrearing norms and practices (see Gray, 2005). It simultaneously considers how best to guide Nigerian immigrants to revisit aspects of their parenting that might be potentially harmful to their children, including physical chastisement. In order to explore how Nigerian immigrants make sense of English parenting policies, I draw on Honneth's (1995) articulation of the tensions that arise from misrecognition of the values of *others*. Honneth expressed unease that cultural minorities within Western countries (states in 'the global North' including 'Nordic Region, North America and Western Europe', according to Ebot (2014, p. 143-144)), do not attain respect and recognition for their values from their host communities. Smith (1999, p. 3) similarly shares her concerns about the unacknowledged 'loss of intellectual and cultural knowledges…' of marginalised groups. Nigerian immigrants' childrearing knowledges therefore are core to this research inquiry, and my aim is to investigate how and why such knowledges are misrecognised and to examine possible alternatives.

1.2 Country Context

This research was conducted with Nigerian parents who had migrated to and remained resident in Britain during the seven-month period of fieldwork for data collection, which ended in October 2013. The contexts therefore include discussions of Nigerian child welfare, as well as those pertinent in England where data were collected, with emphasis on how migration impacts Nigerian immigrant families in England. While 'United Kingdom' (UK) represents the four

countries of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the term will be used only in reference to laws/policies that are binding in all four countries. Otherwise, 'England/English' will be used more commonly to represent child welfare laws/policies and practices common to England and Wales, such as Children Act 1989, for instance. 'Child welfare polity' denotes the entire system within which child welfare laws and policies are enshrined into the political sphere of a state.

Nigeria is situated in West Africa, to the south of the Sahara desert. She is bordered by Benin Republic to the west, Chad and Cameroon to the east, Niger Republic to the north, and to the south, the Atlantic Ocean whose tributaries created the Niger Delta basin. Nigeria is the world's most populous black country, where 185 million persons were resident in 2015 (UN World Population Prospects, 2016). Lagos, the former capital, remains her most populous city, with about 17 million inhabitants. Nigeria is officially a federation with 36 states and the capital is Abjua, located in the north-central area.

Figure 1

Map of sub-Saharan Africa; Nigeria located in West Africa.

Ethnic groups in Nigeria number up to 250, although similarities between them allow the sub-groups to be grouped loosely into about six major ethno-geographic clusters. The Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri constitute two clusters in the northwest and northeast; the Yoruba in the southwest; the Igbos make up the southeast; the 'south-south' (original Nigerian designation) is composed of Ijaw, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Efik and Ibibio; and the Nupe and Igala in the north-central regions (Udo, 1980; Ajayi, 2012). Ethnicity and locale are also linked with religion, such that peoples of the Hausa/Fulani regions in the north are predominantly Muslim, while the easterners, including Igbo, Ijaw, and Efik, are mainly Christian (Burns, 1972). Amongst the Yoruba in the southwest, and the

more centrally located Nupe and Igala peoples, both Islam and Christianity appear to coexist equally.

Nigeria obtains its name from a fusion of *Niger* and *area*, coined in 1914 by Flora Shaw, the secretary and wife of British colonial administrator Lord Lugard, who amalgamated the northern and southern British protectorates of the Niger River into one country (Falola, 2015). This inextricably links Nigeria's very existence to Britain. The earliest recorded Nigerian in Britain, in 1767, was a freed slave of alleged Igbo heritage known as Olaudah Equiano. He later became a prominent African voice of the abolitionist movement in Britain. After slavery was outlawed in 1807 for British subjects, a handful of Nigerians voluntarily arrived in Britain, mostly for education. Some were persons of humble backgrounds sponsored by the Christian missionaries while others were children of chiefs and other royalty who were sponsored by their wealthy, titled parents (Burns, 1972). Thus, while Nigerians' presence in the United Kingdom was, historically, linked to slavery, religion and education, imperialism and economic advantages from the trade in palm oil, rubber and groundnuts, and Shea butter, amongst others, accounted for the British presence in Nigeria. Nigerians continued to trickle into Britain until the 1970s when they began arriving in larger numbers for reasons including commerce. From the 1980s, immigration laws, discussed further in following sections, shaped the movement and migration of Nigerians to Britain.

Nigeria's history of entanglement with Great Britain began prior to the transatlantic slave trade (see Burns, 1972). British trading companies' quasi-government activities preceded Britain's claim to Nigeria as one of its colonies, which enabled British oil exploration in the early 1900s and subsequent exploitation in the late 1950s. Subsequently, Nigeria's adoption as an independent member of the British Commonwealth (now just called the 'Commonwealth') exposed Nigerians to British values over a long period of time (Ogundiran, 2005). Colonial and post-colonial British influence on formal education in Nigeria ranges from primary schools to universities, with the English language as the medium of study in formal education. Consequently, nearly all Nigerians have some acquaintance, directly or indirectly, with British

values, and those who have a university education (which is based directly on British university models) are even more steeped in it.

Official figures on the number of Nigerians resident in England are not usually reliable due to the likelihood of non-enumeration in censuses of some undocumented immigrants (BBC, 2015). However, records from the most recent census in 2011 show that less than two hundred thousand persons identify as 'Nigerian' in England (ONS, 2015). According to the BBC (2015), most of these Nigerians live in London's deprived inner city boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth and Southwark, with around three thousand living in Peckham (Southwark Borough). Thus, the majority of Nigerian immigrants are urban dwellers who live in communities where Nigerians and other black and ethnic minority peoples are significant in relation to white British people. Given the correlation established by many studies between immigrants' transnationalism, deprivation, and childrearing problems, this concentration is significant for the present research.

Child Welfare Laws and Policies in Nigeria

Central to understanding Nigerian immigrants' childrearing practices are the legal regulations and policies in place in their country of origin. According to the U.S. Social Security Administration's 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World' (*U.S. Social Security Administration*, 2015), Nigeria's modern welfare system has its origins in the introduction in 1961 of a National Provident Fund to provide for Old Age, Disability and 'Survivors'. It was only in 2009 that it was expanded to encompass old age benefits, sickness and maternity benefits, permanent disability benefits, temporary disability benefits, and work injury and unemployment benefits. However, these innovations remain the reserve of the working population alone, which places the Fund at a stage equivalent to the beginnings of the 20th century for the modern welfare system in Great Britain (Anyanwu, 2005; Komolafe, 2005). Nigerian immigrants may then experience 'culture shock', especially as it relates to welfare policies and law (Furlong and Wight, 2011).

Nigeria is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), most provisions of which were incorporated into the Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003 (the Act shares major similarities with the UN's Convention). In May 2015, Nigeria also explicitly banned female genital mutilation (FGM) under Article 6 of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. Consequently, Nigerians are, technically at least, bound by internationally recognised child welfare and protection principles, values and legislation. Differences arise, however, from degree and mode of implementation as well as the cultural milieu within which the Convention is being implemented. For example, as of 2014, the Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003 had been adopted by 26 of the 36 states in Nigeria (*ECPAT*, 2015). These discrepancies might account for why a small but nonetheless problematic number of states still practice FGM for example despite indications of a significant nationwide decline in the practice. Nigeria is also a signatory to many other United Nations treaties and protocols on the treatment of women and children (see Appendix I), which, technically at least, create considerable affinity in these issues between her and Britain.

In addition, the relevance of culture and value systems and their interface with child welfare laws and policies enable us to understand the childrearing practices of the Nigerian parent. While the term 'Nigerian' is not homogenous due to certain cultural and religious differences, including the application of Sharia Law in certain states in northern regions of the country, the childrearing value systems in Nigeria are largely common (ECPAT, 2015). Likewise, shared values across African countries are overtly visible in their adoption of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (1979) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), all of which work for securing the best interests of the child. More complex arguments however emerge in light of the fact that Nigeria has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, yet practices like early girl-child marriage, remain prevalent in certain areas of the country (Akpan, 2003; Lincove, 2009). As noted in the following section, Britain has also ratified these UN Conventions. Thus, overall, analyses of normative childrearing practices in Nigeria and Britain persistently reveal similar legal framework but conflicting paradigms of parenting, particularly in relation to women and the girl

child (Ekane, 2013). The analyses also lay bare disparities between laws/policies and practices within Nigeria, where common practices may contravene enshrined laws without retribution.

Legal and Policy Context Regarding Children's Welfare in Britain

The provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) have been incorporated into British law. The Convention is geared to ensure the welfare and basic human rights of children in the signatory countries. The main legislation upon which much of present-day child welfare and child protection practice in England is based in the Children Act 1989. This Act is based on several principles, such as the 'paramountcy principle' (s.1 (1)), which makes a child's welfare paramount over any other consideration during decision-making (including court cases) about the child's rearing; and the principle of parental responsibility, defined in Section 3 of the Act as 'the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property'. Section 47(1)(b) of the Act empowers the local authority in which the child lives 'to investigate… if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child… in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. 'Harm' is defined in the Act as:

> …any ill treatment whether physical or non-physical, sexual abuse, and any developmental impairment whether physical, emotional, intellectual, behavioural or social (section 31 (9)).

An amendment introduced through the Adoption and Children Act 2002 section 120 broadens the definition of 'harm' to include witnessing domestic violence.

The enactment of the Children Act 1989 did not necessarily mitigate tension between interventions in safeguarding children and the rights and responsibilities of parents (Hendrick, 2003). Tony Blair's New Labour government and subsequent administrations sought to create a balance 'between safeguarding and promoting welfare for children in need who are living with their families' (Department of Health [DoH], 2001, p. 46). Within this discourse, children's rights and parental responsibility were privileged over

parents' rights because no legislation explicitly protects parents' rights (Herring, 2008; Kosko, 2010; Lind, Keating and Bridgeman, 2013). Regarding groups like the participants in this research who are on the margins of British society with regards to race, ethnicity and population, parental rights and viewpoints are even less represented.

Nigerian Parents within Britain's Legal Context

Despite the country's long association with Britain, Nigerian immigrants soon find that their familiarity with British overseas influences and values has not prepared them for life in Britain, an experience shared with other post-colonial transnationals (Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk, 2015). Like other West African immigrants, as Coe (2014) observes, Nigerians have a lot to learn, as aside from the English language, much of British culture is alien to them. The Nigerian immigrant soon learns, often the hard way, that s/he has to adjust to a way of life in which the family structure, parenting patterns, social values, roles of authorities, and formal laws are quite different (McEachron and Bhatti, 2005). On the whole, the immigrant family is only partly prepared for the workings of British political and cultural institutions. While many similarities exist, the contradictions between Nigerian values, over which British values have been thinly overlaid, and the actual realities of British society, remain.

A Nigerian immigrant in Britain falls within the category identified by the United Nations as a 'long-term international migrant' and defined as 'a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence' (2016, paragraph 32-37). By British Home Office categorisation 'international immigrants' may be employment seekers, women or men joining their spouse or parents joining their children, students, or tourists (UKBA, 2012). Immigration rules present a major barrier to childrearing and are a source of tension for black and minority ethnic (BME) parents (Patel, 2000). Black African immigrant parents, women especially, with insecure residence status may find it difficult, if not impossible, to seek assistance from any of the health and social care services (including, for example, housing), as

such contact may lead to deportation (Mama, 2000). The existing research is situated within the larger context of the experiences of various non-white minorities whom the British government identifies collectively as BME. According to the government and other widely accepted definitions:

> 'Black' is a political term, denoting those who identify around a basis of skin colour distinction or who may face discrimination because of this or their culture: 'Black and minority ethnic' also acknowledges the diversity that exists within these communities, and includes a wider range of those who may not consider their identity to be 'Black,' but who nevertheless constitute a distinct ethnic group. (DoH, 2003, p. 7; National Treatment Agency / UCL, 2003, p. 16)

Bloch (2000) has pointed out that various immigration restrictions, such as 'No Recourse to Public Funds[1]' (UKBA, 2013, amended 2016), increased the isolation and marginalisation of non-white immigrants. This is partly because these restrictions pose insuperable barriers to obtaining services in connection with child welfare or when facing problems with child protection services (Bernard and Gupta, 2008). Patel (2000, p.173) strongly argued, with much justification and evidence, that the bulk of recent immigration and asylum legislation demonstrates 'racist assumptions' by their clear intent to limit non-EEA citizens' entrance into and residence within the UK. The Family Migration Immigration Rule that became enforceable in July 2012 appears to substantiate Patel's argument (see UKBA, 2012). Cohen (2003, p. 6) further maintains that the rules 'have ensured that virtually all non-contributory benefits [including housing and social services provisions] are tied to immigration status'. Even when immigrant families who are unable to receive public funds seek help, Anitha (2010) decries the fact that local authorities are not legally bound to provide it due to their immigrant status.

Yet conversely, local authorities are duty bound to remove children to 'a place of safety' (into care) if they are deemed to be at risk of significant harm (Children Act 1989, section 44(1)). Bosworth and Guild (2008) argue that although immigration restrictions are legal rules necessary to balance resources within a country, by refusing to provide services to certain categories of

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[1] 'No Recourse to Public Funds' is an immigration rule restricting immigrants from countries outside the EEA from accessing any services or financial support, such as income related

immigrant children, society is discriminating against them by placing less value on their right to receive state support within their families.

The New Labour government that came to power in 1997 had attempted to solve the problem of social exclusion of BMEs through the politics of multiculturalism. The term multiculturalism has multiple meanings, depending on application:

> There is first the simple descriptive meaning – a society that includes people of diverse cultural identities; then there is the policy adopted toward this – for example legislation on equality before the law; thirdly there is multiculturalism as an ideology, which they argue is better understood in terms of a 'vision for the nation' that in different ways for different people incorporates the reality of multiculturalism into an understanding of what constitutes the nation (Uberoi and Modood, 2013, p. 122).

Irrespective of choice of interpretation, Kriz and Krivenes (2010) observe that despite the attempts to address discriminatory values, practices and policies in health and social care in England, immigrant parents still struggle with discrimination in various aspects of the legal and socio-cultural systems. In the same vein, during his premiership, comments by former Prime Minister David Cameron indicate a lack of faith in multiculturalism (Kuenssberg, 2011). The current plethora of immigration reform policies, such as the Family Migration Immigration Rules and the Family Settlement Rules (UKBA, 2016) depict immigrants from non-EEA countries as undesirables whose entrance into Britain must be restricted. In the same vein, many of the arguments for the British exit from the EU (Brexit) were overtly racist and xenophobic (McKee and Galsworthy, 2016). UK immigration policies and discourses epitomise the socio-political, cultural and socio-economic challenges encountered by Nigerian immigrants in England.

Two further child protection laws also attempt to intervene in certain cultural practices of immigrant parents regarding their children. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 is one of the more far-reaching legislations in the UK, which was passed by the New Labour government of 1997-2010. The Act was updated to expand the reach of legislation that criminalises female circumcision

in the UK by also criminalising the performance of, or aiding the performance of, such operations abroad. This policy, Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, amended Multi-agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation, Serious Crime Act 2015 (HM Government, 2016), was extended from 1st April 2016 to teachers and other health and social care professionals.

The other child protection law that specifically targets immigrant cultural practice is the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007, which invests courts with the power to rescue people at risk of such marriage by issuing a Forced Marriage Protection Order, the breaching of which is a criminal offence, even though forcing someone into marriage itself is not proscribed by the Act. These legislations are for the safeguarding of girls and women. However, they can also be some of the avenues in which Nigerian parents may encounter difficulties as immigrants in England, and the intricacies involved in navigating them cannot be underestimated. These complexities prompt my interest to explicate how Nigerian immigrant parents experience not just the child welfare law/policies and the activities of the state's child safeguarding actors but also the ordinary childrearing norms, by asking the following questions.

1.3   Research Questions

I formulated the core research question by reaffirming the *problem* or *focus* of the study, as detailed in Chapter One, section 1.1. From the overarching question, relevant subsidiary questions were developed to 'find clear answers to the main research question' (Pryor, 2010, p. 165). As Honneth's recognition theory is the underpinning conceptual framework of this study, the questions were designed to underscore respect for the participants as competent co-producers of knowledge (Honneth, 2014). My aim was to give voice to the participants as experts regarding their own concerns, thereby affirming recognition of the uniqueness of their experiences and knowledge base (McDonald, Kidney and Patka, 2013). Furthermore, implicit in the framing of the research questions are concepts that embody the ontological foundations of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1998; 2016), the meta-theory underpinning the study.

As will be discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.1, the framing of the research questions is also guided by the grounding of the thesis in Bhaskar's critical realism, in my attempt to obtain participants' impressions of surface experiences as well as underlying systems.

Main Question

- What experiences do Nigerian immigrant parents have of how British child welfare professionals, public, and policymakers perceive their Nigerian childrearing values and practices?

Subsidiary Questions

1. What are Nigerian immigrant parents' understandings of the key factors that promote child wellbeing in Nigerian culture?

2. What norms do Nigerian immigrant parents perceive to be embedded in English parenting practices?

3. How well do Nigerian immigrant parents' own parenting norms and practices fit with predominant English parenting norms and practices?

4. What support structures and services do Nigerian immigrant parents think could improve the fit between English parenting practices and their own?

1.4   Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One has articulated the problem that is the focus of the research, providing a rationale for carrying out this study. This includes a discussion of my positionality and contextualisation of the study population, with regards to cultural, political, and legal permutations between the participants' birth and adoptive countries. Chapter Two is a literature review of published research in this area. It identifies the theoretical framework and themes that emerge from the literature, which partly serve as guidelines for the exploration of issues in the process of data collection. Chapter Three begins with an overview of the epistemological and ontological premises of the study. It then presents the research design and methods used to collect and analyse data, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations of the research.

The three chapters that follow present the study's findings. Chapter Four foregrounds participants' experiences of their own childhood and childrearing in Nigeria, where participants identified norms such as communal living, and respect for older people as important. Chapter Five examines the ways in which participants characterised and experienced childrearing in England. It shows how the participants understood English childrearing in relation to their own parenting background and explores more specifically tensions associated with normative English childrearing practices and professional interventions in parenting and broader child welfare. In Chapter Six, participants discussed their strategies for managing their children's welfare. These include participants' suggestions for how fellow Nigerian immigrant parents, child welfare professionals and policy makers could improve the childrearing experiences for Nigerian immigrants.

The findings are examined through the theoretical prism of recognition theory in Chapter Seven. It employs the concept of recognition to understand in particular Nigerian immigrant parents': ways of expressing love; the label of authoritarian parenting; values of respect and obedience; concerns around children's individualism; aspects of fear in the lives of Nigerian immigrant parents; and

how notions of participation support Nigerian immigrant parents' actualisation of recognition. Finally Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by summarising and reflecting on the findings and discussing their implications for policy and practice. It also explains the challenges and limitations of the study, and further research directions that emerge.

CHAPTER TWO

Intersection of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity in English Child Welfare

There is very little research literature directly focusing on Nigerian immigrant parents and their child welfare experiences in Britain. This review therefore takes a broad look at the scholarly works on black African families in the West and situates and frames this study within this wider research context using Honneth's recognition theory (Honneth, 1995; Fink, 2005; Williams and Graham, 2014). The essential aim, as guided by Wallace and Wray (2011), has been to identify available studies that explore or address how Sub-Saharan (or black African) immigrant parents manage childrearing in the West, and to use these works to contextualise the Nigerian immigrant parents' child welfare concerns in England. This review also examines relevant published research associated with issues of parenting for immigrant families, which include: child welfare interventions, regulations, media and public expectations, with emphasis on sub-Saharan Africans, and where obtainable, Nigerian immigrants in particular.

The literature search began at the University of Sussex online library home page, which allows keyword search of diverse publications including journals and books that the library holds or subscribes to. Other online sources such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, Social Care Online, ASSIA, to name a few, were used. Relevant subject guides including 'social work', 'parenting', and 'immigration' helped to guide the search of online repositories and journals. The aim was to obtain all the empirical studies and literature that directly explore experiences of black African parents in the UK, and Nigerian parents in particular. Keywords used for searching the literature were in the combination of: Nigeria/n, immigrant, parent, London, Britain, UK, England, child/ren, childrearing, Africa, developed countries, black, welfare, safeguarding, child protection, wellbeing. Also included were keyword searches for broader conceptual themes like recognition, cultural identity and acculturation, inclusion, social justice, amongst others. I searched on the basis of titles and abstracts,

and once the abstract suggested that the publication could be relevant to the themes and keywords, I retrieved the article/publication/book. I scanned such literature further and selected those that were indeed pertinent. These keywords were chosen in concert with their relevance to immigrants' experiences and narrowed down to the study group.

The review is grounded in Honneth's recognition (1995), which is the substantive theory used in explaining the data, formulating my approach to, and understanding of the research and practice field. Therefore, the chapter progresses with a discussion of how Honneth's recognition is conceptualised in this study, and how Fraser's principles of participation support Honneth's recognition. These are followed by: discussions on the homogeneity of African cultures in research; black African immigrants and the impact of differing parenting values and practices, including physical chastisement, on Nigerian immigrant parents in particular. Subsequently, the standard theorising of parenting in Western terms is elucidated as potentially inimical to Nigerian immigrant parents' recognition as competent parents. The chapter concludes by reiterating the emergent themes and the gaps they reveal.

2.1   Honneth's Theory of Recognition

Honneth's theory of recognition is based on the concepts of equality and inclusion as well as social justice in pursuance of respect for minority identities (Honneth, 1995; Nyamnjoh and Englund, 2004). Honneth's recognition is a form of critical theory that argues that knowledge and critique are the underpinnings of emancipation (Agger, 2013). Critical theory enables social scientists to go about exploring, disclosing, and changing society through questioning, analysing and critiquing the 'given' (Baert 2005, p.106). Honneth's (1995) recognition follows in that 'critical' tradition by systematically addressing the impact of values and structures on people, particularly *outsiders,* and is therefore appropriate as the core substantive theory for understanding this study.

Ontologically, Honneth views society and social reality as organised by state and economic controls, and maintains that the 'struggle for recognition' by groups on the margins of society fosters conflict in society (Honneth, 1995; Petersen and Willig, 2002; Petherbridge, 2013). Such conflicts arise when traditional goals and aspirations are denied to those who are not members of the dominant group(s). Honneth (1995) advances a framework of moral development in which 'love, rights, and esteem' or 'self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem' are the actualisation of recognition (p. 169). In an interview with Van den Brink and Owen (2007, p. 2) Honneth observes that:

> …struggles for recognition are social processes' in which marginalised groups or communities challenge what they perceive as 'demeaning social standards of expectations and evaluations that ascribe to different members of society certain appropriate roles, statuses or characteristics.'

Honneth further explains that the structures of inequality include 'officially sanctioned forms of unequal treatment of citizens', as well as 'more informal forms of misrecognition in everyday interaction' that involve mistreatment of minorities and individuals or groups whose traits do not conform to the norm (p. 2). For Honneth (1995, p. 169), developing and maintaining the 'practical relations-to-self' is requisite for actualising recognition, which he proposes operates through three spheres of interaction: self-confidence (family/emotional recognition); self-respect (legal/cognitive recognition); and self-esteem (social recognition). Each of these is shown in Table 1 and explained, with a preliminary indication of their relevance for considering the experience of Nigerian immigrant parents.

Table 1

Honneth's Recognition Theory

Mode of recognition	Emotional support	Cognitive respect	Social esteem
Dimension of personality	Needs and emotions	Moral responsibility	Traits and abilities
Forms of recognition	Primary relationships (love, friendship)	Legal relations (rights)	Community of value (solidarity)
Developmental potential	–	Generalization, de-formalization	Individualization, equalization
Practical relation-to-self	Basic self-confidence	Self-respect	Self-esteem
Forms of disrespect	Abuse and rape	Denial of rights, exclusion	Denigration, insult
Threatened component of personality	Physical integrity	Social integrity	'Honour,' dignity

(cited in Van den Brink and Owen, 2007, p.11)

Emotional Support: Honneth, in his interview with Petherbridge (2013), defines love within primary relationships as the initial form of recognition towards individual self-actualisation or the good life. Honneth uses the of concepts '"care" and "love"' interchangeably (2007, p. 139), which is interesting because social work values entail 'caring' from social workers, as do some other health and social care roles (Bilson, 2007). However, such professions do not necessarily include an obligation to 'love' the service user. Love is usually an element of intimate personal relationships. Furthermore, depending on their function (or dysfunction), some intimate personal relationships may have one or the other, and or both (see Hatfield, Rapson and Aumer-Ryan, 2008). In theorising that love in micro relationships is 'the most basic form of recognition', Honneth (1995, p. 162) explains that the experience of sustained familial love confers a person with self-confidence in interpersonal interactions. Honneth (1995) observes, however, that due to love's primary relationship-bound qualities, it rarely becomes a social concern, as it 'does not entail moral

experiences that could lead, of their own accord, to the formation of social conflicts' (p. 162). The value of achieving recognition of the emotional is thus that the individual is able to develop 'self-confidence' for future intimate relationships. In the case of immigrants, we might question whether the loss of personal support networks influence their ability to obtain tangible emotional support, create new networks, and maintain stabilising relationships, and thereby contributes to a form of misrecognition.

Cognitive Respect: Legal rights or 'moral respect' in Honneth's forms of recognition have 'the character of universal equal treatment', which is contravened by any negative treatment directed at individuals or groups based on their identity (Honneth, 2007, p. 139). *Cognitive misrecognition* involves the denial of rights and honours, as well as the fostering of exclusion, legal difficulties and abridged opportunities that immigrants suffer. Honneth, however, clarifies that these are not necessarily legal rights in the codified sense. Rather, these are symbolic rights to public expression or other institutional privileges that ordinary members of the dominant group would take for granted. We will return to some of the real and perceived unequal treatment that Nigerian immigrant parents encounter in England and how these may exacerbate their 'moral disrespect', in subsequent sections, particularly 2.4 and 2.5.

Social Esteem: Unique personal achievements that affirm a group's goals exemplify the process through which individuals' 'self-esteem' develop towards 'social esteem'. Social esteem is therefore attained when individuals embody the values, hopes and aspirations of their communities, and/or reach the pinnacles of their communities' co-operative associations (1995, 2007). A relevant example amongst many black African populations would be where a young person meets the requirements for rites of passage to a new age-group (Obinna, 2011). In Honneth's terms, these are moral claims to 'legitimate social arrangements' or 'forms of interactions' (Haacke, 2005, p.189). *Social misrecognition* represents the inability of a person or group to form coherent community units. In this study, it is associated with the non-acknowledgment or minimisation of immigrant parents' socio-cultural strengths and challenges in relation to alien childrearing practices demanded by the host community.

Collectivism as Social Esteem: Honneth (2004; 2009; 2014) argues that receiving full *recognition* from others assigns upon the individual a duty to return that requisite recognition in kind. In other words, giving and receiving recognition are co-dependent. But this reciprocity, Honneth deems to be under threat from the 'growing indifference' of individualisation (Honneth, 2004, p.466). He explores the origins of individualisation in Western society through the work of Emile Durkheim who articulated its capacity to relieve members of society of inordinately stifling conventional bonds towards a degree of independence and choice. For Honneth, however, these liberating qualities of individualisation descended into personal greed and an erosion of mutuality facilitated by the West's unfettered capitalism. Honneth (2004, 2014) portrays as linked the rise of individualism and the 'expansion of commercial enterprise' (Levine, 1971, p. 254; Oyserman and Lee, 2008). The lure of personal autonomy, rationalisation and a 'sharpening of knowledge' (Honneth, 2004, p. 464) have meant that capitalist societies have actively pursued individualism to the 'impoverishment of social contact' (p. 26). Such ideology is increasingly evident within intimate family relationships through policies and practices of child welfare, and parenting norms in England. This makes it important to explore how participants within this study navigate the shifting boundaries of family relationships, individualism and connectedness.

All three (Emotional Support, Cognitive Respect and Social Esteem) modes of Honneth's recognition begin at the basic personal level, but can progress into group concerns (Honneth, 2007). This is one of the major strengths of the theory: that all individual or groups are allowed all the rights and privileges that the state and society afford, including reciprocal respect from others (Honneth, 2014). However, some critics have also challenged key aspects of Honneth's recognition, as I will discuss in the following section.

Fraser's Concept of Participation and its Relationship with Recognition

Nancy Fraser (2007) argues that recognition theory inadequately addresses problems of social injustice. Her works (1996, 2003, 2007) seek to theorise distinct dimensions of social justice, which she acknowledges resonate with Honneth's recognition theory (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Her emphasis on representation (in addition to recognition) is useful for this study as it expands the vocabulary for thinking about plurality as a means to emancipation. Fraser conceptualizes social justice in three complementary ways: as redistribution (economic), recognition (socio-cultural), and representation (political).

Fraser (2007) equates injustice with a disparity in participation, whether it is economic, socio-cultural or political. She views political representation as vital in achieving social justice because it establishes the criteria for subsequent distribution and recognition. She argues that representation determines who is included or excluded from the community and who can make claims for justice. Representation continues to be a challenge to those on the margins of society, including in Britain, some white British nationals, but particularly black African immigrants (see Komarraju and Cokley, 2008; Pilkinton, 2016). Such groups may converge as '*subaltern counterpublics* in …parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs' (Fraser 1990, p. 67, original emphasis).

England, the adoptive country in the case of this study, is often described as a multicultural society (Williams and Soydan, 2005). From any of the definitions of multiculturalism in Chapter One, section 1.2, the probability that some ethnicities might be excluded and marginalised based on cultural distinctions in England is high (Williams and Graham, 2014). Nigerian immigrant parents fit into Honneth's understanding of the group of peoples who are likely to be marginalised or *struggle for recognition* in Western countries, thus exploring their experiences through the lens of both Honneth's theory of recognition and Fraser's notion of participation is apt. Available studies (see Kastner, 2010;

English-Clarke *et al*., 2012) indicate that childrearing and child welfare are important avenues through which black African families may suffer misrecognition. The nature of the differences between Nigerian immigrant parents and their hosts suggest that there are many gaps in our understanding of the way these groups are constructed in the West. As 'those who do not have the power to co-determine the terms of their legal and social status', what these parents imagine are opportunities for better integration into the British child welfare system are likewise yet to be documented; and this study seeks to bridge these gaps (Honneth, quoted in Van den Brink and Owen, 2007, p. 2).

In the same vein in Bennett's (2004) six-stage model of the development of intercultural sensitivity (also intercultural competence), a person not only recognises but also values cultural differences without subjecting the cultures to a value judgment. According to Bennett, the development of intercultural competence results in a 'move from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism'* (p. 62, emphasis in original):

> I used the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality." By this I mean that the beliefs and behaviours that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned; they are experienced as "just the way things are." I coined the term "ethnorelativism" to mean the opposite of ethnocentrism, the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviours as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities. (2004, p. 62)

Certain integral aspects of Nigerian parents' caregiving may not be obvious when critiqued in Western terms because of different sociocultural value systems (Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk, 2015). Meanwhile, guided by Honneth and Fraser, I seek to capture the participants' experiences and practices as well as their understandings of what could improve the situation for the parties involved. I am, however, under no illusion that this is a straightforward process, conscious of Lovell's (2007) observation that 'misrecognition is pervasive and complex' (p.71).

2.2   The Problem of Cultural Homogenisation

Attempts to study Nigerian practices almost invariably run into the problem of cultural homogenisation, not least because there is very little empirical research on Nigerian families in Britain or Europe. From his research on African-Australian relations, Ndhlovu's (2009) thoughts on how black African nations and cultures are homogenised are useful in understanding the concept:

> …because they all look alike (by virtue of the colour of their skin), originate from the same continent (Africa) and are presumed to be speakers of perceived 'standard' African languages, then their behaviours, their needs, their attitudes and the things they are capable of doing (or not capable of doing) are the same (p. 17).

The error of treating a diverse group as a homogenous entity is not limited to European and other foreign researchers and commentators; it is also widespread among researchers from different parts of Africa. Culture means different things to different people. A sense of culture is also a sense of identity. Identity itself is a highly loaded and contested term, which often connotes qualities, concepts, and patterns that differentiate, and exclude, individuals or groups from one another (Ndhlovu, 2009). Identity has also been described by Weeks (1990) as being 'about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others', and which in its most basic form gives a person 'a sense of personal location' (p.8). Discussions of BME immigrant parents in the social work literature and in practice likewise continue to revolve around the problematic relevance of *differences* in cultural values and beliefs (Sakamoto, 2007; Johansson, 2010). Definitions of culture almost always run into issues of either being too rigid or too fluid. Jahoda (2012) proffers an impressive review of definitions of culture, and yet refrained from an actual description. He suggests that '"culture" is not a thing, but a social construct vaguely referring to a vastly complex set of phenomena' (p. 300). In this study, I am however guided by Matsumoto's definition (2009, cited in Jahoda, 2012):

> A unique meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations that allows the group to meet basic needs of survival, by coordinating social behavior to achieve a viable existence, to transmit successful social behaviors (p. 297).

However, as Jahoda advises, I include my understanding of culture as having elements of fluidity, in that it can simultaneously impact on and adapt to an individual's or group's evolutionary process. Thus, a large part of the literature on immigrant parents focuses on the impact of culture on the parents' adaptation to their new societies, and their experiences of the *cultures* of state services and authorities.

Failing to recognise the differences between diverse individuals and groups as a result of broad generalisations seems partly a carry-over from the then African nationalists, whose rhetoric and ideologies during the days of struggle for political independence from European colonisers echoed their colonisers' in promoting the image of Africa as homogenous. An example of this practice is found in the work of Renzaho *et al*. (2011), discussed in subsequent sections, in which the overwhelmingly Arab and Muslim Somali immigrants in Australia and the overwhelmingly non-Arab and Christian Ethiopians are taken together simply as 'Africans' and made the subject of some generalisations that would not apply in real life. Phoenix and Husain (2007, p. 4) explain that 'religion, language and territory are all included in the term' *ethnicity*. Therefore, to group these immigrant parents from varied African countries and cultures as *African*, seems somewhat simplistic.

Nonetheless, in Chapter One, section 1.2, the descriptions of Nigerian identities include their representations as being *African* as well as *Black*. As Phoenix and Husain (2007) highlight, the term *Black* is broader than both *African* and *Nigerian*, and despite the shared socio-cultural and socio-political spaces, none of these terms or the concepts they denote is reducible to the other. As such, efforts to catalogue the unique challenges of minority sub-groups incur allegations that such exercises imply an 'attempt to reduce people to one category at a time' (Phoenix and Pattyman, 2006, p.187). Applying Honneth's recognition to ethnicities has also been criticised by some authors as being an exercise in 'identity politics' and so 'essentialist' (McNay, 2008, p. 65). Nonetheless, there is an increasing body of social and political philosophy that acknowledges the intersectionality of experiences enmeshed within single races, ethnicities, genders, classes, amongst others, since 'inequalities are not

independent of each other' (Phoenix and Pattyman, 2006, p.187; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013).

As there are significant similarities within black African childrearing practices, most studies find it necessary to generalise about, for example, *West African* or *sub-Saharan* communities. This is why this study's focus on a specifically Nigerian sample is important, whilst also noting that even the term 'Nigerian' represents various ethnic nationalities, and that some of the highlighted issues may be generic to black African lived-experiences in Western countries. Phoenix and Husain (2007) provide rich and helpful insights into the potential distinctiveness and intersectionality of minority ethnic parenting in the West. Following their guidance, I interrogate critically the complexities that arise within parent-child relationships where key signifiers include, for example, race and ethnicity, education, profession, and religion.

2.3   Black African Immigrants in Europe

Let us return to the issue of black African immigration in Europe as this partially explains Nigerian immigrants' presence as a group in England. I begin by briefly appraising some of the relevant studies, and highlighting factors that impact experiences of migration and prospects for integration, such as identity and language. From one writer's interesting exposition on this matter, he (Watters, 2011) disagrees with critics who accentuate differences in culture between immigrants and their hosts. He suggests that over-emphasis on differences is responsible for the persistent dichotomy between immigrants and the host society. Watters believes that exaggeration of perceived tensions allows certain groups to blame liberal immigration policies for various terrorist acts in Western countries. As a result, programmes geared specifically to support immigrant populations were cut back or decommissioned if they did not demonstrate clear integration impact. Watters however, suggests that rather than framing immigrant populations as groups fixed in their historical backgrounds, close examination of their every-day lives shows a gradual fluidity of perceptions,

values and practices, oscillating between their heritage backgrounds and their current society. In essence, he argues that, at least in England, there is much more middle ground, similarity, and acceptance between immigrants, their second-generation children and the host society than is reflected in the literature and the media.

While some writers (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Nigbur *et al*., 2008; Marcu, 2014) hold somewhat similar views about the ambivalence surrounding belonging, highlighting differences has also been shown to expose oppression and help reduce discrimination (Honneth, 2007). For instance, English child welfare laws and policies clearly repudiate a 'colour blind' approach, whereby differences such as race, ethnicity, language, culture, and religion must be explicitly taken into account when intervening in the welfare of a child (Children Act, 1989, section 22(5)(c)). Amongst white English peoples, there are also nuances in cultures and backgrounds (Selwyn and Wijedesa, 2011) that must be taken into account during interventions. Meanwhile, the Norwegian child welfare system for example adopts a 'universalist and assimilationist perspective' (Kriz and Krivenes, 2011, p. 2636). In their comparative study of Norwegian and English children social work, Kriz and Krivenes found that the Norwegian system in its refusal to explicitly acknowledge difference was entrenching, rather than curbing, racist treatment of black immigrant families. Other authors (Akyeampong, 2000; König and De Regt, 2010; Coe, 2014) confirm that differences in cultural childrearing practices are indeed one of the major areas of tension and conflict for black Africans in Europe. Furthermore, Honneth's recognition enables the view that until equality is achieved, that is, there is no more discrimination, differences must be recognised.

Another striking issue suggested but not always effectively engaged is 'why asylum-seekers travel across Europe (traversing various "safe" countries *en route*) to the United Kingdom' (Watters, 2011, p. 325). One important dimension from which to address this question in relation to black African immigrants, the majority of whom are from Nigeria, Ghana, and Zimbabwe (McGregor, 2007) is to explore the aftermath of colonialism. A major attraction for this group to 'traverse' safe countries is language, as English is the national language of their

home countries and their destination. A large-scale study of three black African migrant populations, including Ghana, Senegal, and Democratic Republic of Congo, by Beauchemin and Tovey (2015) indicates that the trend follows that French speaking African migrants are also more likely to settle in France. Furthermore, with the influence of the United States as the world's current only *super power*, English or 'Globish' is unofficially the world's *lingua franca* (McCrum, 2011, p. 139). English language's appeal for migrants, including European nationals, cannot be underestimated (Altbach, 2007; Selvi, 2011). The importance for my research is that Western languages adopted by black Africans through colonialism play significant roles in the choice of emigration country, as well as on the quality of experience upon arrival. Nigeria's national language is English, although whether and how the differences in accents, fluency and usage of English impact on Nigerian immigrants from their perspectives are not documented in literature, which this study aims to underscore. These broad themes of identity, difference, and language provide avenues to explore Nigerian parents' experiences in England, and in particular, to what extent these factors contribute to opportunities for anticipated quality of life.

2.4   Child Protection and Black African Families in the West

It is important therefore to explore what underpins the relationship between race/ethnicity and black African children's over-representation in European child protection statistics. In England, black African ethnicities in particular became a focus of child protection interventions following the Victoria Climbie case (Lord Laming, 2003). The death of this 8-year-old girl, originally from Cote d'Ivoire, as a result of torture by her surrogate aunt and the aunt's boyfriend in 2000 became a key moment in policy history in the area of child protection, and one that brought minority cultural practices into the spotlight. Since the death of Victoria, efforts have been made to analyse and separate safe cultural practices from harmful ones through legislation. The subsequent Laming Report (Lord Laming, 2003) led to a partial overhaul of child protection legislation and practices through the White Paper '*Keeping Children Safe*' (DfES, 2003a),

Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003b), and, ultimately, the Children Act 2004*. Every Child Matters* was specifically introduced to provide children with a rich, purposeful and fulfilling life, irrespective of race, culture, or ethnicity, through five objectives. These aims were that every child should: 'Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a positive contribution [to society], and Achieve economic wellbeing' (DfES, 2003b, p. 14).

Informed by the Laming inquiry (2003), Chand and Thoburn (2006) reviewed the research regarding child protection referral processes for BME children in England. However, some of the limitations of the study are that the authors did not consider all the referrals they collated. For instance, referrals in which initial inquiries deemed the 'concerns to be unfounded' were not included for consideration (p. 369). At the other 'heavy end', cases that had progressed into 'applications to court for care orders', or involved removal of children were also excluded (p. 369). Therefore, despite their thorough evaluation of types of abuses named in referrals, including physical, neglect, sexual and emotional abuse, the level of severity of cases at time of referral was not operationalised in the study. The severity of abuse is a significant factor in assessing referral characteristics, but these were not clarified and neither were there descriptions of the cases deemed *no further action* at the point of referral. However, Chand and Thoburn crucially found that BME families were more likely than their white counterparts to be referred to social services for physical abuse. They also found correlations between physical chastisement and physical abuse (p. 371). And, *black* parents in particular were documented as disagreeing with social workers about the inappropriateness of physical chastisement (p. 372). Regarding neglect, sexual, and emotional abuse, indigenous white English families had higher referral records than BME families. The study, however, found significant overlaps amongst the categories of abuse represented in referrals and called for more research to better understand the intersecting factors.

Turning to the over-representation of BME children in social services, statistics showing the numbers of children in care according to ethnicity, on the basis of which percentages can be calculated, give an indication of the disproportionate

number of black African children in care. Current child protection referral data regarding race and ethnicity for England were not available at the time of this work. However, there are strong indicators that the figures for child protection referrals to social services regarding black African children are much higher than they should be given the group's representation in the overall population (Chand and Thoburn, 2006; Bywaters, 2015). In the 2014 figures from the Organisation of National Statistics (ONS), black African persons accounted for 1.8 percent of the total population of England. Meanwhile, black African children account for over 3.84 percent of all children in care. Even without including the proportion of children of mixed black African heritage, the difference shows a clear over-representation of black African children in the care system (Chand, 2008; Bernard and Gupta, 2008). As Nigerian families account for the largest percentage of black Africans in England, it can be extrapolated that Nigerian children would be over-represented in care (see ONS, 2015). It is thus important to examine some of the studies that attempt to explain the disproportionate number of black African children within English social services.

A key study that may shed some light on this is Renzaho *et al.*'s (2011) research on parenting by African immigrant families from Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, which were the largest African immigrant groups in Melbourne, Australia. The study drew on a sample of eighty-five participants organised in ten cohort discussion groups. Renzaho *et al.* studied the parenting practices of these groups, looking at the impact of intergenerational issues on parenting in a foreign cultural setting on family, sustainability and lifestyle. The researchers conclude that African migrants' parenting practices are 'restrictive', aiming to constrain children's choices and individuality (p. 228). They note that African childrearing involves strict 'control of their children's activities', monitoring of their interests and peer relationships, and generally discouraging the development of autonomy (p. 231). Renzaho *et al.* identify these as intergenerational issues that have been passed down from generation to generation through cultural heritage. For these reasons, they claim that the participants' childrearing practices are entrenched and black African parents are mostly not inclined to show flexibility towards the new culture their children encounter outside the home. The study recommended that government should

implement new adaptation policies to help immigrants' children growing up in a cultural milieu entirely different from their parents'.

While Renzaho *et al*.'s (2011) study goes a long way towards identifying and accounting for African immigrants' childrearing challenges in Australia and their impact on their children, there appears to be a small number of shortcomings. They pay insufficient attention to the hold of the birth culture of the immigrants' children; that is, the timing of immigration in relation to the children's ages. In addition, some of their conclusions may not be fully substantiated, whereby they appeared to describe black African parent-child relationships as devoid of warm interchange, and curtailing children's autonomy. In this instance, the study does not properly consider the possibility of emotionally deeper relations, as well as agency of the children, that might not have been visible within the overtly artificial conditions of research. Moreover, the authors presented the black African parents' preference for home cooked meals, rather than 'pizza', which was frequently the choice of meal by the children, in a rather negative light as 'restricting'. One could argue that 'teaching [children] to eat healthy food' demonstrated *good* parenting (p. 237). Renzaho *et al*.'s assertion that the parents' efforts can only be 'successful to a point' may be unnecessary, as there was no evidence to support that view (p. 237). However, some aspects of their study are relevant for my research, as it provides a lens to understanding Nigerian families in England, which is also a developed country with Eurocentric systems.

The Implications of Acculturation for Child Welfare

One further conceptual framework that I find useful when approaching my topic is that of acculturation as described by Berry (2003). Sensitivity by both immigrants and hosts to other cultures has some bearing on acculturation. Acculturation is a psycho-cultural process described by Berry (2003) as behavioural adaptation-cum-cultural learning experienced by immigrants following exposure to an alien culture. The effects of acculturation are multi-faceted, as seen in her four-acculturation categories – *assimilation* (adopts the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture), *separation* (rejects the

receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), *integration* (adopts the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), and *marginalization* (rejects both the heritage and receiving cultures) would have complex implications for transnational parent-child relations. Berry's acculturation discourse maintains that a person entering a foreign culture has several options, including assimilation, self-segregation from the new culture, integration, and marginalisation (Berry, 2003). Coll and Pachter (2005), however, note that acculturation is more recently understood to be so 'multidirectional and multidimensional' that its effects are observed on both the immigrant and host populations (p. 7); although, this study focuses on the impact on the immigrant population. Berry's acculturation model presents a practical frame of reference for analysing how participants interpret their levels of integration, particularly in Chapter Six.

Meanwhile, challenges arising from immigrant populations' acculturation include educational attainment. Several scholars (Sakamoto, 2007; Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; Johansson, 20010) have also identified educational problems and performance as directly linked to shortcomings of immigrant parents, as conceptualised by social workers. However, these commentators are also careful not to problematise the parents per se by putting all the blame on them. Ryan *et al*. (2010) also studied the problem of immigrants adjusting to the adoptive culture. Their study is of special interest and relevance to this research because it was commissioned by the charity, 'Action for Social Integration'; it informed the production of a guidebook to help BME parents, especially those recently arrived. The guidebook was designed to help the parents understand the requirements of the English educational system and how to help their children cope within it. Ryan *et al*.'s (2010) findings are also especially valuable because their in-depth study of the shared characteristics, as well as the differences among BME children, yield information that is very important to administrators and school teachers. With reference to language as a source of problematic difference earlier in section 2.3, Ryan *et al*.'s (2010) observation on the new BME students' problem with the English language deserves special attention:

> Language is the most obvious obstacle facing newly arrived pupils. While they may pick up spoken English relatively quickly, development of higher order fluency and an advanced level of understanding may take some time and require on-going language support (p. 5).

Similarly, many scholars agree that difficulties encountered by the children at school become problems for the parents at home, whether in the enforcement of discipline or in the provision of welfare (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; Johansson, 2011). Nigerian parents also have to deal with the communication problems that Ryan *et al*. (2010) elaborate. The complexity of linguistic ability for Nigerians in England includes the claim to English as the *lingua franca* of their birth country, yet their spoken English evokes mockery or misunderstanding from members of the host country due to their accents and or pronunciation (see Julios, 2012). There are other national characteristics, including standards for childrearing, which appear to further divide rather than connect Nigerians and Britons, thereby increasing the *visibility* of the immigrant parents.

2.5   Conflict between Nigerian Family Practices and English Social Work Practices

Several studies have demonstrated that certain factors are responsible for the real and perceived dichotomy between Nigerian and English childrearing, and which significantly impact the childrearing experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents. These include challenges for Nigerian families; and the impact of the different child welfare systems within which Nigerian childrearing practices and social work practices interface.

Challenges for Nigerian Families in England

The conventional Nigerian family system is an extended primary family that would ordinarily contrast with the nuclear family system recognised in England and most of the Western world (Obayan, 1995; König and De Regt, 2010). Sossou and Yogtiba (2008) also describe a family system in which children belong not just to their birth parents but also to aunts and uncles many times removed, confirming the Nigerian notion of the family as substantially wider.

Nigerian extended primary families hold their own unique set of shared values and practices within their private domain. As is normal in other cultures, Nigerian families may engage in verbal and non-verbal communication that distinguishes members from outsiders; 'in this kind of talk, members are re-stating that a particular kind of relationship, a family relationship, exists between them' (Morgan, 2011, p. 3). Within Nigerian cultures, parents feel confident sending their children to other family members because the clan is supposedly inter-dependent and indivisible (see Kastner, 2010).

However, as Dwivedi and Varma (2002) observe, this bond is eroded by frequent emigration of family members. Emigration, it has been argued, dilutes or even terminates the bond with the extended family, which would normally be the source of welfare support, which is seen as an important cultural institution (Ahrens, Kelly and Van Liempt, 2014). Ebot (2014) explains that the parental authority and disciplinary practices which are used to maintain socially acceptable behaviour in the traditional, pre-emigration society tend to violate the parenting and disciplinary norms of the host society. Immigrants' loss of the support networks offered by extended family structures can be profound, although even when available, such structures have sometimes been identified as sources of dysfunction (Bernard and Gupta, 2008). The attenuation of direct and immediate contact with cultural roots and sanctions increasingly compromises parental authority over children, as contact with English culture presents the children with different models of potential relationships with one's parents (see Morgan, 2011).

At school, on television and in interactions with other peers, children of Nigerian parents become aware of these alternative ways of interacting with their parents (Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk, 2015). Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) note that second-generation immigrants are not usually enlightened about the complexities of their parents' cultural practices. Nigerian immigrant parents may find it difficult to cope with the demands of the host society's parenting norms and policies, not merely due to cultural conflicts over specific issues (such as physical chastisement) but also because of fears that children will not treat the cultural values and behavioural norms of their parents as legitimate or

authoritative. Researchers such as Law (2000), Renzaho (2002), and Renzaho *et al*. (2011) agree that traditional West African (including Nigerian) cultures strongly emphasise the teaching of children to be obedient to parents and elders as part of the general process of socialisation. For Wagner *et al*. (2008), immigrant parents' concerns about their children's potential *acculturation* (adaptation to a new culture) towards more 'high-risk social contexts' in the host country make parents appear more inflexible in their parenting (p.10).

This dilemma diminishes immigrant parents' abilities to curb any antisocial or illegal behaviours of their children (such as nuisances, substance abuse, and gang membership) while at the same time the immigrant parents are held at least partly responsible for such activities. This paradox is affirmed by researchers (including, Kotchick and Forehand, 2002; Varela *et al*., 2004; Wagner *et al*., 2008) who argue that meanwhile such parents may undergo acculturation themselves. The parents' attitudes are likely a defensive response to alien childrearing policies and practices, in addition to the loss of family networks that provided moral support to both the children and their parents following disagreements (Coe, 2014). The potentially difficult parent-child relations that result from this may not be obvious to indigenous members of the host society who may therefore interpret the child's behaviour as a product of poor parenting (Hwang, 2006).

Furthermore, parents are afforded primary responsibility in matters regarding their children, so, it is their duty to make important decisions about the welfare and safeguarding of their children, such as, choice of school, religion, place of residence, whether or not to receive medical treatment, and the like, but within the confines of the law (Children Act 1989, Section 3(1)). This role places responsibility on the parents while simultaneously empowering children by creating a legitimate expectation, which enables the child (and others on behalf of the child) to assert those entitlements, for example through social services intervention. Hwang (2006) notes that some children of black African parents take advantage of these perceived entitlements to the detriment of the parent-child relationship. Orellana *et al*. (2001, p. 572) found that as a result of this, African immigrant parents saw the option of sending the children back to their

own birth countries as a 'strategy' for managing problematic aspects of the children's acculturation to Western societies. The important issue is that immigrant parents and their children increasingly subscribe to different childrearing orientations and interpretations of the same child welfare laws and policies. I will draw on these complexities further on in the study.

Differing Models of Child Welfare

As noted in the previous section, the extended family largely functions as the equivalent of the state welfare system in England and other Western countries (Jegede, 1998; Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk, 2015). The modern welfare state has no Nigerian equivalent and is incomprehensible to most Nigerians who have not lived in a Western country (Sossou and Yogtiba, 2008). Immigrant parents, particularly of the first-generation, who have never known state involvement in childcare issues, may disapprove of the practice (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010). The strangeness of state intervention for such parents is compounded through the 'adversarial' child welfare system and overworked social workers, which characterise children social work in England, according to Boddy *et al.* (2014, p. 159-160). Their reasoning derived from research into how four European countries namely, Netherlands, Denmark, England, and France, managed 'contact' between children who have been removed into care and their families (Boddy *et al.*). Other studies have suggested that the social workers may themselves be drawn into the high anxiety and risk averse policies and practices not unrelated to hysteria from the media (Beddoe, 2010; Gupta, Blumhardt and ATD Fourth World, 2016). The media's 'coverage of horrific crimes and extremely rare tragedies has become more emotive, arguably making it harder for public policy to take a measured approach' (Gill, 2007, p. 4).

With regards to Nigerian immigrant parents, in addition to child welfare professionals' contentious attitudes in already unfamiliar social work practices, socio-cultural hegemony creates other barriers. Graham (1999, 2007) argues that English social work theories, models and practices are based on culturally specific assumptions that poorly represent the worldviews of other cultures in

the United Kingdom. She argues that social workers ethnocentrically adopt indigenous English value systems as universal systems capable of explaining human behaviour within every culture. With particular reference to African cultures, Graham (1999) observed that 'African-centred perspectives in social work challenge the profession to express its core principles of equality, social justice and self-determination in embracing alternative worldviews and paradigms as legitimate and valid bases for social work theory and practice' (p. 251).

Intersection of Culture and Social Work Practices: More studies, including Williams and Soydan (2005), and Gilligan and Furness (2006), examine the relationship between culture/ethnicity and social work values/practices. Williams and Soydan's study notes broad characteristics across a number of Western countries including Britain, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Texas, USA. The claims were that social workers had failed on account of being too 'politically correct', and had 'shrunk the complexities of culture to a discussion of the black/while binary' (p. 904). Social workers were alleged to make grave erroneous judgements based on cultural differences rather than ethical and legal requirements. In England, some of the criticisms relate to the caveat in the Children Act 1989, which provides in section 22(5)(c) that local authorities and social workers should give appropriate consideration to a child's religion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic heritage in providing and delivering services.

Williams and Soydan's (2005) research question is significant: 'do social workers acknowledge ethnicity as a variable in their assessments and interventions and, if they do, how?' (p. 905). The question's relevance is in evaluating how cultural and ethnic sensitivity would impact on the moral and legal requirements to safeguard all children from harm, irrespective of the nature of such harm. The study found that in social work education, social work ethical foundations that feature commitment to anti-discriminatory principles, for example, are articulated in terms of *competencies* including newly received knowledges of 'culturally competent' practice (p. 902). Cultural competency is effective work by children safeguarding professionals with families of diverse cultures that simultaneously affirms the strengths, values and knowledge of the

different groups, while properly supporting the children (Gray, 2005; Bernard and Gupta, 2008, p. 476). Johnson and Munch (2009) suggest that despite its usefulness as an indicator of critical social work skills, the notion of competencies may be problematic for being highly technical and rational. Humphries (2008) suggests that such learning criteria are developed 'in the attempt to measure change and productivity', thereby undervaluing the passion embodied within social work values (p. 5).

Johnson and Munch (2009) argue that when practitioners are confronted with novel circumstances, their repertoire of *competencies*, often based on non-empirical, over-generalised knowledge of other cultures, has little value. Williams and Soydan (2005) observed that at such junctures, social workers become hostage to forces including cultural relativism and political correctness on the one hand, or heavy-handed impositions of *proper* ways of acting on the other (p. 902). Neither condition serves BME children effectively. Children can be either allowed to remain in abusive situations or subject to drastic interventions. Furthermore, none of these positions uphold the fundamental values of social work. Healy (2007) and Reamer (2013) concur that social work values espouse respect for the dignity, rights, and emancipation of vulnerable and excluded persons/groups. Reamer further suggests that such dilemmas account for ineffectual practices, noted in several serious case reviews concerning children of immigrant families and other vulnerable groups, by social workers who are tasked with 'providing justifications for intervening or failing to intervene' in service users' lives (p. 68).

As a social worker, as well as an ethnic minority immigrant, my conception of cultural competence differs somewhat from many of the scholars mentioned such as Johnson and Munch (2009). Viewed through critical realist (see Chapter Three, section 1.2) and Honneth's (1995) recognition lenses, cultural competence becomes about social workers understanding their own cultural limitations, which may be exacerbated by intrinsic hegemony. Honneth (2014) explains that 'humans are tied, through unconscious drives or attachments, to their own…' (p.195). The implicit principle that, as Western professionals, English social workers hold the truth on what is right and best in relation to

minority childrearing, is fallacious in critical realism. Social reality exists at three layers, the most fundamental of which, *the real*, may be beyond the knowledge of any observer (Bhaskar, 1998). Honneth (2014) provides a platform for social workers and related professionals to break down preconceived assumptions and stereotypes of *the other*, and instead to recognise and legitimise different cultural norms and practices. This means that professionals can become aware and proactive regarding their partial knowledge of the beliefs, practices and strengths of persons of different cultural/normative heritage. Therefore, culturally competent social workers appreciate that they may not know (see Pawson, Wong and Owen, 2011), but are willing to learn, in a compassionate and respectful manner that recognises the humanity and dignity of the other. While this notion of cultural competence simultaneously evokes social workers' *incompetence* about others' normativity, it is competent practice to acknowledge the potential for an *unknown*. Nonetheless, even where poorly understood, the values assigned to unfamiliar norms and practices continue to influence social workers' experiences and assessments of ethnic minority childrearing (Bernard and Gupta, 2008).

Varying Constructions of Good Enough Parenting: Social workers' difficulties are exacerbated by the different cultural constructions of what could be deemed *good enough* parenting and appropriate child behaviour (Coplan *et al*., 2002; Pedersen, 2012). According to Zahn-Waxler *et al*. (2005) good parenting includes 'patience, tolerance for frustration, and an ability to empathise', and not the least, provision for the child's physiological needs (p. 310). In England, what is embodied in law, policy, and professional practice, which are of a secular orientation and are seen as *normal,* may not correspond with those of Nigerian culture and practice, particularly in relation to religious underpinnings, as Godina's (2014) study highlights. Under the influence of a cultural background that is still very 'fresh'[2] and strong for new immigrants, it may be difficult to seek help with children's problems, especially behavioural problems, which the *cultural lens* described by Helman (2007) might filter through spiritual beliefs. This means that parents may not seek support from health and social care

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[2] In London, 'freshies' is a derogatory term for newly arrived immigrants

practitioners for situations like a heavily bed-wetting teenage child, as they may not consider such to be a health or social problem but a spiritual one (see Jegede, 1998).

Both Kriz and Krivenes (2010) and Johansson (2011) echo that black African migrants in Western societies face challenges in accommodating the different traditional values and parenting practices within their host cultures. For example, black Africans may occasionally perceive children's behavioural problems as 'spiritual punishment' or evidence of possession by spirits. Such a perception places the parent in a quandary over how to handle the difficulties raised by the child's condition, as spirit possession and similar *maladies* are not recognised in English law (see Helman, 2007). English social workers are more likely to view cases of severe behavioural issues in children within the context of paediatric psychiatry, even where the symptoms are unexplained or poorly understood (Cortina *et al*., 2012). Like Johnson and Munch (2009), Furlong and Wight (2011) maintain that social worker's challenges with BME groups are linked to a lack of 'critical awareness', which is their preference to 'cultural competence' (p. 39). Woodcock (2003) however argues that much research has tended to focus on broad concerns within child protection, while family support, accommodation, and the balancing of child protection with families' holistic needs have received only slight attention. Jack (2000) also bluntly criticises child welfare professionals, including social workers and teachers, for generally isolating child welfare issues from the impact of socioeconomic realities on the children's families, family institutions in general, and relationships both within the immigrant communities and with people in the rest of the host society.

Physical chastisement and Physical Abuse

Bernard and Gupta (2008) further provide a rich appraisal of the literature on black African children within the English child protection system. They contend that black African children's over-representation in the English child protection system is mostly a result of the parents' perceived poor parenting practices, mostly in relation to allegations of physical chastisement/abuse (p. 478). They cite studies by Thoburn, Chand and Procter (2005) and Barn, Ladino and

Rogers (2006) to corroborate the lack of evidence in suggestions that black African parents are any more physically abusive than parents from other cultures or races. While not condoning or recommending physical chastisement, Bernard and Gupta also maintain that the stereotyping of black African parents in attempt to differentiate their use of physical chastisement is unhelpful. They note that the impact of physical chastisement from black African parents was 'no more likely to be long-lasting' than that of children belonging to other ethnic groups (p. 483). In the same vein, Steinberg *et al*. (1992) have persuasively argued, from their study of African American families, that physical chastisement was not perceived as abuse by African children, as it did not produce negative effects on the children, and neither did it make them feel unloved or unwanted.

Furthermore, the research by Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk (2015) in the USA, which is among the very few specifically on Nigerian immigrant parents in the West, revealed similar preference for use of physical chastisement by this group of black African immigrants. The study used 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews of university educated Nigerian immigrant parents in the USA to explore the parenting challenges they faced. Unlike my study, Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk did not explore child safeguarding. Nonetheless, they capture some core child care and parenting concerns of Nigerian immigrant parents, including: emphasis on respect for parents, older persons and authority figures; inclination to communal/kinship family lifestyle; negotiation between heritage and host's cultural practices; and the need to impart resilience in children which is also partly achieved through use of physical chastisement.

Physical Chastisement as Good Parenting: Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk (2015) note that for the Nigerian immigrants in their study 'the use of targeted corporal punishment as the remedy to… unwanted behavior' arise because 'these parents are inclined to perceive American parenting as ineffective, overly permissive, and the cause of such social ills as drug use, sexual immorality and violence' (p. 28). While not making a judgement as to the appropriateness of physical chastisement as a disciplinary measure, such practices may not be contextually understood by child safeguarding professionals in England. That is,

English social workers do not recognise that the parents in such situations believe that they are exhibiting good parenting practices for which they would expect to be praised in Nigeria rather than admonished. Ahmad and Atkin (1996) argued that methods of discipline by African parents need to be considered in their socio-cultural context in order to effectively address any potential conflict with English parenting practices in ways that do not necessarily stereotype, stigmatise or alienate African families.

Dominelli (2002) was similarly concerned that over-emphasis on dysfunction within African families exacerbates the stereotyping of such families by both the English public and by child protection practitioners. Instead, it needs to be acknowledged that, according to their own cultural values, they are doing the right thing, but that in England, it is viewed as a reflection of poor parenting. The systematic review of African American families' use of non-abusive physical chastisement in the U.S. by Horn *et al*. (2004) however links good enough parenting, which they believe is devoid of physical chastisement, to higher education and class. For them, the higher the education parents had, the less physical chastisement they employed.

Interpretations of 'the Problem': Barn (2007) observed that the situation was not significantly improved by the requirement in the Children Act 1989 for social workers and social services to respect the cultures of respective children and their families. 'Traditional' and religious 'therapeutic measures' employed by African families are often viewed with deep suspicion (Bernard and Gupta, 2008, p. 483). For instance, turning to their religious faiths when children exhibit challenging behaviour would be perceived as detrimental to the child by English practitioners even when there is little evidence to confirm such views. Furthermore, citing Anane-Agyei (2002), Bernard and Gupta query whether these practices imply 'intent to harm' or are simply 'a result of a different set of values and beliefs?' (p.483).

Some USA studies such as Grogan-Kaylor and Otis (2007) however, found correlations between parental religious beliefs and support for physical chastisement. Other faith-based *traditional practices* may seem even more out-

dated and incompatible with secular English life when children of black African parents appear to shift, whether subtly or fundamentally, from their parents' standards. For black African parents, variations in their practice from English norms extend beyond physical chastisement. For example, It is quite usual for Nigerian children to spend much of their out-of-school time being looked after by older siblings without parental supervision (Burns and Radford, 2008), thereby falling foul of English 'home alone/lack of supervision' child protection criteria (Chand and Thoburn, 2005, p. 373). A stay-at-home parent or paid child-minder may be less feasible in black African immigrant homes due to lower income and provisions for external childcare (Evans *et al*., 2008). Furthermore black African parents' backgrounds support that an older sibling in their early teens for example, is competent enough to look after younger ones for limited periods after school. A number of BME parents are implicated in child protection referrals as a result of this practice. Taking a broader perspective, Young (1990, cited in Graham, 1999) argues that much of the pathologisation of African normative practices is 'the universalism of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm' (p. 255).

2.6   Parenting Typologies Recognised in the Western World

A wider review of established Western parenting typologies is helpful in light of the fact that child safeguarding professionals in the West tend to endorse Eurocentric childrearing models in their interactions with all parents. One of the more widely known parenting typologies is that developed by Baumrind, who first identified three core models of parenting (1967), later expanded into four (1991) including: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful/disengaged. These typologies are often used as parenting assessment standards in much of the West, including England.

A permissive parent tends to be indulgent towards the child: yields to the child's whims and wishes, consults them before making decisions that affect them, serves as a resource rather than a standard or model for them; the parent may reason with the child, but rarely exerts controlling authority. As for authoritarian and authoritative parenting, Baumrind makes an important distinction between

the former as being negative and the latter positive. Authoritarian parents try to control the child and shape his/her character according to a particular code of conduct, employ punishment to coerce the child into obedience and conformity, and restrict the child's free will whenever it conflicts with their standards. By implication, an authoritarian parent is also more likely to use physical discipline in controlling the child. By contrast, an authoritative parent encourages the child's autonomy while insisting on conformity with a certain value system and set of standards; and as much as possible employs reasoning rather than coercion to direct the child's decisions, choices, actions and general behaviour. In other words, the authoritative parent exercises adult authority when necessary but also allows and even encourages the child to exercise his autonomy and reasoning.

On the whole, Baumrind's typology consists of 'ideal' types, making little allowance for variations in the parents' own personalities and the human ecological value systems which constitute the parents' frames of reference. Levendosky and Graham-Bermann (2000) caution that Baumrind and many of her followers:

> …have not controlled for important environmental factors such as poverty, single parenthood, ethnicity, or domestic violence. For example, some research has suggested that for African American girls and Hispanic boys, authoritarian, rather than authoritative, parenting is associated with child assertiveness and competence… However, most of these studies confounded the influences of ethnicity and socioeconomic status (p, 81).

Other writers including Phoenix and Husain (2007) have similarly drawn attention to the intersection of factors like race, gender and ethnicity on the style and quality of the parent-child relationships. However, Baumrind's framework remains prevalent across the Western world as well as other developed nations like Australia. Whilst alert to its limitations, Baumrind's framework provides useful avenues for critical reflection on my data in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven. Universalistic benchmarks of living, and of family life in particular, have implications for how others who may feel excluded by the narratives interpret and relate to the principles they embody (Gray, 2005).

2.8 Summary of Emergent Themes

Apparent in this literature review is the absence of in-depth research on Nigerian parents' understanding and lived experience of childrearing and negotiating child welfare norms and practices in England, which is a gap that this research aims to fill. I have explained how the critical theoretical approaches of Honneth and Fraser provide appropriate and complementary conceptual tools for exploring the concerns of BMEs in England, and for Nigerian immigrant parents in particular. Recognition theory helps us understand why immigrant parents may resist the normative constructions or policies of their host country when they perceive those principles to be unfair, and aimed at denigrating their own histories and experiences. In broad terms, the literatures indicate that the British government is aware of the problem of social justice and recognition of BMEs' values and needs, and successive governments have, to some extent, developed policies for tackling the problems, even though significantly more effort seems essential.

Given the disparity between different cultural knowledges across the world, supposedly universal models of *good parenting* may themselves be very ethnocentric, and there is a need to recognise diversity in parenting practices, especially in the context of immigration. The experience of migration may result in anxiety for parents who may respond based on their background knowledge, and thus appear more rigid in their parenting. Moreover, the differences in parenting between immigrant parents and their hosts' may be especially visible, and may eclipse other needs that are more compelling for families. Therefore, social workers may need to be more understanding of cultural differences in parenting before making certain judgements, in other words, be more culturally aware.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Research methodology includes the approach of the study, epistemology, research design, and the application of methods (Dunne *et al*., 2005). This study adopts a critical realist conception of reality, a framework that demands that I look beyond surface appearances to examine underlying mechanisms of power (Bhaskar, 1998; Houston, 2010), while acknowledging the value of differing views in the recognition tradition (Thompson, 2006). In practice, this means being reflexive, examining myself as a Nigerian who must 'make strange what appears utterly familiar' (Riemann, 2005, p. 90), and as a British social worker, must wear other investigative lenses during research. These different positionings require the researcher to 'change where they are sitting' (Featherstone *et al.,* 2014, p. 112), and critically employ 'awareness of the identity, or self' that, when embraced, allow the researcher to genuinely interact with the various levels of social inquiry (Elliot, 2005, p. 153). Therefore, in this thesis, I regularly write in the first person pronoun to underscore my various positions.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It begins with the critical realist perspective that frames the study, outlining its practical application in social science research, and its implications for the epistemology and ontology of this project. I then outline and justify the research design, and continue with a discussion of the context for the study, including the sampling procedures involved in recruiting participants. A full discussion of the different methods of data collection employed, including the use of an internet blog, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions follows. The chapter progresses into an account of the process of data analysis employed, including the use of thematic template analysis. It ends with a discussion on the ethical considerations during the research process and reflections on how I negotiated my competing identies over the course of the research journey.

3.1   A Critical Realist View

During my social work training and practice more than a decade ago, I became convinced of the importance of objective and non-relativist definitions of some experiences, such as 'abuse'. I held the view that there should be a point at which humans moved beyond personal interpretations towards an objective consensus in the definition of certain social phenomena. Such thinking instigated my journey during this research into critical realism, a framework which allows one to both acknowledge the reality of abuse, while also acknowledging the importance of subjective meanings, and underlying structures and systems.

Critical realism emerged as an approach to social research mainly through the work of Bhaskar (1998), and has since been developed and elaborated by other theorists (Archer *et al.*, 1998; Sayer, 2010; Archer, 2000, 2003; Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004; Jessop, 2005). Bhaskar (1998) postulated that there are three levels of reality, namely: the empirical, the actual, and the real. Thus, the social world is distinctly layered (Houston, 2010). The core idea of critical realism is that social reality should be understood as stratified systems with objects connected through causal relationships (Morton, 2006). The *real* includes causal/generative mechanisms, which have caused actual events; the *actual* includes events and practices; and the *empirical* includes human experiences. The social world becomes understandable only if the unobservable factors/structures responsible for events and experiences are understood (Bhaskar, 1998, 2008).

The notion of 'epistemic fallacy' plays a key role in critical realism: the idea that a phenomenon is not 'meaningless, [even] if we cannot falsify or verify it empirically' (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 28). Jessop (2005) argues that critical realism solves the problem of epistemic fallacy, which conflates ontology with epistemology, as reality cannot be reduced 'to ideas that people have' (p. 42). Critical realism therefore rejects the tendency of both poststructuralism and postmodernism to explain social realities solely in terms of mere discursive or linguistic actions; for if their explanations were valid then there is no reality

without language, or, for the hermeneutics, in the absence of interpretations (Westwood and Linstead, 2001; Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004).

For the critical realist, social reality exists in ways that transcend our knowledge; that is, it exists irrespective of us, whether we understand, agree, or acknowledge it. Social reality therefore includes structures that may or may not be directly experienced or observed and which exist independent of human knowledge or thinking (Morton, 2006). Critical realism allows the researcher to differentiate between events and their causes, for while the researchers may observe events or conditions, the phenomena themselves are determined by unobservable causes (example, mechanisms). The objective ontology assumed by critical realism allows us to acknowledge the significance of subjective epistemologies - socially constructed knowledge and social structures that produce them (Jessop, 2005). Put simply, ontology transcends epistemology.

Bhaskar (1997) described 'structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world [as] intransitive, [while our experiences of the events they generate are] transitive' (p. 22). In essence, intransitive structures are 'objects in the domain of the real' and are therefore 'ontological' and intangible while the 'transitive dimensions' are epistemological (Engholm, 2007, p. 264). Schisms between minorities and dominant groups in society reinforce the intransitive structures that produce cultural/ethnic identity at the actual level and which are borne out in behaviour/experiences in the transitive realm. By intransitive, I mean those mechanisms that direct or activate events in the practical realm (Sayer, 2010). It is however complex to allocate the causes of discriminatory policies/practices as 'generative mechanisms are neither determinative nor all-explaining' (Oliver, 2012, p. 374). Besides, 'structures can persist without and even despite human agency' (Porpora, 2007, p. 425). As Fraser (1996) observes 'racist and Eurocentric norms generate racially specific status injuries', which in this instance complicate other forms of discriminatory stratification (p. 18).

Critical realism rejects the preoccupation of positivists with prediction, measurement and quantification on the grounds that although social

phenomena are capable of being measured, the measurements may be inadequate in explaining the nature of the phenomena (Archer, 1998). Critical realists accept that while to varying degrees both quantitative and qualitative 'approaches have complementary strengths and weaknesses, the causal insights from extensive [quantitative] research will be fewer' than those from qualitative research (Downward, 2007, p. 312). One criticism of critical realism concerns its pragmatic openness to varied epistemologies including fluid postmodern and interpretivist perspectives while opposed to their ontological notions (Baert, 1998). Epistemological relativism however does not equate judgemental relativism, as various knowledges accrue different levels of validity, which in turn curtail the propensity to ascribe equivalent relevance to competing claims to knowledge (Bhaskar, 2016). Nonetheless, Oliver (2012) proposes that 'the best we can hope for is to uncover approximate evidence of tendencies rather than proofs….' (p. 375). The 'fact' of marginalisation for instance could be implied from a person's perceptions (empirical), although it could also be authenticated by the existence of racist systems or social structures on the actual level (Mingers, 2014, p. 183).

Applied within social work, a critical realist approach would argue, for example, that whether or not we were able to unravel the reasons for abuse, the causes 'operate even if unknown, and even if there were no one to know it' (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 28). What people feel and say about abuse is distinguishable from the objective character of abuse. Critical realist ideas can also be applied to racial discrimination and can explain why such phenomena may be under-referred/reported and under-investigated; they are difficult to explain from an epistemic stance because they are often hard to grasp, or are liable to multiple definitions by the relevant parties (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Murji, 2007).

My adoption of a critical realist approach for this study has enabled me to hold in tension three things:

1. That childrearing, though simultaneously individual and cultural, is an 'actual' fact and can be identified in multiple ways that are systematic and objective as in the practice of a social worker. These can be captured through observation and assessment.

2. That the 'empirical' meanings associated with childrearing are socially constructed, on the part of all parties including parents, children, and social workers. These meanings can be captured through talk and personal reflection.

3. That there are underlying 'realities', including structural inequalities shaped by race, ethnicity, and economic inequality, amongst others, that underpin and structure the actual and empirical levels which can be accessed through critical analysis, interpretation and theorisation.

For instance, critical realism allows us to understand someone's account as captured in an interview, as constructed, while also affirming that there are real, underlying structures that shape that construction (Cruickshank, 2007). Therefore, while the research data (empirical evidence) is obtained from participants' reports of their subjective lived experiences, I have endeavoured to delve beneath those constructions. My aim in designing the research is for an 'explanatory critique of consciousness and social forms' (Nielsen, 2007, p. 93). By examining the participants' experiences individually and collectively within certain frameworks explained in the following sections, we can attain more fundamental understandings of what underpin both the experiential interpretations and surface actions/events/laws.

3.2   Research Design and Approach

My research requires me to document and make sense of participants' experience of socio-cultural and socio-political phenomena in a host society. The complexity of this task demands the use of a qualitative research approach (see Downward, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The qualitative tradition supports purposive sampling of small populations, researcher and participant reflexivity, and respect for multiple realities (O'Leary, 2010). Importantly, a qualitative design also enables an iterative approach to the methods used in this research, meaning that my methodological strategy could 'evolve as more observations [were] gathered' (Rubin and Babbie, 2010, p. 34).

In social work research, qualitative approaches are recognised as allowing the researcher to gain an intimate understanding of the 'lived experiences of service users, carers and practitioners, [and in] depth understanding of how policies and practices are played out in situated contexts' (Sharland, 2013, p. 14). The focus on obtaining knowledge through thorough exploration of the phenomena under investigation, including experiences of social work interventions in this regard, is crucial to learning how such 'interventions bring about change' (Sharland, 2013, p. 14). Combined with a critical realist methodology, a qualitative research design can seek answers that concern access to underlying structures of power that determine other aspects of social reality (Houston, 2010).

In designing the research, I began by developing the research questions set out in Chapter 1 and shown in Figure 2 subsequently. My research design focused on the perceptions and accounts of Nigerian immigrant parents, and in order to generate these accounts I employed three distinct methods of data collection:

- An internet blog created specifically for this study where Nigerian parents in England could post about their experiences within a relatively public space, and react and respond to the accounts of others.
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews that would capture more personal and less public accounts.
- Focus group discussions where it would be possible to capture debate between participants as well as group dynamics.

The research design was iterative and interactive. For example, I started the blog space with posts outlining concerns about the childrearing practices of Nigerian immigrants (www.uknigerianchild.net). Material from the blog informed questions posed to participants in the one-on-one interviews. Vignettes were used to stimulate debate with and between participants in the focus group discussions. Figure 2 depicts the research design graphically:

Figure 2

Research Design

- **Seeking Explanations**

From accounts of participants' experiences as follows:
1. What are participants' understandings of the key factors that promote child wellbeing in Nigerian culture?
2. What norms do participants perceive to be embedded in British parenting practices?
3. How well do participants' own parenting norms and practices fit with predominant British parenting norms and practices?
4. What support structures and services do participants think could improve the fit between British parenting practices and their own?

Internet Blog

Relevant concerns

Relevant concerns

One-to-one interviews (25)

Unresolved issues

FGD1   FGD2
(grp of 4) (grp of 4)

Textual Data

Thematic Analysis

Explanatory Critique

As shown in Figure 2, the study, including the questions, data collection methods and analysis, was designed to obtain both surface meanings and underlying powers. The first research question aimed to extract subjective empirical experiences. The second question also employed subjective understandings to identify the structures and systems that create those

experiences. Responses to the third and fourth questions enabled *an explanatory critique* of the *problem,* with the fourth particularly emphasising the emancipatory ideals of critical realist thinking by implicitly acknowledging the expertise of the participants.

Context for the Study: Who were the Participants and how were they Recruited?

Inclusion Criteria: The research questions adopted for the study necessitated the category of 'first-generation Nigerian immigrant parent'; assuming that this was a group with coherence and that it was possible to document their perceptions and experiences of child welfare in England. Later in the thesis (Chapters Four, Five and Six) I demonstrate the relevance of this category to the findings, but here I discuss how the category was operationalized in order to generate a sample. The Nigerian parents required for the research were hetero-normative adults who were born and raised in Nigeria, but were now living without immigration restrictions in England, having raised or were currently raising their own children in England. The parents would have married or partnered only other Nigerians, while excluding inter-racial or same-sex relationships. A further inclusion criterion was that participants were able to communicate fluently in English.

The decision not to interview social workers and other professionals involved in children safeguarding (including health visitors, teachers, police officers, and general practitioners) means that there are no direct alternative viewpoints to the parents'. This could be a limitation of the study. However, like Flyvbjerg (2006), I believe that certain perceived limitations can indeed be strengths. As noted in Chapter One, support for parental rights is not currently fashionable (Dixon, Graber and Brooks-Gunn, 2008) in relation to children's rights, which arouse individual and public convictions due to children's vulnerability. My focus on Nigerian immigrant parents is an acknowledgement of their status as people on the margins of dominant English discourses in terms of race, ethnicity and culture, and social work policies that are overtly child-focused. As the first study in England that expressly seeks Nigerian immigrant parents' perspectives on

child welfare, this research ensures a dedicated space for their voices to be heard.

Eligibility for access to the blog was broader than for the interviews and focus groups. The blog was open to any African immigrant parent in England who could use the internet in English, irrespective of whether they were responsible for a child or were first generation. The anonymous nature of the blog meant that it was not possible to verify the identities of those who contributed (Snee, 2013). As with most virtual media, there was the possibility that people might not be who they claimed to be. However, I looked for certain cultural cues, the use of typical Nigerian phrases and terms as an indication that a contributor was indeed Nigerian; meaning that in the blog although any African immigrant could contribute, I only sought out Nigerian voices. I am also aware that despite employing certain distinct Nigerian cultural codes as inclusion criteria, there might have been a few exemptions. However, those I deemed to be Nigerian were the commentators whose blog data I actively used in the analysis.

For the interview and focus groups, I chose specifically to exclude Nigerian immigrant parents with immigration restrictions because the impact of such restrictions was likely to overwhelmingly shift the focus of the interview to financial and residency issues (see Anitha, 2010), which were not particular objectives of the study[3]. Finally, a simple factor like being available for interview seems an obvious criterion but it was important that I stated it clearly to prospective participants on the printed flyers, as it was possible to be genuinely interested and yet unavailable to take part in the study.

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[3] An interview carried out in error with a participant with immigration restrictions revealed significant complexities arising from policies such as 'No Recourse to Public Funds'. Her interview was with hindsight, unsurprisingly replete with accounts of substantial financial difficulties and complexities of childcare. It was not until towards the end of the interview when I advised her on how to access extra support for her child that she informed me she had already approached the council but was not eligible. I had interviewed the participant by mistake because she had not fully understood the difference between being 'legal' in the UK (which she was) and not having any immigration restrictions, which was the study's requirement. Therefore, her interview was discounted, and I apologised to her for not making the restriction more explicit.

Access and Recruitment

From the outset, I was disinclined to interview Nigerian immigrant parents within my personal network. One reason for this was my wish to maximise the demographic range of participants to reflect that of Nigerian immigrant parents in England. My network would have limited this range in terms of education/class, religion, and ethnic group. My initial plan was to access participants from across England (outside London)[4]. Once ethical clearance from the university had been obtained in March 2013, I made contact on the telephone with 'gatekeepers' in Nigerian populated faith groups and Nigerian community associations around Greater London to begin the process of identifying participants. Gatekeepers were given information sheets explaining the research and asked to pass them on to prospective participants (see Appendix II for Gatekeepers' Information Sheet and Leaflet). Interested persons were invited to make contact either through a dedicated telephone number or email address provided on the leaflets. I personally oversaw posting of the flyers in three churches, two mosques, two Nigerian ethnic community associations and two community centres where Nigerian immigrants were known to visit or congregate. Other Nigerian contacts who volunteered spread the flyers more widely.

I visited each church and mosque three times and participated in the activities of both religions despite not being Muslim. Also during those visits, I was invited on two occasions to speak to the congregations about my research. I made it known to the gatekeepers and potential participants from the onset that I was still a registered social worker, even though I was not currently practising. This probably influenced one of the Imams to request whether I could offer a brief presentation specifically on child protection for black African families to his congregation, which I did. I also used the opportunities to inform potential participants in those congregations that I would be anonymising their identities

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[4] However, I made an exception in the interview of the first participant, who was known to my aunt. That participant's reticence regarding disclosing and discussing certain personal issues during the interview reinforced my original commitment to seek participants completely outside my personal network.

and using pseudonyms, to allay any child protection concerns. During further discussions with individual members and small groups of people in those associations, I was able to recruit more participants.

Representativeness amongst Nigeria's diverse populations along the lines of geo-political regions, religion, and ethnicity was not an objective of the study. Nonetheless, these demographic categories highlight the heterogeneity of Nigerian peoples, which potentially could impact on participants' experiences of parenting (see Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). I accordingly sought to obtain, as much as possible, a representation of the diversity of Nigeria's population, not for a 'statistical match' but for 'inclusivity' or 'symbolic representation' (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003, p. 269) of Nigeria's peoples within the sample. As will be seen in the data presentation chapters (Four to Six), some differences with regards to sub-ethnicity and religion for instance, whether real or imagined, eventually played out in the data.

Accessing my sample involved snowballing, a method understood to promote access to a desired study group through networking (Handcock and Gile, 2011; Bryman, 2015). Also known as 'nominated sampling', this technique involves the researcher relying on a person who is already a part of the sample to nominate, contact and recruit others who know and trust them (Polit and Beck, 2004, p.289). Five initial potential participants, three from two different church gatekeepers, one from a Mosque's Imam, and another from a Nigerian community association referred or nominated other likely participants who fit the study's requirements in a cycle that continued until the planned number of 25 participants was reached. In that respect, this method could be criticised for its tendency to recruit participants with similar characteristics, which is known as the *snowball* or *chain effect* (Johnston and Sabin, 2010, my emphasis). Eventually twenty-one participants were recruited from five inner London boroughs. These boroughs are economically deprived areas with significant numbers and different categories of Nigerians (ONS, 2011). I extended the search for participants through two Nigerian community association networks to one outer London borough where I successfully found a further four participants.

Ragin and Becker (1992) suggest that community-oriented research is better achieved by establishing 'culturally typical relationships' (p. 148). I employed this approach in the focus group stage of the study by clustering participants who shared particular traits. For example, I encouraged the Muslim participants to make up a group, while the other group included only men. More importantly, participants were also grouped according to location primarily for accessibility reasons. An overview of the relevant demographic characteristics of the 25 participants from the six local authorities within Greater London is presented in the following table.

Table 2

Participants' Demographics

Criteria	No. of Participants	Total
Gender		
Female	18	
Male	7	25
Region		
East	6	
North	1	
South	5	
West	13	25
Religion		
Christian	19	
Muslim	6	25
Educational Qualification		
Postgraduate	8	
Degree	13	
Secondary	3	
Primary	1	25
Occupation		
Professional	11	
Skilled non-professional	6	
Unskilled	2	
Unemployed/home-makers	6	25
Age Range		
30-34	3	
35-39	4	
40-44	5	
45-49	5	
50-54	3	
55->	5	25

3.3   Data Collection

Collecting research data is 'the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose or the specific objectives, questions or hypothesis of a study' (Burns and Grove, 2003, p. 45). The quality of data gathered depends on the kinds of data-gathering instrument employed. Each method adopted in this study yielded rich data on participants' relevant perceptions and experiences. Adopting multiple types of data collection allows for triangulation, which is recommended for improving validity in social research, as it supports the 'simultaneous display of multiple refracted realities' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 8). Data collected from the interviews were therefore triangulated (thematically compared and matched) with those from the focus group discussions and the blog. In the next section, I discuss each of the different methods used, contextualising these in methodological literatures.

The Blog: an Example of Netography

As a result of increased access to the internet, the use of internet blogs for social research has grown rapidly in the past decade (Hookway, 2008; Thomson, 2014). Digital social practices have become 'embedded in culture' (Hallett and Barber, 2014, p. 310). As Garcia *et al*. (2009) suggest, ignoring the advantage of ubiquitous media technology and programmes that relieve communication boundaries would be a serious omission. In the first stage of fieldwork I created a virtual space for Nigerian parents to share their parenting views as they traverse practices, both micro and macro, in England. The main purpose of the blog was sensitisation to the topic, in that it provided wide-ranging views, which were subsequently explored in the interviews, and vice versa.

I set up the internet blog using WordPress in April 2013. The domain name was www.uknigerianchild.net. The blog was captioned: 'Nigerian parents and children in Britain' (see Appendix III for the blog instructions). As the blog was in the public domain, I set guidelines for contributors to ensure their anonymity and co-operation (Snee, 2013). These guidelines informed visitors that their

posting indicated their agreement to follow the rules of the blog and their consent to their posts being used for research purposes. After the blog was set up, I provided community gatekeepers with leaflets and information sheets with the link to be distributed to potential contributors. Those who joined were asked to share the link with other parents of Nigerian origin. The blog was also advertised on billboards in churches, mosques and community halls where Nigerians were known to congregate.

The topics centred on important, and sometimes controversial, issues common to many Nigerians and other black and minority ethnic parents, which helped generate interest and stimulate discussion. One topic that attracted significant responses was in relation to the use of physical chastisement, which I titled 'Spare the rod'. There were eight topics in total. Following the initial one, I introduced subsequent topics when I observed that interest was beginning to wane. Commentators were allowed to raise topics if they were relevant to the research and other participants were interested in the issue, but none did. I operated the blog from April 2013 until April 2015, at which point the data collection period had already concluded. The blog was shut down to prevent further postings and the necessity to maintain it once I was satisfied that I had collected enough rich data.

While some virtual research (see Thomson and McLeod, 2015) involve online and face-to-face overlap, I maintained anonymity for the virtual participants by not seeking their identity. However, in the early stages of the design process, I planned to invite potential commentators from the blog to participate in interviews or focus group discussions. I later decided against that because I wanted the blog commentators to remain anonymous in order to encourage more *traffic* (see Garcia *et al*., 2009). I also ensured separation between the virtual commentators and the face-to-face research participants to enable triangulation of the data. Hence, I did not seek to interview anyone who contributed to the blog. Nevertheless, I could not verify that there were no crossovers between the blog and interview participants because of the anonymous nature of the blog commentators.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are generally recognised as the most common interview format in qualitative research, as the open-ended questions enable individual participants to elaborate on their responses whenever they consider it necessary to do so (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Interviews are a way of capturing how people talk about themselves, which has a relationship to the *real* but one which may be complicated. For instance, during one of the interviews, a participant informed me that she had never had intervention from social services in relation to her children. However, towards the end of the interview she shared her upset at her partner for reporting her to social services for physical abuse of her daughter, and for the social worker's tacit support for her partner. Her self-contradiction reinforced for me that an individual can provide multiple, varying accounts, all of which they might have felt was the reality at the given time. The incident also reveals the benefit of asking a variety of questions and sustaining a lengthy discussion, as a participant might reveal information in answering one question that he or she had not mentioned at some other relevant point. This can help the researcher piece together a picture in the process of analysis that sheds light on a participant's representation of herself in relation to a fellow Nigerian, a social worker, on in the artificial close proximity of a one-on-one interview.

As earlier noted, the largest portion of the data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted based on a purpose-designed interview schedule. Three months after the blog was in operation, I began interviewing individual participants. The interview questions were formulated to directly obtain responses that address the research questions. The interview guide was divided into three sections. The first part was concerned with demographic characteristics, including those in Table 3; while the other two sections were open-ended and covered the preceding aspects including childrearing, child welfare, social and community contexts (see Appendix VIII for Interview Schedule). The key topics covered participants' understandings of normative Nigerian and English parent-child relationships. Experiences of social work interventions in England were also solicited; likewise were their thoughts

on the various ways their lives as parents in England could be improved. The questions were formulated to facilitate free-flowing discussions with the participants. Ethical issues regarding the entire interview process will be discussed later in this chapter.

As participants were parents or guardians bringing up children in England, some of them would have had contact with health and social care services, including schools, GPs, housing services and social workers. As noted by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002), as immigrants, most would have had some form of immigration concern at various points following their arrival in Britain. Bryceson and Vuorela further observe that these concerns exert both latent and manifest influences on immigrants' behaviour. With this in mind, I was conscious that some participants who had had child welfare interventions from social services might be understandably wary of references to or discussions about child welfare. I found this to be the case in a number of interviews, which I discuss in Chapters Four to Six. I was also conscious that despite my reassurances participants could still be reticent towards me because of my concurrent role as a social worker, perhaps drawing unhelpful correlations between my previous involvement in children safeguarding and my present research (see Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Furthermore, my identity as a Nigerian could introduce other complexities, which are discussed in the 'Reflexivity' section, subsequently in this chapter.

I offered the potential participants opportunities to choose where they felt most comfortable to carry out the interviews. The choices included my home, their homes, or a different place altogether. All chose their own homes. The average length of each interview was 1.5 hours; the shortest lasted about 55 minutes and the longest 3.5 hours. To ensure that no responses were lost or incorrectly recorded, all of the interviews and discussions were digitally recorded with the explicit permission of the participants (Saldaña, 2016). As guided by Silverman (2013), I also made extensive use of field notes to support the audio recordings and capture my immediate thinking during data collection (see Appendix XIV for Personal Reflections on Fieldwork). Accordingly, I also indexed 'transcripts, field notes and reading notes' with the date, time, place and participants'

pseudonyms to enable easy access during analysis (Wengraf, 2001, p. 208). As approved in my ethical review application, I made use of a highly recommended qualified professional transcriber following a properly discussed and signed confidentiality agreement (see Appendix X for Transcriptionist's Confidentiality Agreement). The transcriber could not understand certain Nigerian words and phrases, and marked those spaces in the transcript with asterisks and time references to highlight their absences. The process of correctly re-transcribing those missing words and phrases into text enabled me re-immerse myself in the data. These validity checks ensured that the data elicited are reliable and trustworthy, and that the research analysis and findings are trustworthy (Bryman, 2017; Marczyk *et al*., 2005).

Focus Group Discussions

Creswell (2012) notes that multiple methods and sources of data collection help draw comparisons in a technique known as conceptual triangulation. I hoped that focus group discussions (FGDs) would enable a different kind of voice to emerge, counter-balancing the ideas and perspectives gleaned from the interviews and blog posts. Freeman (2006) views FGDs as a 'form of group interview intended to exploit group dynamics' (p. 491). Furthermore, the use of all three methods together underpins a multi-method plurality that supports a critical realist approach (Cruickshank, 2007).

Participants in the FGDs were recruited from the same snowball sample as the interview participants. Given the use of snowballing, some participants were known to each other, which in the event helped create a relaxed atmosphere where participants felt comfortable expressing their views. Familiarity between them could also create an environment in which previously assumed positions and relationships are replicated in the focus group (Finch and Lewis, 2003). Focus group discussions between familiars can also lead to discomfort and fear of exposure, especially within one's social network. As facilitator, I was alert to non-verbal cues. In the end only two of the planned four FGDs were carried out. Both FGDs were conducted at participants' homes following deliberations with other group members, and each lasted about three hours. Each group was

comprised of four people; one was made up of four men, while the other was divided equally between men and women.

During the FGDs, use was made of vignettes to stimulate dialogue through real-life examples of childrearing issues in England (Mooney, 2000). A vignette serves as a 'concrete illustration' of a relevant situation that draws on participants' existing knowledge, genuine understanding and experiences (Schostak, 2002, p. 167). According to Bradbury-Jones, Taylor and Herber (2014, p. 427), the use of vignettes helps to evoke and synthesise multiple and 'sensitive' viewpoints. He further observes that vignettes enable triangulation by eliciting contrasting perspectives from the participants to reveal socially constructed influences. They also protect participants by reducing the tendency for self-incriminating disclosures while simultaneously stimulating participants' imaginations to explore numerous possibilities and produce/reproduce discursive exchanges (Forrester *et al*., 2008).

As mentioned earlier, I was guided by recurrent child welfare concerns from the individual interviews in formulating the vignettes. In steering the discussions, issues that puzzled me or were left unexplored during the interviews were also introduced for investigation. For instance, consideration was given as to whether differences in the length of time participants had been resident in England might have an effect on their experiences or viewpoints. One of the questions I used to investigate the numerous troubling stories about social workers from the blog and individual interviews was the vignette:

> *Child to parent*: 'If you make me wash those dishes, I will call social workers and tell them that you're abusing me.'

> *Parent to a friend*: 'You cannot control or discipline children in Britain because of social workers.'

This vignette was a reflection of the kinds of stories members of the Nigerian communities reportedly shared with one another. In total, I provided four vignettes to enable participants to engage empathetically and exhaustively with the ethical and practical issues involved. Participants were allowed to chat freely and so sometimes strayed into wider matters that they thought were

relevant to the overall discussion on child welfare concerns for Nigerian immigrant parents. Thus, they yielded data to supplement those derived from the semi-structured interviews and the blog all of which could then be triangulated to discern patterns in perspectives and improve validity and reliability (see Appendix IX for vignettes). The data transcription and preservation for the focus group discussions followed the same processes as those described in the interview section.

The focus groups enabled a different kind of interaction than could occur in the individual interviews or on the blog. While focus group discussion participants seemed more cautious about disclosing personal experiences, they also seemed more open and willing to discuss the issues raised, as well as debate one another. For instance, one of the groups comprised only males, who felt confident to debate fatherhood in a gendered way that was not apparent in the individual interviews or on the blog. The group dynamics also facilitated more earnest participation regarding suggestions for strategies for fellow Nigerian immigrant parents and state bodies to manage child welfare issues.

3.4   Data Analysis

Pawson and Tilley (1997) maintain that research analysis 'can only be as good as the theory which underpins it' (p. 83). Central to the recognition theorisation underpinning this study are the principles of social justice and respect for minority identities. This requires that the analysis of data does not marginalise the voices of the participants. As the critical realist approach taken involves treating the data as a socially constructed route to obtaining underlying realities, it entails not accepting all the participants' remarks at face value while still recognising marginalised knowledges.

More specifically, the data analysis involved making sense of the participants' experiences regarding child welfare practices within the Nigerian and English contexts. Participants' words are presented as verbatim as possible, except where I felt the meanings might be unclear to a reader. In such situations, I

followed Halcombe and Davidson (2006) who maintain that 'the way interview content is both heard and perceived by the transcriber, however, plays a key role in the form and accuracy of transcription' (p. 38-39). I thus represented potentially confusing data as closely as possible to my understanding of the meaning intended by the participants, as well as the actual sounds produced. The data are analysed thematically in Chapters Four to Six. In Chapter Seven, I reflect more critically on these findings with the aid of recognition theory (see Coad and Lewis, 2004). Overall, I read, re-read, and reviewed the field notes, textual data from the blog, and transcripts from the interviews and focus group discussions multiple times in order to immerse myself in the data (Silverman, 2013). This continued into the writing process, where I found myself returning to the data and field notes to check interpretations. My personal reflections from interviews/focus group discussions were also referenced occasionally to help reorient me to the psychological dynamics present at the time (see Personal Reflections from Fieldwork in Appendix XIV).

Coding and Template Analysis

The analysis was informed by a theory-led (critical realism and recognition) standpoint, which also shaped the identification of the problem and the research questions. The data analysis combined inductive (bottom up) and deductive practices (top down), which together informed an iterative thematic coding scheme. My approach gave rise to a structured coding system that was flexible enough to allow for permutations as new insights emerged (Blaikie, 2009). According to King (2004), *template* analysis is a robust means of representing key words, phrases, ideas or 'codes' that are highlighted within the 'textual data' (p. 256). Creswell (2012) writes that identifying central concepts in the data improves analytical thinking and helps connect ideas through classification. The template required identifying organising themes from the montage of textual data. Of the three data collection methods used, only interview data were used to obtain the template, for reasons explained below.

As King (2004) recommends for research involving 20 to 30 interviews, I started my analysis by choosing five of the richest interviews, and began the template

using NVivo. I used an inductive process to derive the themes by first re-reading each selected transcript line by line and highlighting key words/ideas embedded within each line and/or paragraph to obtain basic codes. Then I used theory to deduce further meaning from the data. Similar codes were grouped together to form categories. The framework was further organised into specific categories of themes that linked back to the research questions (Punch, 2013). I condensed these initial or 'lower-order' themes into 'master' themes, then 'organising' themes. The various groups were subsequently developed into 'constituent' tiers of hierarchy, in which the organising themes were on top and the initial themes were the lowest (King, 2012, p. 258). The higher order or organising themes provided a focus for each of the data chapters and is the way that the data spoke directly to the research questions. Table 3 is a simplified illustration of the analytical process.

Table 3

Data Analysis Process

Re-transcription	Correcting for errors and incomplete sentences.
Text	One-to-one Interviews; FGDs; Blog
Re-reading of all textual data	
Selection of five interviews for the template (to be applied to the remaining 20 interviews, FGDs and blog data)	
Codes	E.g. Challenging behaviour; afraid; disempower parents; smack; referral
Master Themes	E.g. Parent-child conflict; parents' distrust of social workers; interpretations of childrearing
Organising (abstract) Themes	E.g. Parenting in fear
Theorising	E.g. Misrecognition explains how parents experience disempowerment through their fear of social workers
Writing / Explanation	

NVivo, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was employed to integrate data from all three datasets into a single framework. A small number of new themes emerged specifically from the FGD dataset were incorporated into the overarching NVivo dataset. The FGD themes remained within the framework as stand-alones in respect of the special contexts they represent, which were the effects of the group dynamics that were neither present in the blog nor individual interviews. NVivo was useful for resolving the issue because I was able to maintain those themes separately but within the same project as unique FGD data, which allowed me to connect it where possible with themes and data from the original one-on-one interview template (see code classification in Appendix XI). Following the success of maintaining the integrity of the FGD data within the same project, I found it much easier to do the same for the blog because the blog already had clear frames, based on the eight topics discussed. There was nonetheless, a large amount of the blog data that although incorporated into the data set, was not actively used in the thematic analysis. Only about three of the eight questions in the blog matched those used in the individual interviews and FGDs; see blog questions one, five and eight below:

> Culture is often described as: 'It's The Way We Do Things Here'. Should African Parents Conform To British Childrearing Culture?

> What issues do Nigerian parents in Britain struggle with the most; is it poverty or the British culture, for examples?

> 'Spare the rod and spoil the child?'

To ensure uniformity and triangulation, these were the blog data that were directly applied in the analysis. However, some data from each of the blog questions are available for perusal in Appendix XIII.

Coding evolved in line with my theorising. It was interesting to see how the same sets of phrases captured a myriad of meanings depending on the lens I was wearing. It was equally convenient that all of the socio-demographic data could be displayed on a person 'classification' page (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.p. 147-149). The full person classification sheet showed the number of children each participant had, the participants' religion, educational attainment

and employment status, length of stay in the UK, age, gender and region of origin in Nigeria. However, some of the participants are known to one another and may be identifiable both to each other and more widely within the UK Nigerian networks. Therefore to protect the participants' identities, in respect of ethics and confidentiality, only an abridged person classification sheet showing pseudonym, educational attainment, gender religion and region is included within this thesis (see Table 4 in Chapter 4, section 4.1). NVivo was an overall useful tool in that it helped 'orient [my] thinking to the issues raised by the data' (Bazeley, 2007, p. 85), as well as reaffirmed the reliability of the data. Following this analytical method, I was able to obtain a well-defined platform for reporting the thematised findings in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Overall, the three different methods complemented each other. Participants in the one-on-one interviews seemed comfortable sharing personal stories, and in a less defensive way than in the FGDs; whereas the group participants seemed to see the discussions as an avenue to debate long-held views on child welfare in England. Contributors to the blog, probably as a result of its relative anonymity, did not shy away from proffering sensitive and politically charged views about Nigerian and other black and ethnic minority parenting in England. Crosschecking was therefore useful for deciphering points of convergence and divergence in the data (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007).

3.5　Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are of paramount significance in a study that examines childrearing practices, including some that are controversial and/or potentially illegal in England. As mentioned above, I encountered some difficulty during the initial individual interview, probably due to the reticence of the participant to discuss these issues in a society where she could have felt negatively judged or could face legal repercussions. However I ensured that I complied with the ethical cornerstones of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity to help allay the anxieties of participants and protect them (Elliot, 2005). These vital considerations in social research ensure that the authority and privacy of

participants are preserved, their identity is protected, and they are not compromised in the future as a result of their participation (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011). Moreover, this research conformed to the ethical standards of the University of Sussex, which are in accordance with major British and international guidelines (DoH, 2009; ESRC 2015).

All of the participants were informed of the research purpose, methods and possible risks. At the outset, I advised each participant of their right to withdraw from the research at any time during the fieldwork without explanation (Long and Johnson, 2007). As discussed earlier, personal data gathered in the course of the research were anonymised and all names were replaced with pseudonyms; all of the data was digitised and encrypted in password-protected storage accessible only to me. The blog presented some unique challenges, as it embodies several issues identified by Tilley and Woodthorpe (2011). They listed areas where maintaining confidentiality is particularly critical, namely, in research with vulnerable groups, on 'highly sensitive topics' or with participants whose informed written consent is problematic to obtain. To address these considerations, blog contributors were provided with clear guidelines and boundaries, which prohibited the posting of personal information and promoted the use of hypothetical or anonymised scenarios where possible in discussions.

Prior to starting the interviews and focus group discussions, the participants were provided with explanatory information sheets and asked to sign informed consent forms. Seven of them declined to sign a hard copy, opting instead to give their consent orally at the beginning of the audio recordings, probably so that there would be no record of their name or signature, endorsed by them in written form. However, I hastened to reiterate that their real names or signatures will be never be used in any form in the research. Furthermore, as information about vulnerable children might be shared, I informed each participant while seeking their consent that if, during the process of the research, any information arose that indicated that a child could be suffering or was at risk of suffering significant harm, then I would be unable to maintain confidentiality, but would be obliged to inform social services (Grinnell and Unrau, 2010; ESRC 2012). However, that before making any such referral, I

would inform the participant if I felt confident that doing so would not put the child in immediate danger. Such clauses about the possibility of not upholding confidentiality regarding certain harmful or criminal concerns create complexities that can affect potential participants' willingness to honestly engage with the research process (Elliot, 2005; Rubin and Rubin, 2011). I cannot likewise be certain that they did not impact on the accounts provided by my participants.

Other limits of confidentiality include the difficulties in ensuring anonymity from 'persons with whom respondents have relationships such as spouses, co-workers or neighbours', who may be able to recognise participants based on information they provided for the research (Bickford and Nisker, 2015, p. 278). Therefore, in addition to the use of pseudonyms, I intended to change the genders and identifying characteristics of participants' children where I thought it necessary. However, towards the end of writing the thesis, I became aware of studies, which underscore the impact of gender on parent-child conflict (see Zhang *et al*., 2016). I became concerned that changing the genders of my participants' children might undermine the value of the research to current knowledge and practice. Bickford and Nisker (2015) accordingly caution that as necessary as these protective measures are, they could 'threaten claims to research quality'. Thomson (2014) also warns about promises of anonymity and confidentiality, which might be unrealistic according to current academic data requirements. Therefore, I chose to use the correct gender, but ameliorated potential exposure by glossing over distinctive characteristics of participants and other relevant persons, mentioning these only sparingly when deemed essential.

Lastly, Thomas and Hodges (2010) also recommend that when carrying out research with cultural minorities and other disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups, prospective respondents should be informed of the researcher's dual identities in a manner that would help reduce any anxieties. In the process of conceptualising and implementing this research, I grappled with how exactly I should present myself to the participants. As a Nigerian immigrant and social worker, I have intimate experiences of being a Nigerian immigrant parent as

well as in-depth knowledge of health and social care policy and practice in England. Additionally, I am a social researcher working on my PhD. Ultimately, I followed Elliot's (2005) recommendations for reflexive practice, informing the participants that although I was a first-generation Nigerian immigrant and social worker, my researcher role was paramount, for it was in that capacity that I was enabled to encounter them. The next section goes into more detail about reflexivity and the effects of my identities on the research.

Reflexivity

Finlay and Gough (2003) define reflexivity as a 'self-critical lens' through which to develop 'thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched' (p. ix). The capacity for shared or reflexive understanding, supported by my insider status, I believe, also affected the participants' trust in me, and vice versa. Besides, my own experiences shape what I measure from participants' responses. Patton (2002) succinctly states that 'experience affects perspective. Perspective shapes experience' (p. 335). I was therefore aware throughout the research of the possibility that my personal qualities and my prior experiences as a social worker could distort or enrich my perceptions and judgement. Blaikie (2007) observes that the insider experience is instrumental to a better understanding of the social phenomenon being researched. As a fellow Nigerian immigrant parent, the participants probably identified with me much more than they would have an *outsider* because of our shared historical and socio-cultural background. Rather than view my history and experiences as problematic, Patton (2002) urges that it is necessary to fully comprehend the various experiences of the different 'stakeholders' in order not to exacerbate already existing concerns of the participants (p. 337). However, I had to be careful not to allow familiarity to compromise analytical clarity.

I also remained aware that the participants might have suffered exclusion, misrecognition and other forms of social injustice, and I was careful not to further compound these experiences. My intentions were tested during the writing process, as I perused the data innumerable times – looking for the best

ways of presenting the findings (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). I felt constrained that I had to make difficult choices, and also that it was necessary to explicitly demonstrate the reasoning behind them (Plummer, 2011). So, I was moved to ponder upon why I felt that way. I realised that I was implicated in the work in many ways that introduced dilemmas.

First, as a registered social worker, I have a professional and personal commitment to English childrearing practices, especially as enshrined in policy and law, and to implore others to do so. Some of my concerns were what and how the data spoke to my professional practice. Participants expressed critical views of social work practices in England that were familiar to me as a practitioner. As a British citizen, this was concerning for me in terms of the politics of research, as the work is oriented in England. I worried that readers who may be my neighbours, social work colleagues, and acquaintances, could view the analysis as a criticism of their best-known practices. At certain moments in the writing, I felt a strong need to offer some sort of apology for my participants' points of view. I worried that the presentation of the data in their raw form, without ameliorating caveats, might suggest that I am disparaging English childrearing practices. There were no easy answers to the dilemmas I faced than to be open, reflexive and transparent about them.

Second, I was also apprehensive that parts of the data were equally uncomplimentary of certain Nigerian practices. Being also a member of the study group itself, as a Nigerian immigrant, I was worried about how some of those comments presented Nigerian childrearing practices as brutish. I nonetheless was drawn to understanding the participants' critique of English childrearing norms as a testimonial of complex dynamics. On the one hand, the participants may see England (and the research) as a liberating space; on the other, it could appear both restrictive and regulatory. I was keen on not reproducing a claim to superiority for either culture (see Corden and Sainsbury, 2006).

I am also conscious that my grasp and presentation of the issues are influenced by a mixed scholarship of Nigerian and Western knowledges and epistemology,

which might create misconceptions. My dilemmas could also be because some of the participants' perceptions, and my interpretations, orient outside the accepted childrearing norms of England in particular, and Nigeria to a lesser extent. However, while I do not always hold the same views as the participants, I sought to respect theirs by opting for 'empathic neutrality' and making my 'assumptions apparent' (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 13). I therefore strove to strike a complex balance without limiting the authenticity of the research, which I think is more beneficial as it orients relevant parties to the processes undergirding the participants' concerns.

I chose not to produce exhaustive counter narratives to the participants' on some sensitive issues with relatively high moralistic undertones. This is because one guiding principle I maintained throughout the analysis was that the focus of this research is not to reduce the participants' issues to a moral debate, but, to as much as is possible, reveal what they felt and said. I believe that the frankness of such a position is necessary in academia, as we provide nuanced analyses of complex situations (see Pilkington, 2016).

3.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodological approach, which framed my study, and how the research questions were operationalised into a research design adapted in practice from a critical realist epistemology. I demonstrated my understanding of social reality through social constructions as both structured and intangible, but which can be reproduced through human agency (Bhaskar 1997). I have detailed each of the data-collection methods involved, namely: internet blogging, 25 semi-structured interviews, and two focus group discussions composed of four participants each. I also reflected critically on the sample that I was able to secure for the research, and the challenges encountered in obtaining participants from half a dozen local authority areas in Greater London. I have outlined the methods of analysis employed including the thematic analysis from a *template*. Furthermore, I reflected on how my position as an insider/outsider within both societies investigated may have shaped both

the kind of data collected and the analysis achieved, which begin in the following Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Making of the Nigerian Parent

Participants' experiences of their own upbringing, and therefore of childrearing practices in Nigeria, is the focus of this chapter. The chapter seeks to answer the initial research question regarding what factors participants believe promote child wellbeing in the Nigerian context. The chapter begins by describing the diversities and intersections within the childrearing cultures in Nigeria. In line with the aim of critical theory to illuminate and clarify the values and knowledge of the marginal (Kovach, 2015), the purpose is to explore the kinds of investments that Nigerian immigrant parents from various ethnic backgrounds have in ways of parenting that are distinctively 'Nigerian', and their use of these to legitimate their own parenting practices. This allows me critically to explore Nigerian parenting in England in Chapters Five and Six specifically to examine how their ideas and investments in 'Nigerian' parenting might be reflected in their experiences and challenges they encounter as parents in Greater London. Data for this chapter were gathered by eliciting participants' memories of their own childhoods, and were drawn mainly from the 25 one-on-one interviews (in the following Table 4), which are the default dataset from which the findings discussed in this and the next two chapters are drawn. Where the data presented are from the focus group or blog, this will be expressly stated.

Most participants in this study characterised their own upbringing as what would be described as authoritarian according to Baumrind's (1967, 1991) parenting classification discussed in Chapter Two. Their accounts shared many common elements, including: meeting children's physiological needs and providing for their education; the centrality of religion, whether Christianity or Islam in informing childrearing; the relevant distinctions shaped by ethnicity on a few areas; and, a nostalgic idealisation of communal living. These elements include a certain level of emotional austerity, and physical chastisement. Participants' accounts are discussed under the following thematic headings, derived iteratively from the data as explained in Chapter Three: 'Tough love and great care'; 'Respect and obey'; 'Discipline and control', and 'Communal living'.

Table 4

List of Participants

No	Pseudonym	Education	Religion	Sex	Ethnicity
1	Abiola	Degree	Christian	Female	Yoruba
2	Amanda	Degree	Christian	Female	Itsekiri
3	Andu	Post Graduate	Muslim	Male	Yoruba
4	Bidemi	Degree	Muslim	Female	Yoruba
5	Binta	Primary/NVQ	Muslim	Female	Hausa
6	Bunmi	Degree	Muslim	Female	Yoruba
7	Charity	Degree	Christian	Female	Itsekiri
8	Christina	Post Graduate	Christian	Female	Yoruba
9	David	Degree	Christian	Male	Igbo
10	Eleoma	Post Graduate	Christian	Male	Ikwerre
11	Folake	Degree	Christian	Female	Yoruba
12	Irulo	Secondary	Christian	Female	Igbo
13	Lorretta	Degree	Christian	Female	Igbo
14	Luke	Post Graduate	Christian	Male	Igbo
15	Meji	Post Graduate	Christian	Female	Yoruba
16	Nma	Degree	Christian	Female	Igbo
17	Olatunde	Degree	Muslim	Male	Yoruba
18	Omotola	Post Graduate	Christian	Female	Yoruba
19	Pamela	Degree	Christian	Female	Ika Igbo
20	Pauline	Post Graduate	Christian	Female	Ika Igbo
21	Sele	Secondary	Muslim	Female	Yoruba
22	Seyi	Post Graduate	Christian	Male	Yoruba
23	Shola	Degree	Christian	Female	Yoruba
24	Simbi	Degree	Christian	Male	Yoruba
25	Ugochi	Secondary	Christian	Female	Igbo

4.1   Tough Love, Great Care

The participants responded in earnest to my prompts about what they thought were important to their own parents during their upbringing in Nigeria. Their responses included terms such as 'basic care', 'specific expectations' of children, and 'sternness' on the part of the parents. They framed these terms

within the concept of 'tough love', which in Nigeria, from my personal knowledge, is best understood by the Igbo (Nigerian) proverb, 'push the child away with the right hand, and pull them back to your bosom with the left hand'.

I begin with some participants' explanations of their own parents' emphases on basic care and material provision as constituting good parenting. Parental care, including ensuring home-cooked healthy meals, funding good education, maintaining stable routines, and being a dependable role model, was high on participants' lists of what comprised essential caregiving. This is exemplified by Andu's statement:

> …If you [parents in Nigeria] do not feed them properly, it's child abuse, because they will not grow properly, and then the neighbours, the extended family or the community will hold you to scorn, saying: "you're not taking good care of your child, just look at his appearance, like someone suffering from 'kwashiorkor'" [a kind of protein malnutrition].

Not only was there general consensus that most parents in Nigeria provided basic care for their children, but also that the love for their children could not be doubted. As Luke noted in an afterthought, 'I didn't mention love because it's taken for granted, yeah'. Luke's comment draws attention to two important facts about parenting and parent-child relationships. He suggested that children raised in Nigeria enjoyed the unequivocal love of their parents, yet the point at which participants began taking their parents' love *for granted* became a contested issue during the process of interviews. While most people said they did not doubt that their parents loved them, within the same individuals' accounts, some indicated they had not been very pleased by the manner in which the love was shown, particularly when they were children. Several of the following findings illustrate this.

A couple of the participants admitted they had been somewhat uncertain about the motives behind their parents' sometimes harsh treatment (usually one parent and alternating with the other depending on the source of ire), particularly concerning discipline, when they were younger. This is illustrated by Simbi's comment:

> When I was growing up my father was a wealthy man. He had so many of us, about 60 children. He had over 18 wives, house helps. Even then

> you were not spared anything, you worked like the house helps. If I went to play football while my mother was cooking, she would beat the hell out of me and I won't even eat that food. I could jump up and down, clean the floor with my body, and she won't listen. Initially I thought she was wicked, even sometimes I used to wonder whether she was my mum; "is she really my mum?" One day I asked her that, and she gave me one hot slap and since then I never asked her any such foolish questions.

Simbi's comment to his mother, querying whether she was indeed his real mother was obviously his own way of showing his displeasure at the way she treated him. However, instead of receiving some reassurance from his mother, she reportedly got tougher with him. Simbi recollected never again asking her such questions, and his judging his question as 'foolish' might mean that he was already aware of the right answer before he asked.

However, some participants like Folake and Ugochi, described having the inkling while young that such harsh treatment did not mean their parents did not love them:

> My mum was very strict because I was the first child, because she was a single mum, she was a widow. So I think she just wanted to do it right, she wanted to get it right, and most of the brunt, the brunt of it fell on me. I had to be the example for the others, though it used to hurt then, and sometimes I think about it, it still hurts…. I can't speak for other people, but for me, I think it did me a whole lot of good (Folake).

> So everyone is scared of them, like me, I was scared of my parents while I was in Nigeria because I knew I couldn't feed myself, I couldn't clothe myself. So I had to listen up to my parents, whatever they say, stays. They made you suffer. They gave you real torture for you to understand the hard part of life, in order for you to listen…. (Ugochi).

Folake was aware that her mother's attitude was intended to impart some kind of life lesson, but nonetheless observed that other young people with less insight might misconstrue them and feel they were not loved enough or were being unfavourably singled out by the parent. As Folake's mother was the only parent, it seems that unlike other participants who had another parent to ameliorate one parent's firmness, she did fully feel 'the brunt of it'. Though her parents were alternating their discipline, Ugochi similarly described feeling unhappy about the level of sternness from her parents, but she also justified this approach to parenting. Both women came to recognise the forms of

dependency involved in the parent-child relationship, namely, that parents provide material security and in return, they demand obedience. These experiences reflect what Last (2000) and Renzaho *et al*. (2011) describe as the strict practices of black African parents that aim to control children's behaviour in a restrictive way.

Nevertheless, some participants felt that sometimes their parents' administration of *tough love* was so convincing that as young children they found it not expressive enough of the deep feelings they knew their parents harboured. In this sense, participants' parents may have been playing a particular role in dealing with their children, which was about teaching life's lessons to their children. In these conditions, children and parents did not necessarily negotiate meaning; the parents possessed experiential knowledge of the world that their children were yet to understand.

Growth towards adulthood gave the participants what may be called an intuitive comprehensive grasp of their parents' intentions, as was the case with Simbi:

> But eventually when I got to the uni [university] in Canada, I discovered that any little meal I prepared for myself in the living area, guys always said "wow, how come you know how to cook so much, how come your food is so tasty?" Then I remembered my mum and thought, "oh this works, what this woman was doing to me, I didn't appreciate it then". So I started appreciating her more when I was seeing most of the outcome of the training she gave me.

With maturity and experience, Simbi eventually began to appreciate that love went beyond public gestures, and that his parents wanted to inoculate their children against the harshness of life by introducing it while they were young children, in an indirect way. The difference between Simbi on the one hand and Folake and Ugochi on the other was that Simbi's understanding of his parents' actions was retrospective while theirs, according to both women, was contemporaneous.

Notwithstanding these complexities, more than three quarters of the participants emphasised the value their parents placed on love in parent-child relationships, to the extent that they appeared somewhat defensive. As I do not believe I

conveyed any doubt about their capacities to love, I wondered why they felt compelled to prove that their parents, and now they themselves, indeed were emotionally committed to their children. One likely explanation is that some felt that *tough love* could be misconstrued to mean a lack of love. In particular when critiqued in Western terms, because of different sociocultural value systems and public discourses about Nigerian parents, this form of tough love may be seen as cruel and in Baumrind's terms (1967) authoritarian rather than authoritative, which is supposedly appropriate and effective. Whatever the reasons, the participants' efforts to explain the value of this parenting style indicate that they were sensitive to how their parenting backgrounds would be perceived by myself and others in the Western world (see Bennett (2004) for a discussion on cultural sensitivity). This was something significant that I had to take into account in my analysis.

The participants with this outlook shared similar narratives about material provision and low emotional input from at least one parent, which they asserted was the combination that opened the door to success and happiness. They also acknowledged being treated with unsparing sternness whenever they violated parental standards, and expressed pride in what they had ultimately become, which they attributed to their upbringing. Even Folake and Ugochi, who both still seemed somewhat traumatised by their parents' harsh treatment, empathised with their parents' motives. Each vigorously asserted their parents' love, which they maintained was shown through caregiving but not usually in emotional displays of affection.

Tough Love as Investment in Children's Future Outcomes

Continuing the narrative of love in care giving, a number of participants recalled their upbringing as being marked by their parents' sense of responsibility for their children's future. Three accounts illustrate this:

> Me, I was brought up in Nigeria and my parents were rich. But I did not get anything I wanted immediately… but here the children want you to do everything so they don't suffer. Even the rich did not pamper their children so much as to make them forget that they would eventually have to cater for themselves and their own family. "Look at me; this is what I

want from you, this is what I don't want. I worked very hard to get what I now have, and you must learn to do the same. You must know that wealth does not fall as rain from the sky…" (Omotola).

Obviously they tried their very best to provide education, shelter, food, and it's the role of the mum and dad to do that. They are doing all these and they feel that they struggle to give you the best of life and the least you can do is just abide to the settings of the home, the values of that family. So the parents go all the way, they make sure they provide for all your needs always. Just few things they want from you: try and get your best education; try to be a good child. When other people see me now, "that parent did well". Yes, it was not a smooth road, but it kind of turned me out like this. Another way is, you think of how people show their love; it will depend on how they learnt love or how they were shown love. You might call it tough love, they [my parents] were not at all huggy and pecky, but whatever they did, you know, they did it out of love. So it all depends on how people see things and how they define things. So, these people might think in this country, they might think showing love is letting a child be free, very, very admired and very, you know, what was the word, not friend… flexible. You know, they feel more just to be free, just how this life is nothing but complete liberty. Nothing to give you pain, nothing to bring sadness to your face. But obviously, at the end of the day, when you have all this freedom and getting yourself into a lot of things, that's the problem. Our parents let us know where they drew the lines (Lorretta).

When you see the way some people bring up their children, it's very different from the way we grew up, and the way our parents brought us up, and, like, trained us back home. And I think it's good in a way, maybe because we've become really resilient to all the pressures, so we turn out better most of the time. It's made me a better person, you know, I can't speak for another person, but for me I think it did me a whole lot of good (Folake).

These participants were reinterpreting, in hindsight, their relationships with their parents. For instance, Lorretta appreciated the firm upbringing as proof of her parents' determination to equip her as best they could for coping with the challenges life would present. In England, Lorretta said she has been complimented for her dedication to her studies, her 'enviable' time management, and other life skills, which she believes she learned from her parents.

Participants did somewhat differ on the use of strong expressions of affection in promoting children's wellbeing, with some suggesting that some parents were too distant to meet their children's emotional needs; meanwhile neglect was

very much disapproved. However, there was also unanimity that Nigerian parents made sacrifices throughout much of their lives to meet their children's more practical as well as educational needs, and that children eventually came to appreciate the emotional attachment that motivated their parents to do so. The study of Nigerian immigrants in the USA by Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk (2015) found similar sentiments. For participants in my study, parental love was thus measured by the outcome of the parent-child relationship; this is, by the final product. Did the child become a well-behaved, productive, viable citizen of the community? This question leads to a brief exploration of key qualities that make a person a *viable citizen*.

4.2   The Importance of Education

Many participants echoed Loretta's reference to Nigerian parents' sacrifice for their children's education. Bidemi's statement sums up the views of most interviewees:

> ...education is, you know, the key to everything. If you are educated and know what to do, what to say and when to say it, that's very good.

When I asked participants about what their parents' considered as extremely important to their children's lives, in addition to good basic care, education was a major factor. Everyone was vocal about its importance, as the following examples illustrate:

> My father used to say, "I want you to have good education so that in future, when I am gone, you will be able to provide for yourselves" (Luke).

> My parents know that it's only through education you can liberate people who are suffering under the shackles of their culture and religion. It's sort of complex when you're talking about the rights of the child back home because it depends on the level of people, their educational background (Meji).

> Education wise as well, parents seems more interested and more particular about their children's education so there are things like taking them to after school clubs or having like private tutors come home to tutor their children. So, I think in Nigerian standards there are more, I don't want use the word leaning towards the European or Westernized ways of doing things in terms of their children, but I think they are aware

of how important education and just general care for a child is for their upbringing (Omotola).

I think in Nigeria the focus more is on education so a parent will think once I have given a child an education that is what is going to set them off for life and you will find out that even the poorest person in Nigeria will strive even it means working 24/7 to make sure their children get an education, they would do that (Shola).

In these quotes, participants' parents equated education with future independence for their children, and liberation from ignorance and oppression. Nigerian parents, including very poor ones, went to great lengths to ensure education for their children.

The main point of divergence between participants was not the importance of education but *who* was important enough to merit this wonderful asset. The four participants with the lowest educational qualifications were all women, and three of them disclosed that their educational deprivation was a consequence of their gender. Sele, for one, shared her sadness at not being able to finish secondary education:

…Although my father has many children, he is very rich. The only reason he refused to pay for me to complete secondary school is because I'm a girl. He said "when you marry, whose name will be on the certificate? Tell your husband to put you in school…" But that really damaged my life. I am intelligent, I know it, but what am I now?

Ugochi related a similar experience, although in her case, it was due to scarce resources:

…We didn't have money so my parents sent my younger brother to school instead of me. For a choice of girl or boy of course they had to choose the boy….

Binta was not able to complete even primary school in her youth because she was married off at the age of thirteen to a polygamous man in his late forties:

You know, I was around eleven at that time. So they put me into marriage at the age of thirteen. They mix the culture with the Quran. Because they don't want anything to happen, for girls to get abused, that's why they quickly chuck them into marriage. Then it's left to the husband to, er, whatever happens. By the time I was aged fifteen, I had my babies you know before my fifteenth birthday I had my daughters.

While participants' parents were all aware that education was central to improving a person, some were evidently less inclined to invest in it for their daughters. Binta had become passionate that girls in Nigeria should not go through her ordeal, arguing: '…the only way is to educate them… both mothers and daughters'. She meant that besides educating the girls themselves, parents need to be educated if they decline to educate their daughters. Shola, another female participant, offered an explanation, which resonated with a number others:

> Back in Nigeria you don't see your parents as your friends; you see them as lawmakers. I can't imagine going to my dad and talking about my boyfriend. All you are allowed to talk about is **education, education, education;** like every other topic is taboo. You have two duties as a child, study hard and respect your elders….

Interestingly, more than 18 participants considered education to be as important as the development of a child's respect for others, especially older persons. They also viewed education as the route to promoting respect and good behaviour. Some described respect as an observable behaviour by which good or bad parenting is judged in Nigeria (see Irukwu, 2014), and some of the emergent themes in this study suggest that participants' own parenting struggles relate both to the behaviour of their children and understanding of professionals such as teachers with whom the children come into contact. Even where education was highlighted as a problematic child welfare concern, it was often in relation to behavioural management in educational institutions, an issue explored further in Chapter Five.

4.3 Respect and Obey

Participants' comments indicate that, for them, respect and obedience are necessary requirements for the maintenance of social order at all levels, from individual and family or social relationships to those with various professional authority figures and organisations. Respect for one's parents and elders was of paramount importance, as embodied in Binta's comment:

> Good education is precious but manners [are] the best. Just like me, my own daughter must have manners.

In consonance with her upbringing in Nigeria, Binta, for whom respect and religion are as important as education, saw having a disrespectful child who challenged authority as a source of genuine concern. Similarly, others like Abiola, a Yoruba Christian, often cited the fifth Biblical Commandment:

> Yes, you're also a Christian. Does the Bible not say in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, "honour your father and your mother so that your days may be long in the land your father will give you? This is the first [Fifth commandment but the one that a promise was first attached] commandment with a promise!"

By referring to my faith, although she had not asked me about it, Abiola was trying to legitimise the values of her own upbringing. Nonetheless, for both Christians and Muslims, respecting one's parents was an imperative precondition for prosperity in the 'Promised Land'. As such, respect and obedience were identified as important pathways to both material and spiritual success.

Most of the participants equated obedience with respect, and therefore proof of good upbringing. However, respect was also seen as a dimension of personal character, a way of behaving which parents were expected to inculcate in their children. Parents were expected to foster this quality in several ways, beginning with directly teaching their children the society's codes of conduct:

> But Nigeria, it's not like that and when you tell your children, "please don't do this" or you will punish him, they obey. But here, they don't listen at all… but at the end of the day you are going to be responsible for their actions. And people will tell you that you didn't give them home training [upbringing], yeah, that's what they are going to tell you. That's why you have to make sure that they have respect… you have to give your children that (Sele).

> Respect is also there. Ours is a society that respects its elders both within the family and outside of the family, so I think it's in effect a key part of our education. If I keep emphasising that, that's because… it's a very important part…. (Amanda).

Sele recalled that parents in Nigeria were afraid of being judged to have failed in their duty if their children did not act respectfully enough towards older persons. The parent, not the child, was held responsible for not *training*, and so not equipping the child. Amanda pointed out, however, that though respect was not part of any educational curriculum other than 'religious knowledge', it was

so much expected from educators that it could easily be mistaken as a requirement in the curriculum.

Respect, Authority, and Control

The Webster Dictionary (2013) defines authority as the 'power or right to direct or control someone or something', and this represents most participants' understanding of the term. For them, the power to control others spoke to issues not just of discipline but love. They viewed the instillation of respect for authority and discipline in children as a demonstration of parental love because it prepared the children for the reality of control inherent in most facets of adult life. Here, participants' comments began to make the contrast between their Nigerian childhood experience and their experiences as parents in England – a contrast that will be more fully explored in Chapters Five and Six:

> Back home your parents would threaten to disown you if you did something bad. No child needed an explanation of the consequences of being disowned. You won't be able to survive because you depend on parents for too many things: school fees and uniform, clothes, shelter, protection, and almost everything else. Here in Britain, parental discipline of a child is labelled child abuse. Free education and the welfare state provide effective alternatives to the parental home. Back home, there is no such viable alternative. So there's no getting away with disobedience or rebellion. You'll be smacked; you'll be told off; you will be grounded (Lorretta).

> Here, your child may tell you "Mummy you are stupid, you are this, you are that". Back home you dare not look your parent in the eye and say "Mom, you are stupid", or your mom is telling you to do something and you say you are not going to do it. Even if you're married you are still under their control, they can [*sic*] still be able to tell you that this is what you have to do… (Olatunde).

Lorretta's comment illustrates the different notions of respect at play. Participants highlighted that for most Nigerians, respect encompasses treating particularly older persons and individuals in authority well, through obedience and deference. Whereas in England it refers more to treating other people generally well, but not necessarily deferentially (and in parenting terms, more akin to Baumrind's progressive/ permissive model (1967). In Lorretta's childhood, if children did not respect and defer to those in positions of authority

over them, effective parenting, which to her parents included enforcement of control, was impossible. Olatunde similarly viewed respect as a mechanism for controlling children. Individuals from his background behaved appropriately according to the standards or requests of their parents, irrespective of age or marital status.

Meanwhile, among the Yoruba, who constituted 13 of the 25 interview participants, not only was respect for elders and authority figures a very important part of a person's character and an indicator of good parenting, they likened a disrespectful child to an abused child. Hence their prioritisation of inculcating this quality, as Andu observed:

> Respect is another thing that is very, very important in my culture, you respect your elders, so teach your children to respect their elders… if you don't teach them respect, it's still child abuse, to be honest with you, because they will grow up being naughty, being not good. But at the end of the day they say, oh, sorry I want to say that in Yoruba: [speaks Yoruba] that is, this girl or this boy lacks training. So it's an abuse from the father or the mother. They will say "oh no you didn't train her or train him properly". So it is child abuse.

Andu explained that in Nigeria, respect must be inculcated into children because it is an attribute passed down from one generation to the next. Parents served as role models. Andu's allusion to inherited practices is in line with Renzaho *et al.*'s (2011) findings in Chapter Two, that for black African families, respect is an intergenerational practice.

In addition, Folake, also from the Yoruba ethnic group, was one of several children raised by a widowed mother for whom respect was paramount:

> In a traditional Yoruba setting, you can't talk back…. Now, because of modernisation we tend to look down on such values, and some even regard them as forms of child abuse. Respect is very, very important for me, and I would want my children to be very respectful not only to myself, but to other people around them. I hold that as very, very important. It's a key issue for me, respect, because I feel that when your child is out there in the world, the way they relate to people matters as well, and is credited to you as a parent who has fulfilled her responsibility towards her child… I don't know how else to explain it.

Folake explained that if any of the children failed to show respect to older persons, it would have greatly grieved their mother. According to her, Yoruba

parents expected their children to respect every older person both within and beyond the family. Shortcomings in this conduct would be regarded as a failure on the mother's part, while behaving respecfully similarly reflects back on the parents as having done their job well.

Participants from other parts of Nigeria also shared the perception of children as *ambassadors* of the family:

> You might not have money, you might not be rich, but once your child has a good education and is well behaved, well brought up, they carry the family name wherever they go, you know, and your mind is at ease knowing that you've given them a good upbringing… You are a model parent (Pamela).

Pamela described how respectfulness equates with good behaviour. These qualities, in turn, are markers for how the rest of the family is viewed in the wider community. Resonating with observations made by the Yoruba participants, Pamela (whose ethnicity is Ika Igbo in Southern Nigeria) stated that her ethnic culture requires children as well as adults to curtsey to everyone older than them in greeting. Along with other demonstrations of respect, a curtsey is always required when receiving or giving with the hands. Entire families or clans can be shamed for not instilling these customs in their children.

Furthermore, respect for parents will lead to respect for all other elders and people in authority in other aspects of the child's life, according to Irulo and Eleoma:

> …They go to school and he tells your children he knows the underwear their teacher wears, and he tells them "Mr Jones is wearing £5 trainers and I'm wearing Adidas". He checks what the teacher is wearing. "Mr Jones [has been] wearing the same shirt all week". It's not your business! He's your teacher; you're supposed to give him full respect! You don't talk to teachers anyhow! What they [parents] sent you to do is go and learn, they didn't send you to check what he's wearing, and if he wears £5 trainers it shouldn't concern you… that's why it all starts at home (Irulo).

> …For instance, if a child is misbehaving outside, and he sees his uncle, he will behave himself because he doesn't want the uncle to tell him off or to go back home and tell the parents… (Eleoma).

For Irulo, people in authority deserve the same level of respect as one's parents, and the way a child treats authority was an indication of the upbringing at home. Eleoma believed that good behaviour was required not only by birth parents but also by extended family members, who had the traditional duty of standing in for birth parents, and representing authority, in the latter's absence.

Interplay of Respect and Obedience

These participants' accounts indicate that their parents and older family members mostly regarded any disobedience or disagreement with parents/elders as disrespect or a challenge to their 'authority'. However, in several interesting ways, participants' accounts demonstrated that the relationship between respect and obedience was not always unqualified, and that respect embraced far more qualities and practices than compliance or obedience alone.

Charity, nonetheless, associated emphasis on respect and obedience with inflexible and often ignorant adults who covered up their lack of knowledge with dictatorial tendencies. She explained why, using examples of interactions with her daughter and a friend's early-teenage daughter when she was still resident in Nigeria:

> If I say "you don't do this", she will ask me "Mummy why?" In Nigeria, that is not allowed. You don't question your parents, even when you think they are telling lies. You don't question your mum, or say "Mum, that's not true". But here a child can tell the mum: "What you're saying is not true". Let them know the real facts. I remember the case of a mother who told her daughter that if a man touched her while she was menstruating she would become pregnant. The child came straight to me at the first opportunity [for corroboration or refutation]: "Auntie my mum said so, so and so, is it possible?" I couldn't talk, I was like "that is really bad", because at school they teach them these things.

Charity had already problematised the concept of complete obedience while she was still living in Nigeria. She believed that challenging authority was necessary, whether the authority figure was a parent or someone else with power over the child. She felt that children were misinformed and harmed by their inability to question authority. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) reinforce

Charity's point that 'parents who tend to be coercive, harsh… in their parenting practices are less likely to be successful than those who place substantial emphasis on reasoning in an attempt to be responsive to and understanding of their child's point of view' (cited in Coplan *et al*., 2002, p. 3).

On the other hand, exemplifying that respect extends much wider than obedience, the Igbo participants, for example, revealed that it was typical in their culture for a person to prefix a suitable title of respect (for example, *dede* for older males and *dada* for older females) when speaking to an older person or referring to them. A relative of Irulo, who walked in during our interview, demonstrated this by referring to her as 'dada'. When this topic was raised with participants of other ethnicities, namely Yoruba, Itsekiri and Hausa, they stated that they also had such customary courtesy practices. The context made it clear that such courtesies did not indicate that obedience would be required. In addition, one was required to offer their chair to older persons when there were insufficient or not readily accessible chairs:

> There back home, you tell your children what to do, but here they tell you what to do. [*Laughing*] I'm telling you, it's the other way round in Nigeria. When we see an older person in the bus, we get up and let them sit, but here it's the other way round; you get up for the children to sit down if you are the adult. But, you know, here they would think maybe its abuse; it's the children that are supposed to sit. No, back home it's not like that (Binta).

The participants also shared that they would run errands for older persons, including non-relatives, as a sign of respect, and would never use insulting language with older persons, including older siblings. These deeds are taken as signs of respect but not necessarily subservience.

To summarise, both respect and obedience constitute an important dimension of the regulation of social life that lays the foundation for the child's future. In the views of participants, good care and education are the primary needs for a child to develop into a viable member of society, and the value of these cannot really be harvested in the absence of respect and obedience. This belief was also religiously sanctioned, both for Christian and Muslim participants.

Disconnect with Contemporary Nigeria

Despite participants' widely-held commitment to respect and obedience, there were also some indications that participants' memories of the value accorded to respect in Nigeria may not be congruent with current beliefs or practices in that country.

Irulo commented:

> In Nigeria, if you ask your child to do something, he immediately gets up and does it. No hesitation. No alternative. But here, they will tell you "I will do it…". Two hours past and nothing has been done. And you can wait forever. A child wakes up in the morning and goes straight to his own business without sweeping the house, washing plates… His concern is breakfast and school… I tell you, it's not the way my mother brought me up.

Irulo negatively compared children growing up in England with those in Nigeria for not behaving with appropriate deference. However, the attitudes of Nigerian children whom she met when she travelled there were in accord with her observed attitudes of children in London. As a *returnee*[5] who lives abroad and visits Nigeria occasionally, Irulo expected to be received with great pomp and ceremony by the village youngsters, in expectation of wads of pounds and boxes of goods. Instead:

> Things have changed in Nigeria; there is no village girl any more. In the olden days you couldn't wear trousers when going to church… and you must cover your hair to be holy. I tell you, I received a shock. *Every child is wise now*, I even *looked village* to them!

From my own Nigerian background, I recognise that Irulo's expression '*every child is wise now*' implies that young people have become overly bold and irreverent; and '*looking village'* indicates that contrary to her expectations, the young persons were stingy with their adulation. To say that a Nigerian who lives in London *looks village* is the ultimate devaluation, a measure of some of the changes in the society. Irulo realised this, but did not appear to recognise the Nigerian youth's attitude and the attitude of her children in England as mirror images of each other. So while she was concerned about the loss of traditional values she grew up with, she seemed to assume that if her children were

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[5] Returnee is the pejorative term for people who live abroad who either visit or relocate back to Nigeria.

growing up in Nigeria their values would belong in the past, not the current generation. There was a *disconnect* between her recognition of these changes and what impact they might have had on her children if they lived in Nigeria (see Wolf, 2010; Tschida and Sevier, 2013). Bristow (2013) demonstrated in his analysis of parenting expectations and control of young people involved in the London riots of 2011 that such disconnect is not unrelated to participants' nostalgia over historical childrearing norms. Nevertheless, how respect and obedience were enforced during participants' upbringing appeared to involve other dynamics of control.

4.4   Discipline and Control

> The generation before also believed a lot in discipline and morals. As much as I see, they were a bit firm and hard. I think it has helped a lot of us stay level-headed. In children, discipline needs to be instilled. If you see a school where there is discipline, whether here or back home, you can always see the difference. So I think in terms of discipline… back home, I don't think one could ever fault parents on that back home. (Shola).

When participants talked about discipline based on their experiences of growing up in Nigeria, they tended to use words like 'firm', 'hard' and 'harsh'. Physical chastisement was a recurrent theme, a central tool employed by parents to enforce their instructions, to assert control over children and to forestall dissent. Every participant in this study experienced some degree of physical chastisement from parents or guardians. By their own accounts, as parents themselves, none of them have deviated significantly from their background to completely oppose physical chastisement for their own children. In fact, they overwhelmingly supported its use, albeit within boundaries, as will be examined in detail in Chapter Five. The participants' perspectives are similar to findings by U.S. researchers that adults who were smacked as children tended to then smack their own children and often are outspoken advocates of its effectiveness (see Horn *et al.*, 2004; Berlin *et al.*, 2009). However, the forms of physical chastisement described by the participants in this study are sometimes more severe than smacking, and studies on children who have grown up in the West who were subjected to such forms of punishment – usually termed child

abuse – have found them to be traumatised to varying degrees as a result (Turner and Muller, 2004). It is therefore crucial to explore the parents' ideas about physical chastisement as a means, in their view, of ensuring children's wellbeing.

The Use of Physical Chastisement

Fulfilment of a Spiritual Command: Many of the participants viewed physical chastisement not only as a cultural norm but as a moral good, based on divine command. Christian participants cited divine sanction in the Biblical phrase: 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' (Proverbs 13: 24), which some of them enthusiastically quoted, while others echoed it in other ways. Abiola invoked it as if it were an article of faith: 'It is my belief, we spare the rod and spoil the child'. 'It is our religion', Nma explains, 'there are no two sides to it'. For Eleoma:

> Even the Bible says, spare the rod, and spoil the child, so if the child is not disciplined he may end up not knowing his left from his right.

Charity argued for physical chastisement in strong terms:

> It's one thing to abuse a child, and another thing to correct or chasten the child for his own good. Don't mind the good-goody people among us, who want us to believe that children have a right to grow like wild vines, crawling on the earth or clasping whatever plant it finds near. The Holy Bible says it loud and clear: "Spare the rod, and spoil the child". It's not saying you shouldn't use the rod, and it says it's whom He loves He chastises, so it is a mother that loves the child that wants to correct that child.

Charity felt that there was a clear difference between physical chastisement and abuse. In her view, children who are not disciplined physically grow up to be wild, without any sense of boundaries or direction. Charity's vivid imagery of a child who 'grow[s] like wild vine, crawling on the earth…' is reminiscent of Andu's words cited earlier, with reference to an abused child who was not taught to respect. Charity is a Christian, and Binta and Bunmi are Muslims but nevertheless all agreed that religion endorsed the use of physical chastisement. Binta explained that parents in her culture smacked their children for religious reasons as well to instil some toughness in them, so that they would develop resilience and an appreciation of decency:

> … Even in the Quran or in the Bible we are told that, you know, you smack your children, but [it is] not abuse. So, from a very early age we know what is dangerous, what is not good. So, we are okay for that I think, yes, and behavior as well, we are taught good manners, that's why we can go to anywhere and stay there and live there, you know, without being afraid, because no matter what happens we got a story for ourselves (Binta).

> Our culture, and our religion, either Christianity or Islam, allows you to smack your child, in order to bring them up properly. So, it's problematic for Yoruba – I mean Nigerian parents in this country, that is, the number one problem (Bunmi).

Binta credits her religion with providing the moral authority for using physical chastisement. Her comment also suggests that only physical punishment teaches children effectively that something is potentially dangerous or harmful or simply unacceptable, and she distinguishes smacking from abuse. She went on to imply that good manners were learned as a result of such parenting methods, and these made a person able to adjust to life anywhere.

A point that can be advanced is that religion is an important influence on values (Heath and Demireva, 2014) and that religion is strongly interwoven with culture. As Binta, who is of Hausa ethnicity and like most of the Hausa/Fulani peoples of northern Nigeria, a practising Muslim, put it:

> We mix our parental guidance in Nigeria with the culture and religion, especially Hausa where I come from. According to their ways, I see they mix religion with the culture.

While rereading the data, the profound impact of the participants' religions and ethnicities on their childrearing practices were patently visible to me, especially as each individual participant stated that religion was very important to them. In critical realist terms, socially and institutionally embedded religious and cultural codes operate observably at the actual level, and more fundamentally at the level of the real; they have a clear and direct impact on people's empirical thinking and behaviour.

Tool for Developing Self-discipline: Besides religion, participants had other reasons for approving of physical chastisement. Both Eleoma, a legal professional who was trained and practising in England, and Omotola, also a

postgraduate professional, said that physical chastisement in their childhoods made them disciplined and responsible:

> For instance, we have many Nigerians in Britain who probably went through the same experience. Now many of them are doctors, many are lawyers. I suffered corporal punishment from my father. I used to get whipped if I didn't do what he wanted; with time I became able to recognise the sound and sting of each of the twelve strokes of his cane. And I believe that that particular discipline and training are responsible for who I am today (Eleoma).

> To be honest with you, if I hadn't gone through that, if my parents hadn't beaten me or, you know, taught me certain lessons that they wouldn't be able to teach me here, I probably wouldn't be the person I am today. Like, I probably wouldn't be that level headed. For example, in Nigeria, like you doing your homework at home, you get something wrong you get smacked by your parents, and if you are misbehaving you get beaten. You know you need to stop misbehaving because you don't want to get beaten. So, all those things, it sort of moulds you into, you know, I won't say responsible, into just being focused (Omotola).

Likewise most of the other participants agreed that physical chastisement did not do them any harm, because they would most certainly have gone astray if their parents had not 'applied the cane'.

Likewise, Christina described receiving a level of physical chastisement that would surely be categorised in England as capable of causing significant harm (Children Act 2004, section s58), as it involved enforcement of discipline with leather belts and bamboo canes, 'I was caned, and sometimes with belt. There were marks, but not to the extent that would constitute abuse….' Christina maintained that her parents were not abusive, 'I felt loved, I always did. Although my father was really strict, my mother was one of the best for us, we were very close to her'. Christina's case returns us to section 4.2 where the participants provided insights into the roles played by each partnered parent; roles which seem intended to counterbalance the other's. For Christina, her father was the *hand of reason* and so the 'bad cop', while her mother's was the touch of gentle emotion, or the 'good cop'. Her words and others' echo the findings of Steinberg *et al*. (1992) in Chapter Two that moderate physical chastisement was not linked with negative effects or feeling unloved among African American children.

It is noteworthy too that participants' support for physical chastisement was not linked to levels of education, or even class. Most who clearly linked physical discipline with religion were university graduates, three of them professionals with postgraduate degrees. This finding is similar to those of researchers in the U.S. such as Grogan-Kaylor and Otis (2007) who found that advocates of spanking mostly pointed to religion as a justification, but there was no difference in support for physical chastisement by class or education in my study, contrary to the work by Horn, Joseph and Cheng (2004) with African American families.

Resilience Building Mechanism: Other participants saw physical chastisement as preparation for life's hardships. This is in line with earlier discussions on the reasons for emotional sternness from parents. Meji observed that as a child her parents used physical chastisement because they wanted their children 'to be disciplined so as to be able to cope with the storms of life'. Loretta, a midwife, expressed frustration at what she perceived as overly liberal parenting styles increasingly becoming the norm both locally and globally. Echoing Meji, Loretta employed the metaphor of a storm resulting from a lack of 'firm' discipline in childhood to express her view:

> Yeah, that's why you see a lot of teenagers or even young adults killing themselves. The suicide rate has increased so badly because they give in when that stress comes in, when that heartache comes in, you know. The dead-end comes in, and they can't survive because all the while from nursery school, from parents' home, everything has been all nice and fine until then. You know, those skills of handling a stressful period you don't know it till now. When then you face it you can't cope with it, then you end up killing yourself, it comes so easily now to them. Here, where you think life is sweet, because I know it and I have seen something with a difference and you know you can come out at the end of the tunnel. But here, they want everything to be all lovely, lively, no dark moment, and when that storm happens, they can't handle it and you see them, as young as you see them, killing themselves for no reason.

Lorretta's explanation suggests that the responsibility for instilling resilience in children lies with parents/family. However some studies, including Gillies (2008), argue that external macro factors such as parental poverty, education and class intersect powerfully in the 'active manipulation of social and financial resources to ensure advantage…' (p. 102).

Reservations about Physical Chastisement

Some participants expressed reservations, not about the use of physical chastisement, but about the degree. Loretta's proviso that it should be used only minimally was perhaps recognition that it was not always effective:

> It's not that you are going to keep smacking a child for each time he does something bad. I can't remember smacking my child, but sometimes even the fear of that happening is enough for them to stop in their tracks or to some other babies, to some other children- if you smack them a lot, they're used to [it]; 'after all, he's only smacking, then I continue doing what I'm doing'.

Ugochi likewise acknowledged that physical chastisement was not enough to create balance and resilience in children:

> My parents said to me, 'don't pierce your ears, I don't want it, I don't want it for Christians because they're not allowed'. Some Christians, they don't pierce their ears. And you know they look nice, but you want to look like a woman; that's the only identity you have to look like a woman. And my parents are like, 'no you can't do it, you're a Christian', they just do [*sic*] some blind argument, and it's not supposed to be. 'Don't pierce your ears'; is it righteousness? It's not righteousness, obviously, and growing up, now I'm an adult. I can if I like, I can open all the ears ten, fifteen, whatever I want, what difference does it make. But they've pushed hard, smacked, beat, but here I am, I'm still doing it, so it doesn't really matter.

Ugochi's personal example is her evidence that physical punishment does not always ensure compliance or control, although she did not proffer any ideas on what else in addition to appropriate physical chastisement would create the balance. Charity went further in her conclusion that smacking was acceptable, but could cross the line into abuse. Still, the point at which physical chastisement becomes abuse according to the participants' experiences is vague; a line that no one could directly pinpoint but which each believed existed. Even commentators to the blog revealed similar blurred lines for ascertaining appropriate level of physical chastisement:

> Beating a child shows that violence is the way, beating might damage your relationship with your child, beating might make your child develop dishonest measures, beating threads the fine line of abuse. The Bible might not be a defense; beating doesn't really work. Proponents for and against have exaggerated the cases because they wish to instill their values on others (blog commentator Richard, see Appendix XIII).

As findings presented in section 4.5 below will suggest, I was able to deduce that the limits of physical punishment would usually be enforced by relatives who would intervene in a progressing or excessive physical chastisement to say 'enough is enough' (Pauline). The unresolved question was what the possible consequences were for a parent that had overly applied physical chastisement in the absence of relatives who could intercede, or refused to acquiesce to intervening relatives or neighbours. Nonetheless, the roles of extended family members and the community continued to be a strong factor for raising and protecting children, as discussed in the following section.

4.5 'It Takes a Village'

The findings in this section corroborate those of several others, including Obayan (1995), Healey and Sybertz (1996), Irukwu (2014) and Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk (2015) who explain that the Nigerian family system is an 'extended primary family' very different from the definition of family in the UK and other Western societies (Morgan, 2011). This view resonated in general statements made by the participants. For example, Olatunde commented that:

> We believe that everybody among us [a cluster of numerous nuclear families] belongs to the same father… we call it a compound. We do tend to believe that every elder [adult] is my father, mother… At Christian and Muslim festivals, all children wear the same clothes. So, that brings a kind of rapport, or a continuation of the family love among us, even when we travel abroad. …You tend to let them eat together. Eating together creates some feelings of sharing, the feeling that they are family… We tend to inculcate some things into the first children of the family: "you've got the responsibility of looking after your younger siblings…".

For Olatunde, close involvement in family members' lives affects every aspect of life, including how individuals relate with their spouses and children, and how they too relate with the rest of the family. Olatunde explained that words like 'interfere' were never used within his *family* because the taboo would be *not* to interfere in one another's situations. That is to say, it was expected that family members were and should be aware of and involved in one another's affairs. Members of the family support one another in matters of children's discipline, marital discord, choice of spouse, and a host of other issues. These are roles

that speak to the recognised differences in child welfare models in Chapter Two according to Sossou and Yogtiba (2008). Like many other participants in the study, Olatunde made little reference to any negative connotations arising from family members being actively involved in one another's intimate personal issues. However, it is also now well recognised (Akyeampong, 2000; Coe, 2014) that for black African immigrants abroad, this family network is either limited or sometimes completely absent. Participants who shared Olatunde's views nonetheless agreed that their way of life was particularly useful for maintaining a sense of unity among the family members and, where possible within the community, both in Nigeria and in England.

Communal Family as Social Safety Net, and Surrogate Parents

Communal living also addressed welfare concerns in ways tantamount to the provision of a safety net, as family members, sometimes many times removed, either voluntarily assumed the role of financially supporting poorer relatives or are called upon by members of the family to do so. Parents and older relatives expect their children or other close relatives to provide for them when they are no longer able to take care of themselves. As Abiola explained:

> …Back home, the parents believe that if we nurture a child, we give the child all the necessity that the child needs, and if the child eventually grows, we believe at the end of the day, the child will be happy to care for us back.

For other participants, collectivism is beneficial in terms of enforcing discipline and acceptable behaviour. Involving members of the extended family in children's upbringing evokes the popular Nigerian adage; *it takes a village to raise a child* (Healey and Sybertz, 1996). Like Eleoma below, many participants lauded communal living for its disciplinary role in childrearing:

> …in Nigeria, a child is raised by the family members, not just the parents, unlike in the UK where your child is raised by just the father and the mother. In Nigeria where I come from, every member of the family, when I mean members of the family, I'm talking about cousins, nieces, aunties, uncles, are involved in the child's upbringing. The uncle has the right to smack him… the teacher can report you to your parents and you will be disciplined by your parents, so anywhere you turn there is discipline. You can be sure that if you misbehave in your parents' absence you can't escape the consequences.

Eleoma like most participants emphasized the importance of community participation, in particular that of the extended family, in parenting. Pauline, for example, referred to it as a system of relationships that spanned the areas of discipline, welfare and child protection, a system in which responsibilities assigned to very close members of the family were met by everyone, including non-relatives and even non-members of a specific community:

> …When we were growing up it was a community. When your parents weren't doing too well, somebody would help. And if your parents are exerting too much force, then somebody would intervene. I remember the neighbours that would always whip their kids, they would run and be chased, and eventually a parent would come and take it into protection with a caution: "You don't do it, enough is enough". Or if you feel that today your parents are going to really do you in, you appeal to your favourite aunties to intervene on your behalf. People were their brothers' and their sisters' keeper and, being so, could also call a wayward member to order.

Seyi similarly portrayed the composite elements of Nigerian parenting in terms of community:

> I remember they were very, very, I won't say regimented people, but you respect your senior because if they [the parents] are not there, they [seniors] looked after you. And if you didn't respect them, how would they tell you do this and you do it? You know, I remember coming here and trying to continue that tradition. It's quite difficult here… So in Nigeria, bringing up, education, the respect, the community, you know, belonging, that, "look, if I'm not there you can look after my child for me. If my child misbehaves you can discipline my child and I'm not going to... [get upset]". Or telling the neighbours while going out: "if you see him outside tell me when I return. You can whip him". And actually they would do so. I knew that even though my mum was not there the people were looking after me.

Charity, among the more recent immigrants to Britain, was critical for example of excessive physical chastisement and children being deprived of freedom of expression and choice, but she was very much in support of the communal living she grew up with:

> Nigeria is a place where a child is not taken care of only by the parent. A child has so many parents, as I'd put it. You could scold your neighbour's child. You could spank a neighbour's child when she is doing something wrong, that I'm not against, but where it becomes bad is when the child gets abused.

Nma, however, was one of the few participants who, despite appreciating some aspects of communal living, denounced certain practices she considered abusive of children. She argued that Nigerian parents viewed their children as the equivalent of human property belonging to them. Even personal matters like choice of clothing during festivals or family gatherings were decided by parents:

> …Nigerian parents don't see children as individuals; they see them as "our children. Products of our loins and you have to do what I tell you or do get your own house and move out" [Laughs]. So in that case the individuality is bottled, which is a shame.

Although other participants' were not invited directly to respond to Nma's view, most of them did not portray themselves as having been mere appendages to their parents. On the contrary, many maintained that despite the parental control they had experienced as children, they had not felt stifled, and so, would not shirk the responsibilities they felt they owed their parents and relatives.

Some participants also drew attention favourably to other norms and practices of communal living. These included, for example, wearing clothes of identical colours and designs, known as *aso-ebi,* during marriages and other festivals. They also normally included children eating together from the same big bowl or plate (not simply as a result of financial constraints); this practice was observed irrespective of an individual child's particular habits, such as being a slow eater or sensitive to food temperatures. Some participants argued that eating together from one bowl at mealtimes taught children to share, to jostle for both physical and symbolic position and power, negotiate, and make decisions. Older children might learn to take charge by directing who took the choicest pieces of meat or fish, and also protect younger or slower eaters. The same was possible of any of the younger children depending on their character or clout within the family. Thus, a single large bowl of food could serve as a source of unchoreographed training that those participants believed might not be equalled through any other means.

In addition to fostering sharing and interdependence, participants' accounts suggested that collectivism served as a welfare mechanism for controlling children, preventing destitution, and policing child abuse. Thus, the participants

were nostalgic about the communal lifestyle in Nigeria they experienced during their own upbringing and wanted to continue living like that in London. This longing reiterates the relationship between how discourse is constructed and yet also is connected to experience.

4.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the ways in which participants talked about their own upbringing and parenting in Nigeria as a starting point for understanding what it means to be a Nigerian migrant parenting far from familiar spaces, even if within a community including other migrants. Although there were some diversity in the accounts gathered, and some contradictions within single accounts, patterns of mainly shared values and beliefs emerged that might be understood as representing versions, maybe sometimes idealistic, of Nigerian parenting. As will be explored in Chapters Five and Six, these gain further meaning in contrast to participants' perceptions of English parenting culture acquired through living in England.

From the data, I was able to build up a picture of the various levels of reality known to the 25 interview participants as young people growing up in Nigeria. A distinct structure emerged in the various talks about how love was defined, expressed, and understood, for instance. To take *respect and obedience* for another example, it was possible to observe the various layers of reality in operation that are not specifically visible in Western literatures. At the *generative* or *causal* level of critical realist thinking, respect was so institutionalised as a generational inheritance that the majority of participants did not think to question it. Enforcing respect and obedience were achieved through powerful but imperceptible mechanisms that determined participants' ways of life. At the actual level were customs that legitimised identity, and influenced participants' views of themselves as 'ambassadors' of their families and clans. These identities were also crucially *observable* through practices like curtseying, and deference to older people. As these fall within the empirical level, that is, people's lived experiences including views, and beliefs, Bhaskar's

(2008) critical realist concept regarding ontological layers of meaning provides part of the framework within which these phenomena are interrogated.

It is equally important to state that except for one blog participant, all of the data presented in this chapter were from individual interviews. Therefore, there were fewer opportunities for cross-conversation between participants. While I do not think this impacted on the quality of the data, it however limited the opportunity for participants to directly confirm or refute one another's comments. Furthermore, the proximity between researcher and participants created by the nature of one-on-one interviews meant that my presence could influence the ways participants conveyed their ideas, and possibly what they said. As noted in Chapter Three, my presence seemed less intrusive during the focus group discussions, and participants were able to have more natural discussions amongst themselves as seen in Chapter Six where the focus group data are more present.

Finally, the key qualities for raising children in Nigeria, according to Seyi and supported by other participants, are: sacrifice, education, respect, community (collectivism), and firm discipline, which might be called tough love or authoritarian parenting depending on one's interpretation. In the next chapter, I explore the extent the participants adhered to or rejected their background practices in their navigation of British child welfare systems and socio-cultural norms.

CHAPTER FIVE

Life in the UK is a Test

The participants' sense-making experiences as parents in England are presented in this chapter using their accounts of everyday family practices. It also explores their dealings with social workers in particular, other professionals involved in child welfare, and their interfaces with the general public/media. The chapter reveals the ways the participants understood English childrearing norms and policy structures, and their perceptions regarding how they imagined their own parenting was seen through the hosts' lens. Thus, a major objective of this chapter is to address my second and third research questions, which seek to examine the participants' grasp of norms embedded within English childrearing practices, in order to identify and interrogate patterns of harmony or tension between the hosts' and the participants'. This chapter thus explores the participants' child welfare management in England from three dimensions: their comprehension of English childrearing values and how their upbringing experiences fit with those; the participants' involvements in child safeguarding interventions, as well as anxieties about potential interventions; and, broader socio-political influences on the participants' practices and experiences. As in Chapter Four, much of the data presented in this chapter are from the one-on-one interviews. Data from focus group discussions and the internet blog, where presented, are identified distinctly.

5.1   Grasp of English Childrearing Values and Practices

The participants' responses to my questions about how their childrearing values and practices in England contrast or affirm their parents' during their childhood were unsurprisingly varied. As observed in Chapter Four, some participants revealed a nostalgic preference for their background practices. While there were points of persistent tensions, there were also significant shifts, accommodations, and overlaps in perceptions and practices. I explain in the following sections how values from the participants' upbringing juxtapose with the reality of English childrearing practices to create unique parenting

experiences for the participants. It is however necessary to highlight an underlying factor in much of the participants' understanding of English parent-child relationships. From their accounts, it was apparent that most of the participants' contacts with English-raised parents and childrearing were from inner city London.

Enforcement of Child Rights

Charity, the most recently arrived immigrant in this study, was vocal in her approval of English childrearing values and practices because, according to her, they aligned comfortably with hers:

> I like the government here [Britain]. I like how they go about it. They don't say don't discipline your child. Even the white people here scold their children while they are behind their doors. So, it is an individual thing, it is just that people overreact. How do I put it? They exaggerate a lot. You shouldn't beat, so a lot of people take it as, "I can't smack the child" because, you know, here they don't beat children. It's not like you can't scold or smack at all. Don't abuse that child.

Charity's comment illustrates that child welfare laws in England also serve as protection from abuse for children. In her view, the safeguarding professionals who implement policies provide oversight that confines parents to carry out their roles without abusing the children (see Parton, 2011). A number of other participants shared similar understandings:

> I don't think it's just Africa anyway, you know. I think it's the same across the world, where children are not encouraged to speak about such things, whether they are here in England or back home, they could be molested or abused sexually and they won't speak about it. In terms of being safeguarded against it, however, I feel it's the same here as it is in Africa. I think the only thing is that here, what they [children] say, when it happens [disclosure of abuse], there're laws. People pay their dues. There are very strong consequences when people find out. In Nigeria I'm not sure what the consequences are if they found out that Uncle Joe or this was molesting a child. People will get angry quite all right but there are really no strong penalties. In Nigeria, you know, the laws are not enforced so much. The bad Joe is also here in England, but I think there are more constraints over here, because, in fact I know, if you abuse a child and it is discovered, you're going to pay real harsh penalties for it (Pauline).

Abiola was equally passionate that enabling children's voices in England increased their safeguarding:

> I think just basically with the way the government is here, there is a lot of focus on children law, which is very good because obviously in the news you hear so many horror stories about children. So, they need to take things concerning children very, very importantly, and I think sometimes the children know this and like I said they abuse it. But I think overall, it's always a good thing to focus more on children, to go to that extreme than not to. I think so because although you might have some children taking it, using that to their own advantage, but at the same time there are so many children that have been helped just by the local authorities getting involved. And when you hear the stories in the news it just starts your heart thumping.

The above statements echo many other participants who felt that enforcement of child rights in England was a positive element in ensuring the welfare of children. However, some participants felt that many indigenous English parents over-interpreted child rights as legitimising *laissez-faire* childrearing.

'Permissive' Parenting

More than two-thirds of the participants perceived English childrearing practices as permissive (as it would be described from Baumrind's typology, 1967, 1991), which was counterpoised to their own preferred practices. For example, a number of the participants felt that censuring parents' discipline measures diminished not only parental control but also control by other relevant authority figures in children's lives:

> But here children are let off easily because they don't get smacked, and they don't know when to stop. And I think the parents feel really weak as well, and with the government, you know, with the powers, taking the powers off the teachers, taking the powers off the parents as well. In a way it doesn't make it very effective for parents to instil that discipline in their children (Folake).

> If you say I'm not going to give her this week's pocket money because she didn't do something she was meant to do, they say it's financial abuse. They [children] have their bus passes, which allow them go anywhere they want for free even if I refuse to give them money. But if I say, "oh, you, you shouldn't go out late in the night with friends", that's also seen as abuse. Meanwhile, my main issue is that I'm worried about their safety. But the child would turn around and present it as abuse because I'm restricting them from where they want to go. But I'm only

trying to protect them. But if they come to harm, all those creating those labels would not be accountable. I would have already lost that child. But the child will tell you, "but I want to have my life, I want to go and have fun with my friends". I've seen how dangerous the world is now and I'm trying to warn them, "that's not how it is". If they [children] call the police on you, now, that's a different story: "you're restraining a child; you're preventing their freedom; you're not giving her the taxi money or any other thing else because you're trying to limit them; you're financially abusing this child; you're emotionally abusing them". "I'm stressed"; that's the first big word for them [children] now. So, it's difficult, it's very difficult because there is nothing else you're holding over these kids. So they slip through your fingers and they are yours on the birth certificate but that's all. You only pray and ask God to do His miracles to make sure the child turns out good, otherwise.... All I know is how I was brought up, how every person around me was brought up, how we all turned out well (Lorretta).

There was a sense of fatalism in Loretta's comment. Although on this issue she was more expressive than most of the other participants, at least 20 participants shared Lorretta's outlook. As much of the data presented in this chapter show, they believed that childrearing in England was permissive, not necessarily because parents deliberately chose to be, but because of the safeguarding policies that allowed most variations of discipline to be labelled as abuse. This made for *permissive parenting* that also encouraged children to be disrespectful. In some responses reported in Chapter Four, especially within Yoruba culture, respect was of great importance in childrearing. Those participants' idea of disrespect as evidence of abuse poses a counter-narrative to official discourse on child abuse in England. Shola, however, linked normalised permissive parenting with lack of parental control, such that when parents then needed to be assertive, children proved to be beyond the available control mechanisms deployed by parents:

Everything is child abuse here in Britain. If you're black and you smack your child and this is from my personal experience, you've abused the child. They say if you shout at the child, it's child abuse; this is rubbish because some children need that *bha* [sharp rebuke] to be still. You see them [mothers] fuming… pulling the child, like, "huh move on, I'm not talking". That's child abuse. But just because you smack the boy and he shuts up, somebody would say "ha, you smacked that boy". But you're not pulling with the rope[6] - they use to pull children. I think that's child abuse too. You see the women… walking and the child is crying behind tugging on the rope and yeah, it is politically and socially right, but if two

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[6] Child harness and reins used for walking/controlling toddlers in crowded spaces/roads

> people are suffering, they are both abused, none of them will be salvaged. She has no power to control the child, the child is abused; "why should you pull me with the dog leash and I can't get what I want?" There must be boundaries. It is very hard to impose boundaries especially on young boys. If we go to a supermarket and he sees a toy, he wants that. I don't see how I must buy the toys they want all the time for goodness' sake! How do you start explaining to a child, "I can't buy you this plane because I can't afford it, blah, blah, blah?" In the end the child just interprets it differently. You smack them lightly, "shut up, let's get out of here, you've got everything!" I see a lot of these things as just nonsense really (shola).

For Renzaho *et al*. (2011), black African immigrant parents struggle with western childrearing norms because of deeply entrenched intergenerational practices, which they are reluctant to relinquish. However Shola, who is also Yoruba, suggested that some of the difficulties of African immigrant parents were due to racism. In addition, she felt that some of the hosts' norms were irrational because children require boundaries.

An Authoritarian Education

Eleoma, a male participant, queried the political elite's attraction to public (fee paying) schools if *authoritarian* parenting was so undesirable. He portrayed practices in fee-paying schools as embodying Baumrind's (1967, 1999) authoritarian model of childrearing, thus reinforcing some participants' claims of double standards by the political elite. Eleoma and a couple of other participants suggested that English elites are attracted to fee-paying schools for the *non-negotiable discipline* they offer their children:

> …children of political leaders are sent to private schools where discipline is non-negotiable, yet they pass laws that uphold permissiveness and lack of discipline. The principals in those private schools are like Lords and their authority is unquestionable…. (Eleoma).

Eleoma's contentions echo writers like Arum (2009) who suggest that '…judicial restraint has allowed public (fee paying) school officials the capacity to discipline students aggressively without the threat of court challenges' (p. 95). A significant phrase in Arum's assertion is *'discipline students aggressively'*, because this is a concept that resonated with *all* the participants, including in interviews, group discussions, and blog, as Seyi upheld:

> There is a class system. These rich people, the MPs who sit in the House of Commons, they pass a law - no corporal punishment in schools… Look at the people in power. Where do the Prime Minister [David Cameron as at 2013] and the top ministers and politicians come from? I mean, which school, what kind of school? Private schools, isn't it? Just like their own parents. The parents sign off their children's rights and say: "Look, punish my child as much as you like and I'll pay you thousands of pounds for that". But in state schools they say you cannot hurt the child. They know, these rich people, those MPs, they know that their children need punishment, they need discipline, but they are saying, "oh, no, no you shouldn't, you must not hurt the child…".

The tensions concerning the exercise of authority and discipline in childrearing were echoed in other comments. Omotola, for instance, stated:

> …Because the law is out there so much in this country everybody knows the law. I think sometimes children take advantage of this. For example, when I was in high school over here, my classmates were so wayward and just horrible, so rude to the teachers... And they, these children, they know the boundaries that teachers have. So, they go to the extreme and push the teachers to the point where they spit upon teachers and if a teacher tries to grab a child, that child already knows 'you can't grab me… that's child abuse'. I shall report you to higher authorities. Once the adult retaliates, the children threaten: 'I am going to get you'.

Omotola's statement rested on two key points. Firstly, that some child welfare laws are skewed towards children in ways that give them authority over the parents and teachers who act in *loco parentis*. Secondly, and related, she claimed that children often get away with being verbally and physically abusive to teachers but not vice versa. Omotola's comment implies that educating children in English government schools allows children to be unruly and ill-disciplined. In the views of many participants, these disparities further underscore child safeguarding policy/practice contradictions based on class and culture.

Not their Brothers' Keepers

With regards to the participants' overwhelming support for collectivism discussed in Chapter Four, Christina was critical of what she perceived as extreme individualism in the English lifestyle, which in her view impacts negatively on children:

> This environment makes our children lack humility. They grow self-centred and cunning, without any of the good qualities of children back home. They are not their brothers' keepers because such values seem alien to British culture. It's all about "my thing, your thing". I was born and brought up in Nigeria; we still care for our parents, we still respect them. But our children are different from us; they are so 'British' that I fear that they will not have time for us in future.

When I asked whether she was referring to children born in UK or children born in Nigeria, Christina responded:

> Mainly those born here, but even the ones born in Nigeria and brought here eventually become seduced by the system; I don't think they will care for parents. Once converted, they become worshippers of the self whose motto is: "Just my business, not your business". My children are no exception: "Oh, I don't have time, okay?" "Can you help me to do something?" "Okay, let me see. When I'm less busy". These children are not ready to give. "Oh, but you should have told me a week ago Mum, so that I can plan." Whereas when the child needs something you don't need to *plan*, you just take it on board.

Christina revealed an essential tension – that parenting and childrearing norms within Britain produce individualism in contrast to the communal experiences back in Nigeria. In her view, being British is synonymous with individualism when she described the children as being 'so 'British'. The second point is the representation of children raised in Britain as disrespectful - lacking humility, which supports statements regarding permissive parenting in Section 5.2.2.

The production of children preoccupied with the *self* – selfishness, individualistic behaviour – were recurrent expressions amongst a number of participants' analyses of normative values their children exhibit which they believed were wholly British-oriented. Bunmi for instance stated of her daughters:

> …She [daughter] will see all the plates there [in the sink], pick out her own to wash and ignore the rest. Oh, especially when it's her siblings.

> I've even tried to divide the chores so each person knows, "okay, I'm doing the dishes for this meal", but no. It's "me, me, me…".

However, one participant explained the perceived individualism differently. David welcomed what he saw in England as important individual attention for each child:

> I think that some parents feel challenged if their children want to do their own thing. They see it like, well that's being rude or mean, but they are only just expressing themselves. Not everyone wants to do things with others all the time and don't expect them to please you as the parent all the time.

David's reasoning is that children in England are more assertive and should be allowed more autonomy to project their true selves to others. Nevertheless, the participants' comments raised issues about the tensions involved in transnational childrearing practices and the implications for parent-child relations. The basic argument is that participants were not willing uncritically to accept English parenting norms. However, some participants' preferences for their prior childrearing values become problematic for them given their residency in England.

Family Men as 'Outsiders'

An indication of discordance between the participants' background childrearing culture and the English context is found in their gender troubles, especially for the male participants. Interestingly, men made up half of the 12 participants who experienced unwanted child safeguarding interventions, which I address in section 5.4. Most of these men expressed some resistance to perceived dominance of women's needs over men's. Luke, for example explained:

> I went to ante natal classes with my wife, when I ask a question the looks I get, the nurses pretend as if I'm invisible first of all. And the assumption is that every black man is an abuser, or something. The hints, and the nudges of "oh he's in the room, can you ask her this question?" And it's all those little things from before the children are born to when they're born in hospital; you're made to feel like a nuisance, It's almost as if the mum will take precedence. Oh, I just find it a constant irritation and it just pisses me the hell off all the time.

Luke's complaint is that English female professionals involved in child safeguarding treated black fathers as potential abusers of their wives and/or children. It would be interesting to know how much of Luke's experience is found in the general English male population. Olatunde's perceptions regarding favouritism of women over men (irrespective of race or ethnicity) in England were expressed in his disapproval of the practice of paying child welfare support to mothers even in cases where the fathers were identified and had parenting roles:

> Some mothers [living with male partners] believe that if they were single, and have up to four children then they would be able to get more money [welfare benefits] to take care of themselves, sometimes not even caring enough for the children. In order to get control of this money, women would go as far as try to break up the family. But that will affect the children later on because they don't have a father's support, which they could have had. The more families are broken the more the society is broken….

Olatunde was concerned that English child welfare policies encourage a discourse that makes men redundant. As a father, he felt that families are being broken up as men's relevance is diminished through the way welfare support is implemented (see Brewer and Ratcliffe, 2012 for some procedures of child welfare calculations).

Eleoma, however, believed that black immigrant families suffered such effects more because of immigration restrictions:

> Some fathers don't stay with their children, their children's mother or their wives, and they are isolated from the children. Well, maybe because the woman is claiming to be a single mother to get certain benefits to be able to raise the children because he is probably not employed in a well-paid job… or may not be qualified for benefits because of immigration status. …And if he says he is the husband, the woman may not get those benefits, and the children will be affected. But then the children are still affected because the man is most times not there for them because of that. …Invariably the child will be affected because the child will see the restlessness of his parents that something is wrong, and if a child cannot see that loving family home and secure environment, his ability to go to school and achieve high grades like other students will be severely affected.

Eleoma approved of England's child welfare safety-net policies, but like Olatunde he also believed that the associated practices inadvertently made

men superfluous to the family and contributed to family dysfunction. The linkage of welfare benefits to immigration status was perceived as even more damaging to black immigrant families. Thus for most of the male participants, English childrearing practices gave fathers an inferior role and promoted fatherlessness (see Gupta and Featherstone, 2016). Furthermore, they felt that the term 'male' which implies strength, lineage preservation, advantage, and power in many parts of the world including Nigeria, is much more synonymous with abuser, perpetrator or 'buffoon' in England (Luke). As such, I read some of the male participants' comments as patriarchal expressions of male disempowerment (see Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk, 2015). While accounting for racism for this demographic, an alternative point of view from the Western perspective is that gender ethos underlying the English welfare state embodies social protection for women by recognising the autonomy of women as citizens and their relative vulnerability to men. However, these values seemed to incur some male participants' anxieties about men's place in family life particularly because they perhaps viewed such support for women by the state as being at the expense of men's, and the families' needs (see Collier, 2008; Featherstone, 2009).

'The Smacking Issue'

In relation to her ability to manage the potentially competing values of the different parenting contexts, Binta reflected that she was a parent who was careful not to break the law:

> …they say when you're in Rome you do like Romans. The way we sometimes treat our children, smacking them and all, it's not allowed here, because when they start going to school, if you do that, then they won't take it anymore. You'll begin to see the changes, then she will be withdrawing. Nigerian children, when you smack them, they cry now and it's finished and that is it, gone. They won't think about it, but here they'll start withdrawing and saying, "Oh, I'm being punished too much". Oh, my God, they make a big deal out of it, which is not like that in Nigeria [Laughing]. And teachers ask them what happened when they see them start withdrawing, "are you okay?" And they [teachers] put words in their mouths; make a big deal out of it and it becomes a problem.

Binta implied that her use of physical chastisement was limited by the legal implications in England. Binta further suggested that professionals engaged in some form of child safeguarding or promoting children's welfare, including teachers and social workers, reinforce the sense of pain that children feel from such discipline. On the latter point, however, some researchers (see Steinberg *et al.*, 1992; Maynard and Harding, 2010) have observed that the sustenance of much of the pain from non-abusive physical discipline is learned culturally. Seyi also reflects Binta's view:

> I remember coming here and realising that discipline, that is, smacking is quite difficult here. …But, as the child grows up and his understanding is increasing, if you're a good parent and doing a very good job, use of fear [physical chastisement] should become correspondingly reduced. If you're still telling a child of eleven years, "I'm going to smack you", then you haven't done your job as a parent, you've failed as a parent.

Seyi rationalised that as children grew older and understood better what was required of them, there was less need for physical chastisement. Nevertheless, publications of *AFRUCA* (2012), which is organised by other black African British persons, and advocates for the welfare and safeguarding of black African children in Britain, would rather that parents not employ the use of physical chastisement at all, irrespective of age. Seyi's observation, however, introduces the contradictory concept of 'fear' from the majority of the participants. It was opportune that his observation occurred during a focus group discussion, and Luke immediately opposed the idea of using fear as a tool for raising and controlling children:

> …A good parent should do whatever is necessary to command his children's respect, which is a very different matter from instilling fear. A good parent needs to be a living example, I think. You can't be saying one thing to your children and doing something entirely different. Children are more clever [*sic*] than we give them credit.

Luke described a more nuanced parent-child relationship, which places the onus on parents' behaviour rather on the children's. Nonetheless, a persistent unresolved issue within the participants' accounts was how to apply physical discipline when they felt it necessary. Furthermore, Luke believed that the single most difficult issue for raising children in England was 'the smacking issue'. Accordingly, most participants were worried about whether to smack,

how to smack, and the consequences of smacking. Writers on all sides of the issues about physical chastisement including Larzelere (2000a) and *Family Education Trust* (2016), question whether English law on physical chastisement was ambiguous – which Eleoma also expressed clearly:

> Some may argue that smacking is allowed under the principle of reasonable chastisement, but then what is 'reasonable'? It is difficult to define the term reasonable because individuals have their own notions of 'reasonable'. So if you smack your child, the child could go to the school and tell his teacher that Mama smacked him at home. In no time, the social services are at your house, itching to make a charge of child abuse.

A measure of this confusion regarding what level or form of physical chastisement is reasonable and therefore allowed in England was misconceived by Luke, who is a legal professional (though not specialising in Children and Family Law). He was emphatic about not 'physically abusing children by torturing' them as punishment. During his individual interview he had stated that he disciplined his children with 'a soft rubber slipper' rather than a smack of the hand, leather belt, or whip, to ensure that he remained 'within the boundaries of what the law allows'. Luke revealed some important contradictions in his use of an implement, which highlight the complexity of the issue of physical chastisement.

Luke's understanding of the law and disclosure of his practices brought with it an interesting dilemma for me, as both a researcher and a registered social worker. I finally decided that it was incumbent upon me from both roles not to leave Luke with his misconception. I delicately explained that a 'soft rubber slipper' is legally 'an implement', which is proscribed in the Children Act 1989, and therefore deemed physical abuse. The law did not prohibit smacking with the hands only, provided no bruise is found on the child from unreasonable force (Children Act, 1989, Amended S. 58, Children Act 2004). Luke was understandably shocked and very grateful for the information. I reflected that correcting Luke might have reminded him of my social work profession and the power dynamics that entails. I also imagined that he could be apprehensive that my social work profession might influence me to report him to social services for admitting an illegal act towards his children. I felt it necessary to clarify that I

would not be reporting the matter to social services. However, although Luke was rather earnest and obliging during his one-on-one interview, I reflected that the heightened power dynamics could have some effect on his subsequent participation in the group discussion.

Luke's misconception points to the importance of being properly informed about the legal ramifications of physical chastisement, as well as raising questions about child abuse thresholds where similar circumstances propel families into social workers' purview. Importantly, all the participants, including Luke who had misinterpreted certain aspects of the law on physical chastisement, unequivocally condemned the physical abuse of children. Most participants made distinctions between physical chastisement and physical abuse. Interestingly, *the system* (law and policy) makes similar distinctions (Children Act 1989; 2004). Yet, even for those participants who claimed to use physical chastisement within the law, the issue continued to generate intense anxiety, as I will present in Seyi's account in the next section.

5.2   Child Welfare Interventions

Participants' fear of interventions could be viewed from different perspectives, including that such anxieties may be disproportionate to the reality of child safeguarding interventions. Therefore, it is essential to examine actual cases of interventions to elucidate the origins of such narratives. Nearly half of the 25 respondents had experienced unwanted child protection (CP) interventions from social workers and other professionals working in child welfare, such as health, education and safeguarding capacities.

Categories of Child Welfare/Protection Intervention

I explored the nature of the interventions experienced by the participants in order to understand the impact such interventions might have on their perceptions of English childrearing. In the following table are the pseudonyms and gender of the participants, with the relevant intervention types. Between them these 12 participants had experienced a total of 21 professional

interventions in the safeguarding or management of their child welfare. Only one participant among the 12 did not have social work involvement. The referrals to social services were made through schools, health services, and the police. One participant experienced tri-profession involvement; three had single-profession intervention; and the remaining eight had dual-profession involvement. It is perhaps necessary to note that none of the participants disclosed interventions resulting from allegations of sexual abuse. The categories of abuse reported by these participants seems to correspond with other research (Chand and Thoburn's, 2005; Bernard and Gupta, 2008), that black African children were more likely to be represented in physical abuse cases, usually arising from physical chastisement. I briefly present the interventions by grouping the participants according to either of the two broad categories of abuse in Table 5, beginning with physical abuse.

Table 5

Participants with Unwanted Child Welfare Interventions

No.	Participant	Gender	Category	Intervention
1	Andu	Male	Physical abuse/restraint	Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT)
2	Christina	Female	Physical abuse	Police CAIT/Social Worker
3	Irulo	Female	Physical abuse	Hospital/Social Worker
4	Nma	Female	Physical abuse	Teacher/Social Worker
5	Bunmi	Female	Neglect/Unsupervised	Hospital/Social Worker
6	Eleoma	Male	Physical abuse	Teacher/Social Worker
7	Lorretta	Female	Neglect/Unsupervised	Hospital/HVisitor/Social Worker
8	Olatunde	Male	Physical abuse	Social Worker
9	Sele	Female	Physical abuse	Teacher/Social Worker
10	Seyi	Male	Physical abuse	Teacher/Social Worker
11	Luke	Male	Physical abuse	Social Worker
12	Simbi	Male	Neglect/Overweight	Nurse/Social Worker

Allegations of Physical Abuse

Nine participants were involved with physical abuse interventions. Among them I will discuss several examples. I begin with Seyi who shared what he termed

'heavy-handed' practice by his five-year-old son's teacher and head-teacher for reporting him to social services without, allegedly, first informing him of his supposed wrongdoing. Seyi explained the chain of events that started while on the way to drop his son off at school:

> I gave him a light smack on the forearm for running across the road without looking. I've taught him not to do this several times, so I couldn't let it go like that. This happened near the school gates and I understand that a teacher witnessed the incident. She did not raise it with me but reported it to the head teacher who also did not discuss it with me before complaining to social services. When the Social Worker came to my house a few days later, she was satisfied that I hadn't done anything wrong, but maybe that's because she was a black woman. But what if someone else had come?

A couple of points can be made: the first being that Seyi felt within his rights to physically chasten his son for dangerous behaviour; the school staff apparently racially profiled him in their actions; and finally he was rightly exonerated, but only because the social worker had been empathetic as she identified with him. These points all have potential to cause disquiet when examined from the lens of social work values or impartial social research. Not surprisingly, Seyi's relationship with his son's school was damaged, and as soon as he could, he changed school for his son. In this instance, it appears that the participants' anxiety about the use of physical chastisement, even appropriately within the confines of the law, is not unfounded.

Meanwhile, Sele is a stay-at-home mother whose 10-year-old son was exhibiting challenging behaviour at the time of interview. She was at a loss about how to manage his behaviour:

> Tayo told his teacher that I beat him and they called me to see the head teacher. How did I beat him? You can't tell him what to do. I talk, talk, talk, from morning till night. "Ok, you won't watch TV for three days". That's nothing. But when I've tried everything, and this time he kept jumping on his bed until he broke it. I slapped [smacked] him on his back *twai twai* [a sound that means two smacks], and he finally stopped. Is that the reason for the head teacher to refer to social workers?
>
> *Cynthia*: did you explain all of this, also about how you smacked Tayo, to the head teacher?
>
> Sele: Yes. Still, she said, [makes a whining sound] "I'm sorry, it is my responsibility to inform social services of any concerns about the

children". So the social worker came. She *ransacked* [looked through] my house, and when she could not find anything, she started advising me about how to discipline my son. Like I haven't tried already. And tomorrow they will tell you that you didn't give your children *home training* [proper upbringing].

While insisting that her use of physical chastisement was appropriate and should not have warranted referral to social services, Sele also seemed afraid of being judged by other parents within her cultural network. Her comment that '…they will tell you that you didn't give him home training…' could equally be linked to the social worker's advice on how to manage her son's behaviour. Sele's situation captures the problem of being seen to fail twice over – by Nigerian as well as Western standards (Ahrens, Kelly and Van Liempt, 2014).

Andu also admitted to having difficulties managing his teenage daughters' behaviour in London. Andu had been quite reticent in sharing this information, which was drawn out in fits and starts during the three hours of his interview. He reluctantly shared an incident of police intervention where one of his daughters called the police because Andu refused to let her go to an all-night party. The police explained in their report to Andu that his daughter had alleged unlawful physical restraint. Andu said the police officers advised him that if he did not let his daughter go out, they would have to arrest him:

> And the police actually allowed her to go and they told me she would be back before 12am, but she wasn't. At 2 o' clock in the morning, the police rang, 'has she come back?' My wife said, 'You're the fool, because I told you she will not come home on time and she didn't'. She came home the following day and I was waiting for her, helplessly. So that was the first time. She went out late whenever she wanted from then on. I didn't want to go to jail… The Police should have told her to listen to her father; that it's for her own good….

Andu questioned the effectiveness of child protection policies that enabled young children to subvert parental authority even when that authority was, as he saw it, in the child's best interest. His case mirrors Lorretta's comment in earlier section regarding *permissive parenting*.

In the reverse, Christina invited the police to intervene regarding her son. She explained that she was forced to call the police to temporarily remove him from the home:

> Yeah, yeah I called 999 and I said I wanted him out. "I've got two younger children and his behaviour is stressing them and affecting the environment". When they came and asked, "where is the person?" and my son said "mum", the policeman looked at me and said, "is it your son that you want us to remove from your house?" I said yes, that I wanted him out. So, the policemen came back to me and said, "if he shows any remorse, we suggest that you allow him in". I had a mentor for him [son] at that time, and the mentor was able to intervene.
>
> The problem is that some children would like to go and live in foster homes because they want to be free. The privileges given to children are too much and when the children are aware they use those privileges against their parents, you understand? When one of my boys was trying to be impossible, I told you, I had to call the police. Why? Because, children misbehave because they know there is a safety net, the government would provide a safety net. So I said, "why don't you go out there and try that safety net?"

For Christina, her son had become uncontrollable. She explained this in terms of the negative consequences of allowing children too much liberty (which she believed the welfare support inadvertently encouraged), and a poor sense of the needs of family members. Christina further reported that if she had felt legally confident to resort to harsher discipline when he was younger, he would not have been out of control, and neither would she have needed to involve the police. Christina might also have found it difficult to manage her son without recourse to familiar control measures known to her during her upbringing (see Chapter Four, section 4.4).

For most of the other participants, child protection interventions generated a lot fear. Child protection interventions understandably produce some level of distress in parents for being unwanted investigations (Gupta, Blumhardt and ATD Fourth World, 2016). From Pauline's description, the fear remained long after the intervention. Pauline described her sister's, as well as a neighbour's, fears and subsequent loss of authority and control over their children following social work interventions in their families. Pauline related that her sister had asked her erring son to kneel down on a rug in the corner of the room, which

the child later disclosed to his teacher. Pauline suggested that the child shared this information after the teacher probed about how his parents disciplined him. Following the school's referral of the case to social services and a subsequent visit from a social worker, Pauline observed:

> It has become impossible for my sister to manage any of the children. I take care of …[*sic*] my sister takes very good care of her children. They eat healthy food, they are well-grounded, always dressed properly. In fact, my sister's children are among the brightest in their classes. The social worker has done more harm than good in my family, to be honest with you. She said I, em, my sister should set time-out for maximum five minutes not twenty. How do you come to that conclusion when you don't know the child; you just pluck a number out of air?

Pauline felt that social work assessments were not comprehensive enough, yet were presumptuous as they failed to consider the entire wellbeing of the child, as well as the influence of his personal characteristics, which were unknown to the social worker at the time. Pauline was also baffled as to how the social worker reached a conclusion about the length of time it would take a child she did not know to calm down or feel chastened enough. In Pauline's view, her sister's child had not been harmed by the discipline and none of her children had ever been. As she saw it, her sister had also not broken any laws about child discipline and was a much better parent before the intervention because it had made her afraid and insecure and diminished her parental authority over her children. Pauline thus had understandable concerns about the impact of some child protection interventions particularly where children appeared to be thriving prior to the intervention.

Pauline's response was so visceral it was clear that she had some personal experience similar to this but was not comfortable discussing it; she spoke instead about her sister and neighbours. I included Pauline in this category of participants because she said 'yes' to the question about whether she had experienced direct child protection intervention, which she supported with the above example. Similarly, some other cases, including Erebamba's internet blog post (discussed in section 5.3 below) highlight the intimate nature of interventions on parents and how quickly they feel disempowered in such circumstances. There is some evidence in the wider literature that since the

Laming (2003) inquiry following Victoria Climbie's death, children's social workers may have become increasingly heavy-handed towards parents (see Williams and Soydan, 2005). Some participants' stories also appear to suggest that children may manipulate the system for their supposed benefit, although this aspect of the problem is outside the remit of this research.

Nma's interaction with social workers was also initiated through her son's school. Ironically, the school had reported Nma's son to her for not doing his class work and disrupting the class. Nma subsequently physically chastised the boy when he got home. However, she claimed that the teacher the following day had specifically asked her son whether his parents had disciplined him, and how. In this regard, Nma felt like the entire episode had been an entrapment:

> My experience with this school was that, you know, I didn't see them as coming to solve the problem. I see them as infusing fear. …By the way they were rolling on the chair and telling me, "I have obligation to social services to report your case". But they have no obligation to my family, to respect our family, or even to the child. They have no responsibility to the child to make him stable and happy at school. Their only obligation was to social services; of course that hurt a lot. So in that case they assumed that I didn't know my parental rights. Which is a shame.

> Don't panic because what they do, they infuse fear in you just because of the same thing they want, and they don't want to deal with you. They don't understand your culture. They don't care.

Nma provided a withering assessment of her son's school. Her choice of adjectives showed how strongly she felt about their seeming incompetence. Also evident during the interview was her sense of isolation from professionals who she felt should have been working in partnership with her family. Her interpretation reflects her low estimation of the school staff regarding actions that, if true, might be termed cultural incompetence (see Bernard and Gupta, 2008). In the end, Nma said social workers took the case to court and it lasted approximately two years.

Meanwhile, Irulo's experience of child protection intervention began when one of her children was ill in hospital. According to her, her then estranged partner wanted to take the children away from her, and so informed the hospital medical staff that she had physically abused her child by using a 'stick' to

discipline him. Incidentally, Irulo provided this information in an unguarded moment during her individual interview, after initially denying having experienced any unwanted child safeguarding intervention. My attempts to explore the issue further with her were unsuccessful, as she declined to respond any more to my prompts. However I observed the pain she still appeared to suffer from the experience and discontinued that line of discussion. The other two participants who experienced CP interventions were Eleoma and Luke, each of whom claimed to have used appropriate physical chastisement on their children but still were referred to social services for child abuse. The recurrent threads of feelings of confusion, fear, heavy-handedness and poor practice by professionals in the participants' reports strengthens these parents' narratives.

Allegations of Neglect (Non-supervision, Obesity)

Three participants, Bunmi, Simbi, and Lorretta, received child protection interventions in relation to child neglect. To illustrate, Simbi's intervention occurred following a routine health check at the local health centre for his child. The duty nurse weighed his child and declared her seriously overweight:

> One example was my daughter, my first daughter, when she was a baby we were doing everything by the book because we were new parents [laughs]. We'd take her for weigh-ins every few weeks, that's what we'd do, and one day we got there and were told by this nurse that our child was obese, which we found incredible, because the baby just looked like a normal baby, the baby wasn't even fat! She wasn't even fat!

> The social worker that came also didn't have anything on us. It was another GP who finally had perspective; "Babies of African heritage tend to be heavier than white babies. And both of you are quite tall anyways. Looking at your child compared to your proportion, your weight, she's fine. And yes, your baby for her age is heavier but she's also taller than other babies, she still is now. Ah yes, she's so, nurse is talking nonsense". The nurse looked at her weight, without considering her age, without considering anything else.

Simbi's story did not only emphasise ineffective practice at his surgery, it shows his distrust of child welfare practitioners, which might have been exacerbated by previous disturbing tales about child safeguarding professionals. As further

explained in Chapter Six, section 6.1, even the positive role played by a subsequent doctor was unable to dispel Simbi's mistrust of the professionals.

Similarly, Lorretta's intervention was health related. Loretta told of receiving unannounced visits from a health visitor, and later a social worker, after she had taken her hyperactive child to hospital Accident and Emergency department several times for minor falls:

> I've never felt so threatened or unsure of myself as I did on that day. What made it worse was that after all the interrogation from the doctors and nurses, and then the health visitor who came the next day, they still sent another social worker to my house without informing me. I opened the door and there she was! I felt like a criminal. For me, that was it. Never again. Unless my child is dying, they won't see me in hospital.

The idea of unannounced visits appears in particular to have alarmed Lorretta, whose fear-induced decision to avoid hospitals in the future may of course put her child at greater risk. Lorretta found the social worker's visit particularly threatening. Lorretta did not expect the case to carry on to social services because the health visitor's assessment of the safety of Lorretta's home and her capacity to safeguard the baby had not been negative. There are notable similarities between her and Simbi's decisions to shun contact with any professionals and agencies linked with child safeguarding.

5.3   Socio-political Influences in childrearing

Fear was a constant refrain running through participants' understandings of external influences on their parenting practices and child welfare management when living in England. It was also perceived within media, public opinion and interactions, and political discourses. Fear was so pervasive in the participants' discussions that it is aptly embodied in Luke's terse, 'Nigerians parent in fear'. Their fears coalesced around four key areas of concern:

- being misunderstood and misjudged as a result of different cultural backgrounds and racism;
- being afraid of their children's reactions to control;

- worried about the impact of child protection policies, professionals and agencies;
- concerned about perceptions and treatment from the general public and media.

Disadvantage of 'Africanness'

> I think all Africans or people of African origin would assume that when dealing with the authorities being African is a disadvantage and creates negative assumptions in the minds of the people you're dealing with; that's the assumption that you make before you do anything… (Luke).

Several writers (Cohen and Garcia, 2008; Aronson and McGlone, 2009) support the view that stereotyped people are more sensitive, and become more vigilant for cues indicating threat. Luke's statement demonstrates how *being African* becomes a disadvantage for black Africans parents in England (Blackshire-Belay, 2001; Coe, 2014). Parents are often so sensitive that they feel threatened by interactions with the authorities that could be normal with other ethnic groups. Some participants recounted incidents where they felt the host society interpreted their practices as ignorant, obsolete or out-of-touch, hence the disparaging treatment. Irulo and Charity felt their values were questioned in judgemental ways in relation to their self-confessed conservative views on teenage sexual conduct and nightlife:

> Don't let your daughter sleep outside. Anywhere they go, let them come back home. Some parents let their 16-year-old children bring their boyfriends to sleep in their home, which we don't do in our country. But white people do it, and they say, "oh you're so old-fashioned". They said, "it's the culture in Britain, you're here now, not in Africa" (Irulo).

> I still think you should teach them to dress well because they could be abused probably because of clothes… In this country you see them going to school and they fix long nails, they have the Brazilian [extensions] hair. They use highlighter, use foundation, and makeup, and I'm like, "this child might be just 10, 12 or 13 in secondary school and dressed so seductively". They have mini skirts, and everything, they are half naked… it's not part of our culture. …There are other things we don't condone in Africa, but with the law here we don't have any choice, we have to follow it. It's like going out at an awkward time, going out late in the night; you cannot stop them. If you stop them, they'll report you to social services, they will take the child from you and you don't want your children to be taken, so it is a big problem (Charity).

Earlier in this chapter, it was apparent that some participants (Sele and Andu) endured external pressures to visibly reproduce a certain type of parenting in England lest they were perceived to have failed. In this instance, participants felt constrained within a *difference* that was equally problematic.

Intimidation from Children

At least half of all the participants described being afraid of their children's reactions to measures of parental control. Among them for example, Eleoma explained this in terms of how policies and practices intended to ensure children's safeguarding had become tools that 'inject fear' in parents:

> …They have rights here, and that is why I said the law, despite the protection it offers children, also handicaps parents from giving them proper moral upbringing and discipline. So, children now exploit, even abuse the laws designed to protect them; the laws are now used negatively to intimidate their parents with such threats as: "If you touch me I will tell my teacher in school". And, the teachers incite them: "call the police if anything happens". They give them phone numbers at school, social services they can call, so they are very knowledgeable about what to do if they feel you've trampled on their rights, irrespective of how insignificant you may think the right is. So that actually injects fear into you.

In contrast with the male participants' impressions (discussed in Section 5.2) that women in England exploit child welfare laws or policies, parents in this section viewed children as misusing the same laws and policies. In a long essay posted on the blog (Appendix XIII), Erebamba told the story of a child who 'reported' a minor family squabble to his teacher, which resulted in his removal from home and subsequent disintegration of the family. Retelling such anecdotal stories among the Nigerian communities would heighten their anxieties about child protection interventions. Irulo also aligned with those participants who argued that fear of children's options inordinately constrained parents:

> In Nigeria we don't fear our children. It's them [parents] who brought you up in this life; they don't fear you. And it's they who teach you what to do, train you in what to do. But here, a child can put fear in you; you're scared of them. They do the wrong thing but you can't rebuke them or correct them because if you do they say "mummy you have no right to

tell me that!" Because you know if they tell their friend, their friend can tell them what to do about you.

From this comment, we can draw a number of inferences. The first points to a reverse discourse from that described in Chapter Four where some participants revealed the significant levels of parental control during their upbringing in Nigeria (see Smith, 2001; Folami, 2011). Secondly, while parents in Nigeria were confident about correcting their children in the manner they chose, such parental liberties could lead to serious problems for parents in the England, sometimes at the behest of the child.

In addition, some participants' anxieties about their children's options in England introduces other concerns:

> Well, to be honest, because of the fear of the system I had to play along with the system, as I didn't want to go to prison, but still they [children] know, because I have to let my children know that if I pull my child's ear and the child calls the police we know who will suffer. I tell the children: "If they lock me up, then you won't see your daddy and me anymore. I will go for rest; I won't even have to go to work to feed you. You will go to work and feed yourself or you go to a foster home and see if they will treat you the way me and your mother treat you".

Simbi disclosed using unconventional means including emotional blackmail and exhibiting an attitude of false 'compliance' (Reder and Duncan, 2013, p. 106) towards social workers in order not to appear uncooperative. His account suggests that better-informed social work practices might reduce secretive behaviours employed by parents, and ensure more effective child safeguarding.

Professed intimidation from children also led a number of the participants to make broad generalisations about their dual (English and Nigerian) child welfare experiences. Omotola for instance recapped that her late-teenage experience of England equipped her with a more balanced view of the phenomenon especially when contrasted with her Nigerian upbringing:

> See, it is a tale of two extremes for me. In Britain, sometimes they give children too many rights and I think there needs to be a balancing act when it comes to children. Whereas in Nigeria, children are just there, they don't really have a voice. Here sometimes it feels like they have too much of a voice that sometimes it can get to the child's head and they

feel like they are actually the ones in power or they are actually the ones in authority over the parents or in school, you know….

The forceful language in 'a tale of two extremes' is instructive. It illustrates some participants' struggles as they navigate adjustments from one perceived 'extreme' (Nigerian normative practices) to another (English practices). The majority of participants proclaimed unequivocal support for a strengthening of parental (and teachers') authority over their children, particularly around the issue of discipline and control. Yet, when asked about the extent to which children's rights (including freedom of expression) should be upheld, some argued strongly for no limits on respecting/enforcing children's rights. Some of the participants referred to the value of child-centred practice, which allow social workers in England to listen better to children's disclosures, and non-verbal stories of neglect and abuse (see Morgan, 2011; Lefevre, 2015). Alternative models of legitimate authority in response to these self-contradictory positions could reside in Omotola's sphere of 'a balancing act', which is further addressed in Chapter Six.

Afraid of 'Care'

The focus group discussions highlighted the high level of fear amongst participants regarding the potential for children to be taken into care. During one discussion, two participants echoed each other's apprehensions:

> …They have rights to call the social worker or the child line or whoever they need to call and get their parents into problems and forget that if they are then taken into care that does them more harm than perhaps their parents trying to bring them up or educate them the right way (Amanda).

> …You have to be extremely, extremely careful with the way you support your kids as well so that you won't get yourself into trouble… with that kind of attitude, with that kind of stuff, you might get yourself in trouble that shows you are not really caring for your children properly. But back home sometimes, although you do care for them, you can leave them with other children out there, unlike here. You are limited because of the kind of environment. You can lose your child (David).

The assumption underpinning both comments is that any involvement with social workers is an automatic avenue for the child to be removed into care. As

Losoncz *et al*. (2015) observed, other races and ethnicities in England share some similar concerns about the impact of child safeguarding policies. However, the uniqueness of my participants as black African immigrants remain in their declared disadvantages of *Africanness*.

Mass Fear

The study's data were collected a few years before the *Brexit* (British exit from EU) vote in 2016, in which 'immigration [was] the issue on which those seeking Brexit have focused most' (McKee and Galsworthy, 2016, p. 3). However, the participants were already alert to and experiencing strong undercurrents of xenophobia within the country, which are discussed in some detail in Chapter Six. In addition, the government and its organisations were sometimes viewed by the participants as threatening the actual existence of African parents in England, as Eleoma expressed:

> I think the government, they have done it in such a way that most parents here, especially African parents are fearful... I think the schools are more out there to catch you out as a parent. The social services is very strong, the school… and the police. In fact don't forget that they are inextricably linked, all of them, they work as a team. So all of them are just as important as the other because from school to social services, from social services you are in court, the police are involved, gone, prison… You might appear in court to defend yourself, and by the time you know it, if they are successful, you are gone, you've gotten a criminal record. What happens? It impacts negatively on your profession and they'll say you've got a criminal record. Because of that frustration, you either go and do security work, cleaning, or you go back home. …You might lose the child, not just incurring a criminal record. The local authorities will start looking after the child, and when they get there, they brainwash them against the parents. Where they are being cared for, the people [foster carers] tell them [looked after children] that their parents don't like them; "that's why you are here. You are better off. You are safer here, you are secure, you don't need them…". So, that messes up your life, so that is a major fear for Nigerians.

For Amanda, frightful images reproduced in the media's preoccupation with distressing reports of abducted children exacerbate such fears:

> I think this society is probably not helping, for those reasons, which I mentioned earlier, especially fear of abduction and fear of sexual molestation. The next minute they are looking for the child, the next news: the child is dead. Such incidents put fear in parents and make

them wish they could keep their children indoors when they are not at school.

Folake shared Amanda's views that as parents they were much more afraid for their children in England than they were in Nigeria, and both blamed the media, as well as the general English society, for the repercussions of insulating children:

> Well in this society I think there is so much fear, to which the mass media contribute a lot, but with so many abductions of children, parents insist on taking their children to school or entrusting the child to a friend. So, the children are very well protected and in this bubble of cotton wool, many children probably don't develop as quickly as they should. The situation is much better in Nigeria. Children develop better and faster, both mentally and physically, because of the exposure they get: they go to school with friends, do things for themselves, and grow more independent quickly because they don't have to depend on parents all the time to do things for them.

In these comparisons between England and Nigeria, these participants imply that parents in Nigeria allow their children more independent mobility than their counterparts in England because Nigeria feels safer – despite in reality having fewer safeguards for young, mobile children (Smith, 2001; Folami, 2011). Just a small minority of participants differed in their view. Ugochi and Charity were among the few whose narratives of childrearing in England were not heavily defined by fear. Ugochi told of feeling supported by the teachers at her daughter's school when her daughter's scooter was stolen from school. She stated that the Police also supported her beyond her expectations in finding the scooter.

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter has explored the intersections between Nigerian and English childrearing systems. Overall, the findings reveal how interactions with child welfare and safeguarding practices and professionals in England limited the spaces for Nigerian childrearing norms. In the main, the participants experienced interventions and likelihood for interventions through a prism of fear. Participants also worried about the opportunities for children to take

advantage and allege abuse to the authorities, and children becoming abusive because they felt supported by child safeguarding laws and professionals. Particularly, the link between teachers/schools and social services is salient in understanding the power that teachers and schools have as a primary source of referral and intervention in child safeguarding.

In addition, findings from the interviews and blog showed a significant number of the participants as disapproving of certain values in relation to children's discipline. Thus, child-centred practices, while praised for giving voice to children and promoting child rights, were also experienced as constraining appropriate parental authority. Significantly, perceptions of the fit between Nigerian and English child safeguarding practices differed according to the length of time the participants had lived in England. Among the participants, Charity and Ugochi were some of the newest residents to England. Except in a few instances, both women consistently identified with norms that underpin English child welfare system. From these contradictions between the participants, including self-contradictions, questions surface about how to resolve the tensions between parenting norms in England and what Pilapil (2013) would explain as the participants' perceived justificatory practices. Critical realist conceptualisation helps us to frame these uncertainties as constructed; they reflect participants' sense-making of empirical experience rather than some underlying reality or truth (Bhaskar 1998). Critical analytical humility indicates that the meanings derived may include underlying conditions that remain open to further understanding. The next chapter, Six, examines the participants' suggestions for constructive solutions to some of the problems they faced as parents in England.

CHAPTER SIX

Best of Both Worlds

In this chapter, I coalesce participants' understandings of childrearing norms and practices in England in order to explore the conditions that could resolve the entrenched tension for Nigerian immigrant parents that have been revealed in the last two chapters. The participants' ideas and recommendations speak directly to the fourth research question that seeks to discover the practices, support structures and services that could improve the fit between English and Nigerian parenting practices. The participants were generous in communicating their analyses of their distinctive childrearing successes and ideas for change. Importantly, these conversations occurred mostly within the loose structure of focus group discussions, where group members were able to engage one another and make rebuttals where necessary. Some of these discussions were also obtained in the individual semi-structured interviews.

My discussion of the participants' analyses and suggestions distinguishes between micro and macro perspectives, each with a number of trajectories. The first section of the chapter, 'Micro Level Proposals', represents personal strategies within the control of fellow Nigerian immigrant parents. The second section, 'Macro Level Proposals', focuses on the roles government agencies, social workers and other child-safeguarding professionals might play in resolving participants' parent-child concerns. The conclusion includes reference to the relevance of Fraser's (1996, 2007) theorisation on 'representation' for addressing issues of participation highlighted in this chapter.

6.1   Micro Level Proposals

There was considerable diversity among the parents classified as immigrant Nigerian – including their viewpoints on what could ameliorate these challenges. I have identified four main strategies through which fellow Nigerian immigrant parents could directly impact their child welfare management and

parent-child relationships in England – each of which can be understood as operating at *micro levels*. These strategies are 'passive participation', 'introverted participation', 'active participation', and 'returnees'. However, De Certeau (1984) has provided an important discourse on *strategy*. He associated strategy with the powerful; although he maintained that 'the weaker the forces at the disposition of the strategist… the more the strategy is transformed into tactics' (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37). Therefore, for these participants, their 'passive, and introverted' proposals could be framed in terms of 'tactics' (that don't overtly challenge the rules of the game); while 'strategies', which are more proactive and directly contest the status quo, would more rightly reflect the 'active' proposals.

Passive Participation in the English Child Welfare System

Total adherence to English child welfare polices is the initial recommendation from one group of participants. The advocates suggest complete co-operation with social workers and other safeguarding professionals. They also suggest full assimilation and adoption of the norms, perspectives and lifestyle of the host country. These ideas were typical of six participants, including Binta, Irulo, and Seyi, who both used the expression 'when in Rome, behave like the Romans' to rationalise their viewpoints on how to succeed as immigrant parents in England. The tactic pertains to these participants' desire or lack of resistance to be wholly absorbed or assimilated into English childrearing culture. Abiola, though not advocating this approach, explained the extent some Nigerian parents would go to in order to assimilate into the English parenting culture:

> Some of them who want to raise their kids the English way say, "my child is reasonable, valuable, I don't even want him to speak the traditional Yoruba language. I only want my kid to speak English". You find Nigerian kids here that cannot speak any other language but English; they cannot even understand our dialect. There are even parents who say "don't speak that language, don't speak Igbo to my kid; speak to him yeah, only in English".

Abiola and Seyi agreed that some Nigerian immigrant parents perceive prowess in English as a tool for acceptance and assimilation. Parents may also believe that speaking *good* English would allow them and their children access to

services and opportunities that those without the language or with limited knowledge would find difficult. This view may make sense in light of current government policies which aim to ban or limit the translation of service documents into other languages for non-English speakers (Cadier and Mar-Molinero, 2012). There are other advantages for Nigerian immigrants speaking only English and wanting the same for their children, including ameliorating the stereotypes and discrimination that may arise from speaking English with a foreign accent (Ryan *et al*., 2010). As Luke reinforced:

> Another thing that's affecting the children of Nigerians, don't forget, some Nigerians bring their children from Nigeria. When they come here, the children are affected in a sense that they struggle to integrate with those who are born here. And they sometimes call them names, they laugh at them because of their accent. So it usually has detrimental consequences on their academic performance, some even commit suicide. I know a Nigerian boy that committed suicide because of bullying. They are called names, they are made to feel less human by their classmates who are whites, and blacks who were born here. They team up, and try to humiliate them, and some grow up to develop psychological problems, feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem. They feel that they cannot do what others can do, and all because they haven't got the accent, they were not born here. They become socially isolated because they don't have friends. Who are they going to play with when they can't speak like them…?

Luke highlighted that Nigerian immigrant parents and their children struggle to integrate if they speak poor English or with strong foreign accents. His view echoes some authors like Carling (2008) who see language as the initial and most crucial pathway for successful immigrant transition and integration into host countries. As presented in the discussion to follow, participants held varied ideas about how to live successfully as immigrants. While this particular suggestion may not seem sophisticated, or could even be problematic, my personal knowledge informs me that it is not an uncommon idea or practice amongst Nigerian communities. Therefore, I did not find it surprising that some participants mentioned it as a tactic. Within the Yoruba communities and some others who together make up the largest group of black African immigrants in most Western countries, their broad, distinctly ethnic accents are the butt of many jokes, even amongst other Africans and migrants. A Nigerian immigrant in London would immediately make sense of this.

Other participants like Irulo further implored fellow Nigerian immigrant parents to 'absorb any circumstances wherever you go, you must sink into the background and do like them'. By that, Irulo was suggesting that Nigerian immigrant parents should not seek to be different from the indigenous populations of their adoptive county. They should aim to learn and assimilate the culture of the people and behave exactly like their hosts. In essence, Nigerian immigrant parents who reject their background languages are also more likely to eschew other Nigerian cultural values including some positive and negative ones (see Parmegiani, 2014). However, such positionality reduces the proclivity to question the norms and practices of their host country, and consequently creates less of an opportunity for culture clash (Ryan *et al*., 2010).

Introverted Participation in English Child Welfare System

The second set of participants are resistant to complete assimilation in a passive-aggressive way. These participants, including amongst others, Simbi, Olatunde and Andu, recommended *remaining true* to their background values and way of life through the following:

- having as little contact as possible with the authorities and healthcare professionals;
- resisting aspects of the law that they found abhorrent;
- maintaining minimal integration.

In some ways, this tactic involves some secrecy (see de Certeau, 1984), as it includes ignoring and avoiding the authorities and available services. Some participants discussed during a focus group discussion how African parents sought to maintain their background values and practices because they did not believe the English way of life was in their best interests. As Simbi explained in Chapter Five, section 5.2, following the intervention triggered by a nurse who weighed their child and incorrectly declared her overweight:

> So after that we thought, you know what, the less intervention the better and we just stopped weighing our child, we just completely stopped after that. It's not a good thing, but this is how we like to do it, we said, "no more, we know what we're doing, we're pretty clued up parents, we don't need the help, those are for people who are clueless, sorry to say, they

> need the help, you know we don't need the help, we don't want the help". So we kind of steer clear as much as possible off any kind of help from social services, from anybody, from doctors, from nurses; "we don't want your help, we just know what we're doing and gonna stick to it". Generally, because of the stories of social services, my wife and I agreed we will never let any social services person, including nurses, doctors, any carer of any kind, professional of any kind, come into our home….

Participants in such groups, whose *introverted participation* best describe their actions, typically take the position that some childrearing policies and practices in England are not in their best interests. Like Simbi, some participants confirm their fears through the frightful stories other parents tell. This perceived discrimination leads some Nigerian parents to conclude that the structures do not sufficiently represent them. This is the core issue for those who believe in *introverted participation*.

Such participants also believed that Nigerians and immigrants from similar backgrounds should take steps to understand the limits and repercussions of their background normative practices in England. They can then make necessary adjustments that would enable them to continue living the way they choose without having 'risky' contact with the authorities. To effectively prevent government intervention, Andu, a social worker, proposed certain *rites of passage* that would allow Nigerian immigrant parents learn about the laws and culture in England and enable them fully subscribe to this tenet:

> Lack of knowledge is failing our black children because we don't even know much about the law. White British children know the law. This is their country; there are certain things they will do that will protect them from trouble, like how to handle the authorities. But African children struggle; they struggle because they don't know the law. And they will play into their [authorities'] hands, and then they will be in trouble.

It is necessary to explain that this comment is not about keeping secrets. I understand it as expecting black children to understand how acting in certain ways towards the authorities can enable them get/stay out of trouble. In particular, implicit in Andu's observation are three key issues: firstly, that newly arrived African children, and by default, their parents, have little or no knowledge of the laws in England. While it is the case, as seen from Chapter Five, that a very small number of participants have some inconsistent or

erroneous understanding of certain sections of child welfare laws and policies, my perception has been that participants were relatively well-versed regarding the laws and policies in England. Furthermore, their second-generation children have even more opportunities to learn the laws by being raised in England as noted by Phillips and Porter (2006).

Secondly, from his observation that 'this is their [white British children] country', Andu implied that this country does not belong to second-generation Nigerian children despite their British citizenship, as obtained in the research participants' demographic index (not appended in detail to this thesis for privacy purposes). In Chapter Five, Andu himself acknowledged Britain as his home. His three children were born and raised in Britain and the entire family has British citizenship. If he and other participants felt that their children, most of who were born in Britain did not belong in the country, then that raises more complex questions about their identity and consequently relationships with the authorities and the society. Nonetheless, the inference that white British children are more knowledgeable than black African children about how to deal with the authorities and laws/policies is not far-fetched. Proportions rather than absolute figures indicate that while white children constitute 81.9 percent of the under 18 demographic at the last Census of 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2014), they are under-represented in the criminal justice system compared to black African children. However, some other participants had more optimistic ideas for managing child welfare in England.

Active Participation in the English Child Welfare System

> I think we should pick up the good in both societies and use them for our benefits to ensure that we get the best of both worlds, which we actually do because for instance a parent in Nigeria will not know any different from that society and a parent here will not know any different from this society. Whereas from both, having seen both, you pick up the best from both societies and use it for your, to your advantage and to the advantage of your children as well, to ensure that they are well rounded, happy and successful children (Amanda).

This idea of getting the 'best from both societies' conveys a desire to culturally integrate but not completely assimilate (see Berry, 2003; Wagner *et al*., 2008). This strategy comprises those who recommended Nigerian immigrant parents' active participation and more holistic involvement in matters affecting children and families in England. Participants in this group including Amanda, Nma, Pauline, Bunmi, and Charity amongst others all suggested giving voice to childrearing issues within England while taking active roles in addressing them. The advocates also proffered advice for structural changes within the child welfare system, including further training to improve professionals' practices and programmes for children and parents, all of which will be discussed in subsequent sections. As an *active participant,* Nma, for instance, claimed several times during her interview that she will 'be the change':

> Let me say that the school and teachers are bigoted in their opinion. But, thank God for me too that I'm not that kind of person who runs away at the first problem. I will deal with it. I'm here to stay; I'm not going anywhere. If you chase me out of this school you're going to chase me out of another school, yeah. Let's finish it and know that today we can shake hands and say, ha we do laugh. I'll finish the case with all the teachers. I will go there and I'll laugh with them. I will play the principal, I'm not going away, I have to change things.

Nma spoke of standing her ground in the face of what she felt was prejudice by her son's teachers and head teacher, and enjoined fellow Nigerian immigrant parents to do the same in similar situations. One could argue that Nma's attitude represented a belligerence that could have invoked further resistance from childcare professionals. They might have perceived her behaviour not only as aggressive but also as inability to accept responsibility for the impasse or make requisite changes. Selwyn and Wijedesa (2011) highlighted concerns about black African families who may respond with defiance to child safeguarding professionals, which in turn might cause the professionals to become more authoritarian when dealing with the parents. In a complicated cycle, fear of losing children to the care system and historical fear of the authorities, in addition to the strangeness of state intervention in mundane family matters, compel some black African parents to resist child-safeguarding professionals.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Nma also underwent child protection interventions from social workers following the school's referral. Nma physically chastised her son in response to the school's report that the boy was disruptive in a class. The case carried on with social services for about two years. In encouraging other Nigerian parents to follow this path, the parents have to be aware that it can be a very difficult experience. As in Nma's case, it sometimes necessitates court intervention and legal fees amongst other consequences. There were echoes of strength, resilience, conflict resolution and sheer doggedness in Nma's statement, although again a note of caution that not every Nigerian immigrant may possess such strengths. Bunmi similarly urged other Nigerian parents to explore their rights and reject a helpless position in their interaction with safeguarding professionals:

> I found out because I went out to interview other people and ask questions and I read books. I went on all the safeguarding website, family website, children who have families. I read up everything I could and I found out there are cases, parents don't know their rights. And sometimes some people come to me and say we have these issues and the social workers say this and say that. The first thing I'll tell you is to hold your peace. "Do you know that you have rights as a parent", and they say, "what rights?" I say you have right to instil discipline in your children; you have rights to spank them. So if the school said you spanked your child you have to find out where, there are places to spank and they said, "what?". "Go and read it up, don't panic. They don't know what they are doing? This is your family. If they take your child your life is busted, just hang in there and find out what's going on."

Taking this position, however, confers the onus upon parents to ameliorate what they experience as oppressive practices by social workers and other child safeguarding professionals. It does not sufficiently take into account the power imbalance between parents and the authorities. As immigrants, Nigerian parents are disadvantaged on many fronts as discussed earlier in Chapter Five. This brings into question the feasibility of them being able to effectively combat perceived professional oppression alone. Some participants were able to point out this complication, and provided alternative advice to address professional involvement for discussion later in this chapter. Pamela encouraged fellow Nigerian immigrants to galvanise themselves into active citizenship groups that will positively impact policy:

> Yeah, like either on the radio or on the television, or go round the churches or the mosques, or go round Nigerian organisations, black organisations. People from Bayelsa they have their own way of meeting each other. So, there could be pamphlet written in those languages or English or whatever explaining to people that look, we can look at this, we can do this in order to help the policy or the law of this country. And being British, we will be listened to by the government, even though I doubt it.

Pamela's self-contradictions at the end of the comment to some extent nullified her initial enthusiasm for motivating fellow Nigerian immigrant parents to work to impact child welfare policies and practices. Nonetheless, more participants in this group encouraged proactive positive participation from their compatriots. Amanda, for instance, believed that:

> I think sometimes we, the public actually, is at fault because we don't always you know, hear, voice, or give our point across and fill the questionnaires and answer questions. And so, of course they need to focus on those who responded and to use those results to make the rules or the laws, which they subsequently then put into practice.

For Amanda, participation includes active citizenship (Bryceson, 2002). Therefore, if Nigerian immigrant parents do not stay alert for new governmental directives, keep informed and respond to surveys, then they lose the right to complain when policies that do not serve them are enacted. Her position might seem naïve in light of Pamela's lack of confidence that the government would take the parents' views seriously. Critical self-appraisal was a common notion from these participants. They appeared self-reflective in their resolve to improve their own practices of childrearing and citizenship inasmuch as they encouraged child safeguarding professionals, agencies and the government to do the same. Meanwhile, those who found it too difficult to cope with the English child welfare system opted for an exit position if the challenges of managing their children's welfare became untenable.

'Returnees' (Relocating Children to Nigeria)

The fourth and final micro level strategy comprises those with suggestions for Nigerian immigrants who find child welfare management in England too difficult for varied reasons. Some participants suggested finding an alternative

temporary residence, notably Nigeria, especially to rein in out-of-control children (see Orellana *et al*., 2001). This issue relates more to Nigerian immigrant parents who might be inclined to resist the system, or prevent the system from completely overwhelming any traces of their background values and practices on their children. Within this spectrum were participants who argued that participation was a myth both statistically and ideologically because the Nigerian immigrant population was too insignificant to propel any changes in English laws or values. David, for instance, stated that:

> Even if we make our opinions known to the government, that we don't want this, we don't want that, what is the population of Nigerians in England? And if the people of this country say "no, this is what we want", and it becomes a law, there's nothing you can do, it is either follow the law, or go back to your country. That's why the English say that ignorance of the law is not an excuse; "this is the way we behave in our country, if you like it, stay, if you don't like it, go".

David raised a legitimate issue, which is the tiny population of Nigerian immigrants relative to the majority in England. The number of Nigerians in Britain has once been estimated between 800,000 and 2 million, which illustrates a broad polarity. Irrespective of what end of either equivalence the Nigerian population actually falls within, the current proportion in the total population in England is less than 0.5 percentage points at about 191,183 from the 2011 census (ONS, 2015), which corroborates David's query. Nevertheless, recent past and present English governments have insisted on the protection of minority peoples and inclusion of their voices in relevant legislation. On that basis, the opinions of Nigerian immigrants should matter, particularly on issues that concern them directly.

Another concern in David's comment is whether indigenous English people really do say, 'if you like it, stay, if you don't like it, go.' Stuart Hall has famously implored researchers not to ask whether English people make such xenophobic demands, but rather to ask what could cause them to say such things (see Hall, 1992). Likewise, we can explore why participants have such perceptions, particularly since 20 of the 25 participants were British citizens and most identified Britain as home. One explanation could be found in recurrent themes from the past governments including of Tony Blair and David Cameron, and

upheld by the current Conservative government of Theresa May. These leaders have proclaimed that naturalised British citizens must either wholly conform to 'British values' or leave the country – thus underscoring the participants' anxieties.

Furthermore, before its abrupt end, Cameron's Government was preparing to enact new laws that would revoke British citizenship for naturalised British citizens and even those born in Britain to immigrant parents for certain offences. Following intense criticisms from human rights watchers, some of these policies were shelved and not included in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (HM Government, 2015). Some immigrant populations may understandably feel that Britain is only their country for as long as they behave in a prescribed manner. Furthermore, English institutions and authorities, including social services, hospitals, schools, and religious centres are actively used as agents to monitor and enforce such policies despite the problematic nature of state foray into the judgement of personal morals (see McKendrick and Finch, 2016). As these policies target immigrants in particular, they highlight disconnect with Britain that many participants project, which in turn limit their integration into British society.

Of the 25 participants, 20 recommended temporarily sending children back to Nigeria if their behaviour became unmanageable. Three participants, namely Binta, Andu and Bidemi, had already done so and were proud of the results. Other advocates of this idea wished they had done so when their children were younger, and were convinced that they would have benefited from the experience. Some considered sending their children to Nigeria in the future if their child management situation in England became untenable. These parents saw the English child welfare culture, including the rights of social workers and the police to remove children into care as facilitating the degeneration of their children, which can, as a last resort, be abated by the removal of the children to Nigeria. As an example, Folake explained that:

> The kids know that the reason why the parents are not smacking them is because of what the authorities say and they will continue to do wrong because they know they will not get disciplined. And some parents even say, "oh no, he is a London child". I don't have London children. My

children are good children. God forbid! Instead, they will find themselves in Nigeria.

In a similar vein, Omotola declared that her children would not become 'London children'. For her, the typical 'London' child is spoiled, disrespectful of authority, and irresponsible. Omotola also vowed to send her three children back to Nigeria if they began to exhibit these so-called London behaviours. Time did not allow for further questions, therefore it is unclear whether Folake or Olatunde had considered that second-generation Nigerian children might not necessarily have been negatively influenced by the liberal values in London – that their children's behaviour could be attributed to more complex often-conflicting issues between their parents' background identity as Nigerians, the children's second-generation identity as British and the mix of these two varied identities within the context of wider Western society (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002, Coe, 2014).

Meanwhile, Sele supported sending children home. The results, to the best of her knowledge, have been positive:

> Some people, some parents, especially Nigerian parents, they have difficulties, especially when the children are 15, 16. It's difficult, and it's like they can't say anything. And we've seen, we have seen some people, when social services are done, they take the children, they pretend, "that's okay do whatever you want", and they will take them back [to Nigeria] for three years. By the time they come back, you see a different [better] person….

The participants appear to have a somewhat critical and ambivalent relationship with their adopted country. The attraction that many of them have for sending their children temporarily to Nigeria characterises the tenuous nature of their commitments to the English child welfare and normative system.

On this premise of sending children to reside temporarily in Nigeria, other issues arise. First, is the child informed that they would be living in Nigeria, albeit for a given period? If so, what is the child's response or opinion, and is it positive or negative? If negative, will the parents still enforce their decision? If, on the other hand, the child is not informed, then the child would have been coerced or deceived into travelling and subsequently remaining in Nigeria,

which introduces further concerns. As De La Garza (2010) explored, if there are other children in the family, what would be the quality of the relationship between the child being sent and their siblings following this decision? Besides, who would be caring for the *returned* child; and how does the *sending back* affect British born children as opposed to Nigerian born immigrant children? Finally, would it work? Would the temporary residency solve all the prior child management issues, and what are the chances that it will always work for other Nigerian immigrant parents? These are some of the myriad questions that parents would need to give genuine attention to in order to implement this option. Binta responded to all these questions in ways typical of those who advocate the practice. Binta stressed that value differences between Nigeria and England imposed constraints that ultimately forced her to send her daughter to live in Nigeria for a few years (see Armstrong and Murphy, 2012), in her assertion that:

> No matter what you as an African are in this country, you are still an immigrant; whatever they want to call you, they'll just call you. No matter what you become, you still, they will remind you where you came from even if you don't know where you came from. So, I decided, okay, the sky is the limit here all right, but you have to know where we came from. So, one day she will wake up, where is mum? Okay my mum is not there, God forbid. But I have to take this girl back home, for her to go and see and appreciate what she's got there. That's why when she came back she appreciated it because I'm sure they worked hard to make her understand.

Binta's experiences return us to issues concerning relegation of migrants to the margins of society, where some members of the host society actively pursue them (Van den Brink and Owen, 2007). Binta understandably felt *different*, as she was often harassed for her racial and ethnic difference. However, I further explored whether specific incidents had influenced her decision to send her daughter to Nigeria:

> *Cynthia*: What informed your decision, and I want to clarify, did she show any challenges before you decided to do that?
>
> *Binta*: Oh, yes, in school and with my next-door neighbour's daughter, they are very close, they grew up together, and they are the same, nearly the same age. So, in secondary school there was a parents' meeting and the guy said to me, "your daughter is a very brilliant girl, but we tried to separate her from her friend. Yeah, to sit, we separate them, but still this one would do something wrong and the other one will take

the blame. And she is just so outspoken; she is quite bold. My daughter always takes the blame".

But my daughter was getting a bad name in school. That's where I said all right, before it goes out of hand, I need to do something about it. Let me use this opportunity for her to go and meet her sisters, brothers and my family to know that we don't live in trees; we live in a house, for her to know my mom and everybody, my sisters, so I used that opportunity to do that.

Cynthia: How did you do it? Did you inform her fully that she was going to be there for a few years?

Binta: I did, I told her, but she didn't like it. Even her friends didn't like it, they gave excuses, "she is a good girl". I said, "I know, but I want her to go home and see, you know, communicate and see". And now she is enjoying speaking the language. She's got many friends, simply because of speaking that language. Now she won't speak any other language except Hausa.

Cynthia: Really, and before she used to speak only Yoruba?

Binta: She couldn't even speak Yoruba, she could only understand it, but now she can speak both Yoruba and Hausa. Back home they use many practical lessons to teach you about life. When I was little, we used to go at five o'clock in the morning to fetch water. I couldn't even carry anything but they still gave me something to carry. I was walking and sleeping; all the water's gone by the time we get home. But, when we're near home my senior sister will pour some of her water into mine. Why then did they send me? I say I don't know, maybe they were trying to teach me to live life you know. To start early, because they know life is not that easy. Just to prepare the child for this wicked world we live in that's what it was. Zainab knows that now after spending less than three years in Nigeria.

Binta claims to have made a pragmatic decision to rescue her daughter from potential failure, and simultaneously introduce her to the extended family members in Nigeria, confident that the translocation of her daughter would be advantageous. Binta's decision can be framed within the term 'provincialise' which means '…relocating western narratives of progress in their wider colonial histories (Nash, 2002, p. 222; Chakrabarty, 2000). The term is applicable in the sense that Binta's desire for her daughter to grow as a person through adversity was very Nigerian, not a western narrative of progress at all – and this very Nigerian aspiration, as well as the desire for her daughter to have a sense of belonging and connection to her family, outweighed Binta's other concerns

about what were also potentially negative Nigerian practices that her daughter might encounter back home. This paradox was made more complex by Binta's rueful acceptance of her perpetual immigrant status and mild regret at originally feeling compelled to relocate her daughter in Nigeria. Individually and collectively (focus groups), participants viewed the value differentiation between Nigeria and England as not only normative but enshrined in the formal systems of English governing bodies, which participants also critiqued.

6.2 Macro Level Proposals

Participants' macro level proposals concern structural changes within the English child welfare system. In thinking about these ideas, it is important to note that some of these *structures* are negligible in the Nigerian context, and that the participants have come to this knowledge from their lived experiences either in other Western countries or in Greater London. The participants who shared their views, however, did so in relation to potentially obtainable ideals in England. For them, these standards include achievable ideological shifts to accommodate differing voices in policy and practice, as well as the more practical aspect of improving the skills of safeguarding professionals.

Inclusive Structural Changes

Structural changes comprise shifts within the law and policy contexts that regulate parent-child relationships, and more generally guide professional child welfare interventions in England. As Anitha (2010) observes, socio-political structural factors such as laws and policies play an integral part in immigrant integration. Accordingly, up to half of the 25 participants, including some who suggested 'micro' strategies, proffered various 'structural changes'. Some participants observed that the government tended not to consult minority peoples during the process of enacting policies and laws, as Meji stated:

> The government as well has a part to play because they make the rules, they make the regulations, they consult. Although sometimes they say they consult, I'm not quite sure whom they consult with.

Abiola supported the active inclusion of immigrant voices in making laws:

> What I think that generally needs to be done is to be able to get involved.
> Get most of the immigrants as well, get them involved in making
> decisions in this case because there's positive there's negative in
> everything. You have negative British, you have positive British. So that's
> why they need to be involved so that you don't make a decision for them
> or, make a law for them on their children. Let them come together, let
> parents, immigrants, British, every group, let them sit down and make
> decisions and then they can form a law. The decision becomes law….

Both Meji and Abiola came to their conclusions separately during their individual interviews. Meji inferred that certain groups of people, including people like her, were not normally consulted about governmental legislation that affected them directly. Abiola went further in urging that the government should ensure that all people, especially those who may be directly impacted by specific regulations, are represented in policy consultations. Inclusion of immigrant perspectives in policy-making is not a novel suggestion as evidenced in certain child welfare legislation including Children Act 1989. However, as Meji stated, who they consult while making relevant legislation with regards to immigrant children and families remain problematic (see McDonald *et al*., 2013).

Less State Intrusion – Focus on Child Wellbeing, not Method

Christina, a children's social worker, stated that the government was too interventionist in family matters, particularly amongst BME families. Butler and Drakeford (2001, p. 7) liken such situations to 'social authoritarianism'. Like Pauline (as discussed in Chapter Five), Christina approved of government intervention in troubled families, where a child might face significant harm, but disapproved of any other unwanted intervention as being unnecessarily invasive:

> I think sometimes the state is quite intrusive into parenting, especially
> when it's black people. I think so. I think so, because they would not see
> the perspective of where you as a parent are coming from. I appreciate
> the fact that you listen to your child, but at the end of the day there
> should be a rule for mediation, where they can see, how do we work
> these things out, but they would just listen to the child, "I want to leave
> home." Unless where there is an issue of child protection, yes, then that
> can be looked into, or where there is some factors affecting their
> capability as a parent, I think less intrusion is needed.

Christina displayed certain self-contradictions. On the one hand, she understood the importance of state intervention in family life for the safeguarding of vulnerable children. On the other hand, she disapproved of such interventions, and regarded them as overly intrusive. The case has often been made that there should be a balance between both ideals of safeguarding children and enabling family privacy and independence. These tensions and arguments cut across ethnic and racial divides (Ghaffar, Manby and Race, 2012; Bywaters *et al*., 2014b). Christina, Simbi and Andu believe that the government should take every step to find the right balance, as Simbi highlights:

> Yeah, new generation parents fail because of the government's interference. If the government does not allow us to bring our children in our own traditional way, and when in future they become problematic to the government, then who is to blame? They will blame us again because the government will exonerate themselves. But they've forgotten that it's their policy, it's their own laws that make it difficult for immigrants to bring up their children in a normal way or in the proper way they know. Now the interference into families is the disciplinary interference not how you look after them, but in the past whereas what they were trying to do was the wellbeing, to say, "okay, that child has a good education, he does this," and things like that.

For Simbi, there are three key issues: the traditional ways of raising children; blame or responsibility when children are out of parental control or are unsuccessful; and interference from social services regarding parenting style rather than the child's overall wellbeing. He suggested that the 'traditional' way of bringing up children, which he claimed is what immigrant parents know, is the 'proper' way. The matter of blaming parents for their children's shortcomings is not groundless as noted in the section on Parenting Contract and Orders (HM Government, 2014). There is yet to be a meaningful report in England that blames any government policy, even in applicable cases, regarding poorer outcomes for looked-after-children (see Munro and Stein, 2008). This issue is in line with wider critiques of neoliberal government policies, seen to individualise and *responsibilise* parents for what are structural conditions (Featherstone, Morris and White 2013; Bywaters *et al*., 2014). Furthermore, Featherstone *et al.*, (2014) maintain that 'focus on targets and timescales is inimical to

relationship building' (p. 114). Drawing from that, social work focus on prescriptiveness could be negatively affecting the responses of parents to their children. This helps to explain Pauline's support for Simbi's final point regarding the authorities' misplaced micromanagement of parents rather than the broader picture – wellbeing:

> When we say children are so different, it's true. How could you really have a guide, a specific law, "oh no five minutes is fine, 10 minutes too much?" Five minutes may be nothing for one child; you haven't even got the message across. I think best practice is really by the results that come out of what you are doing. If a child is growing up well, is well nurtured, is happy, what was the intention of the parent? (Pauline).

For Pauline and Simbi, the cumulative wellbeing of the child should be the main aim of government intervention in childrearing, not enforcing a specific parental style. Such scenarios account for arguments from certain schools of thought that social work has set itself up to fail by rationalising that it can protect *all* children from harm (see Munro, 1996), which the professionals imagine they might achieve through micro-managing parents. Nevertheless, for almost all the participants, state intrusion was a factor for fear, bringing loss of authority over children and other related consequences (see Chapter Five). Andu, a social worker, nonetheless preferred the more optimistic term of 'involvement' in place of intrusion or interference:

> As an immigrant you know it helps that the way the government is involved in bringing up children. There are some of their involvements I like and there are some I don't like. The one I like is that education is free, that will encourage children to go to college, and if they pass, they can get good job, and they will be able to maintain themselves in the future.

While Andu expressed that he found some state involvement less appealing than others, his focus was on the positive impact of primary and secondary education. He was one of the participants who made allowances for state intrusion in families' in education.

Guidelines for Immigrant Parents and Children

In line with Andu, who allowed for some state involvement within families, several participants invited the government to create new guidelines covering parent-child relationships. For instance, Bidemi stated:

> If they, if we want to set it right, I think maybe there has to be like a book that could be accessible to parents and children to know, this is your right and this is how far you can use your rights. Kids will know their rights and how far they can go. "Parents, how far you can use yours, this is how far they can go."
>
> Cynthia: Okay. That sounds like a good idea….
>
> Bidemi: So you then need balance of the two, rather than thinking, "okay I don't want this, I don't want to get into trouble I don't want this to lead me into trouble, I will allow her and pay for it", when you know you cannot afford it. Same for children to know how far they can go, if they know their right, okay then they will know, "okay let me read mum's right, okay it says if I do something she can punish me, oh no I better not do that, no". It gives them an opportunity to say mum has rights. Not when children now use their rights over parents because they think the parent don't even have certain rights. They say, "mum you don't want to go to court, don't do that!" So, it can be so scary sometimes, you know.

Amanda enhanced the parent-child guideline suggestion with an idea geared specifically towards improving children's understanding of their responsibilities in addition to rights:

> Why they have a lot of issues in the society is because they tell the child, "well, your parents have no right to smack", but the child forgets that well, although they are told they can't be smacked they also have to behave responsibly. So in as much as the children have rights, they also have to be told or taught that with those rights come responsibilities. You don't just get the rights you also have to be responsible; you also have to act responsibly. In this country they are told they have rights, but they are not told or the responsibilities are not associated with the rights.

Meanwhile, some participants like Nma directed their proposals for family guidelines towards parents in particular:

> So yeah, like I said initially, any parents or people who are immigrating to this country should be trained on what to expect because a lot of times they don't think they have rights. They feel as if they have no say, they are not good enough, no, no.

Nma's proposal that black African immigrants should be supported to understand the norms and practices of their hosts while not being made to feel inadequate may contrast with the bulk of extant literature on black African parenting. Most of these writings, including some by apparently well-intentioned organisations, problematise the practices of these parents in their focus to 'suggest ways of dealing with those issues…' (AFRUCA, 2012, p. 8). Nevertheless, some Nigerian immigrant parents could view these suggestions as another form of government intrusion, which could be counter-productive to the desired objectives.

Strengthening Professional Cultural Competence

As noted in Chapter Two, cultural competence refers to a childcare and protection professional's ability to work in diverse cultural settings in a confident, sensitive, and anti-oppressive manner (see Bernard and Gupta, 2008). This section explores how participants situated their childrearing norms in relation to the cultural practices of professionals. Data from focus group discussions provided most of the material for analysing professionals' roles in the following sections.

Non-expert involvement in Black Families

Participants' occasional tendencies to collate Nigerian families and their issues under the BME socio-political umbrella reflect the interconnectedness of minorities' concerns in the West (see Spade, 2013). Those intersections of race, ethnicity and law/policies are revealed in the participants' following ideas. In a typical case, Eleoma recommended during a focus group discussion that lay black persons from outside the child welfare profession accompany social workers and related professionals on their visits or meetings with black families:

> I would suggest that when the social worker is visiting black families, there should be somebody who is not a social worker working on the case… Because that person will not see things from a social worker's point of view, he will see things as a normal casual person. There are certain things, as a professional, like now you are asking me questions, there are certain statements I'm making that you know, that relates to your field, but if you get somebody who is not a lawyer, you probably wouldn't get some of the responses you are getting from me. He's going

to talk from a layman's point of view. So, if a social worker is to visit a black family it makes sense to have somebody who is not a social worker at all, somebody from a different profession to accompany him that will validate whatever the social worker will go back with. Because a social worker in that position will have enormous power, he can determine your future.

Eleoma's proposition seemed rooted in a strong belief that social workers are trained in certain ways, with fixed learning criteria, therefore, a layperson would provide a fresh lens. He emphasised understanding the cultural baggage and constraining needs of Nigerian immigrant parents. The suggestion is that social workers tended to be insensitive to the acculturation deficits of Nigerian immigrant parents. The question of power imbalances between the social worker and the parents speaks to a concern that highlights participants' perceived inadequacies in their interactions with social welfare workers during interventions. My reading of the statement is that participants were underprepared for interactions with social workers due to cultural limitations. As such, the mitigation was to have *non-expert involvement in black cases.*

When I further queried why that proposal was made, Eleoma commented that:

If she doesn't like you she can destroy you from that moment, she can write things that can finish you, damage your profession, your future, your destiny is gone. So if an independent black person is there to observe, somebody that doesn't know him at all. They know somebody is coming, they can't tell the person, the race and ethnicity or whatever, they simply meet, and so, "are you the social worker? You please sit down, we are going to raise forms, and then you observe". Each person will make their own notes, so that when they go then they compare the notes.

The comment alludes to a certain need for recognition of cultural differences. First, it asks for representation – *the allowance of an independent black person to be there to observe.* Second, it suggests that Nigerian immigrant parents do not feel confident that social workers properly understand them. Third, it raises a question of trust between the intervening social workers and the parents. These tensions speak to certain cultural gaps that require bridging in the experience of the Nigerian immigrant parents, which necessitated this research. That, I would argue, is not unidirectional on the part of parents. Rather, it is intricately linked to what the literature would describe as lack of 'cultural

competency' (Bernard and Gupta, 2008; Furlong and Wight, 2011, p. 39) by health and social care practitioners, as discussed in Chapter Two. The result is that it leads to systemic exclusion and oppression of certain groups of immigrants (Woodcock, 2003).

Seyi also stated how constraining certain social work policies were on both the social workers and the families they worked with. In response to Eleoma during the focus group discussion, he observed that most African parents would be prepared to pay more tax into the common coffers of the country to ensure that their records were clean of any unsubstantiated allegations of child abuse:

> … The price the family member will pay makes it necessary for that amount to be spent. It's not going to be a waste of money because if the person is found guilty, he is going to pay for all his life. He may never achieve his life ambitions in this country, given the seriousness they attach to child abuse and all those kind of things here. And don't forget this is Europe, and once they get it on the system, you cannot go to another part of Europe to work. So, paying extra money to get to the truth, to the heart of the matter is not a waste.

What the statement speaks to is a view among participants that 'the system' (as they referred to English parenting norms, policies and laws, professional practice and interventions) does not accommodate their needs. As discussed during the interview above, the logistics of such a procedure could be both complex and costly. There are also other implications for practice, such as non-professional application of social work ethics and code of conduct that guide intervention with families. However, as Seyi argued, the current cost to families due to *inadequate* procedures is much higher. Therefore, it is significant that child protection policies and practices experienced as oppressive underlie some of the participants' perceptions of incompetence of social workers. This suggests that more attention should be given to how to integrate cultural competence into the training of social workers.

Furthermore, Nma recalled that the education practitioners involved in her case were not culturally confident in dealing with her and the family and so quickly transferred the case to social services. This caused a rapid escalation of the case and its impact on her family:

> And the people who were supposed to sort out the problem didn't bother; they just moved it to the next level. We don't understand these people, their ways are not our ways, so, they just moved it out like, you know, there's some things some place you don't want to wash, chuck them in the bin just like that. But it breaks my heart to see a lot of people and families that get torn apart because of this, because of course the wrong people have been involved in their case and instead of looking at the solution they are looking at the policy.

According to Nma, over-dependence on policy directives instead of due appraisal of the unique characteristics of each case is problematic for Nigerian immigrant parents.

Uniformity of Standards

Professional benchmarks are again highlighted in Christina's discussion. She was disappointed that the quality of each case depended on the individual strengths of each professional, as there appeared to be no defined standard of competence across the board:

> The police, at that time, they understood me, but with the social workers, you have to really, really fight your corner and I'm just sorry for an African parent who is ignorant or who is not proactive. Yeah, I feel sorry. I think it depends on people's personality. Some are really, really empathetic. And they are ready to listen to you, but some of them are not ready to listen, they just assume and they are judgmental. Most of them had, even before they meet me, they had judgment about what I was going to say because of my culture. Even though knowing me for one day. Not exploring the facts, why is this person doing these things, what are the issues that this person has had? So, they just assume: "oh, I think this is terrible; I think oh I have concerns", without exploring more. So, for me it depends on people, it depends on the person's attitude, I will say.

Olatunde also referenced black children being singled out by the authorities, especially the police and mental health practitioners, for legal sanctions, imprisonment and sectioning under the Mental Health Act (1983) for minor infractions that white British children would, he thought, have been excused for:

> From the agency where I first worked as temp, I dislike the way they carry out their duties in the justice system. I believe they discriminate against the black youths because of how they approach black youths when they commit or when they suspect them to have committed a crime. The approach is different from a white youth. So, a black youth is more likely to end up in prison if he is slightly rude for any reason, it doesn't matter how minor the rudeness is. If he meets a nice policeman he may end up in a hospital and they may label him to be mentally ill.

> The worst is in there, and he's injected, because the more he says 'nothing is wrong with me', they say, "that is part of the symptom of mental illness. He doesn't know he's ill". From there he's injected, from there he will sleep for nine, ten hours, he wakes up the next morning, he stares into space, that's it!

> Whereas a white youth would have just been easily given a slap on the wrist, and then "just go, you are rude, make sure you don't cause any problems". Or they could go to the police, take the person to the police station, and say he was obstructing the police in the course of his duty, though he assaulted a police officer. They make sure they give most black youths criminal records compared to whites. And, the percentage of black youths are more in the mental hospitals than white even though the whites are more in number.

Olatunde's comment alludes to the intersectionality of the Nigerian experience as equally a *black* one (see Phoenix and Husain, 2007); the discrimination described is consequential upon race. Other studies (Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2005; Barn, Ladino and Rogers, 2006) find that child welfare professionals mete out harsher treatment or punishment towards black families for wrongdoing. Therefore, Andu's advice to fellow Nigerian immigrant parents, discussed earlier among 'Introverted Participation' (micro strategies), is further limited in the sense that knowledge of the law and a respectful attitude towards the authorities may not always be enough to protect Nigerian immigrant parents from potentially questionable practices of some professionals and agencies. Andu believed institutional discrimination did not negate the importance of Nigerian immigrant parents having an intimate understanding of how child welfare laws, policies and professionals function in England, as such knowledge is necessary even if only to identify racial and ethnic oppression.

More participants concurred with the notion of the 'good' or 'bad' child safeguarding professional. However, in instances where child-safeguarding professionals demonstrated anti-oppressive attitudes, this approach apparently proved to be constructive (Munro, 2011), as was the case with Bunmi:

> He won't go home, the school is hot and the head teacher abandoned him in the office and told me he had work to do. He left, his class teacher left, all the teachers came and stood there in the staff room. I was distressed. This is a school I've been to six years, nobody showed me any friendship because we were **different**. I was like, ah so this is how people are. For six years I've been a mum here doing activities and all

that and this day nobody, no teacher spoke to me. Then I remembered there was one class teacher who had actually taught two of my boys and I went to her, I knew she was a friendly one. I told her, "look my boy would not come out of the head teacher's office". She said, "is the head teacher there?" I said, "no he is busy". So she left everything and came out and she just put an arm around him and said 'look you were such a good boy in my class'. I don't know what else she told him, but you know, when she touched him he broke down and started crying. She said, "you have to go home, come on let's do it together". His teacher, his class teacher walked past me four times in that office. She didn't say a word, like, tell me this is what had happened in the class, no. I had to borrow a teacher, a friendly teacher to come and help us, and we went home.

While this does not necessarily suggest differential treatment for a white British child, it does emphasise how participants felt alienated in a multicultural English society. In this scenario are reported examples of both good and bad professional practices by the school staff, including the head teacher.

Ideological Adjustment in Childrearing

I chose to frame the participants' macro level suggestions on the issues discussed next as 'ideological' because they referred to normative concepts and legitimised daily practices. As a generative mechanism (see Sayer, 2010), norms help determine which customary constructs, such as values, are accepted or censured.

Communal Parenting

The notion that child safeguarding is everyone's responsibility was commonly supported by every participant. Meji, in echoes from Chapter Four on normative transferability, observed that:

This community doesn't get involved, and actually, that has detrimental effect on the child because when they are going astray society is afraid to correct them because they feel "well he is not my child, or she is not my child, they are not my responsibility, so I cannot get involved". In this society you cannot talk to a child who is going wrong, in fact the child will turn around and insult you and say: "how dare you correct me?" And actually there are times the parent will be on the side of their children to say, "well, you have no right to correct my child". So, I think from that point of view it's broken. It's broken because that actually prevents you or discourages you from wanting to help or assist the child when you see it going astray or in trouble. Which is missing in this society, which

hopefully, in a way if it could be replicated I'm sure it might help, not it might, it would help the society.

Meji recommended communal responsibility for children that adults come into contact with, even if they were strangers. Her idea has numerous implications including children and their parents resisting a stranger's interference and the potential backlash that may incur.

The Fallacy of Perfection, the Strength in Trust

Charity made interesting recommendations for ideological changes, particularly because she had the most favourable outlook amongst the participants of English childrearing norms. On this issue, however, she states that:

> Here they want so much perfection, and we are not gods, we are not angelic. You can't just be perfect like you are god, you know it all, they expect you to be perfect when it comes to you and your child, which it can't, I don't think it should be like that. When my friend's baby's nose was bleeding, she didn't know what happened to the child, it was her first child. She took the child to the hospital, and the next thing they called social services, and they went like, "what happened, what did you do with this child, she was beaten, she was hurt, so what did you do to the child? Blah, blah, blah." And they were accusing my friend of doing something to her own child, which she didn't do. They took the child away, and this child was just, I think six months or seven months old. The child was still breastfeeding, which to me is wrong. You can't assume that the child was bleeding, so the mother must have done something. She got the child back and she left this country. They should learn to balance it. They should learn to trust the parents a bit like, kind of trust, yes.

Charity highlighted these concerns about policy implementation when safeguarding children: expecting *perfection* from first-time parents, and vilifying them when they fall short of lofty expectations; poor trust in parents, where parents are likely to be viewed as potential abusers; and child welfare interventions amongst black families in which socio-economic deprivation does not sufficiently account for decisions on interventions (see Bywaters *et al*., 2014b, p. 8). Charity's solution is that professionals working in a child welfare capacity should 'learn to trust parents a bit'. Indeed, social work practice guidance states that some level of trust is essential in order for parents and relevant agencies to work in partnership to ensure the wellbeing of children (Dumbrill, 2006). How is parenting excellence accounted for given the

intangibility of the parent-child relationship, the complex differences between individuals even of the same family, between families, communities, ethnicities, races, amongst others? Simbi attributes most parental exhaustion and apathy to this drive for perfection:

> Because you know I do talk a lot with them as well, you realise the parents say, "oh my God, nowadays everything you do is for your child". That's why you have so many people with psychological problems, depression, stress, all built into it because some of them don't even know that they're exhausted. It's too much. They don't even know what to do anymore. Everything counts under the law. So most parents don't even know what to do because the fear of everything is put into you. "I don't know if I say yes now whether it's going to count against me or not."

It seems that underneath the parental 'exhaustion' is fear as an immigrant – as a black African, non-white person, even those who are British citizens. Further studies are required to explore whether Nigerian immigrants who are not parents experience similar fear factors and 'exhaustion'. While the factors and decision-making analyses of specific cases vary, in the case of the baby with a nosebleed, Charity was not impressed that the infant was removed from the mother. She pointed out that, *prima facie*, this mother took the child to hospital and reported the nosebleed herself. In her view, the mother's actions indicate a concerned parent who sought appropriate medical support when needed. For parents like Charity, who swore by the parenting quality of her friend, every parent in England is expected to be technically knowledgeable about what could cause a child to bleed from the nose, for instance: parents are not allowed to have lapses or make mistakes; they cannot be unaware of what might have caused distress or harm to their child, and they must otherwise be perfect. Nevertheless, certain Serious Case Reviews (Munro, 2011) indicate that social workers and other child safeguarding professionals can be too reliant on parents' accounts of their children's conditions or appearance. Again, Charity's case example highlights the issue of balance: on the one hand, there is too little trust between child welfare practitioners and parents; on the other hand, there is not enough scepticism on the part of the practitioners.

While these are not solely Nigerian immigrant concerns, the treatment the mother reportedly received in the removal of her young baby, including the

apparent lack of trust demonstrated by the hospital staff and social worker is reminiscent of the harsher treatment described elsewhere that many African parents experience, including higher rates of referral to social services comparative to other ethnicities and races (Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2005; Ghaffar, Manby and Race, 2012). It is acknowledged that Bywaters *et al*. (2015), based on large-scale analysis of administrative data, found that after accounting for poverty, white British children represented higher rates of removal into care. However, as Bywaters (2015, p. 70) also recognises, poverty is so 'endemic' an issue in child protection that *controlling* for it would drastically reduce overall incidences of child abuse and other child welfare concerns. Thus, while the intersecting structural inequalities linked with poverty persist, the status quo is that black African children remain over-represented in the child protection system (see Ferguson, 2014).

6.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, my focus on participation is inspired by Fraser's (1996; 2008) writings on representation and participation, where I distinguish between active, assimilationist and non-engagement strategies. The participants' stances all respond to the power imbalance between Nigerian immigrant parents and child safeguarding professionals, racism and discrimination from the authorities, and government rhetoric towards inclusion of minority peoples. Proposals for macro-political reform involve the naming of power relations that are implicit in the existing norms and ideological changes that would be involved in any transitions to new laws and policies. I have given voice to the strategies and solutions participants offered to address the tensions experienced as Nigerian parents in England. The intention has been to open up the space to explore their understandings of who they are within their spatially situated, historically multifaceted and complex London environment. As constructions of their own lived experience, these accounts reveal participants' ideas regarding the empirical and the actual levels of social reality; they also point towards some sense of underpinning reality. In keeping with the principles of critical realism, it is nonetheless essential to be cautious in the way that conclusions are drawn.

In the next chapter I will synthesise findings from the last three chapters, and engage with them through the theoretical prisms of recognition, representation, and critical realism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Nigerian Parents' 'Struggle for Recognition'

This chapter presents my conceptual interpretations of the study's findings. It reflects on and connects the main findings to the principal elements of Honneth's recognition (1995, 2004) theory through a critical realist lens. I demonstrate how recognition theory can provide a practical framework for understanding participants' needs and processes of self-actualisation as immigrant parents in England. My argument is augmented with Fraser's (1996, 2007) concept of representation/participation wherever it best explains the findings, to limit perceived inadequacies in recognition theory.

In order to consider first the emphases given by my participants on how *love* was evidenced in their own childhood (presented in Chapter Four), I draw on Honneth's 'practical relations-to-self' (2007, p.138), including ideas of 'self-confidence' associated with relationships within families. The importance of *respect and obedience* (also raised in Chapter Four) has consequences for people's 'self-esteem' and 'self-respect' modes of recognition, and so merit discussion using both modes. The preoccupations with *discipline and control,* explored in Chapters Four and Five, have significant rights-based implications for parents; this is therefore analysed from a legal 'self-respect' mode of recognition. *Collectivism,* also presented in Chapters Four and Five, is associated with both family and community and is discussed under recognition's 'self-confidence' and 'self-esteem' modes.

Though *fear* was not operationalised as a normative childrearing concept in Chapter Five, its import in the participants' child welfare experiences requires that it be given attention, and will thus be analysed through recognition's 'legal' or 'cognitive' relations that promote individual 'self-respect' (Honneth, 1995, 2014). Fraser's concept of representation/participation is pivotal for unravelling the participants' self-acclaimed child management strategies, invoking participation issues presented in Chapter Six. The penultimate section of the chapter turns towards critiquing the effectiveness of both recognition and

representation as appropriate paradigms for articulating participants' central parent-child experiences. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study's major substantive concepts, including how the epistemological theory which is critical realism illuminates the application of recognition theory in the research, as well as how my findings help critique the theories used.

7.1   Love Matters in Participants' Struggles for Recognition

Honneth (2014) defines recognition as 'the affirmation of positive qualities of human subjects or groups' (p. 80). In Chapter Four, some participants talked about love in a number of ways. These included memories of their parents' attitudes when they were much younger - questioning parental motives and reinterpreting those as *tough love*. Crucially, the findings showed that as the children grew older, their understanding of their social world increased. However, from the participants' accounts, members of the host society distorted their parents', as well as the participants', expressions of parental love. The majority of the participants felt that love mattered in a parent-child relationship, including with their own parents. Honneth (1995) also believes that love matters, as seen in his work on *the struggles for recognition*. Honneth is, however, concerned that when any of the processes that embody 'potentially "ethically" rational character of norms and values' are disturbed, moral-practical claims may surface' (Petherbridge, 2013, p. 17). That premise might explain why in Chapter Four several participants introduced love as a differentiated and contested socio-cultural issue.

Some participants displayed defensive attitudes in their determination to counter Western constructs of how love should be demonstrated within intimate relationships. Participants, including Sele, Pauline, and Folake took issue with public kissing and hugging and being 'nice and sweet' to children as evidence of parental love. It appears that love acquires cultural and social dimensions in participants' perceptions, and is involved in their struggles for recognition. Honneth proposes that a negation of the intrinsic prospects of recognition in a group's moral experiences has a bearing on social resistance and rebellion. I

understand from Honneth (1995, 2007, 2014) that where certain normative outlooks are denied by society, individuals holding these values feel disrespected. This helps to explain why many participants went to great lengths to demonstrate that love takes many forms, including the denial of privileges and being stern.

Most participants felt misrepresented in English parenting discourses, with their parenting constructed as *authoritarian* and by default devoid of parental love (see Baumrind (1967), discussed in Chapter Two). Even child welfare organisations managed by and directed at black Africans appear to appropriate and internalise English norms, which indicates associated oppression from within one's own community of supposed advocates (see AFRUCA, 2012). The *authoritarian* label eclipses the deep love and emotional commitment these participants felt towards their children and the way that children may themselves understand and accept their parents' actions as being in their best interests. For example, inculcating values of child work (home chores) could be seen as providing a bedrock for other maturational needs of the child (see Nsamenang, 2013). For participants, the authoritarian label was an injury to their 'collective identity' (Honneth, 1995, p. 163).

Several participants ascribed value to appearing tough with their children in order to improve their children's practices and subsequent outcomes. The Nigerian child welfare model does not include any material governmental provision to support parents, so parents bear full responsibility for their children's needs. Thus, children's success (including education and other factors) depends exclusively on parental provision and care. The attraction of tough parenting is directly related to the expectation that a parent's hard work and sacrifice must not be in vain. Children within a Nigerian context rarely have the privilege of second and third chances at success. As seen in participants' reminiscences in Chapter Four, love is then what ensures that parents do everything within their means to guarantee that their children are on the correct life path from the beginning. Parental love is thus demonstrated through the sacrifices parents make. Baumrind (1967) allowed exceptions to her classification based on socio-economic and environmental (cultural) conditions. However, those exceptions do

not appear to have permeated English parenting discourses with regards to the study group, who felt unfairly represented as abusive.

The challenges of the socio-economic circumstances that underpin the logic of tough love in a Nigerian context are extended in England by the perception and experience of racism - with parents believing that the privileges enjoyed by the majority will not be readily available to their children. Nigerian parents could perhaps be seen as wanting to maintain their strict childrearing practices without sufficient understanding of the part they see these practices as playing in preparing children for a context of adversity. Parents' adoption of tough love may be informed both by a nostalgia for 'home', and the fear that black African heritage children need to work several times harder and be several times smarter than their white counterparts to get a 'look in' (participants Abiola, Folake, Eleoma) (see English-Clarke *et al*., 2012). Showing tough love to their children was seen as a way for the children to learn the harsh realities of their lives in a number of ways. On the one hand, it taught their children moral lessons of responsibility and the transience of privileges, while on the other, it disciplined them to be resilient to the harsh realities of life magnified for children of black African heritage.

Honneth (2014) writes about the power of the dominant to define minorities, and to regulate legitimacy through for example, naming and classifying practices, which 'can be perceived as primary definers and generators of misrecognition' (Garrett, 2010, p. 1529). Zurn (2008) alerts us to the way that these 'cultural value patterns are institutionally anchored and systematically subordinating' (p. 148). Featherstone *et al*., (2014) likewise question 'the vocabularies with which social workers in children's services describe relationships…' (p. 113). Dominant groups determine how minority peoples define themselves and these constructions can result in self-fulfilling prophesies (Honneth, 2007; Aronson and McGlone, 2009). However, if we approach participants' contradictory relationship with the term 'authoritarian' using the lens of recognition, we can also acknowledge their sacrificial love for their children, which is implicitly refuted by the 'authoritarian' label.

Participants' stances on this issue further speak of misrecognition in that what they perceived as their best efforts are often being relegated to second-best (or worse) in Western discourses. In another study that corroborates the viewpoints of participants in this study, Levedonsky and Graham-Berman (2000) draw attention to the case of African-American girls and Hispanic boys, for whom 'authoritarian, rather than authoritative, parenting is associated with child assertiveness and competence' (p. 81). This line of thinking also re-invokes the question raised in Chapter Two, concerning whether child welfare interventions should be differentiated between black and white peoples to accommodate racism, discrimination and oppression from which the former 'group of people can suffer real damage' (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Conclusions drawn from Boddy *et al.*'s (2014) research also underscores the case for some level of differentiation in child welfare interventions with diverse groups. The findings from my study do not however suggest that *all* black children or black African children should be raised under an 'authoritarian' parenting style. Rather, participants' struggles for recognition 'aims to deconstruct the very terms in which such differences are currently elaborated' (Fraser, 1996, p.10). The findings also reveal the gap within the research literature for more inclusive parenting classification models that will explicitly interrogate and not underestimate differences as powerful as race, ethnicity, culture and economics.

7.2   Respect is Essential for Nigerian Parents' Survival

As noted in Chapter Two, Honneth (1995; 2007) argues that when individuals personify the values, hopes and aspirations of their communities, they attain self-esteem. In this sense, the participants' cultural adherence to *respect* for older people or authority may be characterised as 'self-esteem'. The values of *respect and obedience* presented in Chapter Four are symbolic. One of the participants' fundamental concerns was respect. Respect pertains to how they ensured that their children were brought up in ways that guaranteed their proper development as responsible adult citizens who represent their communities. Inculcating respect further ensured that children were safeguarded through receiving and adhering to appropriate counsel from adults in a position of care

over them. Respect in this aspect was interpersonal and applicable within micro-relations such as birth family, extended family, friends, acquaintances and known members of the community. It exemplified a cultural value, expressed through, for example, curtseying, using respectful prefixes, and speaking politely to elders. For many participants, these attributes in a child represented the qualities of the community as a whole. Even as immigrants, children of Nigerian heritage who embodied their parents' cultural requirements of respect enhanced their parents' reputation as achievers in the diaspora community.

In Chapter Five, it was noted that some participants' felt undermined in their ability to secure *respect and obedience* in England. Male participants who were used to the deference accorded to them in the mainly patriarchal Nigerian cultures, felt devalued in English society where they felt portrayed by child welfare professionals as abusers of women and/or children, or as buffoons (see Featherstone, 2009; Featherstone *et al*., 2014, p. 114). Other participants, including women, commented on English-raised children's disrespect for older persons and other designated adults.

While questions of respect bring to mind benign cultural differences around politeness, questions arising from the value of *obedience* could be more challenging, being incongruent with modern liberal and postmodern ideologies (Honneth, 2004; Kosko, 2010). Honneth argues that Western peoples are increasingly open to 'normative gaps' that allow fluid interpretations of dissent and an unwillingness to follow conventional 'linear processes of development' (Honneth, 2004, p. 470). Obedience may have some negative connotations within English child welfare terminology. It is sometimes understood as a tool used by child abusers, especially child sexual abusers, to groom children and ensure compliance with the abuser's demands (Kenny and McEachem, 2000; Ullman, 2002). In contrast, for participants in this study, obedience was an overwhelmingly positive trait in spite of their acknowledgement of instances where it could be abused. Respect and obedience were seen as cultural traits that positively distinguished Nigerian heritage children from others. Borrowing

Fraser's (1996) terminology we could then say that the participants' struggle for recognition 'seeks to celebrate, not eliminate group differences' (p. 10).

On the other hand, obedience also involves recognition of institutional authority, be it individual or organisational. This interpretation is consistent with British values (Wolton, 2006). Respect for rules is, for example, a core article of the UK policy statement on 'Britishness' as part of the 'Prevent Strategy' (HM Government, 2011). As Dixon, Goodwin and Wing point out (2003, p.11): 'All social practices are regulated by rules'; the rules support social structures that restrain, proscribe as well as create opportunities. Such rules may include: adhering to work hours, speed limits, bill payments, amongst other activities essential for a functioning society. Obedience is then a component of citizenship (of subjecthood), a shared cultural value. Yet, at the same time it stands in tension with other notions of modernity and civilisation (see HM Government, 2015). As Johnson and Munch (2009) observe 'people do not belong to just one group,' they may subscribe to many identities (p. 226).

Participants' defence of *tough love* reveals how their cultivation of respect and obedience in their children also is intended to serve as protection from potential victimisation by the authorities. Instilling respect for rules at home ensured that their children were prepared to obey rules outside the home. In Honneth's terms, this kind of 'self-respect' gives rise to 'legal recognition'. Black African children are historically more likely to be arrested and/or given custodial sentences than their white counterparts for similar infractions (Craig, 2013; Yesufu, 2013). In Chapter Six, the findings suggest that black African children receive much harsher treatment from police officers and mental health practitioners, particularly if they are not suitably deferential. Therefore, besides maintaining their culture, many participants' insistence on their children being respectful and obedient was a reflection of their concerns for the children's survival in direct response to real and potential discrimination and oppression. In order to survive as well as attain 'self-respect' in England, black African children had no other recourse but to absorb their parents' values for respect and obedience. So the findings of this study suggest that *respect and obedience* may be considered as 'social esteem' traits necessitated by

participants' cultures in Nigeria; and, in England as vital 'cognitive' and protective mechanisms for shielding black African children from oppression. When this notion is misconstrued, it reaffirms the legitimacy of the participants' moral struggles for recognition of their socio-political realities (Taylor, 1994).

7.3   The 'Othering' of Physical Discipline

Another significant finding from this research was the way that physical discipline becomes the focus for defining difference between Nigerian immigrants and their host communities in England. The 25 interview participants admitted to smacking their children at one point or the other, albeit to varying degrees. As self-reported experiences, any conclusions we draw on the utility of the participants' physical discipline or its potential to evolve into physical abuse is tentative. My critical realist lenses confine me to engage with these accounts as only first level empirical reality that may however have other underlying qualities and meanings. Since none of the participants reported being found responsible for wrongdoing following engagement with social services, I have also cautiously chosen to privilege the participants' understandings of the probable harm and benefits in using physical chastisement.

Nevertheless, not explicitly condemning all acts of physical chastisement may risk being seen to side with the defence of a particular form of parental rights, at the expense of the rights of the child (Taylor and Redman, 2004; Brownlie and Anderson, 2006); although Boddy *et al*. (2014, p. 159) stress that 'the two [rights] are not necessarily in conflict'. Interestingly, the participants' disclosures could suggest that black African parents might more readily admit to physical chastisement than other races and ethnicities. Research into this practice by Smith *et al*. (2002) suggests that while there may be reluctance to publicly admitting use of physical chastisement, majority white parents in that study, within the anonymity of research, admitted applying physical chastisement.

Public and professional arguments against physical chastisement are numerous, including those relating to cases where children have been badly

hurt or killed (Turner and Muller, 2004; Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2005). Participants in this study also seemed in little doubt that certain applications of physical chastisement should be discouraged, where these could be termed improper, excessive and severe. However, participants' accounts also indicate that physical chastisement within the boundaries of the law (using smacking with minimum force, sparingly, age appropriately, and avoiding delicate body parts) is an important part of their parenting.

It is possible to think about smacking through Honneth's notion of legal misrecognition (or disrespect). Recognition within legal practical relations-to-self is achieved in the claim to rights, licenses, and participation in public life accorded to ordinary citizens from the dominant group in society (Honneth, 1995, 2007). In Chapter Five, Seyi in particular was bemused at what he felt was heavy-handed intervention for a small smack he gave to reiterate road safety rules to his son. His consternation derived from the knowledge that he had acted within the boundaries of the law. His taken-for-granted understanding of the law did not prepare him for either the teachers' or social worker's interventions. Seyi, like some other participants, concluded that he was denied normative action that was within reason, and his rights and privileges, because of his race.

Physical chastisement is also associated with physical violence, which is perceived by the educated middle/upper classes as the domain of unschooled and uncultured religious masses (see Fontes, 2002; Wilson, 2007). In fact, the former groups are more likely to use psychological violence on their children (see Luthar and Becker, 2002). It is also harder to prove psychological violence, which can continue undetected for long periods of time. Honneth's (1995, 2007) argument on the lack of value attributed to immigrants' practices suggests that physical discipline might have a different public narrative in England if highly educated, non-religious, white, indigenous English parents who used the practice admitted doing so. Smacking, however, has become taboo within English child welfare discourses even though it is legal within constraints and many parents irrespective of race, ethnicity and culture use it (Smith *et al*., 2002; Barn, Ladino and Rogers, 2006; Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2006). To

borrow from Hall (1992), in polite English circles, smacking appears to have become 'what couldn't be put into frame' because it is 'apparently unsayable' (p. 15).

The way parents think and feel about physically chastising their children will be complicated and affected both by their own childhood experiences, the values of their immediate community and their perceptions of the broader society's reactions. For instance, consideration for whether a toddler might more quickly learn through a small smack that sitting on her baby brother's face hurts, could be overshadowed by the parent's guilt of the imprint of her fingers on the child's backhand. Vallentyne (2002) frames such actions as necessary if 'short-term harm is weighed against long-term benefits', which in this instance, counters the child's violation of another's rights (p. 994). The short-term evidence of blushed skin might incline some parents towards support for psychological discipline like being made to stay alone in a quiet room separated from the rest of the family, which some participants felt was emotional abuse. In spite of these inconsistencies, some social workers, as seen in Chapter Five, persistently prescribe specific psychological discipline even where, as Williams and Soydan (2005) suggest, 'prescriptions far outweigh empirically driven evidence' (p. 904).

A case highlighted in the media in June 2015 reiterates the need for cultural competency within child welfare structures. Justice Pauffley is a high court judge who made a ruling in a case where an Indian immigrant man was accused of physically abusing his wife and son (Re A [2015] EWHC 1598 (Fam)). Justice Pauffley found the man guilty regarding his wife, but did not do so in relation to the son. Rather she implored social services, social workers and the police to be more measured when intervening in recently arrived immigrant families with cultural backgrounds different from Western ideals, particularly regarding children's discipline:

> Within many communities newly arrived in this country, children are slapped and hit for misbehaviour in a way which at first excites the interest of child protection professionals. In this instance, and on the basis of his ABE interview, A did not appear to have suffered more than sadness and transient pain from what was done to him (paragraph 67).

Justice Pauffley was subsequently vilified in the media (see Dugan, 2015) for suggesting that cultural sensitivity should tamper legal application. However, it was evident that her detractors did not take into account the fact that the law already makes certain provisions for cultural sensitivity in child safeguarding interventions. As noted in Chapter Two of this study, the Children Act 1989 is explicit that in making an order, a child's identity including their race, culture, ethnicity and background should be taken into consideration. Amongst white British peoples, there are nuances in cultures and backgrounds (Selwyn and Wijedesa, 2010) that must be taken into account during interventions. Recognition of such differences ensures that child welfare professionals do not use a colour-blind or culture-blind approach. It is however important to emphasise that such allowances do not excuse abuse on cultural grounds.

To protect children from potential physical abuse, Sweden became the first European country to ban smacking in 1979; followed some years later by the Italian Supreme Court's declaration that smacking was 'culturally anachronistic and historically out-dated' (Fuller, 2009, p. 246). However critics continue to challenge the ideal of non-smacking as an unproblematic social good. For example Fuller (2009) draws on statistics compiled from many Western countries where smacking has since been declared unlawful, to argue that banning smacking increased juvenile delinquency, including serious violence, several fold, with the increase in Sweden being ten-fold since the ban. There remain divergences regarding the efficacy of physical chastisement. The aim here is not to determine the veracity of either side of the argument on physical discipline, but to mull its use within the law. While we continue to explore more effective ways of discipline, and until English law regulating physical chastisement is changed, social workers and similar professionals would have to work with Nigerian parents who apply (legally) physical chastisement without persistently maligning such parents.

Larzelere and Baumrind (2010) draw on research to argue that children learn good behaviour and the perils of bad behaviour in different ways, and should be disciplined in ways most fitting for their way of learning. They conclude that:

> Spanking should never be used in an infant's first twelve months of life and rarely, if at all, before eighteen months of age… Parents must also be certain not to administer punishment too severely, whether physical or nonphysical… Every child is different, so not all disciplinary tactics will work as well with every child – or for every situation with the same child. Parents need to skillfully use a range of disciplinary options to help their children achieve their full potential, rather than to have effective options restricted unnecessarily (p. 86-87).

In Chapter Five, I showed how participants worried about the relationship between mild physical discipline, and behaviour that crosses ill-defined boundaries between child discipline and child abuse (Children Act 1989, amended 2004, Section 58). My intention is not to advocate for smacking but to encourage child welfare professionals to listen to parents and to understand where and how physical chastisement fits within a wider set of parenting practices and to be careful not to let 'smacking' become central in their relations with minority parents. My position is in line with Honneth's interests in not devaluing minority values – in this case, even apparently uncomfortable albeit legal ones. This would enable a thorough investigation of the concept of discipline as it affects childrearing, particularly for black African parents, by embracing and engaging with previously silenced viewpoints.

7.4   Individualism and Collectivism are not Mutually Exclusive

Another key finding from the research relates to the participants privileging of collectivism over individualism. Their position, however, did not pit one against the other, but was instead a problematisation of an *overly* individualistic outlook. Honneth (1995) understands self-esteem as an individual's appreciation of their own worth, embodied in the individual's attainment of their community's aspirations). In light of their backgrounds of cherished communal upbringing, most participants in this study struggled with their children's individualism. These struggles are encapsulated in Chapter Five, where some worried that there was too little reciprocity between their second-generation children and them as parents. An example is a mother's (Christina) despair that her young adult children raised in England devoted no time or effort to their parents, yet never hesitated to demand their parent's attentions. Meanwhile, as a parent,

she was always giving of herself. In Nigerian cultures, 'it is a moral imperative for the younger generation to provide for their parents' when the parents become elderly (Ebot, 2014, p. 150). Links can further be drawn between participants' requests in Chapter Six that children in England should be taught not only their rights, in terms of entitlements from the relevant adults in their lives, but also their responsibilities towards others, including parents.

The participants expressed considerable anxiety about maintaining collectivism in a context of immigration, perceiving the imposition of individualistic values by social practitioners as part of a political and imperialistic project on the part of British authorities. The dearth of shared values between children and their parents is unwittingly exposed in some social work policies and practices that originate from an ethical praxis to protect children from their parents if need be (Marshall *et al*., 2011). It is possible to understand participants' conflict with an individualistic ideology as expressing a desire to counter individuality persistently imparted unto their children because of its propensity to 'deepen people's mutual indifference' (Honneth, 2004, p. 465).

Following on from Taylor (1997), Abbey argues that it is possible to have different positive values with incongruent manifestations existing simultaneously. Individuality thus has its place in contemporary English society, but its imposition on the internal intimate spaces of shared family existence is problematic. While children may benefit from recognising their individuality, there are nuanced differences between individuality and individualism (Honneth, 2004). Social workers are charged with incorporating a child's individuality and individual needs during interventions (Children Act 1989, section 17 (4A)). Yet this need not entail the promotion of narcissistic self-absorption, which has the potential to hinder the child's relationships with others (Tyrell, 1990; Honneth, 2004). Participants in this study underlined the importance of Nigerian immigrant parents having the self-confidence to exercise their parental responsibilities in nurturing their children to be family-oriented if they choose to do so, except when such demands become overly stultifying for the child, or manifest as abuse.

7.5   Residual Fear as an Impact of Immigration

An important finding in this research is that black African immigrant parents seem to exist in a state of fear; fears that crystallised during interactions with the authorities upon arrival in Britain. Such fears appear to have increased with negative perceptions of and contact with social workers and associated child welfare professionals, as well as fears about children's understanding and reported use of child welfare policies and laws against parents. Furthermore, participants expressed fears emanating from experiences of racism and prejudice and its effects on their families and communities. The current political climate also presents a vantage point from which to further interpret the concept, *fear*, with regards to the participants (see Heath and Demireva, 2014). Xenophobic and racist language has become more commonplace in English public discourses in what Furedi (2006) would call fear of the *other* and 'fear of the unknown' (p. 138). Some politicians have contextualised such rhetoric as appropriate response to an 'existential threat'[7] from Islamic fundamentalists (Lambert, 2013). For Hall (1992) these fears are the sum of 'the terrifying, internal fear – of living with difference' (p. 17). For black Africans in particular, experiences of discrimination intersect with an *Africanness,* which they perceive as being associated with poverty, neediness, disease, ignorance, and war, amongst others (see Humphries, 2004, p. 97).

Drawing from Hall (1992), the symbolic 'fatal coupling of difference and power', ensures that Nigerian immigrant parents in this study encounter a higher frequency of fear in more intimate situations than other non-immigrant, white populations would (p. 17). I have demonstrated in Chapter Five that white, non-immigrant British parents and sub-Saharan African immigrant parents experience the effects of the same child welfare policies and laws differently. Nigerian parents in the study share a customary history of immigration and settlement processes, most of which reportedly still cause anxieties in the majority of participants (Bögner, Brewin and Herlihy, 2010; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). These experiences crystallise into many forms of fear of

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[7] David Cameron used the term to describe threats from Islamic fundamentalism in response to the fatal shooting of thirty British holidaymakers in Tunisia by terrorists in June 2015

authority, the law, and Western socio-political systems. In some cases, participants' children gained full residency or British citizenships before them. Nearly all the second-generation children of the participants have a better flair for the English language than their parents, with many having acted as their parents' interpreters (see Chiswick and Miller, 1998; Earner, 2007). These conditions effectively place the children in some position of authority over their parents within domestic spaces, which participants perceived as being exacerbated by some child welfare applications by professionals that inadvertently increase that power.

Most participants disclosed regularly experiencing a number of reactions arising from otherwise ordinary parent-child interactions ranging from 'insecurity', anxiety, fear, anger, helplessness, to hopelessness (Berg and Peltola, 2015, p. 49). While non-immigrant white British populations might also experience worry and anger as a result of their children's behaviour, as noted in a focus group discussion in Chapter Six, for these participants, these emotions are more profound for being constant threats to their very existence as free citizens in Britain. Furthermore, perceiving that the host society views them as unequal based on race and ethnicity means that parents expect to be judged very harshly in any dispute regarding their children, compounding their fears. Participants did not only report fear *of* their children. There was also heightened fear *about* their children. They described feeling more anxious about their children's safety in England than in Nigeria, albeit that personal safety and safeguards are acknowledged to be lesser in Nigeria.

I have shown how participants experiment and discover pathways to ameliorate perceived negative or oppressive external influences on their private family life. Social workers however, might view such passive resistance as a dedicated effort to circumvent the rules through 'superficial compliance' by parents and caregivers (London Safeguarding Children's Board, 2013, section 6.5.2). Honneth's (1995, 2014) framework, in contrast, encourages us to view these strategies, however passive, as moral struggles for self-actualisation. Parents are resisting norms or policies that they object to whilst complying with others, including complying with some they also object to. Given the experiences that

several participants described, it does not seem irrational that some felt compelled to employ counteracting manoeuvres (seen in attempts at disguised non-compliance) in these forms of manipulation and resistance (see Fraser, 2003). Some of these resistance techniques can be framed as tactics of 'introverted participation', as discussed in Chapter Six. While participants' accounts help us to understand these strategies in context of lived experience, Honneth and Fraser (2003) encourage us not to criticise but to recognise them as strategies for recognition, or resistance to misrecognition.

7.6   Recognition Includes Representation and Participation

Honneth's recognition is the key substantive theory for explaining the findings of this study. However, Honneth made accommodations for Fraser's principles of parity of participation (Honneth, 2003a/b, 2004), which spurred him to make more explicit the issues of 'participation' in 'recognition'. It is thus useful to think about participants' strategies for participation in the British childrearing system discussed in Chapter Six in the light of Fraser's (2003) theorisation of participation introduced in Chapter Two. Fraser conceptualises justice as constituting a three-dimensional struggle over redistribution (economic), recognition (cultural), and representation (political). For her, representation defines those who can or cannot participate economically and culturally (Fraser, 2005, p. 6). As the interview and focus group discussion participants in this study were recruited with a view to obtaining as diverse a group as possible, sampling ensured that the participants reflected some of the diversity of the Nigerian population in those localities (See Sampling in Chapter Three). Their demographic characteristics (also in Chapter Three), which included a significant number of highly educated, working professionals, indicate that despite being first-generation immigrants, they were not particularly disadvantaged through class (economics and education).

This finding of relative financial wellbeing amongst the participants was a surprise given evidence of significant poverty levels for black African immigrants in the West (Coe, 2014). However, several reasons might be responsible for the

comparative economic stability of the participants. Two gatekeepers, one from a mosque and another from a church, disclosed that they had never received requests for financial support from Nigerian members who did *not* have visa restrictions because these parents were 'too hardworking to be broke' (Imam). I accordingly wondered about the financial position of those who were unable to *work so hard*. Nonetheless, two relevant factors in the participants' finances appear to be their settled (visa) status, and their employment status. Accounting for economic factors allows other variables intersecting identity, including 'ethnicity… class, skills and qualifications, personal outlook and experiences', to play significant roles in participants' experiences of English child welfare system (Barnard and Turner, 2011, p. 4).

This finding, however, does not suggest that in general Nigerian immigrants in England do not suffer economic deprivation, as there is still a significant pay gap between black and white people in similar roles (Barnard and Turner, 2011; Rafferty, 2012). Conditions including visa restrictions, which impact the ability to work, employment opportunities, and qualification-job-pay parity indicate that Fraser's theorising on redistribution is relevant for immigrant groups in Western countries. However, focusing particularly on the study's participants whose selection in the research was based on their lack of immigration restrictions has revealed that economic redistribution (in England) was not as pertinent as their struggles for moral (symbolic) recognition, and, to a lesser degree, political representation.

The participants' experiences affirm Fraser's (2003) rejoinder that issues of recognition are not always 'simultaneously economic and cultural' (p. 63). Misrepresentation 'can occur even in the absence' of economic or cultural injustices (Fraser (2007, p. 8). She (2008) would also argue that global distributive (economic) forces might have prompted the participants' emigration in the first place. Other writers have, for nearly a century, also argued about the 'impact of 'external' forces on the lives of Africans' (Kasimir, 2007, p. 47). Furthermore, recommendations by participants to the government in Chapter Six for improving the macro structures of children and family systems in relation to black African immigrants were both ideological (moral) and representative

(political). This lends credence to the suitability of a unification of both Honneth's recognition and Fraser's concept of representation for interpreting those findings, as they specifically emphasise the moral nature of social conflicts, in addition to the broad democratisation of institutional systems that should enable every individual to participate on par with others (Fraser, 1996; Honneth and Fraser, 2003).

In terms of representation, about one third of participants were confident that they were actively participating in the English childrearing system, even if they were not constructively enabled to do so by the host society. Need for representation inclined some *active* participants within that group (Nma in Chapter Six, for instance) to see themselves as interlopers striving to *take* what was being denied them, in other words to experience *impostor syndrome* (see Selvi, 2011). At the other end of the spectrum of those who chose to *participate* in the English childrearing 'system' were those who preferred to completely assimilate without *struggling* against opposing structures. However, their choice of total assimilation seems to entail denial of some aspects of their heritage and cultural origins, a rejection or obliteration of their prior background (Spivak, 1998). Comparable investments were noted in some Nigerian immigrant parents' decisions not to speak or allow their children learn their native languages, considerations that could have been fuelled by imperialist hegemony (see Spivak 1998; Parmegiani, 2014).

Meanwhile, further complexities regarding participation are observed within the 'introverted group' of participants, who felt that equal representation should not even be desired because of Nigerian immigrant parents' numerical inferiority in the country. At this juncture, Fraser (1998, 2005) would insist on 'participatory parity', the lack of which compelled participants in this group (Introverted Participation) to choose non-engagement with social workers and other relevant child welfare professionals. She would also maintain that these participants' disconnect was based on an accurate, albeit fatalistic conclusion 'that institutionalised patterns of cultural value [do not] express equal opportunity for achieving social esteem' (Fraser and Honneth, 2004, p. 36). A superficial appraisal of her arguments would support Fraser's participatory parity as more

appropriate for responding to participants who accept their lack of representation in the English child welfare system for statistical reasons.

However, my view is that the issue is more complex than this. Recognition provides a critical reminder of the limitations of democracy, which is most relevant here. Given that democracy is a governance model founded on majority, groups who are greater in number have a legitimate authority to impact policies, laws, norms, and public opinion (system) (see Dixon, Goodwin and Wing, 2003). Nigerian immigrant parents make up less than 0.5 percent of the population in England where this study was undertaken (*Migration Observatory*, 2016). Honneth's recognition, however, asserts the rights, values and achievements of such minority groups and enjoins the majority to do the same, irrespective of numerical disadvantage. Recognition stresses that the state and its institutions systematically include those whose numbers tend to imply their exclusion.

The narratives of those who sent their children temporarily back to Nigeria, and those who supported that choice indicate that those participants did so because the host society failed to acknowledge their normative childrearing values, and participants empowered themselves to see their decisions as acts to circumvent the devaluation of their practices (see Halter and Johnson, 2014). With this decision, participants hoped to conclusively subvert imperial geographies of power, from the domestic (family) to intra-national (in England) to transnational (between England and Nigeria) spaces. However, these alternative solutions might be less needed if child welfare authorities and policy-makers paid closer and honest attention to the difficulties Nigerian parents encounter in England.

From a critical realist perspective, participants' 'transformative agency' (Morgan, 2007, p. 20), as well as choice of translocation (Nigeria) for their children, challenge certain critics of recognition regarding *agency*. By suggesting that the value placed on recognition creates emptiness in marginalised peoples that they imagine only their oppressors can fill, Oliver's (2004) notion of recognition appears insufficient, especially as applied in this research. Firstly, although the challenges participants experienced were mostly structural, these did not

preclude participants' individual agency. They did not present as helpless, inferior beings unable to function without validation from their unarguably dominant hosts.

While querying their hosts' lack of affirmation of their (participants') positive qualities, participants felt confident enough to equally assign or withhold similar affirmation to and from their hosts. For instance, participants were not hesitant to suggest that a number of their hosts' childrearing practices were detrimental to children's wellbeing, including: allowing children too much freedom to disrespect authority and unnecessarily endanger themselves and others; a psychological over-burdening of parents in their quest for perfection; and, an overly individualistic outlook that increased isolation while decimating mutual caring. Drawing from Mercanti (2012), these assessments do not necessarily reflect feelings of inferiority or weakness but rather an avowal of the strength of conviction participants had of their own normative practices (p. 203). Secondly, Oliver seems to have neglected or underplayed the pervasive *reciprocity* essential for actualisation of Honneth's recognition (Honneth, 1995, 2014; Thompson, 2006, p. 48).

Fraser and Honneth (2003) would maintain however that although participants might have felt empowered in this research to proffer their evaluation of the English childrearing system, genuine representation could only materialise if their perceptions impact policy and practice and effect parity in participation. Actual participatory parity within the system is where Fraser's theorisation on representation plays an important role in ensuring that immigrant families' realities are concretely accounted for; where integrative justice speaks persuasively on inclusion for the study group (see Fraser, 2007). To argue, therefore, like some critics of Honneth's recognition including Barry (2002), Markell (2009), and Phillips (2008), that identity and the differences it underscores are somewhat less important than equality (racial and class equality for instances) is to *split hairs* or even conflate the concepts; none of the concepts preclude the other (see Thompson, 2006; Lovell, 2007). 'A group must somehow come to perceive itself as both distinct and subject to unjust material or social conditions' in order to ameliorate dominant structures (Smith and

Fetner, 2010, p.13). Therefore, in order 'to abolish, [and] not… recognise difference' (see Fraser (1996, p. 9), equality should first have been achieved.

For the study's participants who feel that their race (black) and ethnicity (*Africanness*) entail a double disadvantage, it would be minimising their difficulties to accept that their 'differences of experiences, values or cultural practices… get in the way of our mutual comprehension' (Phillips, 1997, p. 144). Without essentialising Nigerian immigrants, such ideas could be understood as founded upon the very privileges denied the participants (see Sullivan, 2006). There is no denying that the participants' challenges would be improved by redistribution and representation, in addition to recognition. However, Honneth's (2007) recognition embodies an organic yet compelling symbolic change for the participants. In documenting participants' own articulation of their experiences of the English child welfare system, 'claims to justice can now be turned over to the actual deliberations of those affected by them' (Fraser and Olson, 2008, p. 259).

Furthermore, in some other criticisms of Honneth's recognition including Markell's (2009) and McNay's (2008) is the presupposition that a single theory, or even a host of social theories, could effectively address all the myriad socio-political concerns, 'clarify all obscure issues', and assume a fallacious 'promise that will resolve all fundamental problems' experienced by groups in society (Geertz, 1973, p.3). To suppose this would be reductionist at best. Recognition, however, exemplifies the concerns raised by the study group, as well as certain other subjugated peoples (see Thompson, 2006). Putting forward the participants as one sample, misrecognition seems to be the single most prevalent oppression that they experienced in common, irrespective of wealth, education, class, or any other measurable attainment (see Petherbridge, 2013, Ebot, 2014). In this regard, Honneth's recognition shares synergies with critical realism not only in its emancipatory inflections but also its emphasis on the potency of ordinarily non-measurable underlying and characteristically symbolic social apparatuses. Recognition mirrors the undermining of qualitative research and data in favour of a quantitative approach for similar reasons, whereby statistical, observable knowledge is perceived as more persuasive than

narrative and illustrative studies. For Honneth, those non-literal factors of misrecognition significantly shape social existence more concretely as they remain weighty long after tangible realities including suffrage and material deficit have been addressed (2007).

Critical realist epistemology is again useful to highlight that there is much of social reality that we may never empirically experience – that all claims to knowledge must remain tentative (Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 2010). It provides much-needed humility for researchers about the human ability to ascertain or solve social issues, some of which could more or less transcend their consciousness (Oliver, 2012). The generative mechanisms that control events that impact the study group may remain beyond our empirical grasp or might have been misinterpreted. Awareness of our empirical limitations should not, however, inhibit our *quest to know* (Houston, 2010), and a major significance of analysing participants' child welfare concerns is consideration for how to integrate positive aspects of their values into English childrearing practices and norms in ways that address issues of representation.

7.7   Summary - Scope for Black African Values

I have interrogated the findings through the lenses of Honneth's recognition theory (1995, 2007), Fraser's scales of justice, in particular, representation (1996, 2007), and Bhaskar's critical realism (1998). More precisely, the findings suggest that Western child welfare policymakers and practitioners do not recognise Nigerian childrearing values. Instead, their parenting attitudes and practices are presented through a deficit model as authoritarian and therefore problematic (see Nsamenang, 2013). Moreover black African second-generation children are also likely to encounter negative portrayals of African parenting practices (see AFRUCA, 2012; Coe, 2014). The challenge of balancing Nigerian and English values and ways of life is faced by parents in a context of fear and marginalisation. Parents participating in this study thus expressed worry about the individualism of their children, vanishing codes of

obligation between parent and offspring, and a lack of recognition of sacrifices made by parents.

Other critical issues discussed in this chapter centre around parents' discernment of contradictions in the child welfare polity, with certain values and parenting ideals imposed on the children of the poor – whether black or white - and others reserved for the children of the rich. Eleoma for example identified *authoritarian education* as indicative of the 'enigma of Britishness' – available at a price in public fee-paying schools and reviled in the state system. For some this was proof of hypocrisy because it instils in certain privileged children the non-negotiable discipline required for dominance, and for some it represents a conspiracy to deprive BME and poorer 'Britons' the advantages of such strict discipline. An example of this 'double bind' is clearly illustrated in Chapter Four in the experience of Irulo, a *returnee* who discovered to her chagrin that youngsters she expected to stage a triumphal welcome for her actually considered her rather *village* or *bush*.

In Chapter Eight, the next and final chapter of this thesis, I will relay the contributions to knowledge, and social work policy and practice, amongst others, from this research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion and Implications of the Research

In concluding this research, I want to focus on the potentially reframing qualities of this study (Pilapil, 2013). First and foremost, the research provided opportunities for the representation of normally excluded voices that can on occasion drive important discussions about social work practice and ethics in the English system. Participants' voices told that the major issues they encountered were structural and institutional, while some were more personal and intimate. Beyond this, my thematic interpretation of their accounts, critical reflections from the perspectives of Honneth's recognition theory (1995, 2007, 2013) and Fraser's representation/participation (1996, 2008), while maintaining a critical realist outlook (Bhaskar, 1998, 2008) serve to deepen understandings of Nigerian immigrant parents' experiences in England. The findings highlight practices that underpin social, political, and cultural structures impacting on participants' parenting experiences, and the possibilities for addressing, challenging and improving these. This concluding chapter therefore reflects on these findings and on the project as a whole, under the following: 'Original Contributions to Knowledge'; 'Challenges and Limitations'; 'Suggestions for Further Research'; and 'Concluding Reflections'.

8.1   Original Contribution to Knowledge

This is the first study in Britain to articulate and document the parenting and child welfare experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents in Britain from their own perspectives. Onwujuba, Marks and Nesteruk (2015), as noted in Chapter Two, have researched Nigerian immigrant parents in the USA, although they excluded non-graduates, which this study includes. Distinctively too, this research sought to foreground Nigerian immigrant parents' experiences and perspectives and their suggestions for improvement upon social work and child protection/safeguarding practices. Extant literature about British-resident Nigerian parents, including some produced by and for fellow Nigerian immigrant parents, problematise this group, while I have privileged it (see Bokhari, 2008;

AFRUCA 2012). Honneth's recognition theory (1995) has offered a respectful approach to conceptualise their child welfare experiences, which is unique in this field.

More specifically, this research contributes to an area that is under-researched and under-theorised in a number of ways. It brings to the fore insights into how Nigerian immigrant parents may understand, experience and apply English childrearing norms using various strategies and with varying success to integrate these with their own. It surfaces how they perceive their hosts' interpretations of their own values and expertise. Through this, it exposes some of the key problematic and contested features of childrearing they encounter, most notably but by no means exclusive, surrounding physical chastisement, along with the tensions and in particular, the fear, experienced in negotiating them.

This study therefore has implications for understanding, constructing and 'doing' social work with Nigerian immigrant parents, and perhaps with other black Africans more widely. Guided by Phoenix and Husain (2007) and by my data analysis on the intersectionality of certain lived experiences, I cautiously include other black African immigrant parents in some of these reflections as they share similar racial, ethnic and cultural spaces within British child welfare discourses (also see Bernard and Gupta, 2008). Moreover, as first-generation immigrant parents come from different backgrounds, the knowledge generated by this research highlights the opportunities for social work practice in multicultural environments to account for the different identities of various groups, as well as the multifaceted exigencies that frame childrearing practices.

Before distilling the core findings of the study, examining their implications and progressing towards recommendations for a wider vision, it is essential to acknowledge that there have been challenges in undertaking the study, and there are of course limitations to the research itself and the conclusions that may be drawn from it. These are discussed in later sections of this chapter, but they are also held in mind when making claims for the status of the findings, their implications and the recommendations based upon them.

Key Findings and Implications of the Research

The findings suggest that participants' aspirations for parenting excellence were strongly infused with anxiety when striving to achieve this excellence within the British context. Their worries were related to social workers' specific expectations of 'good enough' parenting - expectations that are based on Western models of parenting. These versions of acceptable parent-child relationships play a key part in some participants' experience of exclusion, through a presentation of their parenting style as 'authoritarian' and therefore illegitimate. The perceived denigration was strongly rejected by participants as belying their deep commitment to their children, as well as their well-considered principles of childrearing. Both participants' own proposals, and the findings of the study as a whole, highlight the need for further research aimed at identifying more inclusive parenting models, or at least recognising and respecting *other* parenting knowledges. This finding is particularly relevant for child safeguarding professionals who may inadvertently pressurise Nigerian parents and by association, other black immigrant parents, to aspire towards Eurocentric childrearing ideals.

The participants persistently experienced social work practices and those of other professionals with child welfare from an axis of fear. The most troubling for the participants were the definitions, limits, and responses, both legal and moral, regarding physical chastisement. These worries reportedly guided participants towards an attitude of resistance that unfortunately seemed to intensify schisms with the professionals. This finding points to the need for a more nuanced understanding of both child physical chastisement and physical abuse, and for interventions that fully recognise and respect cultural difference, whilst fully upholding legal and policy standards for safeguarding children from harm. It is certainly arguable on the basis of this study that safeguarding responses uncritically prescribing or proscribing specific disciplinary practices as acceptable or abusive are less helpful than those which focus holistically on children's wellbeing and safety. A more nuanced and respectful approach of this sort would allow social services, and policymakers to target safeguarding interventions towards children who really need it.

The finding further emphasises the need for cultural shift from the risk averse and adversarial social work culture in England to a genuinely co-operative one where parents could envisage child safeguarding professionals as partners working together for the welfare of children (see Boddy *et al*., 2014; Gupta, Blumhardt and ATD Fourth World, 2016). Though the primary purpose of my doctoral research at this stage has been to generate rather than exchange new knowledge, I am pleased to have had the opportunity through my professional role to begin to contribute towards this agenda for impact and change (see Appendix XII).

This study also highlighted the under-recognised and under-researched issue wherein parents appeared to experience not only child welfare professionals but also their own children as a source of fear. Participants reported feeling threatened by their children, regarding calling the police, social workers, or telling teachers about everyday matters. Parents' accounts suggest that children would occasionally follow through with these threats, demonstrating the complex power dynamics between themselves and their immigrant parents. The implication is that social workers and other child welfare professionals would do well to hold in mind the possible causes and impact of this somewhat skewed power dynamic when intervening in such families.

In addition, the ways of being informed by gender put participants in the study somewhat at odds along male/female binary, with the women on the one hand predominantly critical of patriarchal family practices in Nigeria but positive about British recognition of women's rights. The women who suffered poor education in Nigerian because of their gender were actively involved, or wanted to be, in social enterprises aimed to improve equality for women. On the other hand, male participants felt that men were losing a sense of respect and role within the family as a consequence of British policies that supposedly give preference to women and mothers, irrespective of the men's and father's involvement. It is not clear what the male participants propose as solutions to this issue, although more public attention and research may provide necessary insight.

A further key finding is that, in consonance with their upbringing in Nigeria, participants had strong support for a 'big community' regarding childrearing, which translates as communal childrearing. For them, the 'big community' ensures better protection for children, enables children to be raised with values of respect, sharing, and caring towards others, and helps to reduce anti-social behaviour in children outside the home. This would require that the general public, particularly neighbours or people who share some kind of restricted space like buses and trains, develop new communal attitudes towards all children they encounter. Another way to phrase this is in the saying, 'safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility'. Or as is said in Nigeria, 'every adult is a parent'. Achieving this model of 'big community' would be difficult to realise in contemporary English cultural contexts.

Recommendations for a Wider Vision

Most of the implications of the key findings of this study emerged directly from the accounts and suggestions of the participants themselves. Alongside these, a more far-reaching vision for professional and cultural change also emerged from the participants' own proposals, as reported in Chapter Six, albeit thematised and theorised by me, as follows:

A paradigm shift in the way Nigerian immigrants are viewed and characterised would be helpful in reducing their experiences of stereotypes and discrimination. Such shifts would be more influential if initiated by government and state officials whose rhetoric and actions are construed as legitimate by the public. Furthermore, participants' perceptions of the effects of public constructions of *Africanness* suggest that reducing xenophobic and racist language that persistently reminds indigenous populations of the outsider status of black African immigrants would improve the integration of Nigerian immigrants and enable a more cohesive society. The challenges of ameliorating pervasive socio-cultural and socio-political disrespect of certain groups of immigrant parents as culturally inferior might be reduced if government, policy makers and the media projected the positive contributions of those parents,

rather than diminished them. To underline this, avenues for identifying and recognising positive values and practices might be clarified in order for Nigerian immigrant parents in particular to feel listened to, included, and respected as parents (Fraser, 2007; Dominelli, 2002).

To reduce allegations of domination and cultural superiority and to increase effectiveness, laws that specifically address black African immigrants (of which this study group is a part) could be more transparent, free of bias, and partnership-oriented towards the groups concerned. Policies underpinned by an acknowledgment of the structural/systemic, and therefore *real*, challenges such minority parents face, would promote reciprocal *recognition.* This in turn would encourage and promote culturally competent social work practice, for which the hallmark (as I have argued in Chapter Two) is respect for diverse cultural norms, beliefs, practices and heritages, combined with proactive recognition of the limitations of one's own knowledge. At present, however, approaches to curbing oppressive practice with black African immigrant parents remain patchy and inconsistent because there is no formal, coherent procedure for ensuring culturally competent practice amongst child welfare professionals in England. It may help if local authorities introduce purposeful, standardised cultural awareness requirements for frontline child welfare professionals. This will ensure that social workers and associated professionals likely to come in contact with black African immigrant parents provide fit-for-purpose service to such families. This may reduce the varied responses to interventions in which some child welfare professionals feel confident to support families while others do not; or some operate positively while others act in oppressive ways towards immigrant parents.

8.2   Challenges and Limitations

It is important to evaluate both the challenges encountered during the research process, and the limitations of the study. This reflection allows me to revisit what I might have done differently and perhaps explains some of the reasons behind my choices. It also helps ground the extent to which claims, recommendations and conclusions can be made using the study's findings. Nonetheless, these challenges help to substantiate that the findings are indeed strong enough to support the study's claims. Some of these challenges, which I discuss in this section include: complexities in the analysis of data from multiple methods; use of historical information; dynamics of intimate interviewing; and my various positionalities.

Using the three different data collection methods posed challenges regarding collection, sorting (thematising) and analytical interconnectivity of the data (Beauchemin and Tovey, 2015). However, triangulation of data from the methods allowed for relative substantiation of participants' reflections, which situate the study as being both authentic and valid (Bryman, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Dividing the thesis and representation of participants' accounts into themes and chapters necessarily imposes on them an 'order' that was not the order in which participants spoke or may have encountered those experiences. In addition, organising my explication of participants' experiences in ways that they may not have chosen also imposes my *personal interpretation* and *analysis*, which is nonetheless, a recognised strength of good quality research.

The use of retrospective information (especially in Chapter Four) provided avenues to create meanings about the transnational experiences of Nigerian parents (see Elliot, 2005). However, while the intention of the study was neither to compare experiences between participants' original and current abodes, nor to delineate which context was better for childrearing, it highlighted important issues in Nigeria, which could explain the childrearing practices of Nigerian immigrant parents.

In-depth interviews inevitably invite the participants to problematise the topics raised (Longhurst, 2009). In the study's contexts, which relate to understandably emotive matters of children and family life, the participants might have viewed the interviews as opportunities to share some of these complex facets of their lives to a receptive audience; this was indeed my perception of most of the participants' motivations. Nevertheless, some of the context-based issues that arose during interviews, like 'sending children to Nigeria' deserved further in-depth questioning of participants. I however felt unable to explicitly pursue these angles because I was concerned that participants might construe them as accusatory or overly intrusive questions. While I felt somewhat constrained in this regard during one-on-one interviews, I was able to use the security that *group talk* enables to reintroduce such issues in the focus groups (see Boddy, 2005).

Furthermore, as this research was not classed as high risk, in addition to the somewhat misplaced confidence that comes from being an 'insider' on both sides of the 'problem', I was relatively unprepared for the personal impact on me of the participants' accounts. For instance, before the inception of the study, I did not have any children or concerns about where to raise my future children. However, following collection of data, analysis, and deeper knowledge of participants' challenges as immigrant parents, I have since developed related anxieties, especially as I also conceived and bore my two children in the process of the study. Also as noted in Chapter Three (section 3.5), my positionalities as a Nigerian immigrant parent and social worker did raise ethical dilemmas in my interactions with participants and conception of the data, as seen for example in Chapter Five (section 5.2). Future researchers in this field may find it useful to be prepared for the emotional and psychological impact of research with similar immigrant populations.

Key Limitations of the Study

The complications associated with recruiting participants for multiple methods led me to narrow my ambitions away from national recruitment to an exclusive

focus on Greater London. This raises issues about the representativeness of the findings to the Nigerian populations in England, and even more so, England. As the empirical base for this study is also small, I am not making a claim that the findings of this research likewise characterise the experiences of all first-generation Nigerian parents in Greater London. While claims to statistical generalisability would be misplaced, the 'accuracy' and depth (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003, p. 269) of participants' accounts produced in interviews, blogs and focus group discussions generated deep insights. These insights may well have wider resonance for understanding critical concerns within the Nigerian community and indeed other black African migrant communities whose experiences may often intersect with those of the Nigerian participants (see Elliot, 2005, Phoenix and Husain, 2007).

Other methodological constraints include the use of purposive snowball sampling, which has a tendency to replicate the characteristics within a group, as noted in Chapter Three (section 3.2). It is possible that there were tendencies towards uniformity amongst groups of participants who were nominated by others. However, I strove to ameliorate this potential bias by seeking diverse points of outreach, including different Nigerian ethnic associations, faith centres, and gatekeepers.

Furthermore, this study might have benefited from inclusion of one or two illustrative case studies, which would allow for more holistic and deeper exploration of the experiences of particular participants (see Flyvbjerg, 2006). In fact, I did consider and draft for this purpose the case of one participant who provided particularly rich interview material. However, primarily for reasons of space, I did not in the end include this material. Therefore, I hope future research with this population would include a dedicated case study and thus its accompanying insights.

8.3   Suggestions for Further Research

This research focuses directly on the child welfare concerns of first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents in England. Following from the interesting findings about the peculiar relationships of power and the described subversion of parental authority between Nigerian parents and their children, future research could consider juxtaposing the parents' perceptions and experiences with those of their second-generation children. Furthermore, participants' numerous encounters with social workers and related professionals invites future researchers to likewise seek to triangulate these parents' perspectives and their children's with frontline child safeguarding professionals'. Some important policy recommendations by the participants in Chapter Six would benefit from further exploration, particularly in relation to possible implementation by social services and policymakers. Accordingly, further research could seek to explore social workers' perceptions and practices with this study group with regards to professionals' interpretations of their parenting practices including but not limited to discipline measures. Fear is one of the more prominent inhibiting factors in Nigerian immigrant parent-child relations. Future studies could consider whether and how it features in social workers' own feelings and logics during intervention with Nigerian immigrant parents.

The focus of this research has been the experiences of Nigerian parents, of recognition and misrecognition in England. While I have suggested that these experiences and the structural and cultural conditions that produce them might also be common to other black African, or BME immigrant parents, it would be informative to replicate this research with these similar groups to identify shared and distinctive experiences. This study's research process could also be informative for future researchers regarding challenges of accessing similar hard-to-reach participants who require various levels of stakeholders and gatekeepers to be reached. Researchers may benefit from evaluating the best form of obtaining data from such groups where direct face-to-face interviews may not be the best way to capture holistic data from possibly reluctant prospective participants. For instance, the internet blog was useful in teasing out data which many participants were reluctant to share in interviews or focus

group discussions because they probably deemed such data politically incorrect, sensitive or embarrassing.

8.4   Concluding Reflections

Exploring Nigerian immigrant parents' experiences of parenting and child welfare in England through the complementary lenses of recognition and social justice theories, and of critical realism, has guided me to understand that the fundamental issues raised in this study demand an integrative and partnership-based response. Establishing policies and practices that work best for Nigerian immigrant parents requires understanding and incorporating the perspectives of minority immigrant and majority host populations. It requires recognition and respectful interweaving of values, ideas and experiences of the local and transnational. As described by some participants in Chapter Six, Nigerian immigrant parents who are active participants in British citizenship may well have the 'best of both worlds'; conversely non-immigrant English people may learn some positive insights from the experiences of their Nigerian immigrant compatriots. Likewise building the knowledges of immigrant parents into English child welfare policymaking and practices may both embody and engender the reciprocity and recognition needed to ensure that they and their children experience the sense of rights-respecting belonging every individual/group deserves.

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Appendices

Appendix I: International Treaties and Protocols on Women and Children

(Ratified by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).
Source: UNICEF Nigeria 2015 (Updated).

International treaties and protocols on women
and children ratified by the Government as at
December 2001, include:

- ILO Convention 182 on Minimum Age.
- ILO Convention 138 on Elimination of the
  Worse Forms of Child Labour
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on
  Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
  against Women.
- Optional Protocol on the involvement of
  Children in armed Conflicts.
- Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children,
  Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
- Convention against Torture and other Cruel,
  Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or
  Punishment.
- Convention against Trans-national Organized
  Crime.
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish
  Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and
  Children.

Appendix II: Information Sheet for Gatekeepers

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

My name is Cynthia Okpokiri and I would like to have your support to access members of your organisation to take part in a research project that I am undertaking as a doctoral researcher at University of Sussex. The project is about the experiences of first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents in Britain. I am also a first-generation Nigerian immigrant parent who worked previously as a social worker. I am currently a full-time researcher interested in finding out more about experiences of parenting from other Nigerian parents and carers. The following information explains what the research is about, to enable you understand how you can support the research. Please be assured that it is entirely up to you to decide to give your assistance and that you will not be at any disadvantage if decide not to. Please do not hesitate to ask me to clarify any points that are not clear to you.

Research Aims
I am interested in learning how Nigerian parents experience parenting in Britain and how this fits with parenting practices from Nigeria. I hope the study will be informative for people who work with Nigerian parents, although it is a purely academic research and so would not have any direct impact on any services that participants receive.

Who May Participate?
I am asking your permission to recruit study participants from your organisation because you are involved in a leadership role in an organisation that has a number of parents and carers of Nigerian origin. Your leadership position means that you can act as a gatekeeper to members of your organisation, which is why I am seeking your assistance in this regard. Those who will participate in the study would be Nigerian parents in Britain, whom like their parents, were born and raised in Nigeria. They should be able to communicate fluently in English language. I am sorry that those who have immigration restrictions will not be asked to participate because immigration issues may complicate their parenting experiences.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?
You will be asked to introduce this research to members of your organisation. I will provide you with leaflets and similar information sheets that will explain the project in some detail for those who are interested in participating or those who simply want to know more about the study. Those whom you give these documents can do either of the following:

1) Inform you that they are willing for me to contact them directly to discuss whether they might want to participate, or;
2) Contact me directly to discuss this, using the details below:

Email C.Okpokiri@Sussex.ac.uk or on the telephone at 07404595582, or by post at:

Cynthia Okpokiri
Essex House
University of Sussex
Falmer, East Sussex
BN1 9RH

What Will Participants Be Asked to Do?

The project will have three different forms of participation as follows:

- Individual Interviews – these will explore participants' background and experiences of being parents in Britain. The interview should last for about two hours but could be less depending on what participants have to say.

- Group sessions known as a focus group discussions – these will involve about five participants who will meet together to discuss practices and ideas about parenting from examples of stories that I will provide. I hope that those who agree to participate in the interview will also agree to participate in the focus group discussion, but they will be free to decide one way or the other. Participants are free to choose to take part in either all three sets of the participation process, or one or two only.

- Internet Blog – participation is slightly different because it is **not** restricted to parents of **Nigerian origin only**. Parents or carers of children who are of Nigerian and or sub-Saharan African origin are invited to join the internet blog (**http://www.uknigerianchild.net/**). They may share the link with other parents and carers of the same background. However, the major parts for participation are the individual interview and focus group discussions noted above, which are areas where I am keenly seeking for your members' participation.

When and Where Will the Study Take Place?

The interview will take place in the participant's home or at a mutually agreed convenient place. The time will also be at their convenience. Focus group discussions will also take place at a venue and time convenient for all the participants. I will begin holding interviews and focus group discussions from March 2013, and will be continuing for approximately 1year.

Will Participants' Privacy and Confidentiality be Maintained?

I will take the greatest of care that all personal information about participants will be anonymised as quickly and completely as possible, and stored in secure places. Participants will be given pseudonyms (alternative names) to maintaining their privacy in all reporting of the research. I will ensure that interviews and focus group discussions are held in places where participants can speak freely in privacy. I will also make sure that focus group participants agree to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality. Normally, only I, and a professional transcriber (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) will have access to the information before it is anonymised. Audio-recorded information will be transferred onto a secure hard drive soon after collection and destroyed once anonymised transcripts have been made. Hand-written field-

notes and transcripts will also anonymised and safely stored in a locked filing cabinet. When the project is written up, all participants' information reported will be anonymised so that none of it will identify participants in any way.

The only circumstances in which complete confidentiality would not be guaranteed is if a participant discloses something that causes me concern that they or someone else might be at significant risk of harm. In that case, I would let the participant know about any actions that may be taken, except if discussing it with them is likely to cause further harm to those involved.

Are there Any Risks in Participating?
Some people may find that talking about certain parts of their parenting experiences could become distressing. Others may have difficulties with memories from their arrival in Britain, especially if they had children on arrival. However, if a participant finds any of the questions or discussions upsetting or intrusive, they will be encouraged to say so and we can change or stop the conversation. A participant can also decide to withdraw from the study without any disadvantage if they wish to at any time, up until the end of April 2014 when the project will be written up.

Who has Reviewed and Authorised the Study?
I am doing this research as part of my doctorate. It has been discussed and approved by my supervisors and the University of Sussex Research Ethics Committee.

What Next?
You are completely free to choose whether or not to lend your support in recruiting participants for this study. If you might be interested in acting as a gatekeeper or would like to discuss this further with me, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details noted above.

Please keep this information sheet for your reference. If we do make contact, I will talk through with you what is on the sheet to make sure you understand fully what is involved, and you are able to make a fully informed decision of your own about whether to offer your assistance. However, if you have any concerns about this study that you do not wish to discuss with me please contact my supervisor Professor Elaine Sharland at E.Sharland@Sussex.ac.uk for further advice and information.

Thank you for your co-operation.
Cynthia Okpokiri (Doctoral Researcher)

Information Sheet

Research with Nigerian Parents in UK

- **I am carrying out research with parents or children's carers of Nigerian heritage who are first-generation immigrants in the UK.**

- **The research will explore what things are important to them when raising their children, and how they negotiate these things in the UK.**

- **If you would like to find out more, please inform the bearer of this leaflet or contact Cynthia Okpokiri at:**

- **Tel: 07404595582**

- **Email: C.Okpokiri@Sussex.ac.uk**

- **Web: http://www.uknigerianchild.net/**

Thank you and Looking forward to hearing from you!

- Approved by University of Sussex, Social Sciences and Arts Research Ethics Committee

Appendix III: Information Sheet for Blog Participants

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I am undertaking as a doctoral student from University of Sussex. The project is about the experiences of first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents in Britain. I am also a first-generation Nigerian immigrant parent who worked previously as a social worker. I am currently a full-time researcher interested in finding out more about experiences of parenting from other Nigerian parents and carers. The following information explains what the research is about and what it will involve for you if you decide to participate. Please be assured that it is entirely up to you to decide to participate or not and that you will not be at any disadvantage if decide not to. Please do not hesitate to ask me to clarify any points that are not clear to you.

Research Aims
I am interested in learning how Nigerian parents experience parenting in Britain and how this fits with parenting practices from Nigeria. I hope the study will be informative for people who work with Nigerian parents, although it is a purely academic research and so would not have any direct impact on any services you receive.

Who May Participate?
Carers looking after children and parents from sub-Saharan Africa, particularly from Nigeria and West Africa, who are immigrants in the United Kingdom are invited to participate in the blog. However, immigrant parents and carers from other Black and minority ethnic backgrounds (BME) are welcome to participate if they are interested.

What are the Rules of the Blog?
1. If you decide to join the blog, please be aware that you are thereby agreeing that any information you share could be used for the purpose of the research. You may not be able to withdraw the information subsequently.

2. In order to safeguard your privacy and safety as well as others, please do not **ever** share personal information that may identify you or others on the blog**.** Information such as addresses, phone numbers, full names, email addresses etc. should not be recorded or given out to anyone linked with this blog. It is a public space; everything you post will be accessible to others and may not be retrievable.

3. Please maintain respect for yourself and others. Use appropriate language when you post. Do not use swear words or be deliberately insulting. Please do not bully or exercise disruptive behaviour towards others on the blog. Please address matters raised by others in a respectful and patient manner and also allow others to address points that you raise even if you do not agree with them.

4. Please anonymise your identity by using made-up names or made-up initials.

Also use hypothetical examples as much as possible or reconstruct real life examples in such a way that the persons involved and the actual event cannot be identified.

5. Please write in simple and plain English.

6. Please do not **spam** the site in any manner; you will be discontinued if you do. Similarly, please do not link this blog to any form of pornography, sexually explicit content, financial arrangements, violent or illegal content; if you do, you will be discontinued and may be reported to the authorities.

7. Please do not post referral links on this blog. You accept responsibility for all actions and content associated with your account.

8. I the moderator reserve the right to discontinue a blogger's access to the blog as well as to delete any posts I deem to be inappropriate.

Who has Reviewed and Authorised the Study?
This research is undertaken as part of my doctoral project. It has been discussed and approved by my supervisors and the University of Sussex Research Ethics Committee.

Please visit the blog at http://www.uknigerianchild.net/ and freely comment on the discussion topics.

Thank you for your co-operation,
Cynthia Okpokiri (Doctoral Researcher).

Appendix IV: *Information Sheet for Interview Participants*

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

My name is Cynthia Okpokiri and I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I am undertaking as a doctoral researcher from University of Sussex. The project is about the experiences of first-generation Nigerian immigrant parents in Britain. I am also a first-generation Nigerian immigrant parent who worked previously as a social worker. I am currently a full-time researcher and associate tutor interested in finding out more about experiences of parenting from other Nigerian parents and carers. The following information explains what the research is about and what it will involve for you if you decide to participate. Please be assured that it is entirely up to you to decide to participate or not and that you will not be at any disadvantage if decide not to. Please do not hesitate to ask me to clarify any points that are not clear to you.

Research Aims
I am interested in learning how Nigerian parents experience parenting in Britain and how this fits with parenting practices from Nigeria. I hope the study will be informative for people who work with Nigerian parents, although it is a purely academic research and so would not have any direct impact on any services you receive.

Who May Participate?
Nigerian parents in Britain are invited to participate if they and their parents were born and raised in Nigeria and they are able to communicate fluently in English language. I am sorry that those who have immigration restrictions will not be asked to participate because immigration issues may complicate their parenting experiences in Britain.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?
- The research is in two parts. The first part is individual interviews, which will explore your background and experience of being a parent in Britain. The interview should last for about two hours, but could be less depending on what you have to say. However, I may ask you for another session of up to one hour or less if we have not finished or I need clarification on things you have said in the first interview.

- The second part of the study is a group session known as a focus group discussion. It will involve about five participants who will meet together to discuss practices and ideas about parenting from examples of stories that I will provide. I hope that if you agree to participate in the interview you will also agree to participate in the focus group discussion, but you will be free to decide on one only.

When and Where Will the Study Take Place?
The interview will take place in your home or at a mutually agreed convenient place. The time will also be at your convenience. Focus group discussions will also take place at a venue and time convenient for all the participants. I will

begin holding interviews and focus group discussions from March 2013, and will be continuing for approximately 1year.

Are there Any Risks in Participating?
Some people may find that talking about certain parts of their parenting experiences could become distressing. Others may have difficulties with memories from their arrival in Britain, especially if they had children on arrival. However, if you find any of the questions or discussions upsetting or intrusive, you will be encouraged to say so and we can change or stop the conversation. You can also decide to withdraw from the study without any disadvantage if you wish to at any time, up until the end of April 2014 when the project will being written up

Will Your Privacy and Confidentiality be Maintained?
I will take the greatest of care that all personal information about participants will be anonymised as quickly and completely as possible, and stored in secure places. Participants will be given pseudonyms (alternative names) to maintaining their privacy in all reporting of the research. I will ensure that interviews and focus group discussions are held in places where participants can speak freely in privacy. I will also make sure that focus group participants agree to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality. Normally, only I, and a professional transcriber (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) will have access to the information before it is anonymised. Audio-recorded information will be transferred onto a secure hard drive soon after collection and destroyed once anonymised transcripts have been made. Hand-written field-notes and transcripts will also be anonymised and safely stored in a locked filing cabinet. When the project is written up, all participants' information reported will be anonymised so that none of it will identify participants in any way.

The only circumstances in which complete confidentiality would not be guaranteed is if a participant discloses something that causes me concern that they or someone else might be at significant risk of harm. In that case, I would let the participant know about any actions that may be taken, except if discussing it with them is likely to cause further harm to those involved.

Who has Reviewed and Authorised the Study?
I am doing this research as part of my doctorate. It has been discussed and approved by my supervisors and the University of Sussex Research Ethics Committee.

What Next?
You are completely free to choose whether to participate or not, whether to take part in interview and focus group or just one of these, and also whether to withdraw at any point as long as it is before the end of April 2014 when the research report will be written up. If you might be interested and would like to discuss this further with me, or to ask me more questions, please would you either:-

3) Inform the person who gave you this Information Sheet that you are willing for me to contact you directly to discuss whether you might want to participate, or;

4) Contact me directly to discuss this, using the details below:

Email: C.Okpokiri@Sussex.ac.uk
Web blog: http://www.uknigerianchild.net/
Telephone: 07404595582
Post at: Cynthia Okpokiri
               Essex House
               University of Sussex
               Falmer, East Sussex
               BN1 9RH

Please keep this information sheet for your reference. If we do make contact, I will talk through with you what is on the sheet to make sure you understand fully what is involved, and you are able to make a fully informed decision of your own about whether to join in. However, if you have any major concerns about this study that you do not wish to discuss with me please contact my supervisor Professor Elaine Sharland at E.Sharland@Sussex.ac.uk for further advice and information.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Cynthia Okpokiri (Doctoral Researcher).

Appendix V: *Action Plan for Disclosure*

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

ESRC Research Ethics Guidebook (2011) notes that although there may be no legal obligation to act upon information obtained from participants during research, the researcher has a 'duty of care' that may require her to breach a participant's confidence if the researcher has significant concerns.

The following is a proposed line of action to be taken if a parent or carer shares, or I become privy to information that raises significant concerns about the welfare or safety of a child, vulnerable person, or participant during data collection for this study.

Concerns Relating To The Welfare Or Safety Of A Child, Vulnerable Person or Parent
If I become considerably worried about a child's or vulnerable person's welfare or safety, I will make an analysis of the situation and a judgment about the risks and benefits of addressing the issue, and the appropriate manner and timing. If this happens during an interview I will gently raise my concerns with the parent or carer either during or immediately after the interview. I will explain ways of addressing the concern and try to obtain their permission to contact the appropriate agency. According to ESRC (2011) parents and carers do not usually refuse suggestions to contact agencies on their behalf. However, there may be exceptions particularly if this involves harm being caused by a parent to a child, including, in context of this study, practices like female genital mutilation, which are considered not only harmful but criminal in the UK. Whatever the situation, and whether or not the parent or carer agrees for me to contact a relevant agency, I will inform my supervisors and agree a line of action with them.

However, if I think the concerns are great and I am worried that the child or vulnerable person would be put at further risk of harm if I inform the participant who has disclosed the issue of concern, then I will not discuss it with the participant on the day. I will contact my supervisors as soon as possible for guidance.

Concerns Raised in Public During Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
If potentially disturbing information is raised during focus group discussions in the presence of other participants, I will reiterate the need for confidentiality with the group and advise them that I will discuss the matter privately with the individual(s) concerned. As set out above, I will make situated judgment on the risks and benefits of any line of action to be taken, as well as seek guidance from my supervisors.

Unless it will increase risk of harm, I will also inform participants about any actions I have taken either by phone or by visiting them again. Any visits following a referral to an agency will be risk-assessed with my supervisors before I embark upon them.

Appendix Vi: *Interview Participants' Consent Form*

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

This is a research project conducted by Cynthia Okpokiri, a doctoral student in the   School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. Please read and sign this document to confirm that you have read the information sheet provided, understand what the study entails and agree to participate.

- I confirm that I have read, and understand, the Information Sheet for the above study.

- I have decided to participate in this research of my own free will and may withdraw my participation or any information I have provided up till end of April 2014 without having to explain why.

- I agree that my personal information may be collected in written and audio form and used in anonymised form for the purposes of the research.

- I give my full and informed consent to taking part in this study.

Participant: _____

Code Name: _____

Signature: _____

Or: Verbal Consent: **Yes**   **No**

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix VII: Focus Group Participants' Consent Form

First-Generation Nigerian Immigrant Parents and Child Welfare Issues in Britain.

This is a research project conducted by Cynthia Okpokiri, a doctoral student in the   School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. Please read and sign this document to confirm that you have read the information sheet provided, understand what the study entails and agree to participate.

- I confirm that I have read, and understand, the Information Sheet for the above study.

- I have decided to participate in this research of my own free will and may withdraw my participation or any information I have provided up till end of April 2014 without having to explain why.

- I agree that my personal information may be collected in written and audio form and used in anonymised form for the purposes of the research.

- I agree to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all other participants within the group.

- I give my full and informed consent to taking part in this study.

Participant: _____

Code Name: _____

Signature: _____

Or Verbal Consent: **Yes**   **No**

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix VIII: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Interview begins with a brief re-introduction of the research, a reminder of researcher's plans for anonymity and confidentiality and a verbal request for consent for audio recording.

Group A Questions: Participant's Demographic Details

A1. What is your Nationality? (For those who may have dual citizenship)

A2. What state in Nigeria are you from?

A3. What is your gender?

A4. How old are you/age range?

A5. When did you emigrate to the Britain?

A6. What is your highest educational qualification? (GCSE, Degree, etc)

A7. What is your religious affiliation, if any?

A8. What is your occupation, if any?

A9. Are you married / living with a partner / single / divorced?

A10. If you have a partner, are you and your partner heterosexual or same sex?

Heterosexual	Same sex	N/A

A11. How many children are / were under your parental care?

A12. Please give the sex & age of your child/children

Sex	Age
Sex	Age

Group B Questions: Welfare/Rights/Childrearing

At this point I would like us to discuss your thoughts on parenting from your personal experiences and your understanding of others' practices. So, I am going to ask you some questions about parenting practices in Nigeria, some questions on what you know about White British parenting and some questions about parenting for Nigerians in Britain.

B1. I would like to begin by asking you to tell me where you consider as home, whether Britain or Nigeria, and why.

B2. I would like you to think about what the needs of a child might be from your background; what your parents think children required to develop well and to become successful individuals?

B3. What would you say are the specific qualities that a good parent should possess? Please explain.

B4. From your knowledge of parenting, do the childrearing practices in Britain differ from what you know in Nigeria?	Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B5. Please explain and give examples.

B6. If YES to **B4**, how do you manage the differences? Please give examples.

B7. As a parent bringing up children in Britain, what do/did you consider the most important issues regarding your children's upbringing?

B8. Please tell me what you know about how parents seek to ensure their child/ren's wellbeing in Nigeria.

B9. Please tell me how people understand child abuse in Nigeria; what do you think Nigerians consider to be child abuse? Please explain with examples.

B10. Do you think that traditional childrearing practices in Nigerian successfully safeguard children and promote their wellbeing?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B11. Please explain and give examples.

B12. Do the Nigerian authorities (social services, community leaders, police, schools, hospitals, etc) have any roles in safeguarding the wellbeing of children?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B13. Please explain and give examples.

B14. Do you think that children in Nigeria are seen to have rights?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B15. If YES to **14**, what are they, and are they upheld? Please explain if otherwise.

B16. Do you think that children in Britain are seen to have rights?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B17. If YES to **16**, what are they, and are they upheld? Please explain if otherwise.

B18. In your opinion in general, are children's rights important?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B19. If YES to **B18**, to what extent should children's rights be upheld? Please explain with examples if otherwise.

B20. Do you think that parents in Nigeria have rights?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B21. If YES to **B20**, what are they, and to what extent should they be upheld? Please explain if otherwise.

B22. Thinking about parenting in the Nigerian context, in circumstances where parents' rights and children's rights may conflict, whose rights take precedence? Please explain.

B23. Do you think that parents in Britain have rights?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B24. If YES to **B23**, what are they, and to what extent should they be upheld? Please explain if otherwise.

B25. Thinking about parenting in the British context, in circumstances where parents' rights and children's rights may conflict, whose rights take precedence? Please explain with examples.

B26. Please tell me what you know of how people in Britain understand child abuse; what counts as child abuse in Britain?

B27. Please tell me what you know about how white British parents seek to promote their child/ren's wellbeing in Britain; including managing behaviour.

B28. Do you think that white British childrearing practices successfully safeguard children and promote their wellbeing?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B29. Please explain and give examples.

B30. Do the practices of British authorities (social services, police, schools, GP, etc) manage to safeguard the wellbeing of children?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B31. Please explain and give examples.

B32. Are there any British rules, eg. laws, about childrearing, or requirements of parents that are particularly problematic for Nigerians?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B33. Please explain and give examples.

B34. If YES to **B32**, what might help to deal with these problem rules or requirements?

B35. Following your arrival in Britain, has living in Britain changed any part of your original childrearing values, ideas and/or practices?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

B36. Please explain and give examples.

Group C Questions: Social and Community Contexts

C1. Please tell me how well you relate with neighbours or other people in the community in Britain on matters to do with your children or theirs? Please explain and give examples.

C2. Do/did other people in your community in Britain (shopkeepers, neighbours, church members, etc) influence how you care/d for your child/ren? Or you them?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C3. Please explain and give examples.

C4. Please tell me which agencies or professionals in British society most affect how you behave as a parent and manage your children (whether positively or negatively); for instance, schools, GP, social services, police, etc? Please discuss in some detail.

C5. Do/did any of the agencies or professionals mentioned above support you in the way you care/d for your child/ren?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C6. Please explain and give examples.

C7. Do/did any of the agencies or professionals mentioned above present challenges to how you care/d for your child/ren?

Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C8. Please explain and give examples.

C9. If YES to question **C7**, how are issues resolved? And if they remain unresolved, why do you think that is so?

C10. Do/did you feel listened to or understood when you have/had dealings with any of the above agencies or professionals?	Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C11. Please explain and give examples

C12. Could any of the above agencies or professionals do anything differently in the way they interact with you, to achieve more positive results?	Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C13. Please explain and give examples.

C14. Could you do anything differently to achieve better results from your dealings with any of the above agencies or professionals?	Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C15. Please explain and give examples.

C17. Does being an immigrant play a role in the way agencies in Britain (social services, GP, schools, housing, police, etc) or people in general relate to you regarding your children?	Mainly YES	Mainly NO	Don't Know

C18. Please explain and give examples.

C19. Is there anything else that we haven't discussed which could have made it easier for you as an immigrant to be a parent in Britain?	YES	NO

C20. Please explain.

C21. In general, where would you prefer to bring up your child/ren, Nigeria or

Britain? Please explain why.

C22. Are there any other matters about parenting in Britain that you would like to discuss with me?

Appendix IX: Vignettes for Focus Group Discussions

Question One

What, if any, traditional Nigerian childrearing practices are particularly harmful to children? Follow up with examples (children working with/for parents; FGM; child marriage; physical chastisement).

Question Two

Child to parent: 'If you make me wash those dishes, I will call social workers and tell them that you're abusing me.'

Parent to a friend: 'You cannot control or discipline children in the UK because of social workers.'

Question Three

Child protection statistics in London indicate that black parents are more likely to be reported to social services for physical abuse (physical chastisement) of their children than white parents.

  a) Is physical chastisement a 'black thing'?
  b) Why do you think some parents might use physical chastisement as a form of discipline?
  c) What could be the reasons why physical chastisement should not be a form of discipline?

Question Four

It is time for the traditional ceremony of coming of age for young girls in a particular community in Nigeria. This ceremony is the 'female circumcision' rite of passage. Due to international influences, the procedure is now done by a qualified health professional in a sterile environment. 15 years old Eka and her family live in Britain but frequently travel to Nigeria during holidays. If her parents do not get Eka to participate in this ceremony, Eka will be virtually ostracised from the village community. No one would attend her marriage or

childbirth ceremony in the future. Her parents have to make a decision whether to take Eka for the ceremony or not.

a) What could be the cultural implications for Eka if she does not attend the ceremony?

b) What are the likely implications for Eka if she undergoes the ceremony?

c) What are the implications for parents' with particular regard for the family's status as British residents?

d) Respect for culture is child's right; should the UK government honour this custom even if they disagree with it?

Appendix X: ***Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement***

I, **name** of **address**, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audio-records and documentations received from Cynthia Okpokiri related to her research study on the researcher study titled 'First-generation Nigerian immigrant parents and child welfare issues in Britain'.

Furthermore, I agree to:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-recorded interviews, or in any associated documents.

2. To not make copies of any audio-records or computerized titles of the transcribed interviews' texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher, Cynthia Okpokiri.

3. To store all study-related audio-records and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

4. To return all audio-records, files and study-related materials to the researcher in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio-records and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name:
_____

Transcriber's signature:
_____

Date _____

Researcher's name: Cynthia Okpokiri

Researcher's signature:
_____

Date _____

Appendix XI: Nodes (codes) from NVivo CAQDAS

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
British Parenting Traditions	2	25	11/01/14 02:44	CGO	12/01/14 05:30
Adequate child safeguarding by authorities	2	2	11/01/14 03:03	CGO	12/01/14 03:57
Children disrespectful to elders	5	5	11/01/14 02:47	CGO	11/01/14 04:45
Detrimental child policies	1	1	11/01/14 02:52	CGO	12/01/14 04:08
High awareness of child rights	2	4	11/01/14 02:49	CGO	12/01/14 03:47
Individualism	3	3	11/01/14 02:48	CGO	11/01/14 02:48
Invisible fatherhood	1	1	11/01/14 03:01	CGO	12/01/14 04:11
Men as potential abusers	4	4	11/01/14 02:56	CGO	11/01/14 03:31
Permissive, 'easy-way-out' way of life	1	1	11/01/14 02:54	CGO	12/01/14 02:17
Poor resilience of British-raised children	1	1	11/01/14 02:55	CGO	12/01/14 02:19
Unnatural parenting	1	1	12/01/14 01:42	CGO	12/01/14 01:58
Use of verbal communication and negotiation	1	2	11/01/14 02:45	CGO	12/01/14 03:58
Ideas for Improvement	2	16	11/01/14 03:25	CGO	12/01/14 05:30
Authorities to clarify certain child policies	1	2	12/01/14 03:59	CGO	12/01/14 04:05
Better training for professionals	1	2	11/01/14 04:48	CGO	12/01/14 04:57
Education of children against racism	1	2	11/01/14 04:55	CGO	12/01/14 04:57
Enact children & families policies that promote family unity	1	2	11/01/14 04:53	CGO	12/01/14 04:13
Enlightenment programmes for newly arrived immigrants	2	2	11/01/14 04:50	CGO	11/01/14 04:50
'Go home'	2	2	11/01/14 05:03	CGO	11/01/14 05:03
Immigrant values and knowledge in policy-making	2	2	11/01/14 04:51	CGO	11/01/14 04:51
Non-professional opinion in social work	1	1	11/01/14 05:01	CGO	12/01/14 04:40
Send children back to Nigeria to improve behaviour	1	1	11/01/14 04:49	CGO	12/01/14 03:00
Nigerian Parenting Traditions	2	48	05/01/14 03:57	CGO	12/01/14 05:27
Absence of authorities in child safeguarding	2	3	12/01/14 02:02	CGO	12/01/14 03:42
Belief in physical chastisement	2	5	05/01/14 03:59	CGO	12/01/14 03:39
Commitment to children and family	2	6	11/01/14 02:40	CGO	12/01/14 03:07
Communal parenting	2	8	11/01/14 02:36	CGO	12/01/14 04:16
Culturally adequate child safeguarding	1	1	11/01/14 02:37	CGO	12/01/14 01:54
Ease of raising well-behaved children	1	2	11/01/14 02:41	CGO	12/01/14 03:18
High value of education	2	4	11/01/14 02:32	CGO	12/01/14 03:31
Importance of religion	2	3	11/01/14 02:33	CGO	12/01/14 03:30
Interpretations of child abuse	2	7	11/01/14 02:27	CGO	12/01/14 03:40
Low awareness of child rights	2	4	11/01/14	CGO	12/01/14

			02:38		03:44
Traditional moral values	2	3	11/01/14 02:34	CGO	12/01/14 03:29
Women and marriage	1	1	12/01/14 01:27	CGO	12/01/14 03:05
The Fit	2	34	11/01/14 03:04	CGO	12/01/14 05:28
Concerns about social work roles and powers	1	3	11/01/14 03:19	CGO	12/01/14 04:37
Culture shock	1	1	11/01/14 03:10	CGO	11/01/14 06:16
Effect of length of stay in Britain on parenting experience	2	2	11/01/14 04:29	CGO	12/01/14 02:22
Identity issues	2	4	11/01/14 03:06	CGO	12/01/14 04:53
Lack of trust in health and care professionals	1	3	11/01/14 03:22	CGO	12/01/14 04:34
Lessons learned	2	7	12/01/14 01:17	CGO	12/01/14 04:54
Over-interference in parenting by authorities	2	3	11/01/14 02:51	CGO	12/01/14 03:13
Parenting in fear	1	3	11/01/14 03:20	CGO	12/01/14 04:23
Smacking rules are problematic	2	8	11/01/14 03:16	CGO	12/01/14 04:01
The Good Life in the UK	2	15	11/01/14 03:24	CGO	12/01/14 05:28
'Africanness', a disadvantage	1	7	11/01/14 04:31	CGO	12/01/14 02:49
Agencies and professionals not often overtly racist	1	1	11/01/14 04:32	CGO	12/01/14 02:50
Hostility of British Police to young black persons	1	1	11/01/14 04:33	CGO	12/01/14 05:15
Loss of economic and social capital	1	2	11/01/14 04:42	CGO	12/01/14 05:25
Raising children	2	4	11/01/14 04:40	CGO	12/01/14 04:52
Minority Participation	1	3	11/01/14 03:29	CGO	12/01/14 05:29
Negation of Minority Values and Knowledge	1	1	11/01/14 03:28	CGO	12/01/14 05:29
Policy and Legal Exclusion	2	4	11/01/14 03:29	CGO	12/01/14 05:29

Appendix XII: Direct Research Impact

In April 2016, I presented the initial findings of this research to a team of child safeguarding professionals in a local authority with a large Nigerian and black African population in Greater London. Attendees included social workers, housing support workers, health visitors, police child protection officers, youth workers etc. The focus of my session was on understanding black immigrant families and how to work effectively with such families to reduce their high representation in child protection, often arising from excessive physical discipline and physical abuse. Guided by evidence from my research, I proceeded to sensitise the attendees on some of the background factors for such parents. These included: cultural norms around good childrearing and discipline; parents' feelings of disempowerment as a result of fear of social work in particular, and other state authority figures in general; and social workers' interpretations of physical abuse in contrast to what the law allows. While not upholding physical chastisement or condoning abuse, I proposed that the aim should be to create conditions that enable black immigrant parents relate positively with social workers. The attendees engaged meaningfully with how black immigrant parents might feel and react to the various parent-child scenarios provided. The director of the child safeguarding board was quite appreciative of my presentation and thanked me for promoting empathetic working with black immigrant parents.

Subsequently, a social worker who attended the training contacted me to share her concerns about the practice in a different child protection team where she worked, also in Greater London; concerns that she had been unable to articulate prior to my training. According to her, following the training, she had looked through some of her team's referrals and section 47 cases (Children Act 1989 – duty to investigate child abuse) carried out in the preceding couple of months, and the majority of them involved fairly frivolous physical chastisement cases which she said ended as 'no further action' (NFAs). She stated that my training had helped her understand that social workers in her local authority were not allowing for 'reasonable chastisement' at all if it involved black immigrant parents. She felt that social workers seemed to overly penalise such

parents and were domineering even where no wrongdoing had been established. This social worker escalated her concerns to the head of services (director) of their child safeguarding teams who commissioned an audit. The outcomes of the audit reportedly corroborated my findings.

The director called on the telephone and informed me that evidence from the audit showed they appeared to 'have redefined significant harm' particularly with regards to black immigrant parents (see Children Act 1989, section 47). She observed that they had in practice lowered the threshold to much less than the law recommends, and were not appropriately applying the law, as follows:

1. Social workers and managers were allowing the police within the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) teams to decide on the criteria for section 47 assessments, which was not essentially the police's role as police focus more on criminal actions and punitive responses.

2. The section 47 assessments had an inordinate amount of NFAs, which meant that if the referrals had been properly examined at the initial stage, most of them might not have been categorised as section 47s. Given that section 47 was usually invasive and demanding, it was an unnecessary ordeal for families.

3. There was evidence in those NFA cases that social workers were using a high level of 'veiled threats' with the parents. She observed inordinate utilisation of power and fear in the assessments.

The director subsequently invited me to present my original training to all the managers in their children and families MASH teams, which I did in September 2016.

Appendix XIII: Excerpts from the Blog Data

Title of blog: **Nigerian Parenting (www.uknigerianchild.net)**

Dates of 1st Post (descending order)	Discussion Topic	No of Total Posts	No shown
02/03/2014	Culture is often described as: 'It's The Way We Do Things Here'. Should African Parents Conform To British Childrearing Culture?	3	1
14/09/2013	Is Sexual Abuse of Children More or Less Prevalent in Nigeria or Britain?	10	2
22/07/2013	Could a Child be a Witch/Wizard or Possessed by Evil Spirits?	6	1
29/06/2013	When can it be justified to identify a child as a witch/wizard or possessed by evil spirits?	3	1
25/05/2013	What issues do Nigerian parents in Britain struggle with the most; is it poverty or the British culture, for examples?	9	2
12/05/2013	Should British authorities intervene less or more in families with children?	4	2
26/04/2013	Are children brought up in Britain more respectful and responsible than those brought up in Nigeria?	12	2
04/04/2013	'Spare the rod and spoil the child?'	13	4

Some verbatim excerpts from each blog topic:

'It's The Way We Do Things Here'. Should African Parents Conform To British Childrearing Culture?

Posted on **02/03/2014** by admin.
One of the simpler definitions of culture is 'it's the way we do things here'. Some people insist that immigrants in Britain must raise their children according to British norms and way of life. What are the arguments for and against this principle?

Jess on **19/03/2014 at 00:41** said:
> I am in complete disagreement with this. Dropping your own culture in order to adopt the culture of others. Black people do that too often and for that, we are not respected. We will sacrifice all our own values in order to be wanted. Let's be honest, Britain was an economy built on 373 years of anti black racism and slavery. That cannot be undone after 150 years. We will never be liked by them. This culture we have of simply dropping our own cultures and values in order to be "accepted" ultimately leads to the economies of our communities being controlled by those that are not like us under the pretext that we want integration.   When the Chinese migrate here. There is no such thing as integration on their agenda. They come here, they will make cultural adjustments in order to

adapt to British society holding true to their own cultural values. They will set up businesses in their own communities collectively rather than go and work for white people. They will ensure they are in control of the economies in their communities. They will ensure that they take care of their own first. I've been to Chinatown in west end plenty of times. They speak bare minimum English. That doesn't bother the British. The British will still flock into their shops and buy their food. As for black people. This notion that we must all go and work for Mr Charlie in order to become a success is the bigger failure of black people. Black youth unemployment is high. Yet black people in the British diaspora still do not have the initiative to set up shop and businesses within their communities in order to employ their own youth. This is why our communities are always riddled with crime and poverty. A lot of black also do not understand the concept of investing their money. This is clear by looking at our socio-economic situations wherever we are. We don't invest in our own communities then complain when our communities are gentrified. I once asked my friends if we could pool our resources together in order to start buying auction properties in our area, doing them up, then renting them. Carry on until we can own a few houses in our communities. You know what they told me? "That's white boy shit".

Is Sexual Abuse of Children More or Less Prevalent in Nigeria or Britain?
Posted on **14/09/2013** by admin.

Some Nigerians believe there are more paedophiles in Britain than in Nigeria, but is this true? Could there be other reasons for the higher proportion of prosecution of those who sexually abuse children in Britain as opposed to the rate in Nigeria?

Aisha P on **14/10/2013 at 21:34** said:
I think sexual abuse of children is more common in the UK than in Nigeria but there is also more investigation and prosecution by the police in the UK. The problem with Nigeria is that although there are not as much sexual abuse of children in Nigeria as in the UK, children and young people do not report most of the cases. First, children are taught to fear adults and cannot bring themselves to openly accuse an older person. Secondly, sex issues are a discussion taboo in Nigeria, so children do not even know how to raise the topic. Thirdly, even when some children manage to speak up, adults sometimes do not believe them. Even when the children are believed, the police may not be called in, and when they are, the abuser is not prosecuted or given appropriate punishment. I say this because I've been a victim. I was raped at the age of 14 by a neighbour. We were very poor so I was afraid to report him. But I told my mother because we lived in one room and she noticed something was really wrong and she took me to the police station to report to the police. I can tell you that the police charged the man a lot of money for bail and the case died till today. They didn't even give me some of the money to compensate for my suffering. There are many other cases like that in Nigeria. But I still believe child sex abuse is higher

in UK than Nigeria.

Mumuni on **18/03/2014 at 08:31** said:
We don't have statistics to show but it is just as bad as anywhere in the world.

Could a Child be a Witch/Wizard or Possessed by Evil Spirits?
Posted on **22/07/2013** by admin.
Georgina Brown on **10/08/2013 at 20:57** said:
I believe that it is possible to become vulnerable to evil spirits regardless of age and that is why it is important to shield ourselves and children with the word of God which is the truth. However, I find it extremely disheartening when children are accused of witchcraft or spirit possession and are therefore abused due to ignorance. This issue is especially prevalant in West Africa where children are forced to endure extreme measures of 'Exorcisms' often resulting in physical and psychological damage. For the most part these children have special needs such as Autism or Epilepsy and this is misinterpreted as possession. Children must be cherised as they are blessings from God. The main issue is a lack of trust in what God can do which leads to people taking matters into their own hands.

When can it be justified to identify a child as a witch/wizard or possessed by evil spirits?
Posted on **29/06/2013** by admin.

This question seeks to explore attitudes to, and beliefs in supernatural powers, as they relate to children. It is generally accepted that Africans are not alone in their varied beliefs in the existence of some form of supernatural powers.

Anne on **22/08/2013 at 23:55** said:
Firstly, witches and wizards do not exist; it's all part of our imaginations, running wild.   Witches and wizards only exist in the realm of fairy tales, movies, television and peoples' imaginations. Our mind can conjure up amazing ideas and characters which may seem real. The idea of witches and wizards seem to entertain the mind on a level of curiosity. Imagination and strong belief can make some things seem real. There is no evidence to confirm the truth about witches and wizards. Movies and television shows such as "Harry Potter", "Charmed" and "Bewitched" make these witches seem real and relevant in today's society. The idea of a witch and/or wizard using his magic to cast spells on a person is absurd and ludicrous. A person who believes in witches and wizards has a fascinating imagination and should write tons of fictional books. If anyone thinks they exist, no one will stop them from believing that, however, please leave innocent children out of it. Some people are born different; with special features and personalities, that they appear and act differently is not enough grounds for them to be regarded as witches or wizards. The most annoying part is that these families and/or spiritual

heads who claim some children are witches cannot explain clearly or even prove that they do anything extra ordinary, like waving a wand and turning a dog into a mouse, looking at a chicken from a distance then it slumps, growling and behold a whirlwind in the room or perhaps fly (it'll be fun to be able to fly though, hee hee). Probably, these kids are highly intelligent or just head-strong and stubborn, they make very scary facial expressions, talk strange nonsense, have strange birthmarks and coincidentally some horrible things happen… ahaa! they conclude, she is a witch, let's beat the living daylight out of her, for the Bible says 'suffer not the witch to live'. When things go wrong, we would like to blame someone, and that someone is likely to be different from us in some way.

   The poor kids are suffering from autism, epilepsy or other form of illness, so rather than persecution what they need is understanding and help. The abuse needs to be stopped asap, innocent people are dying due to lack of ignorance and in the hands of religious fanatics.

What issues do Nigerian parents in Britain struggle with the most; is it poverty or the British culture, for examples?
Posted on **25/05/2013** by admin.

This issue has never been more relevant than now, in light of the recent sickening murder of a British soldier by a suspect of Nigerian heritage. Please share your honest views.

Erebamba on **01/06/2013 at 08:22** said:
I do not believe that poverty is a major problem which African parents have to grapple with in the United Kingdom. Most of them have seen and experienced worse poverty where they came from. In African where there is no social security, poverty is more stark and its effect more profound. What I see instead is that African parents are under a lot of pressure to make as much wealth as possible and the UK obviously offers such opportunities. The African family structure and the caring and sharing disposition makes it more or less imperative that family members who are more affluent should help less endowed family / extended family members. This causes some parents to pay much attention to making wealth than actual parenting. These pressures have caused families to break up with the man having to leave the home (as is the practice in Britain). The ease and speed of such break ups is also a feature of British culture which is alien to Africa. There are structures in the UK which deliberately encourage couples to separate and which facilitate the process. In contrast, there are support structures and networks in place in African to cushion couples from the inevitable pressures of married life. Once separation occurs, then all the problems of single parenthood start manifesting and these invariably exacerbate existing difficulties in the area of parenting.   The issue, to my mind, is what may be termed cultural schizophrenia for want of a better term. This is the internal struggle (conflict) between two conflicting cultures – the very permissive culture in the UK where they are currently domiciled and the somewhat authoritarian culture in the land from where they came. It takes strength

of character for one not to be sucked in to the prevailing culture – especially as it presents as more attractive because it poses little or no problems – initially. Children love it – to be allowed to do as they please. To them it's great. The difference in cultures is underlined by the fact that somewhere along the line when cracks begin to appear, some parents have had to send their children back to Africa so they can 'learn how to behave'. The testimonies from some of such children I have spoken to revealed the world of difference between parenting in both cultures. They speak of the difficulty they had in overcoming the initial shock and the thought that their parents must hate them to bring them here. But once they had adjusted, some did not wish to come back to the UK. If we add to this permissive parenting culture the culture of official interference in parenting which I have previously touched on, we get a ticking time bomb (recipe for disaster). There is always the looming fear that if you shout at your child loud enough your neighbour might call the Police and or Social Services. Some parents allow the fear of the prospect of that happening to rule and dominate their parenting lives and so more or less wash their hands off. To those parents who put themselves under undue pressure by working literally round the clock they find all sorts of excuses (Police, Social Services, the law) to not get really involved in much parenting. This affords them the opportunity to concentrate on making money. They thus lose sight of their children's welfare – school performance, the friends they keep, where they go for sleep overs, what time they get in at night, what they do when they are out with friends etc. The African parent who bows to these pressures and leans too much to the side of the alien culture will invariably struggle with parenting. The struggle is not in the early days but much latter when the evil seed had already germinated and is beginning to blossom. A few weeks ago, two Nigerian Moslem converts committed a horrific crime on the streets of Woolwich in the full glare of members of the public. I may be wrong, but I did not hear much about their parents. Why not? Where are they and where have they been? It would be very unkind to hold the parents directly responsible for the heinous crimes of these two. But let's rewind 15 or 20 years and see what level of attention was paid to the proper upbringing of these two Michaels. Let's not dwell too much on recent events leading to their radicalisation – that is only the symptom of a more profound problem. The effects of arms-length parenting can be far reaching and could have wider ramifications.

Folorunso Makinde on **17/06/2013 at 18:02** said:
While I would like to say that it is the British culture generally, however, I do see that the area where you live in also determines what issues pre-occupy the family. You hear about the prevalence of gang culture in southern part of London which to some extent is also intertwined with poverty within the inner cities while if you live in areas like North West London, it is not always the case. Things have moved on drastically though from the eighties when few Nigerians were in well paid jobs and majority of Nigerians were in lowly paid jobs. I could remember when my family moved into our area in Hertfordshire and my son was one of less than ten black children in the whole primary school that he was attending

at the time. The issue for us was maintaining our African culture and bringing our children up to learn the African tradition like respect for your elders while balancing it with the influence from the community where we live. For us then defending our African/Nigerian culture is high on the agenda. Although, things have changed. a little bit and our younger children attending the same primary school have more black children around them to relate to but the main issues would still be Nigerian culture. However, listening to other family friends from other areas in the UK, their issue of pre-occupation may be different. I will therefore say that the area where you live also determines what the main issues are for you.

Should British authorities intervene less or more in families with children?
Posted on **12/05/2013** by admin.

Some bloggers make reference to over-interference in families by social services in Britain. Please discuss the issue as it concerns African families.

Erebamba on **13/05/2013 at 08:21** said:

The last 20 years or so have witnessed a significant increase in both the speed and frequency of Social Services intervention in child protection cases. These interventions have resulted in a sharp rise in cases where children have been removed from their parents and taken into social services' care. We all know that Social services have no homes per se where such hapless children (victims) are taken to and kept for 'proper care and upbringing' under Social Services supervision. Rather children are fostered by other people who it is believed would be able to provide an environment safe and conducive enough for proper upbringing of the children. What this has resulted in is that children have needlessly been taken away from loving family units on rather flimsy or even frivolous reason. What it hasn't done is to stop or even reduce significantly those cases like Victoria Clymbie or Baby P. The strict intervention regime should only be informed by the preponderance of Baby Ps rather than public policy on a few albeit it gruesome cases. I hold the view (and I know that this is likely to outrage advocates of greater intervention) that where a parent or guardian who is sufficiently demon-possessed (I can't think of any other reason why Baby P or Victoria Clymbie could have happened) has determined to hurt or kill their defenceless child or ward, they would do so regardless – even if Child Protection Team was stationed next door. No one could prevent that. If doing so slowly like the two cases cited above would stop them achieving their aim they could do it instantly, in which case any intervention would always be post mortem. What policy-makers have done under the deafening clamour of public opinion is to allow these extreme cases which are at best statistical outliers to inform and drive child protection policy. Has this approach worked? No. Has it led to knee-jerk reactions in thousands of other cases? Yes. Have children been needlessly taken into care because officials want to err on the side of caution? Yes. I will cite the case of a family I know who relocated to the UK from Africa about ten or

so years ago. Shortly on arrival, the youngest of four male children (about 7 at the time) went to school and flippantly told his teacher that he had been 'beaten up' by one of his older brothers who was about 14 at the time. Straightaway the Police and Social Services were called. What they were desperate to establish was that this was not a one-off occurrence. As soon as it became clear from the child's account that it had happened previously, the machinery was put in motion to remove the two youngest boys and take them into care. The older of the two has since left care while the younger is nearing the end of his term in care. In taking the children away Social Services based their action on the evidence of a very young child. There was never any intention or even prospect that these so-called physical abuse resulting from sibling rivalries could ever have resulted in any harm or injury to these children. I come from a large family myself – fifth of six males and two females. I know that on occasions where I had been mouthy and insolent to my elders, I had received a sharp smack from my elders. That forced me to check my behaviour and utterances in future. None of my elder brothers who loved me dearly and still do would have thought of putting me in hospital for being disrespectful or mouthy. If that had been in this country and I had been reckless enough to tell my teacher, I would have been a care leaver. What a tragedy that would have been for me and my family. In the case of this family, Social Services argued that because both parents were at work when these incidents took place, they were not responsible enough to care for the children. So at huge cost to the state and agony for every member of that family, the two children were taken and kept in care. They have thus missed out on the warmth and joy of what was otherwise a loving family. The children who were taken into care later confessed to their parents that if only they knew the consequences they would not have reported to their teacher. Their intention in reporting, they later said, was merely for someone in authority to tell their brothers off, to get their own back at him, that was all. They had absolutely no conception of children going into care. These children regretted their action but then it was too late. They also missed out on a relationship with their only sister who was born while they were in care. What this clearly demonstrates is official 'back covering' couched as erring on the side of caution. This is another culture of the care system which ends up spoiling the child. Because Foster parents are paid (handsomely paid) for their work, they would not like to jeopardise their livelihood by doing anything that would remotely resemble discipline thereby having the children taken away and their names possibly struck off the fostering register. So children in care are generally known even expected to be unruly, disrespectful and attention seeking. Is it not common knowledge that children in care are likely to have challenging behaviour which in most cases was the product of the care system? In relation to children from African or Caribbean backgrounds, I am of the view that because in these communities (even among those resident in the UK) traditional methods of parenting are still in use, Social services should be cautious in swinging into action at the slightest excuse. As the family discussed above proved, the children deeply regretted their flippancy and wished they hadn't done it. The

consequence is that even after it is realised that Social Services have acted too swiftly it is not usually possible to backtrack because of the culture of back-covering – asking 'what if these children are returned to their parents and then something grievous happens? The Social worker, because they are not footing the bill nor is it their family that is being torn apart, would usually err on the side of caution. However, erring on the side of caution has far-reaching consequences for the families involved. In conclusion, I would advise a culturally-sensitive approach to child protection in cases involving African and Caribbean families. The child protection system must educate itself to understand and appreciate the traditional inclination of these cultures to enforce discipline their own way. As a society we should move away from the very dilute characterisation of 'CHILD ABUSE' and recognise that a corrective smack on the bum has never killed anyone or even put anyone in hospital. Evidence, testimonies if you like, from adults like me who were so-called 'victims' of such treatment show that rather than be permanently scarred or damaged by such experiences they actually made us better and more useful people to ourselves, our families and society at large. On the whole, parents should be supported rather than criminalised /demonised in their parenting efforts. When it comes to the African / Caribbean families, care must be taken because the system is, in treating everyone the same, losing sight of culturally significant differences in parenting styles.

Benjamin Achogbuo on **13/05/2013 at 17:58** said:

I think emphasis should be focused on the law giving rise to the power the social services are exercising. The Law should be clear on this and have red line on what should trigger interference in families by the social services. A complaint by a child that his parents smacked him is not a reason to trigger any investigation by social services. The problems is further complicated by recent cases of negligence by social services on children that needed protection which they failed to provide and Black African families have been made scape goats. The Law on protecting the children should make provision for parents to use certain disciplinary measures to curb the excesses of their children. In the absence of this, children brought up in UK will be heading to anarchy. We see the daily stabbing in the streets of London by our youths. Without disciplined parenting, children will miss the focus. Parents should be allowed to apply their traditional method in parenting their children. It will be impossible to use a method that one was not brought up with on his/her children. The Social Services should have clear rules on when to intervene in families, with consideration on ethnicity and religion of families involved. Without such clear rules black African families will always fall short and will continue to be targeted by the social services. The Culture of Africans allows them to smack the child and it is in the mind and consciousness of every African to use a stick as a correction tool. This was passed from generation to generation. The Law should make provision and accommodate the culture, religion and values of the Africans to eliminate any suspicious of bullying on children as opposed to discipline. Ben

Are children brought up in Britain more respectful and responsible than those brought up in Nigeria?
Posted on **26/04/2013** by admin.

This topic has been raised from a previous blogger's reference to children in Britain being better behaved than their Nigerian counterparts despite support by most parents in Nigeria of some form of physical punishment.

Richard E. I. Chinwo on **01/05/2013 at 08:13** said:
Talking about the way kids are brought up is often a very sensitive subject. Most of us are familiar with the defense statement "don't tell me how to bring up my kids". In Nigeria for example, it is not a strange occurrence for a child misbehaving in public to be spanked by an absolute stranger, while his mother looks on appreciating the fact that this person she doesn't know was kind enough to discipline her child. If this incident was to happen in England, the stranger would be arrested for child abuse. It is differences such as this that throw light on the impact that culture has on a society's way of life. The law in England is particular about children's rights and child abuse so much that parents have run out of ideas on how to bring up their kids without getting on the wrong side of the law. Whereas, Nigerian parents are firm believers in the "spare the rod spoil the child" philosophy. Even within the education system most schools are expected to smack their children when they get out of hand, for reasons ranging from disrupting a class to not doing homework. This practice is unheard of in an English institution and the thought would be met with immediate outrage. By contrast English parents follow the "my child's happiness is what matters" philosophy. So even if a child has misbehaved, it is more important that the child does not end up crying or throwing a tantrum, than for the child to be properly disciplined for his/her actions. A key element missing in the story is balance, and on that note it would be fair to say that much can be learned from both societies. Even though the Nigerian method is more likely to generate respect and submission to authority, the English way of life is better able to create a relationship where the child's opinion and feelings are taken into account. An extreme Nigerian is in danger of bringing up a child that lives in constant fear of doing something wrong. An extreme English parent is in danger of bringing up a child that is spoilt and only happy when he gets things his way. There is nothing wrong with being friends with your kids but in the early stages of growth the child doesn't need a friend, (s)he needs a parent.

Ebony on **06/05/2013 at 19:49** said:
Children brought up in UK are not any more respectful than children brought up in Nigeria. Having said that, most children brought up in the working class, middle class or upper class British families are more respectful than their counterparts in Nigeria. This is because the children from wealthy families in Nigeria most times feel that the ordinary man

and woman on the street are not human beings because they do not have money or belong to the same socio-economic class as their parents. Majority of the children in the UK are respectful but some children in the main cities like London who come from unemployed single parent homes and who may not have that father figure at home to be their role models are not often respectful. Bringing up children to be respectful depends entirely on the parents/ caregivers who instill discipline on their children from the onset, teaching them what is right and wrong before they grow up…

"Spare the rod and spoil the child"

Posted on **04/04/2013** by admin.

I invite all participants to please discuss the above phrase "spare the rod and spoil the child" in context of black and ethnic minority parents and children.

Erebamba on **09/04/2013 at 22:43** said:

The quote is one of King Solomon's proverbs (Prov. 23:13). I totally subscribe to the sentiment conveyed in the quote. With my strong religious background there is a real prospect that I may be accused of unalloyed subscription to a biblical injunction. In whatever culture or country children grow up, they need boundaries and they need to be made aware of those boundaries early in life. In my view the earlier, the better- they are never too young to learn boundaries. The boundaries would be pointless if there are no sanctions for when they cross the line. The rod represents the sanction – discipline – some unpleasant outcome resulting from breaking of rules. The rod is not necessarily, as is suggested a big stick. It could be a telling off, withdrawal of something the child used to have and enjoy, withholding of something desirable or if necessary a gentle smack. Without sanctions children learn very quickly that the boundaries where they exist mean absolutely nothing. Parenting policy in this have in recent times been dictated by extremely outrageous but untypical cases – like Victoria Clymbie or Baby P. While I don't in any way trivialise what cruelty these little children endured in the hands of responsible adults who should be looking after them. However, knee jerk policy on the back of such tragedies are bound to be counter- productive (undermining the parental control and eroding their authority in the home). In Africa, and indeed in the Caribbean, parenting is very different. It is made less burdensome because it is seen as a shared responsibility not only of adult members of the extended family but of adult members of the community in general. The child is not seen as the sole responsibility of biological parents. As a result if little Tunji was found playing truant by a family friend, he should expect the same scolding, the same telling of, the same interrogation and the same 'spanking' as he should get from his own parents. So Tunji should think hard and fast before he playing truant, knowing there is no shortage of 'uncles' who would take active interest in finding out why he is not in school.

Hulya Ogidi on **19/04/2013 at 13:35** said:

Despite every theory, every child or rather every person has their own character and inner timing, conscience etc. This also explains why children of the same household grow up to be very different people. Same genes, same environment same upbringing same food, same schools etc. So what makes them different? If the society's problems could be solved only by not sparing the "rod" there would be no problems of any sort. Unless of course there are some parents who would punish their kids for not using or peddling drugs or for not prostituting themselves or stealing. Ah, there is one actually, there is a particular part of society here that punish their children for not getting what they want through any means. Bribing, bullying, shunning, anything to get votes for class presidency and such. So where do you start shaping the society? Parenting is just a part of it. And to be very honest, from my experience children with bad parents turn out to be much better and more successful people than those who come from very good families.

Adejumoke Adeoti on **23/04/2013 at 21:40** said:

To contribute further to this debate, people do not often differentiate between discipline and abuse. Having lost my father at age nine, it was really difficult for my mother to cope alone with four children. She felt she had a lot to prove to herself, the extended family and everyone around her, and especially in a society where being a single mum was unacceptable. Due to these external factors and her will to succeed as a parent, I think back now and I could say I was physically abused by my mum although it was not intentional. But this could be because she did not know other ways of correcting or enforcing her authority as I was the first child in the family and had to show good example to my siblings. However, despite all the beatings, we all turned out well. I believe as a mother that it is essential to bring up children in a way that is acceptable, by them knowing what is right or wrong and also knowing there are consequences for every action. Disciplining a child is not wrong, but when it affects the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of a child, it becomes abuse. Furthermore, it has its advantages and disadvantages, some children become resentful and want to do their own thing or become psychologically affected while some turn out the way their parents want them to be and become good products for the society. I believe that showing children unconditional love, some discipline not physical abuse will be a more effective tool in parenting.

Chief Bekwele Agbirigba on **05/05/2013 at 19:38** said:

The topic in question will be a rewarding evaluation on attitudes, values, norms and developmental needs of children in comparison to both societies. One needs to critically analyse those factors that enable or make children behave the way they do in both societies. Then use such norms as hypothesis to test the reliability of what obtains in another society. For example, when parents are arguing in Ikwerre land, children can only plead with then to stop as a mark of respect. But in the UK, children will ask them to shut up, which is an expression of English

language. One must have a balanced view without being judgmental.

Appendix XIV: Personal Reflections on Fieldwork

Note: All of the personal and other identifying characteristics and location details have been anonymised to protect participants. These are excerpts from my 'diary' reflections and are therefore rather intimate thoughts and personal opinions of my fieldwork. They may not necessarily reflect the views expressed by the participants in the actual transcripts of their interviews, or my final interpretation of the data.

Participant no. 1 - was accessed through my personal network. She did not seem comfortable sharing certain sensitive personal information during the interview for that reason, to my thinking. I thought this impacted on the richness of the data I garnered from her. As she was my initial participant, I decided to no longer interview anyone whom I met through my personal network. Some family and friends suggested I must be harbouring some kind of masochistic tendencies by refusing to take the easy way out and interview the numerous potential participants from my personal network, especially as it was still a bit of a challenge finding willing participants outside of my network.

I felt the need to 'share' some of 'myself' with her. So, after the interview, when she wanted to chat, I stayed to chat for about an hour. I also found myself clowning a bit after the participant and her relative laughed at a joke I made. I felt like I owed her.

Participant no. 2 - It was a Muslim family so I was conscious to remove my shoes in the foyer. I did not wait to be asked as I was anxious not to offend her. The participant seemed really proud of her children because they were all doing relatively well. Participant shared key information about historical childrearing from a race-neutral perspective in Britain

Participant no. 3 – I left home for the interview at 7pm after arranging for a sleepover child-minder. On arrival at the participant's home, I removed my shoes in the foyer as I expected in respect of his Muslim faith. He was very welcoming. His wife was upstairs but came down specifically to say hello during

the interview. I appreciated that this is customary Nigerian practice where members of family make effort to greet guests in their homes even if they were occupied somewhere else in the house. After the interview participant asked whether I would publish my research in a book format - he said he would love to pay for such a book because it would help many Nigerian parents. I felt somewhat indebted to him for giving me the time to interview him despite his busy schedule, and felt the need to give something of myself back. So when he asked me whether I had children, I freely offered that I had had some difficulty conceiving but was fortunate to be the proud mother of a 13month old daughter. He was very encouraging and said God will bless me with more.

Second visit to Muslim Prayer Group - After church service, I quickly drove to my mother's and dropped my daughter before driving down to the mosque meet with the Imam and the members. The group was having a special occasion and the prayer session took longer than usual because of the increased number of speakers.

As I walked into the building, I felt the need to cover my hair as their religion requires. But I hadn't gone with a scarf so asked a member where I could borrow one. She quickly removed an inner one she had on her and handed to me. I was very grateful. I informed her that I was there to meet with the Imam about my research. She seemed aware of my role (probably from last week when the Imam informed the congregation about the research) and quickly sent a man to inform the 'Alfa' (as she called him) of my presence. I joined in the service whilst waiting for the Imam.

During the prayers, I felt obligated to pray with them. I followed their rituals of clasping their palms at the base with the palms facing upwards. I also put some money (£5) in the offering pot when it was passed round. Some women spoke to me, and I observed others bowing to them whenever they were addressed. I found myself bowing to them as well in greeting. This is a customary Yoruba greeting in respect for older or important persons.

At the end of the service, the 'Alfa' again spoke to the congregation about my

research and asked for people to be receptive to me. I only knew because I frequently heard the words 'Cynthia' and 'research', and also from the way people began glancing at me. Overall, I thought I got excellent reception from the Muslim gatekeepers as well as potential participants. I suspect the Muslim organisations seemed eager to share their experiences; they probably saw the research as an opportunity to have their perspectives heard. I sensed that members of the Muslim organisation often felt misunderstood and under-represented, and were happy for someone to ask of their viewpoints. Some members appeared shy to use their Muslim names. While taking names and numbers of potential participants, one tried to give me her Nigerian ethnic name and was told off by a friend who insisted she use her Muslim name. I also experienced this with another Muslim lady (not from this organisation) who said she preferred to be called 'Debbie' for Deborah, which is a Christian name. However, the 'Alhaji' who made the connection gave me her Muslim name.

I considered that if a parent was in such tussle about whether to be known by a Christian or Muslim name, did that reflect a constant struggle of identity? How was this mirrored on their children? Would their children have to be 'British' when they were in school or with peer groups; and Africans at home? Were they also compelled to live double lives like their parents?

Participant no. 4 - I was very satisfied with this interview. Rich data! He was very forthcoming about his challenges with agencies/professionals. He asked many questions and provided more information off record. He emailed my blog to a friend whom I would have liked to interview because he said the friend had faced some challenges as an immigrant parent.

Participant no. 5 - Participant became quite sad while explaining how the police treat young black people, especially males. He seemed quite dejected when he said if young black men were even slightly rude to, or not very polite to police officers, the officers would take them to the hospital to be assessed for mental health issues. He maintained that the Police deliberately treat these young men harshly, knowing that the youths will react - they practically taunt

them and use the youths' understandable anger as reason for mental instability and criminal records.

Participant no. 6 – Participant offered to give me lunch but I declined. She then insisted on giving me the meal in a take-away pack and I could not refuse without appearing rude, especially as I understood the Nigerian custom of feeding guests. She became very sad and tearful while talking about FGM. She provided a lot of information off record. Participant said she was happy that FGM had practically been eradicated in most states in Nigeria. However, she knew some East African communities that were still practicing FGM right here in the UK.

Participant no. 7 – He had a Yoruba accent and I sometimes needed to refer back to the question to make sense of what he was saying. I became excited about this interview because I believed the data was very rich. He was open and thoughtful in his answers. He had very good memory and could remember minute details from decades ago. Also, when interrupted by his phone (a call he had earlier informed me he needed to take), he came right back to the question and effortlessly continued from exactly where he stopped.

Participant no. 8 – He got quite excited while talking about how Nigerian parents could cope with the differences in childrearing in Britain. He frequently used the term ' when in Rome, behave like the Romans'. I found him rather intriguing because he explained he had been the victim of serious institutionalised racism in the local authority where he previously worked. He noted that racism was very emotionally damaging. Yet, he seemed keen to assert that he had felt supported by social services during an intervention with his child, but not by the school. The participant came across as well balanced and realistic.

Participant no. 9 - She seemed reticent when asked about whether she was in a relationship or not. She attempted to offer some sort of explanation about the absence of her children's father and was obviously not confident that I was not there to access her financial arrangements. She did not have very good English

so I needed to explain most of the questions in very basic English. Participant became very passionate while talking about the differences between childrearing in Britain and Nigeria. She was impressed with the British agencies and professionals who work with children and families.

At the end of the interview, I called her Alhaja, which is the respectful term that was used when the Imam introduced her to me. However, on impulse I asked her how she liked to be called. Participant said call me 'Clara', making her the third Muslim to use a non-Muslim name by which she was not known within her Muslim group.

Participant no. 10 - She became sad as she shared her experiences in Britain. She was widowed suddenly following her arrival in Britain. I needed to be sensitive and tender due to her emotional state. She had very little education (stopped in primary). She struggled to express her thoughts in English language although she knew it Yoruba, which she sometimes lapsed into.

She was convinced that telling children their rights undermined parental authority. She provided examples of her son's challenging behaviour, and a friend who was frequently hit by her teenage son. The participant felt that the only solution to the problem was to send him back to Nigeria. However, I imagined that the anger the teenager displays might also be linked to issues of isolation and confusion. The mother was also a single parent who works long hours.

Participant no. 11 - She was reluctant to give the ages and sexes of her children. She came across as highly educated, articulate and reserved. She seemed like a professional with highly intellectual manner of argument. I was not surprised to learn she was a business manager. The data was rich.

Participant no. 12 – The participant became a bit tearful as she disclosed severe physical chastisement as a child. She said her chastisement was oftentimes brutal, however, she shied away from calling it abuse. The participant became tearful in discussions of services and agencies in Britain, as

she was experiencing accommodation issues.

I felt that the participant found the interview helpful for therapeutic reasons. She seemed to use the interview to explore her actions and relationships with her children's school and local authority.

She gesticulated a lot with her hands and face, especially when talking about minimising children's excesses. I will have to read my notes alongside the audio and transcript in order to fully recapture the discussion.

Participant no. 13 - She was very passionate about parenting issues. I thought it curious when she claimed the British government owned children born and raised in Britain by 80percent whilst parents owned them by 20percent. It was clear that parenting was a really thorny issue for her. She confirmed that this was the case, and likewise with many of her friends, and cited various examples. She seemed totally exasperated with the childrearing requirements in Britain.

Participant no. 14 - She became slightly tearful when asked about the role of the Nigerian authorities in child safeguarding and welfare. She had endured a robbery on return to Nigeria some years ago, and swore never to return. She also remembered being overly smacked. However, she maintained that lack of parental control, which she felt was the case in Britain, was also not a good idea.

Participant no. 15 - From the first question in Section B, participant began talking about differences in parenting, which was a question on the latter part of my list. She seemed very keen to discuss parenting difficulties, which were apparently a previous cause of concern for her. The participant seemed to struggle to articulate her thoughts in English language, although she was highly educated. It was apparent that she would have been much more eloquent in Yoruba language, which she often lapsed into whenever she needed to make a point. She would then translate in English. I understand minimal Yoruba but

even without her subsequent translations, was able to make sense of what she was trying to say.

Participant no. 16 – Participant tried to anticipate what my questions would be. He seemed eager to get into the issue of parental authority, with emphasis on smacking! He was rather passionate about physical chastisement, or the lack of it in Britain. He appeared shocked when asked about whether he related with his neighbours regarding his children or theirs. He said some people would stare at him very curiously if he said good morning to them!

Participant no. 17 - Participant was raised in Nigeria till she was eleven years old. However, she still presented a rather Nigerian outlook, probably because her upbringing remained very much Nigerian-focused even after her arrival in the UK. She recollected that her mother really 'beat' her here in the UK. She acknowledged that the beatings were sometimes excessive but insists that it enabled her develop into a successful adult. She was easy to talk to and expressed her thoughts very clearly.

Participant no. 18 - Participant was recently settled in Britain from Nigeria and seemed very impressed with the British way of life and child welfare. However, I found myself wondering if she would still have the same outlook in a few years' time. She made me reflect that many Nigerians who have lived in the UK for a long time might not fully realise the realities of the Nigerian child welfare system.

However, as the interview wore on, she stated that the British system to a great extent allowed children to go astray by unnecessarily disempowering parents. I also found myself becoming increasingly worried about whether I wanted my child/children to be raised in Britain or Nigeria.

Participant no. 19 - During the first section, which was demographics, she appeared reluctant to give the ages of her children and gave me a vague answer of 18-30 for two of her older children. The participant frequently used facial expressions and body movement to complete her sentences. I

understood what she was saying but since it was not verbal, it was not audio-recorded. I will personally undertake this transcription.

She had some preconceived ideas about what she thought I wanted to hear; she often deviated from the questions I asked to share her opinion of other social issues relating to immigrants, and I sometimes needed to redirect her to the particular issue being explored. I thought she used the interview in a therapeutic way. She very much wanted to talk about her experiences and I sometimes struggled to get her to refocus.

She asked me to have some food but I thanked her and declined. However, after the interview, she went off to the kitchen and returned with a plastic take-away plate in a carrier bag. She insisted that I took it and knowing the culture, I could see that she would be deeply offended if I refused, so thanked her and accepted the food.

Participant no. 20 - One of the participants accessed through the church gatekeeper. The participant came across as thoughtful and reflective. She was clear that children in Nigeria were not protected because they do not know their rights. She observed that teaching children their rights through any medium available is the best way to prevent child abuse. She was open to new ideas and would change her mind about an issue after reflecting upon it.

Mid-way through the interview, the battery ran out and we did not notice for a while. The participant was very patient and understanding when I replaced the batteries and realised that the last question and the participant's response had not been recorded. She simply carried on and answered the question again. She tried as much as she could to recapture her initial thoughts on the question. It highlighted for me the importance of writing field notes alongside the audio recording, which I had done. I felt really embarrassed and inept for not realising the battery had run out. I previously relied on the idea (now false) that the recorder had a warning system!

Participant no. 21 – The participant forgot about the interview and I also neglected to call her before leaving home that morning. She asked me for some time to enable her have some cereal, and I used the time to make some important calls. She was ambivalent about Nigeria, and came across as reflective. I was getting somewhat bored of asking the same questions over and again but felt a renewed excitement during this interview.

She suggested that Nigerian parents had difficulties about where to draw the line between discipline and abuse - 'it's a balancing act'. However, she believes some British child and family policies erode parental authority. Participant gave an example of a case where a child's school reported the mother to social services. Mother was not found guilty of any wrongdoing but the child felt that mother had been 'scolded'. Mother also felt chastened even though she was cleared and did not feel confident in dealing with her children from then on.

Participant said she never notices racism - 'you need to kick me in the face before I'll realise you are being racist'. However, she felt her children (and other second-generation Nigerian Brits) were more sensitive to racism than first-generation Nigerians like herself. She believed children in Britain are too sensitive and that this leads to poor resilience against the least challenge. She was concerned that suicide rates will increase if the trend continued. The interview lasted very long… participant was very warm and chatty. It was sometimes difficult to move her onto the next question.

Excluded Participant – Interviewed in error!
Participant was initially cool towards me and did not seem very keen to be interviewed. However, her attitude began to thaw as I cooed at her son. She was tearful whilst talking about overly strict parenting. I needed to use slightly basic English during the interview. She used a lot of non-verbal Nigerian mannerisms. The participant was struggling financially but was very grateful to health and care services in Britain. Her response is similar to that of another recently arrived Nigerian immigrant. Similarly, I am curious about whether her thoughts on the issue would remain the same a decade from now.

Towards the end of the interview I advised the participant on how to access help for her child, but she informed me that she had tried unsuccessfully because she was under immigration restrictions, although legally in UK. Being legal without immigration restrictions were requirements of the study, which invalidates the use of her interview for my research! I apologised to her about the error. I offered her a token of £20 for baby supplies.

Participant no. 22 - I was really excited to do this interview because of participant's ethnicity. When asked about the ages of her four children, the participant only gave me the age of her last child. Her reticence made me curious. She had basic English. She said she could not tell what child rights were but her explanations showed good knowledge. She did not have a high opinion of her abilities and kept calling herself an uneducated woman. However, she had numerous certificates in various health and social care sectors and was quite analytical in her reflections. I realised that I needed to draw her out and proceeded to do so. She was flattered when I informed her that she was as educated as most graduates. She took the praise well (rightly deserved, I thought) and became more forthcoming.

Participant was tearful as she disclosed abuse she suffered as a child. I used every skill I learned as a social worker to give her the space she needed while gently supporting her to let it all out. It paid off. She tearfully explained that she was married at the age of 13 and had two children by the age of 16. Her younger sister was also married at the same age but suffered severe damage to her reproductive organs as a result.

She used a 'Nigeriancentric' phrase often although I understood it well enough - 'children in Britain have free hands'. Like a couple other participants, she was convinced that inner city white British people had poor parenting skills.

The use of myself was crucial in this interview. At some point, I needed to leave issues about the research to discuss the participant's personal issues and lack of self-confidence. I needed to motivate her to open up to me. I knew she had a wealth of knowledge of both the Nigerian and British parenting systems and had

to break down/breach/access her private and well-guarded trove of experiences. I almost felt guilty afterwards, like I had taken something from her without her knowledge.

Participant no. 23 - Participant moved to Britain less than a decade ago and intends 'to stay forever'! She was pleasant and welcoming. She Is a homemaker, meaning she does not work but her husband does. She had strong, clear views on every issue. Might come across as opinionated depending on the audience. Said Britain was a major shock to her family's system. From the outset, her children and subsequently her, had serious difficulties with their school and social services was involved. She stated that people in Britain 'live a lie' - no one is allowed to show their true feelings, 'even when someone is angry, they must not look upset'.

After the interview, participant wanted to know how she could get onto the social work training and I explained it to her.

Participant no. 24 – The participant seemed in a hurry. He later explained he had an appointment afterwards. I was not pleased with this interview. I felt the participant was parroting socially acceptable ideas. He painted a picture of the Nigerian system that I, also a Nigerian, found difficult to believe. I could not help but feel that the participant was trying to tell me what he imagined I wanted to hear.

On reflection, I wondered whether the flat feeling I had following the interview was due to the participant being in a hurry or whether I wanted someone who appeared appropriately exercised about the issues, and was willing to give me interesting answers irrespective of how fanciful they were. As if it could get worse, the battery ran out midway and I had to repeat a previous question!

Participant no. 25 – This was a very articulate professional lady. She said Nigeria was 'home', but that she knew it should not be, because her life was in the UK. She also explained that seeing Nigeria as home was detrimental to her and her husband's progress in UK because it made them unable to firmly put

down roots. The participant said she and her husband ensured they were warmer with their children than both sets of their parents had been towards them.

First Focus Group Discussion

None of the two women could make it so the focus group consisted of four men. It lasted over three hours. The participants were so exercised that they did not want the discussions to end! I had to get more involved than originally planned in order to take control of the discussions at certain points.

Of the four topics discussed, one of them, the vignette about FGM seemed superfluous and I will seek to omit it in subsequent focus group discussions. Following a participant's point that the British government should show some respect for immigrants' culture, another responded that since the immigrants, in this case the Nigerians themselves, overwhelmingly object to FGM, he could not see why the British government should respect an aspect of Nigerians' culture that the Nigerians do not want to be associated with.

Despite the length of time, the discussions were very interesting and provided very rich data. It was raining and quite late so I offered to drop two of the participants at their homes. They thanked me profusely but no one could have been more grateful than I.

Second Focus Group Discussion

Only four participants made it for this session, despite confirming with five earlier. The only male did not seem isolated but appeared to dominate the group. I took steps to ensure that he allowed the ladies give their input as much as possible.

They dynamics in this focus group was quite interesting. The female participants seemed to need a little time to warm up, but when they finally got confident, they were quite vocal. The discussion heated up around sending

children back to Nigeria. Even though all four participants supported the idea, each one had distinct reasons for doing so; the benefits to the child, the parents, and the family. This focus group discussion lasted just short of three hours. Again, I offered to drop one of the participants although she lived out of my way, I felt like it was the least I could do in return for their efforts.

Gatekeeper 1 – 1st Imam

The imam was under great pressure from his members and could only spare me a brief moment, which I was grateful for. He gave me some general estimates of his congregation's statistics. He was highly educated and articulate. He believes 80 percent are Nigerians and of those, about 60-65 percent are parents. On the kinds of issues his members may ask for support with, he said mostly child welfare issues like education and negative peer pressure. The imam was emphatic that none of the Nigerian parents was experiencing poverty or real financial difficulties; that 'Nigerians believe in hard work and go a long way to ensure they do not lack anything they fancy. They put themselves under great strain to achieve what they want'. He further explained that if there were financial difficulties, they would be relative in the sense that the parents were probably sending a lot of money back to Nigeria or spending them on other trappings of wealth to show they have 'arrived'.

I thanked the imam very much and allowed him to go back to attending to the throng of people waiting for him outside.

Gatekeeper 2 - Pastor of second church.

The pastor advised that more than 95 percent of his congregation is Nigerian, and that more than half that were parents. His members would ask for support with issues like marital problems, emotional issues and family difficulties or disputes. He would know members of his church who had immigration issues. Currently only a handful of parents were in that position. Of those who did not have immigration issues, none were experiencing any level of what he would

define as poverty or financial difficulties. He said, 'the Nigerians always want to be rich, so they work extremely hard'.