A STUDY OF THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD IN BARKING AND DAGENHAM, EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF UK-BORN AND MIGRATING PARENTS

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DECLARATION

"I, David Simmons certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigation except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others."

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis takes a grounded theory approach to researching the lives of 15 couples from the East London borough of Barking and Dagenham: new migrants and UK-born second generation couples, all of whom had recently become parents. The couples were interviewed between 3 − 12 months postpartum, and the interviews transcribed and coded. Themes surrounding the parents' experiences of childbirth were explored, as were their feelings about their place in the local community, issues of social cohesion and personal identity.

As the data were being transcribed, theoretical concepts then began to emerge: a loss of personal control within the health care system; the use of the internet as a resource for new families and also to create family cohesion across continents; becoming a new family and the responsibility which that entailed; geographical transitions; isolation; issues of social cohesion and multiculturalism; and concepts of place, home and personal identity. Findings were viewed through a Ecological Systems theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The study is relevant to providers of community and health care services, local authority and national policy makers who have a responsibility for developing such services and regenerating post-industrial areas.

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Chapter One. Introduction

1. Introduction

This thesis examines the transition experiences of new parents in the location of Barking and Dagenham, focusing on their transition to parenthood, as well as, for the migrant parents, the experiences of transition to a new country. The thesis aims to compare the experiences of parents who have recently migrated with those who have not. For the research, fifteen couples were interviewed (thirty participants in total) and the data were transcribed and analysed thematically in the light of emergent themes. These themes then informed the selection of theoretical concepts to be applied to the thesis. The study will have relevance in the fields of perinatal care as well as migration and social cohesion. This chapter outlines the thesis as a whole, explaining the context of the study, the data gathering and methodological processes, as well as placing the study within the context of the location of Barking and Dagenham, which is considered in more depth.

The research came into being following a period of my time as a manager at a Children's Centre in Dagenham. Upon observing the service users, it became apparent that those who used the nursery services (and who were people of means) were almost entirely from an ethnic minority, many of whom were also migrants. It also transpired that those who accessed the free services (or social service interventions) were frequently local white working class. This led to a commission from the organisation for whom I worked to conduct an evaluation of an antenatal parenting course in partnership with the University of Greenwich, a piece of work which ultimately culminated in writing this thesis. I wanted to explore further the life experiences of the parents in the context of the local area, and felt that a qualitative approach would be best in order to elicit the nuances of the participants' unique perspectives of their life accounts, and to draw out themes and concepts which arise from the data.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this research are to:

- Explore some of the couples' experiences of the transition to parenthood and migration to the UK;
- Seek to understand all of the parents' experiences of transition in the context of their wider families and community;
- Compare and contrast experiences of local indigenous couples and migrating couples;
- Seek to understand these transitions through analysing existing theoretical approaches.

In order to study the experience of transition for new parents within Barking and Dagenham, I felt that it was important to look at the cultural and social mores which informed the choices which they made concerning their pregnancy, the birth of their child, and postnatal care. Therefore an approach to researching the experiences of both migrants and non-migrants (for comparator purposes) seemed important: and constructivist grounded theory was chosen. The research questions were framed around the family's experiences of their local community, in order to anchor them in a social context. As the literature search and research progressed, I began to observe the recurrence of common concepts both within the literature and within the interviews themselves; to do with culture, upbringing, personal identity, the emergence of family identities, experiences of transition, and isolation within communities. The interviews were then coded in the context of emergent concepts. Social theory then played a part in the analysis of those concepts and experiences, as the data were analysed by drawing upon a framework based on a critical understanding of Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

1.2 The literature context

This study is positioned within literature which examines the nature of transition to parenthood: primarily the work of Cowan and Cowan (1992); Schumacher and Meleis (1994); Olds et al (1997); Deave et al (2008). This work draws upon Bronfenbrenner's 1979 theory of human ecology, asking what a "healthy transition" is, and reviews Bronfenbrenner's theory in the context of structure, agency and place (Giddens, 1984; Smith, 2005; Bakewell, 2010). The

experience of fathers in transition is considered (Burgess 2008), as is the isolating nature of new parenthood (Mauthner, 1995). The review also draws on other fields. One of these being the nature of migration and ethnicity within the literature (Phoenix and Husain, 2007), examining contexts of ethnicity, identity and belonging in the context of health and social care (Brah 1996; Alagiah, 2006; Puthussery et al, 2008). The literature debating social and community cohesion is then reviewed, defining social cohesion in general terms (Cantle, 2001; Beider, 2010) before looking more specifically at the East End (Dench and Gavron, 2006) and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in particular (Cattell and Evans, 1999; Bristow and Jenner, 2010). Each of these themes is uncovered and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

1.3 The choice of Barking and Dagenham

Barking and Dagenham was selected for this study for several reasons. One was pragmatic: it is my home borough, and therefore travel within the area was straightforward: couples could be interviewed and the data could begin to be transcribed within the same day, for example. Another reason was the nature of the borough itself; it has undergone considerable industrial decline and social change in the past thirty years, which has resulted in the location itself being in a state of transition; somewhere families might live temporarily before moving onto more affluent areas (see Dench and Gavron, 2006 for the migration of the existing East End population, as well as Asthana, 2010). Furthermore I wanted to explore families' current experiences of maternal health services within the Borough against the background of adverse publicity, and to consider the lives of couples who have migrated into the area, in the context of their family history, their culture, their experiences in their countries of origin, as well as their perception of home. At the time of writing, the main concern for the maternal health care of Barking and Dagenham has been the adequate provision of hospital care for prospective parents, which has resulted in some anxiety concerning maternal services. The concerns of the capacity of local maternity units have relevance to this study, as it is an area of concern for many of the parents who were interviewed. The context of Barking and Dagenham as the focus for this research is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

1.4 Data gathering

The use of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Charmaz, 2006, Corbin and Strauss, 2008) within studies around the transition to parenthood has been extensive, and within the primary papers of this thesis (see section 2.1.1) are several studies which use grounded theory (Puthussery et al, 2008; Sidebotham, 2001) or a version of it (McCourt and Pearce, 2000). Reading Charmaz (2006) illuminated the possibility of a constructivist approach to grounded theory: also, strict grounded theory would insist upon a complete blank canvas, whereas alternative interpretations can allow for the possibility for using an extant theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) through which to interpret the data.

Those data for this study therefore, were collected through a series of fifteen semi-structured interviews with migrant and non-migrant couples, based on Corbin and Strauss's (2008) constructivist grounded theory methodology. In each couple, the mother was a primipara; in two of the couples, the father had had previous children. The first nine couples in the cohort were selected through an antenatal course which was run by LifeLine Community Projects called "Getting Ready for Your Baby" (November and Easter, 2008). The second six couples were recruited through local Children's Centre services. The interviews followed a semi-structured topic guide, and the parents were encouraged to talk at length wherever possible. The interviews were then transcribed, and the transcriptions reviewed by staff at the University of Greenwich for data validation purposes. The topic guide was arranged along a series of descriptive themes (experiences of the local area, experiences of perinatal services, experiences of the local community, expectations of local education, for example).

From the data, I began to notice recurrent concepts, and these were then managed through NVivo software to create a database which formed the basis of analysis: where initial categories gave way to the development of concepts, such as home, a loss of control, isolation, identity and adaptation, to name but a few. The methodology is described in full in Chapter Three.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework chosen for this study is the Systems Theory of Human Ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which theorised human experience (particularly that of transition) within the context of four systems. Bronfenbrenner's theory is still drawn upon in current policy and practice, as seen in Olds et al (1997), whose work underpins the Family-Nurse Partnership in the UK, as well as Schumacher and Meleis (1994) and their work on transition in nursing, and Cowan and Cowan (1992) and their work on transition to parenthood. The application of this framework was appropriate primarily because many of the parents in this study were undergoing a non-normative ecological transition through migrating to the UK, as well as the primary and fundamental transition from couple to parenthood; non-normative meaning that the transition veers from the norms of "settled" behaviour, staying within the boundaries of one's country of origin, for example. The effects of the transition to the UK from other countries (and by definition, other macrosystems) could therefore be discussed in the context of the effect upon the parents' microsystems, as could the effect of the transition to parenthood. Bronfenbrenner's systems themselves are defined and discussed within the context of other social theories in Chapter Two.

1.6 Thesis overview

The thesis itself is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter One describes the nature of this study, and its placement within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Chapter Two is a review of the Literature on transition to parenthood, migration and ethnicity, and social cohesion. Chapter Three deals with the research methodology which was used: a qualitative constructivist grounded theory study, and how the selection of that particular methodology was chosen. It also examines ethical considerations, theoretical frameworks which were considered prior to Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecology, and a note on the interview participants: the fifteen couples in question. Chapter Four is the first of the findings chapters, looking at the parents' perspectives of the geographical transition of migration, and their perceptions of "home", their cultural responses to living in the UK, experiences of xenophobia, as well as isolation and integration in the community. The experiences of the migrating couples is compared to that of indigenous couples.

Chapter Five examines the nature of the transition to parenthood: from the couple's expectations of childbirth and parenthood, the role of settings (such as hospitals and Children's Centres) in facilitating that transition process, and the importance of communication between settings and the couples in question. The concept of a loss of personal control within the healthcare system is examined, before the chapter considers the disruption of new parenthood, the anxiety and responsibility which emerge when a couple become parents, and the role of adaptation within that. Chapter Six is the final findings chapter, which focuses on the parents' identity, in terms of race, gender, culture and religion, and as students, since it transpired from the data that many of the parents had either recently completed studies, or were in the process of studying and self-improvement. The Discussion Chapter (Seven) draws together all of the threads emerging from this study, and considers its limitations and implications, before making recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two. Literature Review

2.   Introduction

This chapter describes the literature search process, then outlines the main documents which were selected and why, ordering the subsections in terms of the main concepts of the thesis: primarily transition in the context of new parenthood and migration to a new country. The choice of Bronfenbrenner's theory as a framework and its role within the context of more modern literature are also reviewed. The chapter begins with an examination of the literature search methods, and what inclusion criteria were used. The section on transition asks what a healthy transition may look like, begins by considering the work of Cowan and Cowan, before looking in more depth at the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner, and the context of structure and agency. This is followed by the section on migration and ethnicity within parenting studies, and how ethnicity informs identity and concepts of "home". The section on social cohesion completes the chapter: social cohesion in the context of place, in this case the East End of London, and how tolerance and multiculturalism affect that cohesion.

This chapter will show that an examination of the experiences of recent migrant new parents is a singular approach. To begin with, there appears to be something of a paucity of UK-based literature on the experiences of parents from an ethnic minority in general; this is noted by Phoenix and Husain in their paper "Parenting and Ethnicity" (2007). Similarly, in "Race and Childbirth", a book which traces the experiences of Gujarati and Bangladeshi women, Katbamna (2000) states that ethnic minority women appear to have been underrepresented in the literature, whilst Puthussery et al (2008) said that "few studies have focused on professionals' perspectives of UK-born ethnic minority women's maternity experiences" (p. 199). The choice of new migrants allows the thesis to focus on the dual transition of migration and new parenthood, and and also to compare the perspectives of migrants and non-migrants as a whole: whether White British couples, British caribbean couples, British Bengali couples, Romanian immigrant couples, or Albanian and British Albanian couples.

As Phoenix and Husain (2007) point out: "Further research including 'insider' accounts from … parents is also required, with fathers being included as well as mothers" (p. 35). This thesis examines the experiences of both mothers and fathers. Deave et al (2008) examines the

experience of new mothers and fathers both antenatally and postnatally. What that research was not able to do, however, was to shine light on the experience of parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. This thesis also examines the experiences of migrant and non-migrant primiparous couples through the prism of Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology (1979), within the urban context of their social setting in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Most of the literature review took place prior to the study. As data were processed and concepts examined, further studies were drawn upon. Of particular initial interest were studies around the transition to parenthood (Cowan and Cowan, 1992; Bateman 2009; Schumacher and Meleis, 1994; Deave et al, 2008), ethnicity and parenthood (Phoenix and Husain, 2007; Katbamna, 2000), the nature of community within a location which is itself in the process of transition (Dench and Gavron, 2006; Alagiah 2006), the experience of ethnic minority parents in the healthcare system (Puthussery et al 2008 and 2010; Davies and Bath 2002), and finally, the transition theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 1995), through which the data of this thesis are analysed.

2.1 Literature Review - methods

This section explains and describes the methods used in the literature review, and gives reasons for the choices involved. Throughout the literature search process, I used the internet as the primary search tool, beginning typically with a generic search on Google Scholar or the ISI Web of Knowledge, proceeding from there to whichever database was indicated from the relevant articles listed in the search result. Once I had gathered a number of articles or books on particular subjects around new parenthood, transition, migration, ethnicity, race or the East End, I then began to consider other references, both from fresh searches and from the reference pages of the articles which I had retrieved, read and annotated, and filed away in both electronic and printed hard copy.

I generally chose Google Scholar as a starting point, as its website and database evolved throughout the period of the study, and provided a useful general starting point for searching, before I used the ISI Web of Knowledge. To start systematically, I recorded notes of all the

searches within Microsoft One Note, and stored details of the literature primarily within an Access database, then I used EndNote, and finally used Mendeley. Articles were filtered according to their relevance to the PhD itself. For example, the review of the effectiveness of Sure Start (Rutter, 2006) is valuable as a Government-sponsored review of its time, but only has tangential relevance to the experiences of new parents from an ethnic minority in an East London borough, whereas classic works on the experience of new parents and their transition to parenthood (for example Cowan and Cowan, 1992) had more direct relevance. The literature sources were then catalogued by themes which were imposed by me, before I began to discover concepts within the data: concepts of new parents' experiences of transition, their ethnicity, social cohesion within their community, experiences of fatherhood and use of the internet.

2.1.1   The search strategy

My approach to the literature review encompassed an initial search of the literature (using web-based search facilities) and noting articles where the abstract indicated a particular field of interest, and downloading those articles: searching for papers at first which related to the impact of childbirth on the lives of parents. Where the articles reflected themes which were relevant to, or which began to recur in the research (experiences of ethnic minority parents, or socially isolated mothers, to give two examples), I would write down the article, date, country, methods used, and relevant themes. From there I would group articles by theme, putting to one side any articles where the focus was less relevant to my central themes. This then enabled me to construct a set of "primary" sources, and "secondary" sources. The primary papers were read, annotated and compiled in Mendeley, where they acted as a permanent resource. As the field work progressed, matters arising from the research warranted further literature searches in order to probe those elements further: the couple's experiences of internet use, for example, or their perceptions of multiculturalism both warranted further study of the literature. In this way, the literature search and the research then influenced one another.

The limitations were:
- Country - UK or USA (some exceptions, notably Priel and Besser (2002) which is Israeli, Plantin and Daneback which is Swedish, although has a greater application).

Exceptions were considered when the material seemed to add something of particular relevance.

- Year - ideally no more than thirty years old, unless the paper was a commonly referenced (i.e. seminal) source (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- Databases - Most were accessible to the University:
  - Wiley Interscience
  - Sage Journals Online
  - PubMed
  - Science Direct
  - JStor
  - Ingenta Connect

Occasionally, grey literature would appear, notably newspaper articles concerning the state of local maternity services in Barking and Dagenham (such as Opinion Leader (2010), or Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. These would not comprise part of the primary set of papers which were used in this study (see table in Appendix Three), but would contribute to the narrative background of life in Barking and Dagenham for new parents. Books which examined life in the East End (such as Dench and Gavron, 2006), or the experience of migrants (Alagiah, 2006) were also included. Most of the research reviewed is either based on qualitative studies or is a discussion of extant theory.

2.1.2 The initial search process

The literature research log for this study reveals certain search terms which were used, how useful they were, and how they were adapted to obtain better results. My primary searches were for 'experts' in perinatal parenting experiences, in January 2009, using a list of starting authors from my supervisor.

From the articles I had read I compiled a list of further "secondary" references which I thought worth investigating. By May 2009 I was working through lists of David Olds's articles about his Nurse-Family programme, before focusing later that month on articles about the theory and experience of transition, using, for example, search terms such as "transition", "parenthood", and also the author field, for example, "Cowan". Occasionally, articles proved

to be elusive, such as Selder (1989), which was difficult to obtain anywhere beyond its abstract. Bronfenbrenner (1977) however, was present, in a badly copied but reasonably legible form in PDF, from which I obtained both printed and electronic copy. Indeed, all of Bronfenbrenner's articles (1986, 1995) also seem to be poorly copied onto PDF, which makes legibility and annotation challenging. His book (1979) however, is readily obtainable, is a seminal piece of work which is drawn on by many others, and became a primary source.

Throughout the process I was constantly searching, refining, re-storing my article references on ever-improving databases, cataloguing articles by theme, colour or inclusion criteria (antenatal in red, ethnicity in orange, fatherhood in green, for example) in order to facilitate the searching and cataloguing process. I was also surveying the literature to review the uniqueness of the study, with searches such as the following:

parenting ethnicity uk – (Google Scholar)

ethnic; parent; ante+natal; birth anywhere in the article (Google Scholar)

ethnic all fields AND natal all fields (Swetswise)

culture all fields AND birth all fields (Swetswise)

ethnic and birth and natal and parent (ISI Web of Knowledge)

ethnic and birth and parent (Wiley Interscience)

drawing on articles which were returned from databases such as BMJ, Ingenta Connect, ISI Web of Knowledge, JSTOR; Mendeley, NCBI PubMed, Science Direct, Swetswise and Wiley Interscience. I would always use the advanced search function of any website, since the specificity of my requirements was rarely served by the default page.

2.1.3   Inclusion criteria

Many of the papers retrieved by the search process had a medical focus, and these papers were put to one side. Papers were considered for inclusion primarily if they focused on the impact of the transition to parenthood on the lives of those couples, or if they added information concerning the experience of ethnic minority or migrant parents. In order to keep the literature appropriately focussed, I had to select criteria for article inclusion, and latterly, needed to pare the number of articles down still further, in order to focus on a smaller number which were

felt to be more pertinent to this study. A process of starring important articles was therefore used in Mendeley.

Articles and literature sources were included in the main table of papers, if:

A.   They dealt with new parents and their experiences of the perinatal transition point;

B.   They approached their subject from a primarily sociological viewpoint (or social psychology), as opposed to a primarily medical one;

C.   They examined the impact of transition and migration on local communities, ethnicity and race.

Where a literature source was found to be rich in one particular area, it might then be categorised as a primary paper - the ones which I concentrated more time on, reading, annotating, reviewing, and re-reading. These were papers or texts which dealt directly with concepts which I was uncovering in the research itself; whether migration and a need for home (Alagiah, 2006), the impact of childbirth on a couple's relationship (Bateman, 2009; Cowan and Cowan, 1992), the experiences of ethnic minority parents (Phoenix and Husain, 2007; Puthussery et al 2008, 2010) or issues of social cohesion (Dench and Gavron, 2006). These became the smaller number of "starred" papers in Mendeley. Sources which proved to be useful in helping with general academic study (for example Greenhalgh, 2000) were excluded from this list, yet used for background reading. The table of primary papers is in Appendix Three. This illustrates the thinking behind the paring down of sources from the initial trawl to a more concentrated number, and again to a "focussed few" primary papers which are more frequently quoted and drawn on in this review (the figure below illustrates the thinking behind the selection process, as a flowchart).

Search Flowchart
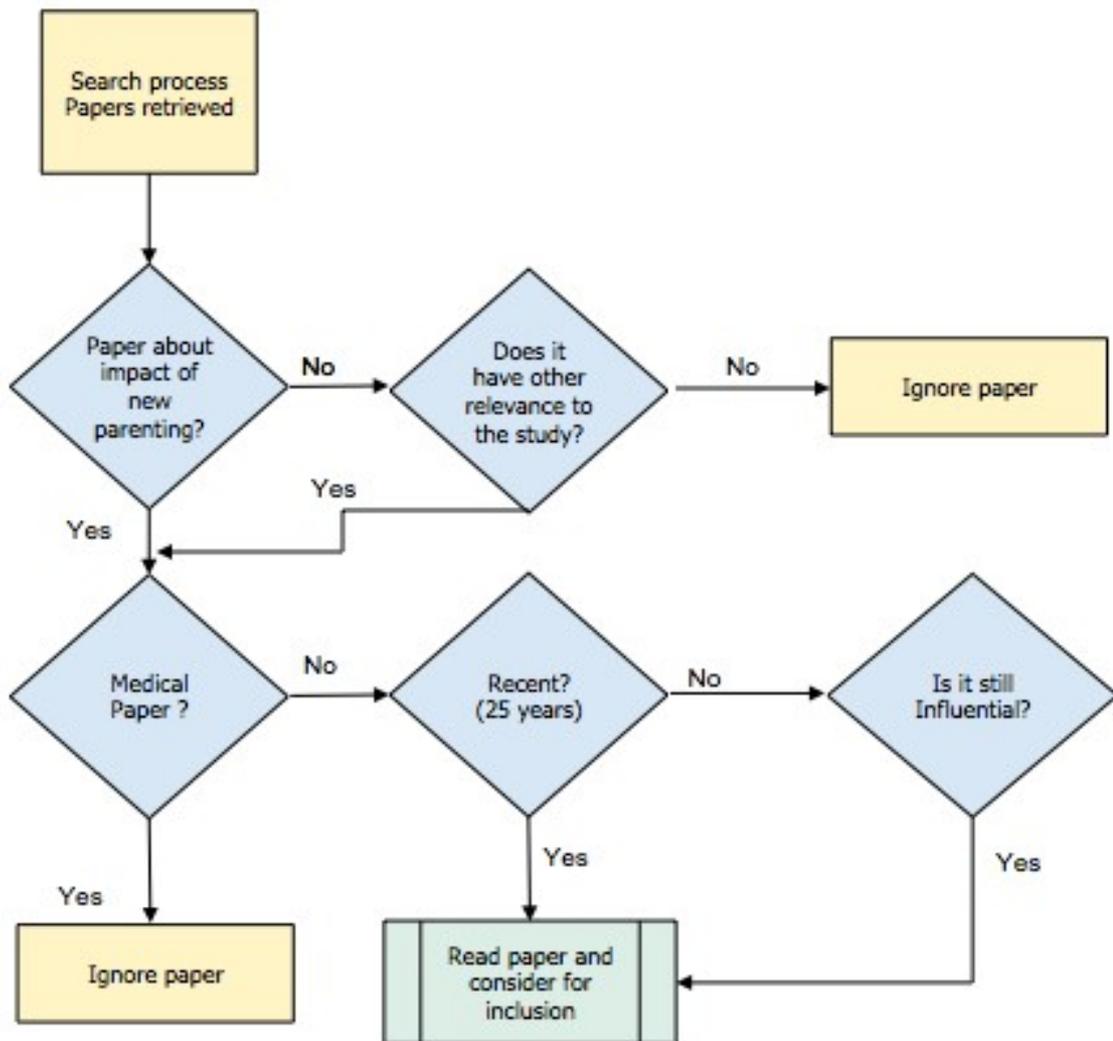
Figure 2.1: The literature selection search flowchart

2.2 Transition

This section considers the themes emergent from the literature on the transition from couple to parenthood in particular. It examines theories of transition, asking what a healthy transition is, looking at the Cowans' work, then Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology within the context of the transition to parenthood in more depth, the experience of fathers within transition, and the effects of social isolation on new parents.

2.2.1 What is a healthy transition?

In "Transitions: A Central Concept in Nursing" (Schumacher and Meleis, 1994) transition was defined by the authors as "being a passage or movement from one state, condition or place, to another …" (p. 119). The paper examined influencers on transition, as well as asking the question, "what constitutes a healthy transition?" An element of transition which the authors marked as significant was the fact that "all transitions leave their mark on existing identities, roles, relationships, abilities and patterns of behaviour" (p. 121). The influencing factors which were discussed include people's expectations, their levels of knowledge and skill, their environment, ability to plan, as well as their emotional and social well-being.

Indicators of a "healthy transition" included feelings of distress brought about by the change giving way to well-being as well as the ability to master the "role" or relationships:

> "disagreements or family disruption may occur during a transition … but when the process moves towards a successful conclusion, the well-being of family relationships is restored or promoted" (p. 124).

The authors explored the theory of transition further, as they listed types of transition (developmental, situational, health, and organisational). The paper then went on to discuss the properties common to all transitions, such as the change in individuals' "identities, roles, relationships, abilities, and patterns of behaviour" (p. 121). The types of transition illustrate the importance of attributing meaning to the transition process in order to help the individuals handle the change. Therefore these meanings are linked to personal expectations (both realistic and unrealistic, managed and otherwise), to levels of knowledge and skill and whether the individual feels they possess sufficient levels of both to cope with the change. These meanings are concerned with uncertainty and the environment – with perceived support and communication or a lack of planning, and a lack of emotional and physical well-being. The authors then described what a healthy transition might look like, whether the individuals have physical and emotional well-being, as well as feeling as though the individuals have "mastered" the change themselves: "We have identified three indicators of healthy transition that appear relevant across all types of transition: a subjective sense of well-being, mastery of new behaviours, and the well-being of interpersonal relationships" (p.124). The authors saw isolation or integration within the local community as a vital factor in parents' ability to cope

with transition. Their paper focused primarily on the patients' experience of transition in nursing, however, and touched upon the experience of new parents but did not explicitly focus on it.

The ability to undergo successful transition is certainly pertinent when one considers the effect of childbirth on couples, as outlined by Cowan and Cowan (1992), whose influential work within the field of parental transition will be looked at more fully in the next section: "In the midst of the family adventure we had embarked upon, our ten-year marriage began to feel precarious for the first time" (Cowan and Cowan, 1992: 2). The Cowans realised the impact of transition upon previously harmonious relationships may be difficult for couples to accept: "They can't see that some of their tension may be attributable to the conflicting demands of this very complex stage of life, not simply to a suddenly stubborn selfish or unresponsive spouse" (p. 3). In this context, healthy transition therefore can be complicated, particularly with regard to couples accepting the changes that a new child demands. However, as Schumacher and Meleis observed, successful (or "healthy") transition can result in not only a greater sense of personal well-being, but also of self-control, a sense of greater dignity and overall quality of work and home life.

The theme of the transition to parenthood runs throughout much of the literature on parenting, whether it is how childbirth "changes marriages" (Belsky and Kelly, 1994, Cox et al 1999) or affects depression (Matthey et al, 2000). The Cowans' work is cited extensively; one study undertaken by One Plus One (2003) for example, which drew from their research, and catalogued the changes which parenthood brings. There is less time for the couple's relationship, but also a conflict in the parents' role as workers, an effect on self-esteem, and often a greater involvement with the couple's extended families. The paper posed the question as to how the new family could be helped, whether through existing research or family-oriented services. The One Plus One paper closed with two cyclical possibilities for a couple's response to the birth of their first child: the vicious cycle (father's dissatisfaction with couple relationship – father less involved with the child – mother feels unsupported and dissatisfied – mother criticises father and conflict ensues) and the virtuous cycle (father satisfied with the relationship – father is more involved with child – mother feels supported and is less critical of the father), although the reality of parental relationships are rarely as simple as this.

Like Cowan and Cowan and One Plus One, in her 2009 systematic review of studies around the impact of the birth of a first child on a couple's relationship, Bateman found that "the way in which changes are assimilated can affect the quality of the relationship" (p. 9). Bateman also described the need for further support services to assist new parents in this critical time of transition, pointing out how important it is for healthcare professionals to "ease" the transition (p. 2). She argued for couples to have a strong sense of their partner's identity to enable mutual support once the baby is born, and added that communication is a key skill which many couples do not develop properly, with possibly negative consequences. Rather than concentrate solely on the transitional nature of the couple's relationship, Bateman examined the impact of transition on the family and those who help them, particularly midwives, who have a role in supporting them through the transition.

Deave et al (2008) dealt with the transition experiences of couples, and Deave and Johnson (2008), the experiences of the fathers in particular. Deave's research focused on the experiences of 24 primiparous women, 20 of whom have partners. Early on in the first paper, Deave made the point that it is important to keep the fathers included in every aspect of the pregnancy in the antenatal months, to prevent possible alienation (Deave et al, 2008). The study looked at the prospective views of parents antenatally, as well as their reflective views postnatally, and provided "an empirical example of a theoretical framework of systems that was described by Cowan and Cowan" (p. 13). The themes which came from the research were: the importance of professional support before and after the birth, the influence of the couple's parents, the influence of friends and colleagues, antenatal/postnatal groups, preparation for baby care, sources of information, breastfeeding, and the relationships of the couples themselves. The study illustrated the need for improved support to help parents through this critical time of transition. Of the 24 women and 20 men who were interviewed, only one was from an ethnic minority.

2.2.2   The work of Cowan and Cowan (1992)

The experiences of couples in the transition to their first experiences of parenthood are discussed extensively by Cowan and Cowan (1992) whose work is cited consistently throughout the literature of people's experiences of transition to parenthood. The book summarised a ten-year study where the Cowans worked with a cohort of 96 couples (72

expectant couples and 24 non-parent couples, some of whom went on to have children, some of whom who did not). The couples were researched from the days of their first pregnancy, through their experiences of childbirth, and the child-rearing years. It remains a classic study of its kind, a comprehensive picture of people's lives from a qualitative viewpoint, and the material has prompted much debate and discussion.

The Cowans cited the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an influence (Cowan and Cowan, 1992: 5), particularly with regard to the creation of their "domains". For whilst Bronfenbrenner described "systems" of life (which are explained more extensively in the next section), the Cowans described the transition process in terms of its effect on five "domains" of family life: namely, the inner lives of the parents, the quality of the relationship between husband and wife, the quality of life with the extended family (for example grandparents), the relationship between the nuclear family and individuals or institutions around it (work, friends, child care) and the quality of the relationship and interactions between the parents and their first child. Among other conclusions, the Cowans found that the strength of a couple's relationship prior to the birth influenced the strength of that relationship after the birth, that becoming a parent can be a very isolating experience, that "women with a larger investment in their parent identity tended to have lower self esteem" (p. 81), and that parenting can make couples more creative in their problem solving. They examined couples' approaches to parenthood, and categorised them in four distinct types: those who are planners (52% of the cohort), those who accept their fate (14%), those who are ambivalent (15%), and those who view life in terms of straight positives and negatives ("Yes-No couples", 19% of the cohort).

The Planners group were identified as having developed a more effective process of problem solving and more satisfying relationships - something which Schumacher and Meleis (1994) also noted. The Cowans also found that men who are more involved in the life of their family tended to describe themselves as more fulfilled. In order to help parents come to terms with the various aspects of their identity which struggle for ascendancy, and to add to the typological aspect of their work, the Cowans encouraged their participants to use a pie metaphor for their lives before, during and after pregnancy, and to label each aspect in order of perceived importance – how large is the "Worker/Student" segment of the pie compared to "Parent", compared to the "Partner/Lover" part, for example (1992: 80-83). They discovered that for men, the "Father" aspect of their identity appears to be smaller than other parts. The couples in the study who did not have children acted as a comparator for those who did. Then

they used an Adjective Check List (as pioneered by Gough and Heilbrun, 1980) which enabled the participants to evaluate their self esteem at key moments in the process, describing "Me as I am", "Me as I'd like to be" and a description of "My partner". They also pointed out how vital it is for new parents to continue their lives as partners and lovers, not just as parents.

The authors also described the couple partnership as a "crucible in which their relationship with their children takes shape" (p. 11) which in turn causes the couple relationship to change. They also said that, due to the stressful nature of early parenthood, couples should avoid having children in order to patch up a struggling relationship, although the immense pressure can actually be a positive thing: "…when women with young children do juggle work and family successfully, they tend to feel better about themselves and their marriages, even if they are breathless at times" (p. 116). The authors also argued that parenthood does not change people as individuals, but rather adds a dimension to an already existing personality, for good or ill. The importance of the male partner becoming more involved in household activities cannot be overestimated for the Cowans' cohort, but also that if a father becomes more involved in the day-to-day running of the household, this can be frowned upon by his parents. This was an interesting point to examine in this thesis, given that the Cowans' study was conducted in the 1980s with research participants whose own parents would have come from an earlier time, where gender roles may have been more clearly delineated than they are now.

Overall, the Cowans claimed that everything which we are as individuals and couples comes together to affect who we are as parents. Our strengths will still be our strengths, our failing our failings, and our irritations will remain. Pregnancy merely serves to magnify those issues and in the end, having children incorporates those. Whilst the Cowans' book remains a landmark of its time, it described an American study, and its sample cohort, although described then as "wide-ranging", had all completed their high-school education, were mostly married (or soon to become married) and many had gone on to further and higher education. In terms of ethnicity, only 15% were non-Caucasian, and none were migrants. Further such long-term research is clearly needed, therefore, to explore these themes in the twenty-first century, and with a population which is arguably more diverse than it was in 1985. Also, the 1980s predated the internet and its rapidly transformative effects on social networks.

2.2.3 Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

Works on the transition to parenthood, whether Cowan and Cowan (1992), studies cited by Schumacher and Meleis (1994), de Montigny et al (2006) or Olds (1993, 1997, 2005, 2006) owe much of their theoretical underpinning to the theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Bronfenbrenner's reputation is primarily derived from his "systems theory of human ecology", which he refined throughout his career, culminating in the book "The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design" (1979), in which he outlined the theory. In this work, he examined the effect of common transitions on what he termed the "systems" of that person's life: the microsystem (the relation between a developing person in their immediate environment, including social groups such as family, school, peer groups), the mesosystem (the interrelations between a person and those social groups), the exosystem (which are external social structures that affect the person as distinct from their immediate family: such as their place of work, local services or government) and the macrosystem (which are prototypes within a culture, such as the standard uniformity of a classroom setting, or certain accepted cultural attitudes). He described "environmental structures and the process taking place within them" which "must be viewed as interdependent and must be analysed in 'systems' terms" (interpreting life as a series of inter-related "systems" - as shown by figure 2.2 below). When something affects one system of life, it has an effect on other systems. He later included models with a "chronosystem", which examined normative and non-normative chronological and developmental transitions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The author went on to say:

> "Since almost every transition involves more than one setting, reciprocal processes occur not only within but also across setting boundaries, thus involving interaction effects at the level of higher order systems. For example, when a child enters day care, the pattern of family activities changes; a divorce can alter a child's behaviour in a classroom; dropping out of school has reverberations in the family; and a new job in another town affects home, school, and every other environment of developmental significance" (1977, p. 525).

Each system is not only influenced from the upper level macrosystem, but can in turn have a reciprocal effect on the other systems: they are isomorphic (taking on the same shape as one another), and inter-related. Bronfenbrenner himself described the systems as being like a "nested set of Russian dolls", identical in appearance and shape, but with different

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characteristics. In 1986, Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem: a longitudinal measurement of systems over a period of time.
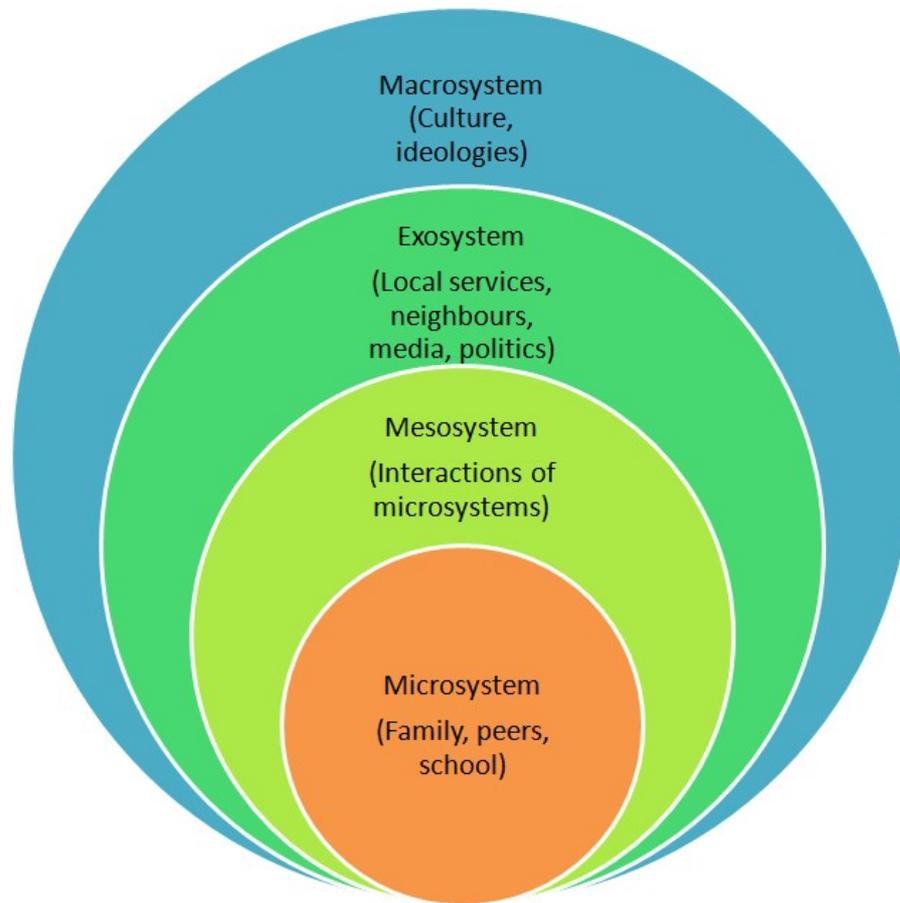
Figure 2.2: A stacked illustration of Bronfenbrenner's model

Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecology model - or "bioecological paradigm" (1995:621) - examined the role of life transitions in "shaping the course and content of human development" (1977: 525). Classically, Bronfenbrenner used the model to analyse the effects of systems and interactions upon a developing child; in my study, whilst the child becomes central once born, the study by definition examines the effects of the transition of migration and childbirth on the life of the couple.

Within Bronfenbrenner's ecological model a couple might meet, and decide they want to get together and have children. This is a dyadic interaction: the "primary building block of the microsystem" (1979:56) - and theirs becomes a primary dyad: "A primary dyad is one that continues to exist phenomenologically for both participants even when they are not together" (1979:58). This dyadic interaction expresses itself in shared "molar activities" (regular patterns of behaviour, 1979:56) and "proximal processes" (solitary or joint activities within

the person's environment - or "context" - and which are consciously or unconsciously shaped by the environment: such as reading, playing, athletic pursuits, 1995:620). The establishment of a home is the establishment of a primary setting, from which the couple experience their systems interactions. Their microsystem is experienced together - and their mesosystem comprises the interactions of other microsystems - with respective parents, and friends. Their mesosystems are a set of interrelations between the settings in which they actively participate, whether places of worship, community gatherings, or social interactions (1979:25). Their respective exosystems are affected by their places of work, and the company they keep when not together within their primary dyad (1979:25). Their values and cultural perspectives are primarily influenced by the macrosystem, which is in turn moulded by their country of origin, their language, belief systems and the host "culture" of that country (1979:258). From Bronfenbrenner's perspective, to ensure family stability the couple should have a joint developmental trajectory (1979:285). Childbirth is a common transition point where couples can often be seen to have a joint trajectory.

Further complications arise when the systems are in an urban framework such as exists in the area for this study, since Bronfenbrenner wrote that this may be a complicating factor in the development of a family's systems (1986:731). When the urban area itself is in a state of transition, as Barking and Dagenham is, that affects exosystems (places of work or job seeking), mesosystems (hospitals, GP surgeries, nurseries, Children's Centres, schools) since the interaction between the microsystems is affected by the changes within the exosystems and arguably, macrosystems as well. As a local area seeks to acclimatise to the changes within societal structures (in the case of Barking and Dagenham, the rejection of the British National Party and the emergence of greater multicultural norms) that in turn effects the systems. Bronfenbrenner also claimed that the model has extensive application to public policy (1979: xii-iv), something which is discussed in the next section of this thesis.

According to Bronfenbrenner, there will also be pressure upon individuals from a fragmented family background to repeat the life course of their own family (1995) - the "sleeper effect" of earlier life courses which have an impact on the present day, which can sometimes be triggered by a seemingly unconnected event - such as a sudden trauma or loss of role identity (1979:285). This is also where the chronosystem comes into effect (1986:724), since human ecology is measured not only within the vertical systems, but is also measured over time, the horizontal (or longitudinal) aspect of the chronosystem (1986:733). This was then referred to

by Bronfenbrenner as his *person-process-context-time (PPCT)* model (1995:621): which is explained more fully in sections 2.2.4 and 7.2. The events and transitions which alter family interactions (emigration, death, divorce) affect not only the immediate family, but also have subsequent generational impact (1995:642). Furthermore, the person's tendencies and predispositions to respond a certain way in childhood might affect how they will respond in later life (1995:641).

2.2.4   Uses of Bronfenbrenner's model of human ecology

Wherever possible, it has been important to examine the transition experiences in this study in relation to the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. This works to a certain extent, within the range of Bronfenbrenner's systems, but it too, has limitations. Bronfenbrenner's own 1979 systems theory was based primarily on retrospective experiments, and much of it stemmed from psychological studies of the twentieth century. As noted earlier, Bronfenbrenner developed his theory through the ensuing decades (1980-1990s), he added the longitudinal chronosystem as well as reflections on urban systems to the model (1986). A search through the literature illustrates that Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is still well deployed within health and social care practice; studies such as Ungar (2002) for example, highlighted the importance of the theory in current social work and Greenfield (2011) used the model to define initiatives for support for the elderly. Whilst advocating the use of theory to supplement social work practice, Ungar did however, stress the limitations of ecological systems theories as a whole as "overly generalised" and employing language that is "too complex" (p. 5), and that in 1979, Bronfenbrenner was addressing his more "conservative" psychological colleagues who "placed little importance on assessing a child's environment as a causal factor in psychopathology" (p. 3). Hollander and Haber's 1992 study used Bronfenbrenner's theory to explore transitions within sexual identity. Lee et al used it in 2010 to investigate the phenomenon of youth suicide in South Korea by listing the systems and aligning them to the experiences of the youth in Korea. So, for example, the microsystem consisted of parent-child relationships, communication, peer support; the mesosystem encompassed family and peer inter-relationships; the exosystem involved the media and the internet as external influencers of behaviour, and the macrosystem encompassed the culture of parenting, Korean collectivism and the cultural emphasis on academic achievement. The chronosystem is also defined within the context of a recent economic crisis resulting in youth depression. A 2011 paper by Algood

et al studied the maltreatment of children with developmental disabilities through the ecological framework.

Literature which examines the effect of life transitions upon families is frequently grounded in systems terms, if not directly using Bronfenbrenner's own ecological model, then borrowing from it in order to interpret data from a similar standpoint. Schumacher and Meleis noted how Bronfenbrenner influenced transition research in their 1994 paper, "Transitions: A Central Concept in Nursing", as described in section: 2.2.1. Cowan and Cowan (1992) however, acknowledged the influence of Bronfenbrenner upon their research, but took it forward by moving from his ecological paradigm to one of their own creation - which they called the five "domains" (as explained in section 2.2.2).

In terms of current government policy, Bronfenbrenner's influence is perhaps most keenly felt in the work of Professor David Olds, the major influence behind the Nurse-Family Partnership programme, which has been implemented extensively with families in the US, and latterly in the UK through the Family-Nurse Partnership. In his 2005 paper which reflected upon the impact of the programme over several years in the US, "Taking Preventive Intervention to Scale: The Nurse-Family Partnership", Olds wrote that the philosophy which underpins his programme is rooted in theories of child development and behaviour change:

> "The program is grounded in nine theories of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1995), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and human attachment (Bowlby, 1969). Together, these theories suggest that behaviour change is a function of families' social context as well as the individual's beliefs, motivations, and emotions – a view that has implications for program design" (p. 9-10).

Olds then drew upon Bronfenbrenner's systems theory to explain his model of involving "networks" of influence upon the mother's life, and linking families with other public services (p.10). Olds also accepted that the theory formed the foundation of the Nurse-Family Partnership in Olds et al (1997): "The formal theoretical foundation of the original program model … consisted of Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecology" (p. 10). The authors went on to write that the theory "emphasises the importance of social contexts as influences on human development" (p. 11). The paper also observed the importance of external relationships in the context of influencing the parent-child relationship, and recognised the nature of the

"ecological transition" of primiparous childbirth upon both parents in Bronfenbrenner's terms, although the Nurse-Family Program tends to work mainly with new mothers (p. 12). Olds also acknowledged that: "compared to other developmental theories, Bronfenbrenner's framework provides a more extended and elaborate conception of the environment" (p. 12).

It is the limitation with Bronfenbrenner's original 1979 position, however, which caused Olds to state that Bronfenbrenner's original theory does not deal adequately with "the role that parents sometimes play in selecting and shaping the settings in which they find themselves" (p. 12). Whilst Olds et al went on to say that Bronfenbrenner addressed this in later works, it remained an acknowledged limitation as Professor Olds developed the original Nurse-Family Partnership program, which resulted in Bandura's self-efficacy (1977) and Bowlby's attachment (1969) theories also being integrated into the program as it was developed. In critiquing Bronfenbrenner's work, Olds pointed out that Bronfenbrenner's theory moved from being primarily focused on "contextual influences" to one where the parents (as agents) can influence and alter their environment (structures), via Bronfenbrenner's 1995 *person-process-context* model (*time* was added later to this framework; also see the next section, 2.2.5, for a discussion regarding structure and agency within the context of Bronfenbrenner's theory).

In evaluating the Nurse-Family partnership for the UK Government's implementation of the program, Barnes et al (2008) also detailed the influence of Bronfenbrenner upon the program's theoretical basis, and De Montigny (2006) also used Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as the basis for her work in the transition to fatherhood. Bronfenbrenner's theories also formed a basis for the American Head Start movement of which he was co-founder, which in turn influenced the creation of Sure Start in the UK. It should be acknowledged in working with Bronfenbrenner's theories, whilst recognising the influence of his theoretical model on current policy and practice, that his theory of human ecology was very much a product of its time. His 1979 book "The Ecology of Human Development" drew upon much research and theory which evolved through the earlier stages of the twentieth century, in the USA predominantly. In his 1995 paper, he then detailed the *person-process-context-time* framework, which works within the systems model. In terms of structure and agency, Bronfenbrenner's "person" becomes the agent, the "context", the structure.

2.2.5 Structure, agency and place

Within the field of sociology, theories tackle the concept of place and the importance of location on a recurring basis. Curtis and Jones (1998) and Popay et al (1998) both explored current trends within theoretical thinking on notions of place as an influencer on human behaviour, particularly with regard to health inequalities. Giddens (1984) developed a theory of structuration, in which locales (as an element of structure) play a role in constraining the actions of agents (people). For example, to what extent might the locale of Barking and Dagenham itself, or the area surrounding the couple's home play a role in constraining the actions of the research participants: "Locales may range from a room in a house, a street corner, the shop floor of a factory, towns and cities, to the territorially demarcated areas occupied by nation-states" (Giddens 1984, p. 118). The author employed the term 'locales' as opposed to 'place' to denote a greater sense of human interaction with the area: he called them "settings of interaction"; the locale therefore plays a more interactive role in the "constitution of encounters across space and time" (p.119) than a "place". Giddens also lost no time in criticising structuralist social theory (such as that of Parsons[1]) which placed the agent at the mercy of structural forces which buffeted them through life, treating them as "much less knowledgeable than they really are" (introduction). With structuration, Giddens pronounced agents to be "actors": having the ability to interact with their environment, to shape the course of their lives, even whilst at the same time being reciprocally shaped by the structure in turn, something which latterly, Bronfenbrenner claimed of his systems as well. As Bakewell (2010) commented of Giddens:

> "Hence, social structures are seen not just as constraints on individual actors but also enabling their actions. Social actors are self-aware in the sense of continual monitoring of the effects, both intended and unintended, of action and the modification of their behaviour accordingly. While their action may be constrained, people's agency ensures that they always have some degrees of freedom— some room to manoeuvre" (p.8).

So Giddens' approach differed from the more deterministic aspects of post-war sociology (where agents arguably have little influence), as he wrote that the agent can themselves challenge the elements of the structure (whether it be locale, social class, religion or other

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[1] Talcott Parsons (1902-79) was an eminent American sociologist whose theoretical work emerged primarily in the 1950s, and had a primarily structuralist core; it was criticised by many contemporaries as anti-individualistic, and was revised much during his lifetime.

institutions). Bakewell (2010) examined the concepts of structure and agency specifically within the context of migration. He debated the nature of agency as being particularly sensitive when dealing with refugees for example, as: "to go too far towards explanation and ascribing any agency to such people may undermine their case for refugee status" (p.2). He, as did Giddens, debated the need for "micro" and "macro" structural elements, but acknowledged that theories of migration which incorporate both structure and agency (such as that of Massey et al, 1998) can do so apparently successfully (p. 6). Within the context of these debates on structure and agency, it could be argued with regard to Bronfenbrenner that his systems theory represented a "structural" paradigm which does not necessarily allow for the freedom of the individual, or human agency. This will be discussed and revisited in further sections, and reviewed later in the Discussion chapter (Seven).
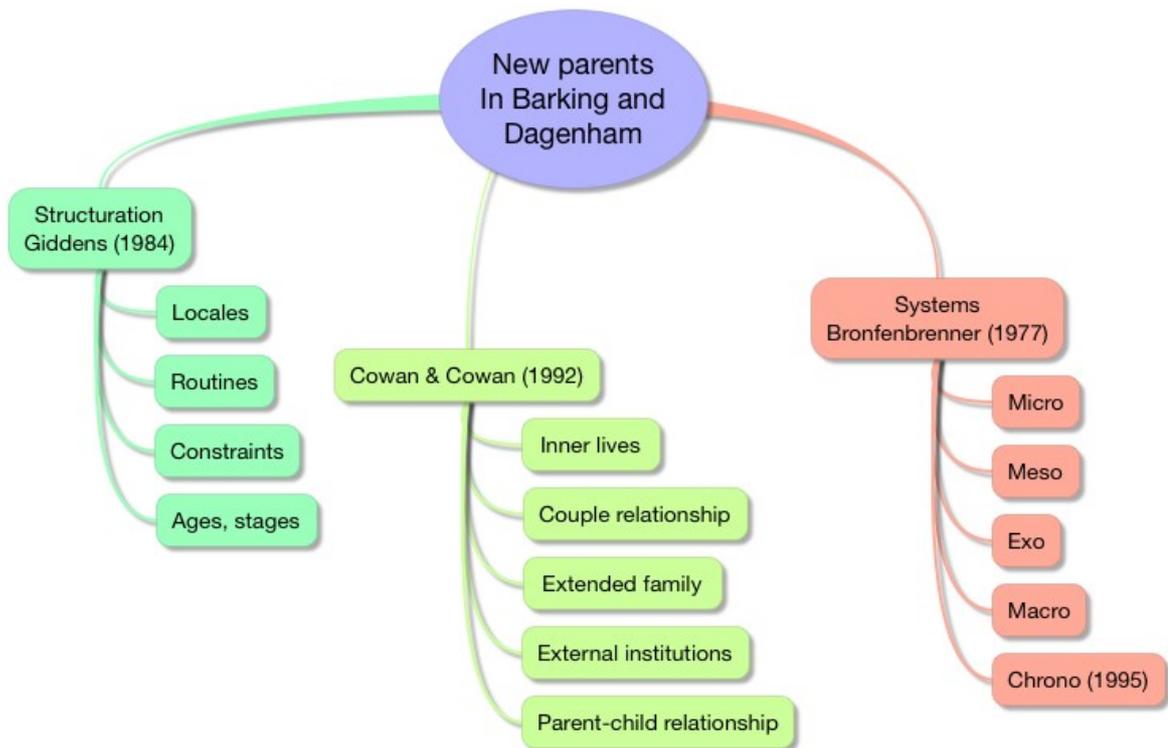
Figure 2.3: Theoretical models

The theoretical models in Figure 2.3 illustrate three core theories which examine the nature of transition to new parenthood in the context of structure, place and personal environment. To a degree, the theories overlap; for example Cowan and Cowan's inner lives and couple relationship are located within Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, as are Giddens's "routines". The location of Barking and Dagenham plays a significant role within this study, as it shapes the respondent's behaviour and responses to it. As a structural element in their lives it is

significant in helping to shape the choices which they make. For example, the housing is relatively inexpensive, which is something that drew several of the couples to move there in the first place. Popay et al (1998) discussed the nature of the health inequalities debate, particularly looking at the tension between positivist research (which seeks to ascertain the role of statistical variables within a location) and the importance of lay narrative (as opposed to "expert" analysis). The authors commented on structure and agency: challenging much of the extant literature around health inequalities, claiming it to be weighted towards positivism in its stance, and "disconnecting individuals from their social context" (p. 628). They also commented that social class is not necessarily the key factor in predicting individual health outcomes, but discussed the nature of "risk factor epidemiology" and the role of the individual agent in selecting riskier health "lifestyle" choices, resulting in poor health, or indeed the converse, for example: "Those working in occupations where there is the flexibility to structure one's own working day have been shown to suffer fewer health problems than those whose working practices are tightly defined" (p. 623). There are, however, structural factors at play, whether to do with place, social networks (for good and ill), community integration or even international factors. The emphasis of the paper was on discovering the importance of human agency within the research:

> "…there has been a lack of attention to the development of concepts which will help explain why individuals and groups behave in the way they do in the context of wider social structures – to link agency and structure to use the sociological language" (p. 625).

The authors then pointed out the importance of the individual "lay" narrative in contributing to the analysis of health inequalities, so that the data is ontological as well as empirical or epistemological: based on experience rather than knowledge. They continued to argue that the dangers with theorising through a series of "macro to micro" systems is that the theory depersonalises the individual, and removes the factor of human agency out of the equation (p. 636). They looked at systems theories (Giddens and Bourdieu in this instance) and stated the importance of finding the point within those theories where human agency can influence the structure in question, so that the two elements are actively reciprocal. They also stressed the importance of place within the structure-agency debate: "Nor is there much research which conceptualises 'place' as the primary site for the impact of macro social structures to be played out in the daily lives of individuals" (p. 632). However, in order to research place adequately within the context of health outcomes, they emphasised the importance of

gathering narrative (historical and biographical) data. They asked to what extent the nature of the local environment played a role in the health outcomes of the citizens: particularly in areas where there was significant material deprivation.

Smith (2005) also looked at the concept of place within the context of its effect on the socio-economic outcomes of the population of a post-industrial South London estate, not dissimilar to those found in parts of Barking and Dagenham. For the author, "place" represented a "framework through which relations of class, gender and race can be analysed" (p. 22), from local responses to the de-industrialisation of the area, through the formal and informal economy, as well as a reflection on predominant theories of social exclusion and their application to this particular study. Smith reflected on the responses of his own participants, whose cultural identities became linked to place (p. 78). The author also commented on the nature of labelling within the context of place: in other words how certain locations (even postcodes) become stigmatised according to labels assigned to them by both insiders and those looking in (p. 80) - insurance companies, for example. For many of the participants in this study, the location of Barking and Dagenham became a focus point for much of their conversation, particularly when discussing the future, as many did not see that the borough had a future for their growing family at all (discussed later in section 4.7).

2.2.6 The experience of fathers in transition

There is extensive literature on the experiences of fathers in the time of the transition to parenthood. As well as Cowan and Cowan, central to much of the literature is a review by Burgess (2008), which examined the experiences of fathers in categories as diverse as smoking cessation and breastfeeding. With regard to transition, however, Burgess highlighted the relationship between father and mother as being of critical importance; "the quality of the relationship between the parents has been shown to predict how both mother and father nurture and respond to their children's needs" (p. 5). Deave and Johnson (2008) wrote that fathers were grateful for some warning as to the emotional impact of the child's birth on their own relationship; having expected sleepless nights, they had not expected it to impinge on their relationship with their partner (as referenced in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 where the role of fatherhood is placed against the role of partner).

This unexpected effect of a new child can then have the unfortunate effect of eroding the couple relationship, Bateman (2009) citing the statistic that 25,000 children in the UK under four have divorced parents. Bateman went on to say however, that for couples who already have a strong bond, this disruption can also enhance the experience of child-rearing for both. Bateman then argued for some informal discussion with expectant couples by midwives in order to smooth this transition, or even for more formal therapeutic interventions. Deave and Johnson's cohort, on the other hand, opted for a more modern approach, requesting a DVD which explains the transition to parenthood. Cowan and Cowan also brought a counterbalance to the gender myth of the idealised "New Man" (who is wholly attentive to the needs of the mother and baby and able to respond fully to any situation which arises) to another possible reality where the roles of both partners ended a long way from where they had expected to be. This should, however, be contrasted with Burgess's statistics about the involvement of fathers in the birth itself, "Almost all fathers are present at their children's births" (p. 4). From this data, it can be argued that although the "new man" ideal may still be something of a myth, there exists nonetheless a greater number of fathers who are ready and willing to be more involved in the perinatal process, and a more active parenting role.

A successful transition to fatherhood is essential for the strength of the couple in question, and the fear of a poor transition has caused anxiety for fathers in the past (Cowan and Cowan, 1992). The Cowans also observed that fathers frequently lose self-esteem just as their partners are coming to terms with the transition. The authors said that for many of the fathers, both a sign of coming to terms (and possibly an attributable factor) is an active participation in the life of the baby from the beginning: "… more involved fathers continue to have lower parenting stress and report fewer symptoms of depression" (p. 102). They also reported the converse to be true - a less involved father will also report a distancing from the couple relationship as a whole. Schumacher and Meleis (1994) also made the point that when a father is prevented from spending time with his growing family through work, it can hinder the transition to fatherhood. Deave and Johnson (2008) stated that it is vital, therefore, for fathers to be prepared adequately for the process, and given support before, during and after the birth, to ease transition. They observed that fathers are much neglected in maternal services and policy, and that this needed to be addressed: "they often felt excluded from antenatal appointments and classes" (p. 629), since much of the antenatal material was aimed solely at women. In spite of this, however, many of the men were surprised at how successfully they

managed to make the transition: "It's just nice to feel like a family. I didn't think I'd enjoy the baby part as much as I did" (p. 631).

2.2.7   Transition leading to isolation for parents

A key factor in the transition to parenthood for primiparous women is the risk of social isolation. In Cowan and Cowan (1992), a father remarked of his wife's suddenly reduced social circle: "Who ever thought how lonely it can be to have a baby?" (p. 20). Priel and Besser (2002) used selective measures to assess mothers' self-efficacy and perception of the need for social support as well as how difficult they felt their child was as a result of these pressures. Pridham et al (1991) confirmed the importance of adequate preparation for birth on postnatal outcomes, including what the authors called "transition markers" - the evaluation of parenting and of infant and self-care capability. Mauthner (1995) probed what appears to be a direct link between social isolation and postnatal depression:

> "During the course of my doctoral research on why and how some women feel depressed following childbirth … I found that, for the specific group of women who took part in my study, their encounters with other mothers with young children were critical to their feelings of emotional and psychological well-being. The accounts of their experiences of postnatal depression revealed how their journeys into and out of depression were influenced by the extent and nature of these relationships" (p. 311).

Mauthner examined the experiences of 18 women who suffered from postnatal depression. The mothers talked about the need for a community centre to "bump into people" or simply "push the pram to" (p. 314). Also, returning to work did not necessarily help them either. They even reported feeling "stigmatised" as working mothers. Ensuing depression then caused the mothers to withdraw further, thus exacerbating their already acute isolation and depression, although they were still not aware of any association between their withdrawal and the onset of depression.

The article then became more positive as Mauthner described how the mothers emerged from the cloud of depression when they began to participate in social settings and to open up to one another. It would be oversimplifying a complex area to place social isolation as the only contributor to postnatal depression, as a systematic review conducted by Robertson et al

(2004) illustrated through a meta-analysis of 14,000 participants, that there are a myriad of complicating contributory factors, not least depression and anxiety during pregnancy, a stressful life event occurring during pregnancy, and a previous history of depression. But again, low levels of social support were also discussed as a key contributor.

At this point, it would be apposite to find appropriate definitions for social support within the literature. Priel and Besser (2002) wrote that "research on social support has produced consistent evidence that a person's perception of the availability of others as a resource contributes significantly to the individual's self-regulation of distress" (p.344). De Montigny et al (2006) noted the importance of social support, and measured parents' perceptions of social support through a Social Support Questionnaire. They defined five areas of social support: informal support, support from a local organisation, professional support, family support and partner support. Pridham et al (1991) talked about "affection and affirmation" as two key components of social support, Mauthner (1995) stated that social support is "coterminous with support from a male partner" (p.212), and McCourt and Pearce (2000) wrote that being a single parent can result in a mother feeling unsupported (p. 150). Katbamna (2000) also talked specifically of "social support networks" (p. 4).

All this literature illustrates how social support can be seen to be intrinsic to both family life and a sense of connectedness to the networks of the community. For new parents, this is part of the mesosystem described by Bronfenbrenner (1979): something from which they receive support, but also something to which they can contribute support - as there is an interconnectedness and reciprocity (p. 209).

Fathers and isolation

In parallel to the social isolation of mothers after birth, and as also considered in "what is a healthy transition" and "the experience of new fathers in transition" is what appears to be a sidelining of the fathers, and subsequent paternal depression. Deave and Johnson (2008) observed this: "We found that first-time fathers described themselves as bystanders: more detached than they expected or wanted to be" (p. 631). Bateman (2009) described this too: "Men also report emotional changes … little is mentioned about paternal depression impacting on marital satisfaction" (p. 1), as did the National Childbirth Trust, who estimated depression rates in new fathers to be at around 7-30%. In that NCT paper, "Involving Fathers

in Maternity Care" (2009) the experiences of men from other ethnic groups was taken into account, as was the issue of communication within the couple. As with Burgess (2008), the paper went on to highlight the importance not just of involving the fathers before and after the birth, but also in the care of the baby:

> "Fathers of four week old babies who were given brief training in baby massage were found to be more involved with their babies than a comparison group of fathers two months on. Also their babies greeted their fathers with more eye contact, vocalising, reaching and orientating responses, and showed fewer avoidance behaviours" (NCT, 2009: 8). This particular cohort of 817 fathers researched in 1998 comprised 94% white fathers, 66% between 25 and 34, and "around 60% were expecting their first child" (p. 3).

Cowan and Cowan remarked how isolated fathers can be, and they also wrote about the importance of having strong social structures in place to support new parents. Gabb et al (2013) revealed that fathers tend to be less positive about their partner relationship than non-fathers. Bateman (2009) described fathers experiencing loss and rejection when adjusting to the new relationship with their partners, whilst Burgess showed how young fathers might be prone to depression as a result. Burgess also highlighted the issue as being particularly difficult for low-income African-American fathers of whom "56% … were found to have 'depressive symptoms indicating cause for clinical concern' "(p. 12). Burgess went on to urge greater involvement for fathers in antenatal care, at the birth, and in postnatal care and parenting services in order to combat a lack of involvement, isolation and depression. The author also urged a greater involvement for fathers in antenatal provision, as it brings with it positive associated outcomes: "Fathers who have attended undertake more housework and are more likely to utilise support" (p. 14).

2.2.8   The use of the internet in new parenthood

This section will look at the emergence of the internet as a vital resource to parents globally, but particularly to new parents whose own families of origin are often dispersed across the world. As development of this thesis has progressed, it has become increasingly evident that the internet has become a critical tool in the experiences of new parents within the transition

to parenthood. The rise of websites such as NetMums and Mumsnet both bear witness to this, although both names give the impression of being exclusively mother-focussed, whereas the European site jeunepapa.com focuses on prospective fathers. Plantin and Daneback (2009) highlighted the rise of the internet in association with the corresponding dispersal of families across the globe: "the increased mobilisation of the population has made close maternal-support more difficult to realise" (p. 3). They then continued to describe how important the internet has become in facilitating day-to-day communication between geographically disparate family members. The authors also examined the limited reach of traditional sources of information and support, as mothers' traditional starting point (of their own families) might be one step removed by geography.

The authors argued that the NetMums website serves as a typical example of this virtual environment for parents. They noted that internet generation parents tended to be between 16 and 30 years old: "The mean age of these parents is less than 35 years. In Madge and O'Connor's study on the British parenting web site 'Babyworld', 76% of the visitors were under 35 years" (p. 5). The reference to middle class is notable: "The demographic profile of the average internet-using parent is that of a young, white, middle class woman, who uses the internet mostly to search for health information and to visit parental web sites" (p 5).

Fletcher et al (2008) analysed the perceptions of fathers towards childbirth and becoming parents, and highlighted possible solutions to their information needs, involving the use of email bulletins and websites. The authors observed that parenting websites tend to be targeted to and used primarily by mothers (as noted in the first paragraph above) but that they were also frequently tailored for fathers as well. Within the information proffered to fathers was a series of frequently asked question topics, such as: "what games can I play with my new baby?" and "how much sleep is normal?" Although Fletcher et al reported positive findings about the use of the internet in this way, the writers again added the caveat that most of the respondents were skilled professionals with a good education.

The role of the internet in replacing traditional family and community support structures is the province of other studies into social networking, and yet there is arguably an important role being played by the internet, especially for families who are migrant, displaced or disconnected from traditional support structures. The internet also has an emerging role in ease of access to health care, where parents can use NHS Direct and similar information

systems from the comfort of their own home. There is still, however, much research to be done on this emerging field of inquiry.

2.2.9   Summary on transition

While Bronfenbrenner's Systems theory of Human Ecology (1979) offered some explanation of people's ability to cope with change to life "systems", the Cowan's 1995 study focused on five domains of family life, whilst Schumacher and Meleis (1994) explored the properties of different types of transition. A number of important themes emerge from this literature. Parents' ability to cope as a couple with the transition to childbirth is often largely influenced by their previous experiences as individuals and as a couple - for example, having a baby will not make an insecure partnership any more secure (Cowan and Cowan, 1992). It is also important to balance "the parent" domain of one's life with that of "the partner". Bateman (2009) wrote that communication within partnerships is often neglected to the cost of the couple, and that more needs to be done to address this issue. While fathers in general tend to be far more involved in the birthing process in the UK nowadays (Burgess, 2008), some fathers can be taken by surprise by how "detached" they can sometimes feel as a result of the transition (Deave, 2008). The transition can also have an isolating effect on mothers (Cowan and Cowan, 1992), although Mauthner (1995) illustrated how depression can be alleviated with the right kind of integrating intervention.

Bronfenbrenner's theory therefore, is appropriate to apply as a framework in this instance, whose systems describe the relationship between people and their immediate environment, their workplace, their society and (possibly changing) cultural mores. Cowan and Cowan's five domains are also applicable, yet they owe much of their conception to the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner, particularly when considering fundamental transitions such as migration and childbirth. Within this study, the microsystem could be defined as the relationship between the parents themselves, and their emergent family; the mesosystem as their health care services, GP surgeries and hospitals as they engage in their temporary roles as "expectant couple" or "patient", as well as their wider family, their neighbours and community, truly a "system of microsystems". The exosystem would be their respective workplaces (or places of study), along with Barking and Dagenham itself. Owing to the migratory nature of some of the parents, the transition of macrosystems (changes at cultural level, having an impact at microsystem level) also comes under scrutiny. Within this framework, as changes take place

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within each system, we can expect to see reciprocal changes take place within the family, the community, within the local government framework; systems which in turn affect the systems which surround the couple themselves (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter Four).

2.3 Migration and ethnicity within parenting studies

Given the migratory status of some of the parents within this study, this section will deal with the literature on migration and ethnicity in the context in relation to family life, religion and acculturation in an adopted country, ethnicity and personal identity, and concepts of home. Migration in itself is a profound ecological transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and one which not only affects the individual, but significantly, their environment (context) and its processes as well.

2.3.1 Migration

Studies on the issue of migration are divided here into the theories of migration in its socio-historical context, and some of the subjective experiences of migration. From the theoretical perspective, Bakewell (2010) examined the notions of structure and agency within the migration discourse, and used the paper to debate the nature of structure and agency, its uses and ultimately its limitations. He said that while structuration (Giddens, 1984) is an influential theory, it shows little in the way of how balance is achieved between structure and agency in any context, and Bakewell disliked what he described as "the simple dualism" of structure and agency. He recognised the need for an appropriate migration theory, given its current global prominence and debated the "new economics" of labour migration, as well as network theory and human ecology - debating migration theories which veer between the micro and the macro, whilst feeling more convinced by theories which acknowledge the "meso link which can bridge micro and macro-level theories" (p. 5). He settled on a theory which allows for four basic elements: forces which promote migration in countries of origin, structural factors which enable immigration in the country of destination, considerations of the goals and aspirations of the migrants themselves, and an analysis of the social and economic structures which connect areas of outward and inward migration. He analysed Giddens (1984) and acknowledged that both structure and agency are interdependent and reciprocal (as are

Bronfenbrenner's systems). He also wrote about proactive and reactive migration - with regard to refugee movements. He described Morawska's study of Polish migrants, which:

> "… highlights three factors that enabled potential migrants to take advantage of these new opportunities: the **micro**-level structures of social relationships embodied in the extensive and long-standing Polish diaspora; the **practical** knowledge about wages, immigration regulations, job opportunities and so forth, afforded by these networks; and the **experience** of strategies developed under the communist regime to subvert regulation and official structures" (p.14).

For Bakewell, the importance lay not in a simple dualism of structure and agency, but in a fuller analysis of the macro and micro levels of human experience, and how they influence human migration behaviours.

Birman (2011) looked at the experiences of migration from the viewpoint of human ecology theory. She asked whether the society into which migrants attempt to acculturate in fact prevents them from so doing (p. 340). She saw discrimination as a barrier to acculturation, which caused migrants to withdraw into the safety net of their own culture, something which was also reflected in Sales et al (2003), who looked at the experience of Chinese immigrants. Birman described the "push" and "pull" factors of migration - where some people are "pushed" from their home country for financial reasons, for example, others might be "pulled" by family reasons, or reasons of marriage. Finally, her argument led to the need to go beyond a mere meso and macro perspective to a more global one: "increasingly we live in a global network where what happens in one country affects what happens in another" (p. 342).

Brah (1996) described migration in terms of diaspora, which she defined in terms of a journey, something which arises from socio-historical (and even Biblical) narratives, of a dispersal from a "home" to "elsewhere" (p. 182). With Brah, the modern diasporic journey was seen in the context of Marshall McLuhan's "global village" (1962), and the creation of new transnational identities. Sales et al (2003) looked at the experience of the diasporic Chinese community in London, as they begin the process of integration into the destination country and yet still aim to have a unique sense of their own community cohesion.

These studies all acknowledged the need for a theoretical framework for migration, and for a greater level of understanding of the causes of migration, whether structural at the macro level, or agency at the micro level. Bronfenbrenner's human ecology theory may have encompassed all of the levels of influence which are debated within these papers, but there appears to be a fresh call for a theory which incorporates the new global perspective in a "shrinking world" (Brah, 1996:195) or a bridge between the macro and the micro (Bakewell, 2010: 5).

2.4 Ethnicity

This section will look at ethnicity from the perspective of definitions of race and essentialism, ethnicity within the context of parenting and family life, as well as concepts of culture, the role of religion and the wider family, the nature of identity and "home".

2.4.1 Essentialism and stereotyping

Essentialism was defined by Phoenix and Husain (2007) as treating an entire ethnic group as having the same characteristics, and assuming those characteristics exist throughout that population. In the case of parenting, for example, it can lead to assuming that certain groups of people all approach parenting in exactly the same way as other members of that group:

"For example, Asian parents have been both blamed for being insular and overly traditional, and praised as exemplary, concerned parents. White Englishness is rarely recognised as an ethnicity and differences between ethnic groups are treated as explanatory rather than, for example, resulting from socio-economic differences" (Phoenix and Husain, 2007: 6).

The authors analysed the terms "ethnic" and "race", as well as discussing the sometimes confusing minority/majority issue; to what extent such terms are to do with the distribution of political power, for example. Their paper appeared to accord with Brah (1996) who explained that the minority white population in South Africa had greater power over the majority of the population for many years, leading some to call for the use of the term "minoritised". Brah also argued that "racism" should be pluralised to "racisms", as there are many different types

of racism, not just from white people to Black or Asian. Brah's book saw the dangers of classifying one ethnic group as though all the members had exactly the same characteristics, and how minority ethnic groups appeared to attract academic attention only when there were problematic issues to be investigated.

Stereotyping is defined as having a "preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation" (Oxford English Dictionary). The issue of stereotyping was also discussed by McCourt and Pearce (2000), who wrote about issues such as patient stereotyping, women's expectations of maternal care or their ability to bond with their babies. Puthussery et al (2008) also remarked that stereotyping in relation to health practice is a frequent theme in the research.

Also noted by Phoenix and Husain (2007) and of relevance to this study, is the anticipated effect of the influx of white minority ethnic groups from Eastern European countries. In Bradby (1995), the terminology around ethnicity, race and racism was challenged. Bradby also acknowledged, along with Phoenix and Husain, the importance of recognising white ethnic minorities, particularly the Irish, as well as Eastern Europeans. Definitions, according to Phoenix and Husain, are dependent on who has the right to impose them, and ethnicity, class and gender are interdependent, and should not be isolated from one another. They also pointed out that there are white minority victims in some circumstances as well.

2.4.2 Ethnicity and parenting

Of particular concern to Phoenix and Husain (2007) was the tendency for some researchers to "essentialise" entire cultures and their approach to parenting. An example is cultural approaches to discipline, which might lead researchers to stereotype entire cultural groups in this way, and where some researchers "can be said to have 'essentialised' the entire Caribbean region at a stroke" (p. 18). Phoenix and Husain asserted that there is no evidence for such generalisations in the literature. On the other hand, other research, such as by Beishon et al (1998) showed that many Black and Asian parents believe that white families lack dedication to discipline in parenting, resulting in unruly behaviour. They made the point that some white people perceive Asian and Black parents as incapable of controlling their children, which brings us again to the concept of essentialism - how easy it is for cultures to create

misconceptions about one another, despite efforts to integrate through "multiculturalism" or otherwise. Such blanket approaches to ethnicity were shown by Phoenix and Husain to be needlessly polarising, when in truth they suggested that ethnic communities of all races should view each other's communities as "intersecting rather than isolated" (p.3). Such a view might then arguably make the process of interethnic harmony (and multiculturalism) attainable. Katbamna (2000) debated the extent to which essentialism may play a part in the life of a community, where a young couple undergoing a life transition with a new baby may experience difficulty at the hands of an indifferent healthcare system, or local council services.

Katbamna (2000) also made the point that, owing to the prevalence of advanced medical technology to take as much risk out of childbirth as possible: " … a biological and social event, traditionally supervised and managed by females, has been transformed into a medical emergency" (p. 1). She argued that traditional support for new parents has been undermined by migration, where families are fragmented across continents. Phoenix and Husain stated that midwives treating them in "stereotypic ways" caused mothers from ethnic minority backgrounds to have difficult experiences in hospital. This not only applied to white staff treating parents from an ethnic minority, but intra-ethnic tensions between Black African staff and patients as well. In a report of Maternity Health Choices in North East London (Opinion Leader, 2010), the researchers said that "some of the participants of Black African origin talked about the problems they had experienced when being treated by midwives of a similar ethnic background" (p. 29).

2.4.3   Religion and acculturation

Katbamna (2000) showed how attitudes to childbirth and parenting vary not only across religious divides, but also within those religions themselves. Dench and Gavron (2006) discussed the differences between perceptions of Islam and the reality, where the perception was that women are oppressed by men, but they were far more likely to be oppressed by mothers-in-law. They went on to say that many of the Bangladeshi women saw actively religious men as "more caring, more respectful to women" (p. 88). Phoenix and Husain (2007) cited religion as a very important factor in research on issues of ethnicity, particularly Islam: "…because it is apparent that, among young men especially, Islam is increasingly viewed as a

worldwide universal brotherhood in which family and traditional gender relations are highly valued" (p. 29), although this appears to be quite a broad view in itself.

Within the perspective of migration, Phoenix and Husain continued to expand upon issues of acculturation, where second generation migrants might assimilate cultural mores of appearance, attitude and lifestyle, and the issues which this acculturation may bring within their own family context. They also discussed the emergence of "dynamic" families: those who are prepared to adapt and adopt practices which they may have taken for granted, partly through choosing schools which mix faiths - something which touches upon the issues raised by multiculturalism (this is discussed further in section 4.4.2).

Puthussery et al (2008) reviewed the perceptions of health workers toward South Asian mothers, based on the external manifestation of their religious adherence (and therefore their subjection to stricter lifestyle codes). The 'Westernised dress' and 'freedom' of UK-born (therefore second generation ethnic minority) women were also cited as distinguishing features. Dress was perceived to be an important sign, not only of generational status but also of the autonomy or freedom of Muslim women. Women who wore a veil, or less Western clothing, were assumed to be from a traditional stricter family. The literature would appear to illustrate that Western preconceptions about religion and culture (such as the treatment of Muslim women) are not necessarily correct, or that the argument is much more complex than it might first appear. It also highlights issues of second generation acculturation, when the first-generation parents remain faithful to the structures of their own culture of origin.

2.4.4 Culture and family

Brah (1996) wrote that "there is no single 'right' definition of the word 'culture' " (p.18). She debated the concept of culture in terms of a symbolic construction of a single group's life experiences, and argued that there are as many definitions of "culture" as there are groups which may incorporate such experiences. Cultures are bound by experience and history, and are shaped by the material conditions of an individual society, and yet cultures can converge. Brah used the example of South Indian castes and groups all sharing a "cultural" heritage, despite having significantly different historical narratives, she then claimed the same of the diverse peoples of the UK: citing the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh who, despite their vastly different historical heritage, nevertheless (from her perspective) share a common

cultural identity in the present day. This perspective might be seen by those peoples of the UK to be somewhat essentialist in its viewpoint, however.

Puthussery et al (2008) described the pressures of existing between two cultures: the family at home and the world outside, as identified by health workers. Professionals distinguished between two types of UK-born South Asian Muslim women: those 'under the thumb' and those 'breaking away'. As expressed by one midwife, those who live at home tend to stay within the influence of the family and be more traditional and conservative, to identify more with the minority community and to have less freedom in decision-making. Katbamna (2000) detailed the repercussions on the family of constant separation, which in turn causes fragmentation. Although Phoenix and Husain (2007) described the role played by grandparents in retaining a sense of family identity across multinational boundaries, they also recognised the strain that separation ultimately causes to the grandparents' relationships. They also acknowledged the fact that "traditional" family practices may well have their roots in practical necessity:

> "Thus, what may seem to be pure 'traditionalism' in family practices may result from complex accommodation to specific circumstances. For example, the well-established tendency for black British mothers to be more likely to be employed when they have children results from both historical and cultural factors, and from current structural and economic factors such as high rates of unemployment for black men and low rates of pay for both black men and black women …" (p. 16).

Sidebotham (2001) looked at the British parenting "culture", and the susceptibility of parents to experience stress when comparing themselves to "cultural" expectations, such as financial provision, a "culture of acquisition", time and work pressures (a "long hours working culture"), and a "child-centred" culture which "increases the expectations that society has of parents" (p. 481). When parents face such societal cultural comparators (whether rightly or wrongly) as well as the transition to parenthood and migration to a new country, it can add to an already considerable amount of pressure to their growing family unit.

2.4.5 Ethnicity, identity and "home"

Puthussery et al (2008) remarked that second generation (UK-born) women can experience "hybrid identities" originating from a multiplicity of cultures, a possible consequence of acculturation. In Bradby (1995) the complication which arises from the simple question, "where are you from?" is highlighted: "For instance, a person's country of birth may be Wales, her parents' country of birth may be Kenya, but her ethnicity might be best described as Punjabi-Sikh" (p. 413). This is an added complication in an age where, in order to comply with societal norms, one might often be required to categorise oneself through a set of boxes to tick. This could become a greater issue as mixed heritage children and families increase (Phoenix and Husain, 2007). Alagiah (2006) drew out the issues and experiences of life as a first-generation migrant to the UK and how he soon learned to adopt a naturalised British accent, and to place his identity as a Sri Lankan from West Africa into the background. He said that, despite the pressure to assimilate into a generic UK culture, he was unable to deny the varied nature of his heritage. In terms of identity, Alagiah understood that he will always be Sri Lankan as well as English. On travelling to Sri Lanka, he said that he understood how people from ethnic minorities sometimes have to "compartmentalise their identity into manageable chunks" (p. 187).

Black (1985) highlighted a similar issue with categorisation, although he specified that for the purposes of his paper, "Asian" refers to families from the Indian subcontinent and "South East Asian" from China and Vietnam. His paper examined the socio-medical problems of ethnic minority families as a whole, but within the context of this, he wrote about the importance of finding out why families have come to the UK:

> "Groups who maintain strong links with their home by frequent visits and live in a closely knit community with its own shops and organisations may not need to alter their way of life very much. Those who have been forced to leave their country because of political, racial, or religious persecution are more likely to have to accept the reality of permanent residence here because they may have little prospect of returning" (p. 616).

Puthussery et al (2008) saw the difference that "staying at home" with an extended family can make to the autonomy of a mother, where mothers have to ask their family's permission to attend parentcraft classes. From the literature we can see that families can become divided

geographically by migration, although modern-day technology arguably enables greater communication within dispersed families than ever before. Central to studies around parenting and ethnicity is the concept of family: the family from the perspective of home and hearth, but also the extended family and the family back in the country of origin. Phoenix and Husain (2007) drew upon the anthropological concept of family "kinscripts" with regard to behaviours within a family setting being appropriate (or not) within the expectation of the wider society. The authors also discussed the historical division of families brought about by economic necessity, citing television personality Floella Benjamin's own experiences of her parents leaving the family home to seek economic security elsewhere.

The authors also described the importance of "home" to Bengali and South Asian women, and how there exists a real tension between progressive social empowerment of women on the one hand, and a traditional pull toward maintaining "home" as a "central life domain" on the other (p. 13). This tension is not present for men in those cultures, and ultimately has an impact on "parenting style". It also has an impact on the mother's decision to pursue a career following their transition to parenthood, or to stay at home.

Brah (1996) also examined the concepts of identity and home. She acknowledged the existence of "multi-racial identities" (p. 47) and the concept of a "home away from home" (p. 25). In the context of "home", she wrote that: "Home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (p. 192), and that "not all diasporas inscribe homing desire to return to the place of origin" (p.193). In Sales et al (2003), the Chinese respondents described being Chinese as something which was taken for granted in China, but was seen to be a key differentiator in the UK. In terms of marriage, one Chinese woman, who was married to a Westerner, said that there would always be some things which would divide her from her husband.

Alagiah (2006) recognised that, along with identity, it is not necessarily possible (or desirable) for a migrant to have one home. For some people, home will always remain abroad, partly owing to the remittance culture which has grown up, whereby migrant workers send constant sums of money "back home", partly to provide for poorer relatives, and partly to demonstrate their new-found comparative wealth to those same relatives; to make an impression "back home". Alagiah also eschewed the need to identify just one home. From the literature, it would appear that identity and home are coextensive, and that is important from a religious

perspective (Phoenix and Husain, 2007) as well as a cultural one (see also section 6.1.1 for a discussion about hybrid identities).

2.4.6   Summary on migration and ethnicity

From this section, several threads emerge. Firstly, the question of whether ethnic minorities are more "minoritised" by people from outside the grouping (Brah, 1996). Then, attitudes to other cultures may result in essentialism - stereotyping entire cultures, which seeps into the health professions of the UK (Puthussery et al, 2008; Phoenix and Husain, 2007) and which can cause misunderstanding regarding parenting practices (Beishon et al, 1998). For many within these communities, there is a pull between religious and cultural orthodoxy on the one hand (Phoenix and Husain, 2007) and gradual acculturation on the other (Alagiah, 2006). The existence of strong family units appears to be key to how, when and whether acculturation takes place, yet many families are becoming more fragmented through migration (Phoenix and Husain, 2007). Central to this is the concept of identity and origin, as described by Alagiah. Puthussery et al (2008) wrote about the tendency for some to exert pressure to conform to cultural standards from within the culture itself, which also occurred in Phoenix and Husain (2007). Those authors also highlighted tensions between progressive acceptance of female empowerment and the traditional expectations of new mothers from certain cultures, which affect their understanding of the parental role, and whether they therefore feel at liberty to pursue a career (Brah, 1996).

When faced with the transition of migration as well as that of new parenthood, the pulls of culture and expectation present a series of additional challenges for the primipara, and may therefore affect the way in which the child is subsequently parented within the context of the parents' culture of origin. These factors (arguably macrosystem - cultural and mesosystem - familial) all exert influence on the parental family microsystem within the context of the transition to parenthood, and are elements which are explored later in this thesis.

2.5 Social cohesion

This section will examine social cohesion, particularly within the East End of London, and with regard to immigration and the rise of multiculturalism in the UK. Social cohesion is important as parents define how they feel about their community, and it plays a role in the transition to parenthood as they reflect upon the future of their small family within the wider context of that community.

2.5.1 What is social cohesion?

Cantle (2001) attempted to define social cohesion in the context of communities, although there appears to be an evolving definition. He acknowledged that social cohesion was initially defined economically, but that, in order to achieve cohesion a larger number of factors need to be considered "including access to education and employment, poverty and social inequalities, social and cultural diversity, and even access to communication and information technologies" (p. 69). Some of the papers listed here discuss communities with regard to social cohesion, but do not provide a definition (such as Cattell and Evans, 1999), but there is an implicit definition of people within communities working together for a common purpose, or "neighbourly interaction" (Cattell and Evans, 1999: 2). Beider (2011) showed that local white working class respondents in Camden, Birmingham and Coventry thought of social cohesion as something which could be "interpreted in different ways" (p.29), or aligned to "political correctness" and driven "from the top down by government". In Green et al (2003), the authors showed that it has various definitions in differing contexts:

> "…it may emphasise: (i) shared norms and values; (ii) a sense of shared identity or belonging to a common community; (iii) a sense of continuity and stability; (iv) a society with institutions for sharing risks and providing collective welfare; (v) equitable distribution of rights, opportunities, wealth and income; and (vi) a strong civil society and active citizenry" (p. 455).

To some extent therefore, it could be argued that social cohesion implies a sense of belonging in one's own community, which can also be termed "community cohesion" (Cantle, and Beider, 2011: 10 and 35). Bristow and Jenner (2010) also viewed a feeling of belonging as an

important indicator of community satisfaction. Cattell and Evans (1999) examined community life within two East End estates, and argued that the "friendliness and good humour of local people, their patterns of reciprocal aid and supportive networks [which] strengthen residents' sense of attachment" are central to those neighbourhoods (p. 1). They also observed that in some cases, the design of the estates encouraged friendly interaction. Whether or not racial tension exists under the surface, one of the residents of an estate said that, 'We need to bring the community together as one body … where everyone could go behind the bar and make a cup of tea' " (p. 3). It is not clear whether this idealised anticipation of community life is actually manifested in reality. Indeed, many of the white locals in Tower Hamlets quoted by Dench and Gavron (2006) used nostalgic reflections in a manner that chimed with Yiannis Gabriel's concept of a "Golden Age" (Gabriel 1993) to mythologise the way "things used to be" in the 1950s:

> "We never used to lock the door. If my mother wasn't in and I wanted a cup of water I would just go next door. If somebody had a baby, they, the neighbours, would look after her, do all the errands, the washing. It was nice family life. You could say it was a great big family with lots of mums and dads" (Dench and Gavron 2006, p. 157).

Wood et al (2009) described the way in which "social marketing" was used to create community cohesion in Barking and Dagenham, through advertising and poster campaigns, in an attempt to tackle the "prevailing narratives" of the borough (p. 3). Green et al (2003) advocated the use of education as a means of creating greater social cohesion (they differentiated between "community" and "social" cohesion, arguing that community cohesion does not always reach the "societal level" (p. 457). They related social capital to greater levels of education, and observed that both were clearly related to social participation. Cattell and Evans (1999) argued for greater training opportunities, "facilities for local socialising" and local organisations to create opportunities for community participation and regeneration (p. 1). These recommendations have some resonance in general terms; place, however, should also be a contributory factor to the debate, as Smith (2005) pointed out, the emergence of "facilities for local socialising" in a housing estate in a deprived area may be turned into outlets for the informal or even illicit economy.

2.5.2 Social cohesion in the East End

Dench and Gavron (2006) described the progress of London's East End from a society where white working class families dominated the landscape, leading to idealised "close-knit neighbourliness" in the 40s, 50s and 60s (and as written about in the 1957 Young and Willmott study: "Family and Kinship in East London") and which gave way to an alternative landscape populated largely by Bangladeshi immigrants from Sylhet. The migration of white working class families, "escaping" out of areas of where populations were rapidly changing was described by Asthana (2010) but this is also discussed by Dench (2006), who described a local Bengali who reported how the local white population had all moved out to Essex. This illustrates the continuing fragmentation of the local communities; possible opportunities to have culturally integrated communities are lost. The book also examines attitudes of local white people who did not "escape" to Essex, but who chose to remain in Tower Hamlets, and reflect bitterly on the housing priorities afforded to immigrants, " 'If any place round here gets vacant you know who's going to get it. And that makes people prejudiced' " (p. 161). Smith (2005) commented on this phenomenon, when he wrote that "the same set of processes that gives rise to an extensive service class has also created new socially excluded groups through exerting a downward mobility for large sections of the working class, along with a set of structural locations that are filled with large numbers of immigrants" (p.24). For existing white working class residents, who might see migrants as economically opportunistic, this can create a greater sense of alienation.

When dealing with white people's perception of their Bengali counterparts (as constantly dependent upon the state), Dench and Gavron highlighted how the immigrant families often live a relatively frugal lifestyle compared to their white counterparts and manage to make their benefit payments stretch much further as well, and described the suspicions of the white residents, who tended to lean toward essentialism with regard to the Bengali community. The authors noted the historical context of racial suspicion and intolerance, and how foreign immigration created racial tensions in the East End as far back as 1888. They suggested that for many white people, a strong family is linked to more racist attitudes. Matters have not been helped from the political spectrum either. Ethnic tension arose at various points, with one example in May 1978 being the fatal stabbing of a young Bengali machinist following National Front provocation. Many of the problems arose from mutual suspicion, and an unwillingness to bend or acclimatise to the new status quo:

"The whites who had 'owned' the place by right of long residence feared that they would soon be overwhelmed by a mass of new and strange people living next door but behind a wall of mutual incomprehension" (p. 45).

The prevalence of this historical thinking was reflected with the current thinking of the white Tower Hamlets population, "We're the ethnic minority in Tower Hamlets" (p. 144). This attitude showed the sense in which many of the white working class in the community resented the recent migrants, and indeed felt squeezed out of an area which they once perceived as their domain. In Wood et al (2009), a paper which aims to evaluate the response of local populations to social marketing initiatives, the authors highlighted the local suspicions that long-term residents of Barking and Dagenham nurture: "These people do not trust what the council is saying and believe their opinions and feelings are not being responded to" (Wood et al, 2009: 4). They went on to comment that many of the residents are suspicious of the council, and that it is their perception of the reality which needs to be addressed. The feelings of suspicion, alienation and negativity among long-term Barking and Dagenham residents reached their culmination in a political expression, as twelve British National Party councillors were elected to Barking and Dagenham Borough Council in 2006 and became the only opposition to the Labour majority. In a paper which attempted to engage with the issues concerning the re-emergence of extremist politics in Britain, Wilks-Heeg (2009) wrote: "The BNP's emergence as a political force in a number of English local authorities represents more than a challenge to the underlying liberal values of English party politics. It also constitutes a stark warning about the advanced state of decay of local representative democracy in England" (p. 378). Wilks-Heeg illustrated a negative form of cohesion (that of political extremism) but more positive forms of cohesion can be found when groups work together toward a common purpose; it is not merely enough to live side-by-side in supposedly integrated neighbourhoods (Cattell and Evans, 1999). Popay et al (1998) highlighted the centrality of social relationships within generating social capital for the benefits of personal well-being. The examples above illustrate what appears to be a key factor in community (and arguably social) cohesion: the gathering of diverse groupings around a common ideal or purpose for the benefit of the community.

2.5.3 Tolerance and multiculturalism

The issue of racial tolerance and liberal values within the East End (and indeed all of British society) is complicated by the events of the world following the events of September 11 2001 and July 7, 2005, where "liberal Britain" has been reconsidering its response to immigration (Dench and Gavron, 2006: 82) and "At the time of writing (Summer 2005), public opinion is re-assessing the values of tolerance and human rights following recent suicide bombings in London" (p. 83). Dodd (2004) examined the statistics behind racial social segregation: "Around two-thirds of all ethnic groups believe that ethnic minority Britons too often live apart from the rest of society…" (p.1). The article appears to infer that suspicions and tensions will continue to exist for as long as there is this divide between communities. Trevor Phillips, the former chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said the lack of close knowledge between communities could lead white people to believe lurid tabloid headlines and racist propaganda, presumably through a lack of understanding, despite being a country which theoretically espouses multiculturalism. Goodhart (2013) added a further element to the discussion when he wrote that by "placing ethnic identity before citizenship" the ensuing multiculturalism was "separatist" rather than integrated (multiculturalism is defined and discussed in depth in section 4.4.2).

Brah (1996) saw the British multiculturalist approach as being a discourse about the 'Ethnic Other' - one which ethnicises ethnicity" (p. 230). From her perspective, the British multiculturalist discourse has encompassed many forms - from the integrationist approach of Roy Jenkins (1966) to assimilationalist approaches later on. Multiculturalism itself has, however, been viewed by some as a type of informal segregation. Cantle (2001), for example, claimed that multiculturalism creates a community where separate cultural streams live, work, worship and learn in a parallel existence to one another, and where none intersect. His recommendation of "myth busting[2]" (p. 11) is reflected in subsequent studies, such as Wood et al (2009) whose whole paper was devoted to possible ways in which to challenge stereotypes through social marketing. Phoenix and Husain (2007) also observed the alienating effects of informal segregation, as they talked about lacking "interethnic knowledge" (p. 24-5). The authors did, however, go on to discuss factors which can encourage interethnic understanding, such as mixed schools. Alagiah (2006) went as far as to suggest that

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[2] Myth busting is Cantle's term for challenging the ingrained views of one community toward another; of challenging racial and cultural stereotypes through community interventions which would involve services such as the police and schools. See also Wood et al (2009).

multiculturalism is similar to apartheid in South Africa (Alagiah 2006). He commented, with regard to education, that children can spend an entire six years at school without encountering British life "first-hand" (p. 148). This concentration on small communities being solely represented within one school, he argued, could well lead to more dangerous forms of cultural division. The author concluded that many societies viewed "the nation outside their enclave" with deep suspicion, almost as though they were a smaller nation buried within a larger one (p. 177).

2.5.4 Post – multiculturalism and super-diversity

In more recent years, the debate on multiculturalism has widened to encompass new concepts such as post-multiculturalism and super-diversity. Vertovec (2010) made the point that the world is moving from a multicultural perspective to a post-multicultural one, where previously held open-handed perspectives had given way to more cautious ones, and policy is amended to incorporate elements which are aimed to encourage faster acculturation such as minimum language requirements, citizenship courses and tests for immigrants. He went on to say that "even previous supporters of multiculturalism came to question the model as contributing to a demise of the welfare state and the failure of public services" (p.83).

In February 2011 British Prime Minister David Cameron argued for a "stronger national identity" in order to combat societal elements which might be working against national security, demanding a more "muscular liberalism" which did not accept "passive tolerance" (Cameron, 2011). In the same month, then French president Nicolas Sarkozy declared multiculturalism a "failure", proclaiming, "We have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving and not enough about the identity of the country that was receiving him" (Sarkozy, 2011). The growing concern was for national security, in the light of the 2005 bombings in London (Dench and Gavron, 2006, Alagiah, 2006). The European narrative was therefore becoming one of cautious withdrawal from the open-handed multiculturalist approach of previous governments.

Vertovec (2010) questioned whether European society is indeed in a post-multicultural state, as it also deals with issues of "super-diversity", which he defined as "a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously

experienced" (p.1) – in other words, a societal state which is almost beyond diverse. Vertovec (2010) then cited London as an exemplar of a super-diverse city, one where immigration worked together with more settled approaches to life; where individuals avoid the need for singular national allegiances, and instead embrace a more diverse personal perspective:

"As in earlier eras, migrants feel powerfully bound to homelands and communities elsewhere and now they can variously express and enhance this attachment. At the same time, new immigrants clearly are getting on with developing a new life, livelihood, social ties and political interests in their places of settlement" (p.90).

Ram et al (2012) wrote about the effects of super-diversity when migrants have to understand and use complicated bureaucratic systems in their new country. Phillimore (2011) highlighted the additional issues which super-diversity raised with regard to healthcare provision (p.23). With all of these debates, it is clear that a new paradigm is emerging, one which recognises the "melting pot" (Beider, 2011, Giddens and Sutton, 2013) of super-diverse cities, and which encourages a more prescriptive framework through which to adopt the new citizens of the country, which then has its implications on government and health care policy (Phillimore 2011).

2.5.5   Summary on social cohesion

Definitions of social cohesion point to various interpretations, including "community belonging" (Beider, 2011, Bristow and Jenner, 2010). The concept of social cohesion, or the lack of it, pervaded much of Dench and Gavron's work on the shifting landscapes of the East End, from its mythologised and idealised roots (Dench and Gavron, 2006, Cattell and Evans, 1999) to the point where, distressed by the influx of immigrants, many white families have taken refuge in Essex (Asthana, 2010), thus undermining any possible social cohesion. Racial tension and its impact on social cohesion have been exacerbated by reactions to the events of 2001 in New York and 2005 in London (Dench and Gavron, 2006) and the policies of multiculturalism have done little to help this, resulting in cultural communities growing in parallel to one another, but never converging (Cantle, 2001; Alagiah 2006). This lack of a convergence then results in a vacuum where social cohesion arguably ought to exist. In addition, for many commentators, we now live in a super-diverse and post-multicultural world (Vertovec, 2010), the implication being that new answers need to be found which address the

potential consequences of what that author termed a "complexity surpassing anything many migrant-receiving countries have previously experienced" (p. 87). Post-multiculturalist policy might imply that the UK follow the lead of other European countries in requesting that new migrants undertake citizenship courses and tests, with minimum language requirements (p. 91). The relevance to this study highlights an area of concern for new parents: the extent to which social cohesion plays a part in contemplating their families' future in Barking and Dagenham.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the literature from the viewpoint of transition to parenthood, migration and ethnicity, and social cohesion. The literature review has been informed not just by searching through online databases and using key words (as outlined in section 2.1), but also retrospectively through the interviews with the parents themselves. In this way, the literature reviewed played a role of increasing importance in the study. For example, the common theme of referring to one's country of origin as "back home" in turn prompted additional searches of the literature around dispersal, ethnicity and identity. Another interview which highlighted the importance of the internet helped to direct a new strand of both the subsequent qualitative research and the literature search into this particular direction. Corbin and Strauss (2008) advocated enabling the literature review to inform the grounded theory data collection as well as its analysis:

"Though a researcher does not want to enter the field with an entire list of concepts, some may turn up over and over again in the literature and also appear in the data, thus demonstrating their significance … However if a concept is truly relevant, the question to ask is how the concept is the same and/or different from that in the literature" (p. 37).

The use of grounded theory will be outlined in the next chapter. The question of how the concept diverged from the literature can be illustrated in this example. There were points in the research when the literature particularly chimed with a comment by participants: for example the constancy of the concept of "isolation" by the mothers in this study reinforced Mauthner (1995), as well as some of the comments in Cowan and Cowan (1992). The difference however, emerges when one considers the dual reason for a sense of isolation of many the mothers in this study - that of "confined" motherhood, as well as that of relatively recent migration, which does not appear in those two studies.

Corbin and Strauss described the importance of the relationship between the literature and findings as being symbiotic, so that the literature may be searched "before beginning a project" and then used to "stimulate questions during the analytic process" (p.38). Then, once the fieldwork is complete, the researcher can use the literature to confirm findings, or indeed to highlight the need for further clarification. Charmaz (2006) acknowledged the original grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss,1967) leaning toward delaying the literature review until after the fieldwork to prevent preconceptions from emerging, although she stated that this view was later partly rescinded by other grounded theorists, when they acknowledged that no researcher can indeed be a 'tabula rasa' - a mind entirely void of ideas and preconceptions. For this study it was both useful to begin the literature review beforehand, but to let the interview process inform further literature searches as the concepts began to emerge. Theoretical underpinnings of understanding migration remain an issue of debate: from the structuralist approach (Giddens, 1994, debated by Bakewell, 2010) to a call for a balanced understanding of the "push" and "pull" of migration (Birman 2011); between the micro and the macro of individual decisions to move (Bakewell, 2010: 5). Where Bronfenbrenner (1979) applies, is in the theoretical mapping of micro, meso and macrosystems, which apply equally to the migration experience and to the perinatal experience, and which arguably still have value in the policy frameworks of the present day (Olds et al, 1997). Some would argue that Bronfenbrenner adopted a particularly retrospective structuralist tone, something which will be looked at in more depth in Chapter Seven. Other attempts to theorise transition experiences incorporated the analyses of tendencies for people to compartmentalise their lives into component parts: something which was discussed by Alagiah (2006), which echoed the domains of Cowan and Cowan (1992) and the systems of Bronfenbrenner (1979). The work of Mauthner (1995) influenced the development of interview questions in the current study around social isolation, but looking at Alagiah (2006) and Phoenix and Husain (2007) focused some of the research in the direction of isolation through family dispersal, something which is wholly relevant to new migrants. That dispersal in turn may be ameliorated by the use of the internet and social networking with parent-focused websites and NHS information services (Plantin and Daneback 2009). The increase in the "information superhighway" and its effect on the "shrinking world" is also described by Brah (1996), as she called for a greater understanding of the effects of global events on "transnational identities" (p. 195).

Transition remains a key moment of vulnerability not just for mothers (Cowan and Cowan, 1992, Deave et al, 1998) and fathers (Burgess, 2008) but also for new migrants (Sales et al, 2003). Within the migration debate rest issues of ethnicity and identity, culture and family, religion, acculturation and understanding of "home": Brah (1996), Phoenix and Husain (2007), Alagiah (2006), Katbamna (2000). Social cohesion remains an elusive proposition, whether as defined by Cantle (2001) or by Beider (2011). Perceptions of immigration thus affect the equilibrium of existing populations, who migrate outwards, in a nostalgic search of a fondly remembered past (Gabriel, 1993). This study draws upon, and further adds to the extant literature by focusing on couples who are not only experiencing childbirth for the first time (as a couple), but some of whom are also experiencing the transition of migration. The next chapter will look at the research methods and methodology which formed the basis of the work on this thesis.

Chapter Three. Research Methods and Methodology

3.   Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology, the design, and the conduct of this study. I will consider the aims of the research, and how I place the research within the context of life in Barking and Dagenham. The research aims are to:

- Explore some of the couples' experiences of the transition to parenthood and migration to the UK;
- Seek to understand all of the parents' experiences of transition in the context of their wider families and community;
- Compare and contrast experiences of local indigenous couples and migrating couples;
- Seek to understand these transitions through analysing existing theoretical approaches.

Central to the study is the thinking behind the choice of using aspects of grounded theory as a starting point, and how that enables the development of concepts which arise from the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), and the development of further analysis arising from those concepts which are grounded in the data. This chapter also looks at design, coding, a reflexive approach to the research which enabled the literature review to continue as the fieldwork progressed, and how this reflexive approach affected the topic guide used in the process. The study is qualitative, therefore a qualitative methodology had to be adopted. This study draws upon constructivist grounded theory:

> "A constructivist approach means more than looking at how individuals view their situations. It not only theorises the interpretative work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation" (Charmaz, 2006: 130).

Within the later findings and discussion chapters, there will be some exposition of the nature of the parents' subjectivity, and how that may affect their interpretation of their lives, and their lived experiences, with particular reference to the birth of their first child. This, then, yields what Charmaz describes as an 'interpretive' (i.e. constructivist) view of the world, rather than an 'exact' (i.e. objectivist) view. A theoretical framework was then sought through which to interpret the data, thus the data is then examined through the prism of

Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology (1979), with regard to viewing the transition to parenthood through that theoretical model. In order to study the experience of transition for new parents within Barking and Dagenham, I felt that it was important to look at the cultural and social mores which informed the choices which they made concerning their pregnancy, the birth of their child, and postnatal care. The interview questions were open, and framed by the research aims, the family's experiences of their local community, in order to anchor them in a social context.

3.1 Methodology

When approaching a study such as this one which draws upon people's perception of critical life events, it is important to find a methodology which enables one to gather the necessary data, and establish a framework for analysis. By "methodology" I mean the theoretical underpinnings behind the systematic methods employed in this particular study, enabling me to connect the theory to the methods employed. As the research aims were to explore couples' experiences of transition, to understand their experiences of that transition in relation to their community and to compare and contrast their experiences, I wanted to use an approach which enabled a substantial gathering of qualitative data.

I considered several research methodologies, primarily for the applicability of their underpinning theory to the work in hand. These included Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith et al, 2009) and (briefly) Conversation Analysis (CA, Atkinson et al, 1984). With Conversation Analysis, I felt that too much of my time would be taken with analysing the mechanics of the interview conversations themselves (Silverman, 2005), rather than on the subjective experience which the interviewee was describing (Smith et al, 2009). With IPA, much of the underlying philosophy is shared with grounded theory, which itself seeks to elicit the participants' perspective of their lived experience, but with a more defined framework. Like grounded theory, IPA requires the avoidance of imputing meaning to the data before the research begins (Smith et al, 2009). Yet it also requires that each interview be broken down and analysed in terms of its conversational data, as well as exploring classic grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which is pragmatic, yet analytical, and constructivist (Smith et al, 2009): "I view grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages" (Charmaz 2006: 9). Charmaz outlined the principles behind grounded theory in a way which sought to maintain the original tenets of the

theory, but which also explained its divergent forms since the publication of the original theory in 1967, the constructivist and objectivist interpretations, as well as explaining its application thoroughly. The table in Smith et al (p. 45) also assisted in my comparison between the possible theoretical approaches to the study:

Research question	Key features	Suitable approach
What are the main experiential features of being angry?	Focus on the common structure of "anger" as an experience.	Phenomenology
How do people who have complained about their medical treatment make sense of being angry?	Focus on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience.	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
What sorts of story structures do people use to describe events which make them angry?	Focus on how narrative relates to sense-making (e.g. via genre or structure).	Narrative psychology
What factors influence how people manage being angry?	Willingness to develop an explanatory level account (factors, impacts, influences, etc.).	Grounded theory
How do people talk about "being angry" in close relationships?	Focus on interaction over and above content, and caution about inferring anything about anger itself.	Discursive psychology
How is "anger" constructed in incident reports from a residential home for older people?	Willingness to use a range of data sources, and a focus on how things "must be understood" according to the conventions of a particular setting.	Foucauldian discourse analysis

Table 3.1: Different questions, different qualitative approaches

(reproduced from Smith et al, 2009:45)

The "explanatory level account" as defined by Smith et al (above) can be reinterpreted as theory - the theory through which the data is interpreted. One clear definition of theory emerged in Corbin and Strauss (2008):

"What do we mean by theory? For us, theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some phenomenon" (p. 55).

Glaser and Strauss's initial application of grounded theory in 1967 created a new opportunity for qualitative researchers, merging Glaser's positivist approach to coding data with Strauss's own more pragmatic perspective of agency, subjectivity, meaning and routine ("symbolic interactionism"). This continued until the separation of the two resulted in Strauss's work with Juliet Corbin, which focused more on the qualitative side of data analysis, aiming for theory generation, whereas Glaser's perspective is that everything applies to the data model, whether quantitative or qualitative. The more pragmatic applications of grounded theory methodology such as those espoused by Corbin and Strauss had a certain appeal for me, as a relatively novice researcher; as it encourages a recognisable formal approach to qualitative data analysis and also allows concepts to emerge from the data, "which also indicates that ideas or hypotheses generated will be dropped if their importance fails to materialise in the data" (Heath and Cowley, 2004: 144). Added to this is the possibility of highlighting the relationship between existing social theory and the experiences of the parents themselves, looking at theory as interpreting the data, what Charmaz called "an imaginative interpretation" (p.127). The use of grounded theory elements underpinned the design of the research, both from an early methodological approach, and also in the use of interview recording, transcription, memos, and coding to enable themes to be highlighted, which in turn might influence further interviews and field work. The importance was placed on identifying common themes and concepts, rather than having preconceptions about the possible data and coding around those. In addition, Charmaz acknowledged that the danger for many grounded theorists is for the study to remain "descriptive rather than theoretical", and that in some instances, it is hard to find the "theory" in grounded theory (p.133).

Key to this particular study was my desire to capture the "lived experience" of the transition to parenthood, the experience of living as new parents, new migrants - or both - in the locality of Barking and Dagenham, and comparing the experiences of indigenous couples and migrating couples. In this way the research methods serve the aims of the research. With grounded theory also comes the opportunity to draw out hypotheses from the data rather than from existing work (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and there is great appeal in discovering the concepts and themes which exist in the data, and then revisiting the data and drawing out subsequent thoughts, which can be further explored in later fieldwork.

3.1.1 Theoretical frameworks

Corbin and Strauss (2008) said that it is not strictly necessary to apply a theoretical framework to qualitative data, and that there has been much debate on the subject. They did state however, examples where frameworks can be helpful in explaining alternative interpretations of data. Examining the data in this study, the participants' experiences of (and relationship to) their community and its services (including healthcare) began to recur, together with their attempts to establish their identity within the locale, to develop a new home around their emergent family, and to make sense of their experiences of transition. The analysis of the data would indicate that their experiences of those phenomena are shaped largely by their own culture, upbringing (biography), their existing (and historical) family and concepts of "home", as well as their personal identity. This is illustrated below:
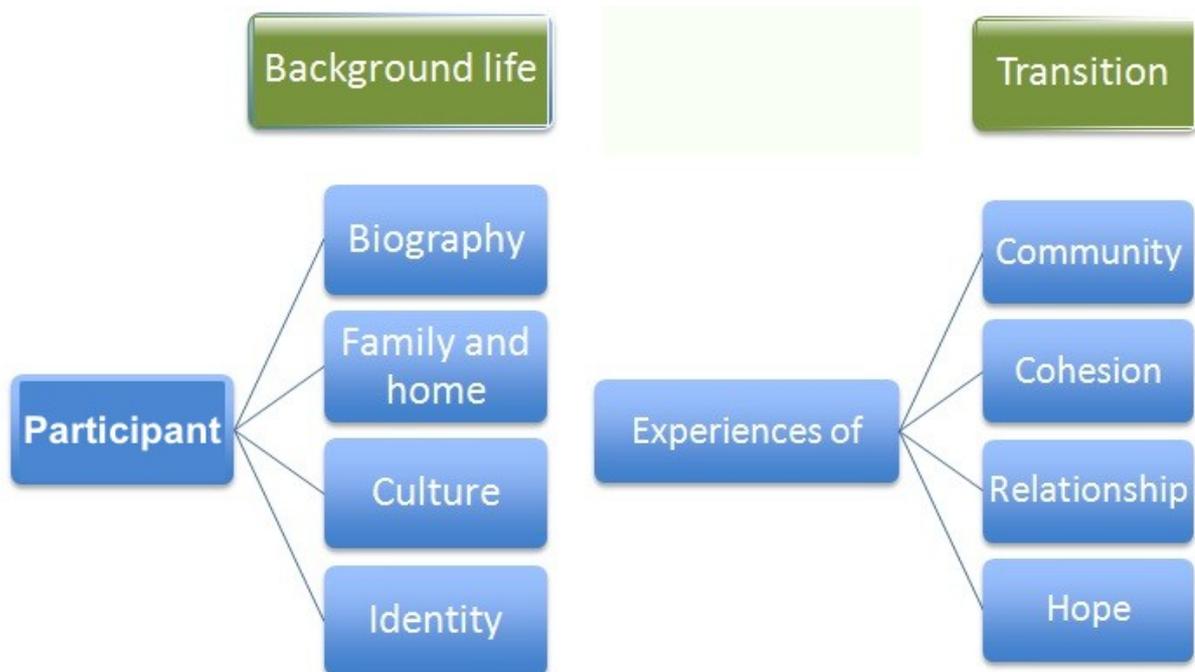
Figure 3.1: An Early Interpretative Framework for this Study

The figure shown above illustrates an early model of thinking for this particular study: in the participant's experience (their own life story, experiences of family, home, culture and personal identity) lies a framework through which to interpret their subsequent experiences of transition - to a new country, a new community, and whether they feel as though they belong, how they relate to their community and to one another, and their sense of "hope" - whether

they are investing in the area (by buying a house, or planning their child's schooling locally) or whether they are merely waiting in the area before the circumstances of life move them on.

Charmaz (2006) advocated using theory to stop, ponder, rethink anew, to use grounded theory data gathering methods to allow the researcher to distance themselves from the data and to reflect on it and its implications, and even to allow "whimsy and playfulness" to enter in. The danger that grounded theorists face, she argues, is the temptation simply to allow the study to remain "at a descriptive level" (p. 137). In "Doing Qualitative Research", Silverman (2005) described three common initial approaches to research: the "Simplistic Inductivist"(someone who avoids strict research design), the "Kitchen Sinker" (someone who attempts a topic which is too broad) and the "Grand Theorist" (someone who "builds theoretical empires" pp. 78-83), all of which highlight common pitfalls of the novice qualitative researcher, and how to overcome those pitfalls. The danger with this study was that, in Silverman's terms, the kitchen sink would indeed end up being included, particularly when faced with possible theoretical frameworks through which to interpret the data. Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology (1979) provided a model which had not only been used extensively within the field of parenting transition and child development, but also had an application to the lives of the couples themselves, as they were undergoing the dual transition of migration and new parenthood.

3.1.2 Analysis

Constructivist grounded theory encourages using a methodological framework for data analysis, and the fascination of drawing out firstly themes and later concepts, from the data, which either concord with the existing literature, or which take the study into potentially new areas (Charmaz, 2006). About halfway through the interview process, I began to re-frame the data from themes into concepts, and revisited the interview data (as well as the literature) partly with a view to gaining a deeper level of understanding into those concepts, and also to re-think how I could conduct future interviews along those lines (Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). For example, early themes might include the parents' experiences of local services; later concepts would include their sense of belonging in the community as a result of how they felt about those services. Then examining those data through the prism of a social theory (such as Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecology) enabled the research to be given an interpretative framework, and to be analysed within the context of that framework.

Bronfenbrenner's theory works in this instance because of its relevance to topic, and current application to certain models of family life (such as Olds, 1997) but also the *person-process-context-time* (1995) element adding a context in which to view the participant's life within its social structure (this was discussed in section 2.2.5, detailing where a person, or agent, experiences or carries out processes within the structure of a context, over a period of time).

Therefore a set of interview questions which concentrated on experiences of community health care in the first few interviews deepened into a set of further questions into the participant's experience of those events, along the lines of a "loss of control" in one's own childbirth or early parenting experience, for example - to what extent did the parents feel that they were no longer in control, or felt that events were getting out of hand? This became particularly pertinent for example, with the apparent advocacy of caesarean section within the maternal services at that time: how much choice did the couples themselves feel they had in the matter? What effect did this have on the mother's feeling of being able to cope both at the time, and later when the child was born? The data analysis was something which I found myself constantly revisiting in order to gain the most from the data. As the literature search and research progressed, I began to observe the recurrence of common concepts both within the literature and within the interviews themselves, to do with culture, upbringing, personal identity, the emergence of family identities, experiences of transition, and isolation within communities. The interviews were then coded along conceptual lines which were in the data; social theory plays a part in the analysis of those concepts and experiences, as all of the responses are viewed through a framework of Bronfenbrenner's systems theory of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Some proponents of grounded theory also encourage development of the research in parallel to the literature review, in the sense that one can inform the other (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) although Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally advocated postponing the literature review until after the data has been collected. With no pre-conceived theoretical framework, I felt it was important to pursue both literature review and data collection together, as they could inform one another. For example, I began the literature review at the start of the study, with general sources covering transition to parenthood, ethnicity and childbirth, but once I began to talk to the parents, I began to recognise recurrent themes which I felt I would like to feed into my literature review (the experience of internet use, and views on multiculturalism within the community being but two), and this, in turn informed the development of my topic guide,

where I added notes to myself to probe further into internet use, and other sources of information for new parents, as well as looking deeper into experiences of culture and community. As shown in the Literature Review, this two-layered method of literature and data informing each other enabled me to develop concepts (within the spheres of the community, healthcare, ethnicity and identity, and experiences of transition) from the ensuing data (Sidebotham 2001, Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

3.2   Barking and Dagenham

The Thames Gateway[3] (containing Barking and Dagenham) has been described by London Assembly member John Biggs as "the Ellis Island of England" (from a speech to local voluntary organisations in Barking and Dagenham in 2006), drawing a comparison between it and the historical staging post for immigrants who were arriving in the USA. This highlighted the character of the area in terms of a gathering area for newcomers, but it also affected the housing and employment expectations of long-term existing residents, who responded to the rapidly changing nature of the local population by turning to the British National Party in the 2006 council elections, when twelve BNP members were elected to the local council. Biggs also subsequently referred to Barking and Dagenham as a "dormitory borough, rather than an employing borough" (speech to local residents, 2013). The history of Barking and Dagenham to date is one of rise and decline, summed up in Asthana (2010), where the borough's history is charted briefly from 1920 when Dagenham was selected by Ford to house its European automobile production plant giving jobs to over 40,000 workers, and Barking power station, which employed some 1,800 workers, to the present day, where the Ford plant employs just over 4,000 workers in engine operations (Hudson, 2009).

Barking and Dagenham is an area which has been subject to considerable change in the past 20 years, which is reflected by the ethnicity of its population, its health services, and its political life. Long-standing businesses, such as the Ford works or the Rhône-Poulenc-Rorer pharmaceutical plant lay either waste, partially derelict or awaiting new owners, and this sense of transience is reflected in much of its population. Despite this, areas such as the Chase

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[3] The Thames Gateway comprises the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Havering, Lewisham, Greenwich, Newham and Tower Hamlets; the Essex non-metropolitan districts of Basildon, Castle

Nature Reserve and Eastbrookend Country Park to the east have been generated out of old gravel quarries or dumping grounds, so there is some community regeneration, along with the newly-built Barking Learning Centre, Becontree Heath Sports Centre, and developments in some of the parks to create training facilities for the 2012 London Olympics. The borough is ranked as the 22nd most deprived borough in the United Kingdom (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, National Centre for Health Outcomes Development from The Department of Communities and Local Government 2007, cited in Bristow and Jenner, 2010). The interviews reflect much of this change; respondents speak about the settings within the local area with mixed feelings, and these are explored in the findings chapters (Four, Five and Six).

According to the ONS, in the 1991 Census there were fewer than 6% non-White British residents in the borough. Out of a population of 147,272, only 8,369 came from other ethnic groupings. In the 2001 Census, the number rose to 33,134 (19% of 165,700) and in 2011 it rose to 93,962 (just over 50% of 185,911) whilst simultaneously, the number of White British had fallen from 94% of the total borough population in 1991 to 49% of the total (see the table in Appendix Two).

The rise in both "white other" populations has particular significance as well (an increase of 10,360 in ten years) a proportion of whom are Eastern Europeans, and Black Africans (an increase of 21,401 in ten years). Barking and Dagenham has been further characterised by both an ageing and economically challenged white working class population, and a rise in unemployed young people and pregnant teenage mothers (Haste, 2001). Haste also remarked on the rise in the refugee population: "…there has been an influx of refugees in the last two years, many from eastern European countries that traditionally have high rates of teenage pregnancy" (Haste, 2001:6). The changing population is relevant both in terms of the increase in the multicultural population, but also in terms of a greater population accessing maternal health resources. Referring to the altered socio-economic map of the UK as a whole, Goodhart (2013) describes the migration of 4 million people into the UK between 1948 and the early 1990s as a "demographic revolution".

Point and Rochford; and the unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea; the non-metropolitan Kent districts of Dartford, Gravesham and western parts of Swale; and the unitary authority of Medway.

For ethnic minority residents, the change may be noticeable at a political level following the elections of 2010, and although the recently contested Goresbrook Ward by-election illustrate that the BNP have lost considerable ground (Goresbrook had been strongly BNP in 2006, with 2 BNP councillors receiving 39% of the vote, whereas in the by-election, their candidate was defeated by 1113 votes to 593), nevertheless there is still strong nationalist sentiment in the area, which was observed by some of the migrant couples who were interviewed, and one of the white working class couples appeared to display. Feelings about local health care still have importance for the couples in this study, as some couples who were interviewed refused to have their baby at the local hospital, owing to fears caused by adverse publicity, although most of those who did opt to deliver their babies there had positive experiences.

Bristow and Jenner (2010) drew attention to the rising birth rate in Barking and Dagenham - rising by 40% between 2003 and 2008. They also said that: "by 2012 it is estimated that children from Black ethnic groups will account for 50% of all children under the age of 15 years in the borough" (Bristow and Jenner, 2010: 7). The authors also put a service provider's perspective on the maternity figures:

> "The annual number of live births increased by 40% between 2003 and 2008 (from 2,594 to 3,619), and the percentage of births to mothers whose birthplace was outside the UK has increased from 36% to 56% in the same time period … Although a small part of this increase may result from immigration, the majority is likely to be due to babies born to local residents" (p. 118).

The issue of ethnicity arose in the Opinion Leader article (2010), when it comes to midwives from a similar background to the patients in question. In the Opinion Leader study, patients felt that the approach of these midwives was rude, and contrasted to the midwives' attitude when treating patients from other backgrounds. This is echoed in the literature, for example Puthussery et al and their two-sided study, which examined the attitudes of health care staff to ethnic minority women (2008), then the attitude of the women to the healthcare staff (2010). In the Opinion Leader article, the patients concluded that they would like to have had a choice over who their midwife was and would like to be able to choose one from another ethnic background to avoid the problems they had experienced (Opinion Leader, 2010).

One of the considerations which I had to address is that of insider research (researchers who work within their own spheres of life, whether work, or location, or with colleagues) - a considerable research field in its own right), and whether my relationship to Barking and Dagenham can influence my perspectives and objectivity, given that it is currently my home borough. It is an analysis which is discussed by others, such as van Heugten (2004), who considers the potential pitfalls which subjectivity can bring, yet also argues that subjectivity is a necessary aspect of sociological research, and should be welcomed, provided it is suitably balanced. I moved into the borough in 1992, for reasons which turn out to be very similar to those of many of my respondents: that of housing price. The move to Barking and Dagenham followed spells in the London Boroughs of Haringey (1984-86) and Redbridge (1986-92), which in turn were preceded by nine years in a Hertfordshire boarding school (1972-81), and before that, nine years in the Far East, Japan and Hong Kong. Indeed, my relatively nomadic upbringing does inform, to a certain extent, my understanding of the nature of migration - for me, "home" was rarely a certain concept, and the question I dreaded most was, "where are you from?" Whilst Barking and Dagenham has undoubtedly been my home for the past 20 years, I have always felt able to view the borough at a distance, whilst at the same time providing some "insider" insights: through understanding the nature of the location, its most recent history and the workings of the local council, through partnership in running a Children's Centre, and conducting research into parenting providers on their behalf. My experience as a parent, and work in the area of parenting provision has also given me some perspective in the area of parenting support and the underpinning theories behind parenting support programmes.

It should also be noted that, unlike some insider researchers, I have had no knowledge of the participants before and after the interview process, so there can be no "friendship bias" that some writers warn of (van Heugten 2004). Despite this, van Heugten made the point that while some "nativism" is possibly unavoidable, it should be noted whether a researcher has connections to the researched population, through geography or relationship, and that their research should therefore be open to scrutiny. Indeed with local research comes the possibility too, of coercion, particularly when the researcher has an official role in local government for example. This was also something worth noting in respect of my role as a manager in LifeLine Projects, which was at that time, a significant deliverer of parenting and childcare services within the borough. This then, could affect the participants' accounts of their lives, as they may have seen me as an authority figure with whom to present a moral account,

particularly with regard to parenting issues (see the later section in this chapter on the interview process for a fuller discussion about "moral accounts").

3.3 Ethics
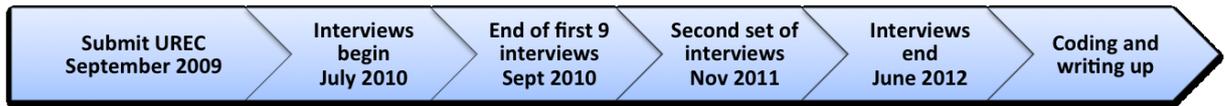
Figure 3.2: Timeline of the research process

My ethical application was approved by the University of Greenwich in October 2009 (see Appendix One). Possible issues, and how they were overcome, included:

1. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** I declared my position as a resident of Barking and Dagenham openly as my supervisors guided me.
2. **CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS:** At the outset, as parents signed the consent form, I declared that there would be clear notification that if there were concerns to do with child safeguarding, I would have to disclose these concerns to a local Children's Services team according to London Child Protection Procedures. I reminded participants of this by reading out a prepared statement at the start of the interview process (see Appendix Seven).
3. **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PARENT/COUPLE:** Parents were also given a list of names/organisations who they could contact after the interview should they feel upset or distressed about anything raised by or during the interview. (see Appendix Ten).
4. **CONCERNS ABOUT THE RESEARCHER:** Both LifeLine and the University of Greenwich have a Lone Worker policy. Couples were interviewed together, frequently with the child present. I also stressed to all respondents that they had the opportunity to be interviewed at a neutral venue (such as their local Children's Centre, or LifeLine offices) or at home. All chose to conduct the interview at their home. As part of the policy, I ensured that someone either in the workplace (day) or at home (evening) knew exactly where I was, and was prompted to contact me if I had not made contact within two hours, before following an escalation procedure.

5. **CONCERNS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEVELS:** For the sake of data clarity, I decided that respondent parents should have a minimum English language level of ESOL Level 3 or above. This can be tested in a brief conversation, where use of the future tense is tested (a good grasp of the future tense is a fair measure of English at Level 3 and above). They should also be "settled" parents, as opposed to asylum seekers.

Part of the application was that I submit to the committee the information sheets and proposed topic guide to be followed in questioning, which were the same papers with which I approached prospective parents for participation. It was agreed with the committee that couples who participated in the interviews should be offered £50 for their time, which would not need to be refunded if the parents later decided to ask for their data to be withdrawn. All names were to be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be used instead of names for analysis. Wherever possible, identifying data would be changed or removed altogether. All prospective participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix Six) which explained:

- the requirement to complete an informed consent form;
- their right to withdraw at any part of the study;
- that their personal data would remain confidential;
- once the data has been obtained, it would be made anonymous and encrypted;
- that their participation would be strictly anonymous;
- that they would be able to read their transcripts when the study was complete.

3.4 Data and sampling

In order to keep the study focussed I decided to define my sample inclusion criteria early on: to limit the research interviews to accommodating both parents together as a couple (in line with my aims), which meant that only couples could be interviewed. The difficulty of this approach was that there were many women who responded positively to the idea of discussing their experiences, but when they asked their partners, they responded negatively, and were unwilling to talk about such issues with a complete stranger, therefore the couple could not be included in the sample. There was also the consideration that one partner might feel inhibited by talking in front of the other, as well as the added concern of the implications of a male partner being present, should there be any possibility of threat. Consequently, the LifeLine and University's Lone Worker policies were implemented in this case.
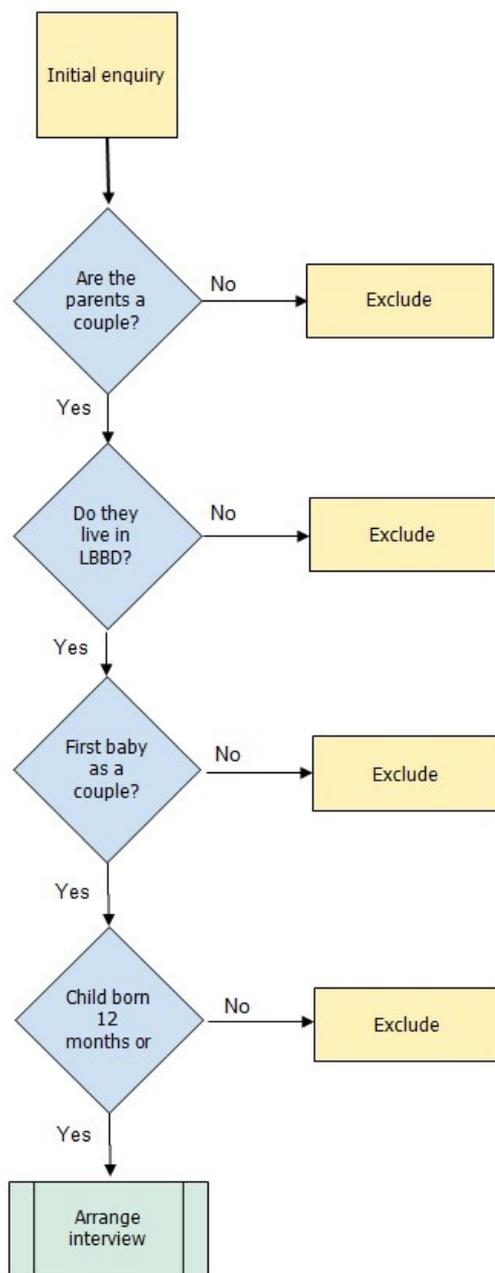
Figure 3.3: Interview Selection Flowchart

In line with the grounded theory approach to this study, it was necessary to collect the data through a series of semi-structured interviews on the experience of childbirth from the parents' point of view. The interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo software, common themes were drawn out from the data through coding, and data interpretation began.

The first sampled cohort were drawn from participants of a local antenatal programme which was being piloted in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The project began with an evaluation which I was commissioned to write, of an antenatal programme called "Getting

Ready for Your Baby" (November and Easter, 2008) which was devised by a midwife and parenting facilitator in Barking and Dagenham. The evaluation consisted of a survey questionnaire. The respondents of the early part of the study, therefore, were drawn from the initial cohort of the evaluation who responded to that questionnaire, and nine subsequent interviews were conducted for the purposes of this study only - the evaluation having been completed by that time.

Obtaining later participants gradually became more difficult than at first. Additionally, in 2011, I was made redundant from LifeLine, the company who chose to commission the research and initially sponsor the study. The company generously chose to continue their sponsorship, but I was hampered in my access to company staff, so had to co-ordinate research efforts slightly more "remotely"; despite the fact that many staff remained friendly toward me, there was still an additional cohort who had never met me, and therefore were not sure how to handle my approaches for parents' participation. I spoke to many members of staff in Children's Centres, from various parts of the borough, who passed my introductory pack to parents who were accessing services as diverse as Baby Clinics, baby massage groups, and breastfeeding support services.

The sample is described in the table below. I felt that there had to be a balance struck between the accessibility of the participants and how they represent the borough. In addition, I wanted to select mostly couples who were either partly or wholly representative of migrant populations, who represented the growing population in the borough. In the end, six of the thirty respondents were White British (20%) which enables some comparison between the couples. The fact that the research centred on couples and excluded lone parents also indicates a non-representation, since the population figures of 2001 indicate 10% of families were lone parents, and by 2011 the number had risen to 14.3%.

White British	6	20%	Dennis, John, Charlotte, Ray, Tracey, Sally
White European	8	27%	Adelina, Peter, Kristina, Vytas, Lidia, Marius, Elena, Mantas
White Other	2	7%	Lucy, Tony
Black African	7	23%	Maleka, Mary, Irfan, Brunelle, Armand, Eunice, Edgar
Black British	2	7%	Lloyd, Shonya
Asian British	4	13%	Mita, Mohammed, Ranjit, Amrick
Asian Non-British	1	3%	Meera

Table 3.2 - Ethnicity of sample

The benefit of drawing comparisons between migrating parents and those for whom England has been a base for life, is that it illustrates the nature of transition both for people who are relatively "settled", and those whose recent life has been characterised by migration, and enables the question: how does that migratory transition affect those who are also undergoing the transition to parenthood?

3.4.1 Limitations

This section looks at limitations within the scope of this study, and the possible effect of those limitations upon the research as a whole. They will be explored further in Chapter Seven, after the data analysis. Some of the potential limitations with the sample cohort include the fact that the couples were all gathered from Children's Centres, therefore as respondents they might be the sort of people who would naturally reflect on their lives as new parents. Yet that is precisely why they are good respondents as well: as their interviews provide rich data. The first nine parents had also participated in the antenatal course "Getting Ready for Your Baby": so again, they would be the type of parents who would care enough about the forthcoming birth to want to attend a course which advertised itself as "preparing the couple for parenthood." I had hoped that there might be some "snowball" sampling originally - that one couple would refer me to another, who would refer me to another; the idea being that there might be some "distance" between a couple who were active participants in a local Children's Centre and some of the later respondents. In the end, this was not possible due to reasons of time and practicality.

Because this study was to focus primarily on couples' experience of the transition to parenthood, I made a decision early on not to interview lone parents. Without a doubt the experience of lone parents and their transition to parenthood would be a rich source of data; it would, however be the subject of a different study. I wanted to explore the impact of the birth on the couple's existing home life, as well as their understanding of their own identity and sense of belonging. I felt, therefore, that both fathers and mothers were both important to this. As separate individuals, the couples bring different experiences of life to the interviews: two of the fathers had already had children with previous partners, for example, and four of the couples had one partner from a different country of origin to the other. Although this was a study of the impact of the first child in a specific couple's life, it can be argued that fathers

who have already experienced parenthood will necessarily bring a different dynamic to the transition than first-time fathers and therefore alter the dynamics of the data.

As with any research, I was aware that parents might be putting on their "best behaviour" during the interview: as there is a tendency for participants who give accounts of themselves to want to be seen as "moral actors" within the process of any research; for their "realities" to be subjective, in which they portray themselves in the best possible light, particularly if there may be underlying issues of coercion (Silverman, 2005: see next section in this chapter on the interview process). The couples had children of differing ages - ranging from two months old to nearly a year old. It could be argued that the parents of older children may have slightly less recall of their birth experiences than those of younger children. The age of the child also affected the dynamic of the interview, as some toddlers were more keen to explore and distract their parents, and for those parents whose children were asleep, the interview was able to run for much longer. This in turn, may have affected their feelings about the transition to parenthood. There were also three sets of twins within the cohort; parents of twins would also have very different perspectives to parents who have just one child. This was not a study about couples who have twins, but the transition experience of those three couples with twins must have been different to those with just one child. Because staff at a Children's Centre were asking parents on my behalf about participation, I was unable to speak directly with the couples who did not want to take part. My understanding from the members of staff involved was that the mothers were very keen but their partners were not: this occurred with approximately three couples. Reasons for non-participation were not given, and the members of staff themselves did not necessarily speak to those fathers. Self-selection can present a challenge to researchers (Wolfendale, 1999), particularly when couples are approached via the mother or father, and the two disagree on the merits of participation. It is also a challenge when the parents are willing to participate, but the data is filtered through "selective or faulty" human memory (Wolfendale, 1999: 165).

3.4.2   The interview process

The first set of nine interviews were conducted around a semi-structured topic guide, which defined the proposed subject areas which the interview might explore. Once these first interviews were completed, transcribed and coded, and I was recognising and coding themes, I decided that more could be elicited from parents by conducting longer, more in-depth

interviews, thus allowing the concepts to be explored more freely from the data. For each interview, a digital recorder was used, placed at a strategic location for ease of picking up voices; but in some cases, removed from the prying hands of investigating babies (for more than one interview, I had to move the recorder several times for this reason). For earlier interviews, I tended to follow the Topic Guide quite carefully, whereas later my interview technique relaxed as I felt more able to let the conversation flow; I learned that I needed to allow for greater flexibility in my questioning, thereby following tangents from time to time, as new and intriguing issues might arise from this approach.

Once it became clear to me that I was recognising certain recurrent concepts within the data (such as a sense of "home" being other than in the UK, or feelings of fear and danger in the local area), I would ask further questions to gather data, as I became more confident in allowing the participant to take the interview in their own direction, allowing myself to explore any area which I found interesting in greater depth. For example, if a parent began to talk about their country of origin, I would aim to explore their attitudes to that country in comparison with life in the UK, examining possible concepts of home and identity which might come from that. The second set of interviews took place over a year after the first interviews had been conducted, transcribed and coded. This in turn, became a positive thing, as the first set of data could be revisited and re-analysed twelve months afterward, as I began to address new concepts.

From the point where I began to order the data into concepts, I re-steered the guide toward those themes (as described previously: community, healthcare, family and culture, transition). New potential topics for exploration included whether the family felt safe in the area, explicitly asking whether they felt that they wanted to stay there, and how they felt about living in the UK in general (if they were a migrant family). Often this would feed into questions about their wider family circumstances, and how close they were to their wider family both emotionally, and in geographical terms. Questions about career then followed, and then the birth itself, their experiences of hospital care and postnatal care, and feelings about being pregnant and being new parents in the local area.

At that point, questions ranged from feeding the baby, their hopes for their child's future, sources of information in caring for the baby, whether they felt part of the community and local neighbourhood, and the challenges of being a parent in Barking and Dagenham.

Questions frequently changed order as the interviews progressed, and topics would be touched upon in any order, although they generally followed a similar pattern throughout. Where in one interview, the respondent would become animated as a particular topic was raised (such as local government priorities and education) another respondent would pass that over, in order instead to talk about other issues, such as the implications of living in a Western calendar-bound economy in contrast to one where concepts of time are less clearly defined. I also found that interview length was not necessarily influenced by a lack of willingness on my part to probe deeper into parents' experiences, but from more prosaic issues. The interview of Ranjit and Charlotte for example, was nearly two hours in length, but it was conducted on a Saturday morning while the baby was asleep, and both parents felt relaxed and able to talk at great length about almost anything. The interview with Amrick and Meera was just over an hour long, but had to be split into three sections, because we were constantly interrupted by the demands of the twins, who had to be cared for two thirds of the way through the interview.

With regard to presenting "moral accounts", Silverman (2005) described the phenomenon within the qualitative framework of conversation analysis (CA). In this paper, he analysed the way in which participants may present a particular view of themselves; particularly when faced with possible medical interventions (such as HIV testing, cancer counselling or a cosmetic surgery clinic for cleft palate). The paper highlighted the need for the researcher to be aware of many elements within the conversation. For example, when describing a cancer patient's positive outlook, he wrote that: "expressions of "positive thinking" may have more to do with public displays of one's moral position than with how people actually respond to their illness" (p.5). He described an HIV patient's desire to have a test when explaining the sexual behaviour of his partner, yet simultaneously displaying the need to prevent the counsellor from judging either of them. So beneath the exterior presented narrative is a subtext of self-presentation into which the narrating participant immerses themselves; which medical practitioners (consultant surgeons in the case of a respondent teenager with a cleft palate) have to have pointed out to them explicitly, before they understand the true meanings beneath the dialogue. Silverman states:

> "The real strength of qualitative research is that it can use naturally-occurring data to locate the interactional sequences ("how") in which participants' meanings ("what") are deployed" (p. 15).

The relevance to this study is in the analysis of the data presented (although Silverman was using CA specifically, the principles remain relevant): that for all of the respondents, there is a need to interpret the data both from the point of view of the presented "story", but also from the perspective of how that story makes the narrator appear. This is something which I bore in mind when presented with the challenges of interpreting the data. Giddens (1984) also pointed out that the actions of agents are frequently divergent from their supposed motivation, and similarly Smith (2005) reflected that in some cases, interview participants might construct versions of themselves as objects of narration.

Bjørnholt and Farstad (2012) also examined the nature of couple interviews, particularly comparing couple interviews with individual ones. They asserted that when interviewed together, participants can have more control over their "common story", as their narrative appears in a public context; they also described potential ethical pitfalls when a couple is interviewed separately, and the researcher finds themselves becoming a "mediator of secrets" (p. 13). Interviewing couples together enables the couple to corroborate or challenge each other's narratives, and the researcher's observations of the couple's interactions enables the gathering of further rich data. Certainly with this study, there were points where one partner would either challenge or affirm another's perceptions, and in one case use the interview as an opportunity to praise their partner for their work with the baby. The authors detailed the practicalities of holding joint interviews as well, which draws the male partner into the process more easily.

3.4.3 Transcription and coding

Where possible, all interviews were transcribed within a few weeks of the interview taking place. The conversations were recorded using a digital recorder, the files copied to a computer hard drive, and replayed and typed up from there. All of the transcriptions were undertaken by me, together with memos, so that I would become familiar with as many aspects of the data as possible (Charmaz, 2006). Pauses in conversations were recorded as well[4]. This enables the researcher to analyse potential considerations on the part of the respondent: whether the pause

is significant, or whether further understanding is being sought (Silverman, 2000 and Charmaz, 2006). Verbal characteristics were also recorded, which could be complex, as one participant had a stammer, for example. Once a conversation had been transcribed, the transcript was reviewed by replaying the conversation, following it, and correcting or adding anything which might have been missing from the first draft. Transcripts were then also submitted to my supervisors, who thus reviewed the data as it was obtained, commenting on the nature of the interviews, and making suggestions for the future. In this way, the change from the earlier to the later, more in-depth interviewing took place, where I became less concerned with remaining at the level of discussing experiences of the local environment, but felt able to probe the parents' personal interpretations of their experiences more deeply.

The coding in question was primarily axial (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006) using themes and sub-themes to define the data at first, and then cross-referring them. Axial coding refers to the process of relating codes to each other through inductive thinking, and thus being able to use the codes to facilitate analysis. For example, might there be a relationship between couples who report a "friendly neighbourhood" and their attitude towards remaining in Barking and Dagenham. Initially, the interview coding covered mainly descriptive themes, which became quite extensive:

Barking and Dagenham	Time spent in Barking and Dagenham - community life - health care - local services - perception of schools - transport - the future - leaving the area - threat of violence - racism and extremism.
Families	Family backgrounds - extended families - remote families & non-resident parents.
Family, ethnicity and culture	Country of origin - cultural mores - arranged marriage - ethnicity of professionals - faith and parenting.
Jobs and employment	Educational background & jobs / bringing up children - current jobs - career aspirations.
Antenatal experiences	Pregnancy - antenatal classes - infertility and IVF.
Childbirth experiences	Pain - midwives - birth complications - caesarean section.

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[4] Where an ellipsis is used, this indicates that some of the quote has been cut, for brevity and clarity of meaning. Where a dash is used, this indicates an interruption of thought, sometimes of pace. The use of a full-stop does not necessarily mean the person has finished their sentence, it may mean that they have paused mid-thought.

Postnatal care – professional	Inefficient staff – child care – health visitors – baby health - bureaucracy.
Postnatal care – friends & family	Meeting other parents - family care - friends - neighbours.
Feeding the baby	Breastfeeding - cultural taboos - peer networks - other types of feeding - weight concerns.
Experiences as new parents	Adaptability - transition - attachment - challenges - coping - anxieties - sleeplessness – fatherhood.
The future	Expectations for children in the future - the baby's future education.
The internet	Internet communities - learning on the internet – Skype.

Table 3.3: Initial codes and their meaning

Once the data were gathered and transcribed, I began to review them as I proceeded with the coding, adding memos which enabled me to compare responses from each of the respondents with others, as well as keeping a research diary, both used in the aim of moving the analysis forward (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). At this point, patterns and relationships were identified. For example, certain people (usually White British respondents, but not exclusively) would spend time describing life "as it used to be" (particularly when describing discipline) and when I observed this in Interview 1, I then noted when it came up in Interviews 3, 10, 13 and 15. This trait is similar to that of the respondents in Gabriel (1993), where nostalgia for better times past enables people to come to terms with the perceived inadequacies of the present day. Similar traits would appear when first-generation migrant parents would describe their experiences of the local area, or in several instances, pregnant mothers' experience of the lack of manners on the London underground (Interviews 12, 14 and 15).

The data then elicited further questions, relating to the framework (above), for example: to what extent does a person's background, upbringing, and sense of rootedness affect their experiences of the local area and its health services? How does their culture affect with whom they will spend their time in the UK, and whether they feel part of the local community? Have they brought that culture with them, or discarded elements of it? Is their experience of "home" characterised by a home elsewhere, and to what extent does having an extended family within the house or at least living nearby add or detract to that sense of creating an emergent home and family? Looking at Bronfenbrenner (1979) during the analysis stage: to what extent are the family affected by the changes to the "mesosystem" of their local community, or

"macrosystem" of the local community culture? How does that macrosystem differ from their internal value systems: drawn (presumably) from the macrosystems of their countries of origin? These thoughts would then draw me back to reviewing and re-searching the literature for similar themes and concepts.

As the research progressed, it became clear to me that the simple thematic coding method (shown above) was inadequate, and that I could begin to explore the concepts rather than categories. I therefore outlined possible concepts which I probed, and re-coded the entire first cohort of interviews according to those concepts. They then became the codes which I used not only to re-code the first group, but also the second. I identified a set of concepts, which differed from the earlier, more descriptive themes, in that they appeared to be more than just categorical labels. These were:

Responses to the community	Belonging - alienation & isolation – Confidence in schools - urban decay - the recession - fear of the local area - a lack of respect for old values.
Healthcare	Personal healthcare - a loss of control- expectations of the birth - inefficiency in healthcare - impersonal healthcare – perceptions of prejudice in the health system.
Ethnicity and Identity	Biographies - family values and cultures - "back home" - local attitudes to race - England as a foreign country - religious belief informing identity or decisions.
Transition	Career aspirations as a parent - gendered roles - parental expectations - experiences of the transition - the internet - an emerging family identity - concern for the future - optimism through becoming parents.

Table 3.4: More developed themes

Once the interviews had been coded within the concepts described above, I reviewed each interview in turn, and added a number of memos, using the NVivo Annotation function, which enabled me to reflect upon the earlier interviews compared to the later ones, and draw relationships between the experiences of the couples.

3.5 The interviews - an overview

Fifteen couples were interviewed about their experiences of becoming new parents in Barking and Dagenham: 30 respondents in total. The sample itself brings into question the term "indigenous": given that Mohammed and Mita (Couple 2) or Lloyd and Shonya (Couple 3) considered themselves to be "British", and only five of the respondents were "born and bred" in Barking and Dagenham, two of whom were Indian. Overall, 12 of the 30 individual parents were UK-born, not necessarily coming from Barking and Dagenham itself, but in the case of Lloyd and Tony: Tower Hamlets, in the case of Ray: the North of England. The first nine interviews took place in 2010, the next set of respondents were interviewed a year after that. The reason for the gap is because my employment at LifeLine came to an end, and I began to run my own company from the summer of 2011, so personal circumstances constrained the research. When the interviews began again in November 2011, I had decided to use the interviews to explore some of the themes which I had picked out from the first nine interviews in a little more depth. The first nine couples had participated in the antenatal evaluation, and they came from a Children's Centre in the heart of Dagenham, for the most part. Couple 10 (Ranjit and Charlotte) and 11 (Amrick and Meera) were referred by one of the Barking Children's Centres, and Couples 12-15 from the Dagenham centre, although many of the couples lived in quite diverse parts of the borough. All respondents chose to have their interviews at home, and they invariably took place in the living room, frequently with the baby present, sometimes with a grandparent or relative present in a different room, who could look after the baby whilst the interview was in progress. By the 14th and 15th interview, the topics and concepts emerging were not particularly new; I felt that the point of data saturation had been reached (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and so the interview process was concluded.

As the interviews began in the summer of 2010, much of the world was experiencing the effects of recession. The coalition government had just been elected in the UK, and more importantly to the residents of Barking and Dagenham, the twelve BNP councillors who had assumed office in 2006 had been replaced. Nevertheless, in some of the interviews - particularly interviews 6 and 7, the fact of political extremism was acknowledged, and the parents spoke of being aware of the local atmosphere (see section 4.3.6 about experiences of xenophobia). In interview 13, there is evidence of thinking from the other perspective, from a white family who feel that the local area is being over-run by what they term "asylum seekers".

Charmaz (2006) argued that grounded theory interviews can adapt according to theme, narrowing the field of questioning according to themes being researched. This was certainly the case with this study, the questioning followed similar patterns, but gradually more was drawn out about a couple's experience of the UK in relation to their experiences of their "home" country; this is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. As the study progressed, certain interviews added an interesting renewed perspective to existing themes. For example, Interview 6 became pivotal from the viewpoint of seeing migrant families as feeling alienated, and unable to establish a home or identity within the new country of residence. Interview 10 raised issues about multicultural coexistence which invited a fresh review of the literature around this issue. Older interviews were then reviewed (and subsequently re-coded) following this interview. When I interviewed Tony and Sally, and saw how confident both mother and father were with the twins, it made me think back to how Amrick and Meera, Armand and Brunelle had been - both of whom had had twins, and had different ways of coping with the added demands of twins (Amrick and Meera had his parents to help out, Armand and Brunelle used the internet in lieu of parental expertise). Interview 6, in turn, also made me reflect upon the uses of the internet for couples with newborn babies, something which caused me to review the literature on the subject and ask questions of all subsequent participants.

The economic climate is ever present as a background to the interviews; we see Vytas and Kristina (Couple 7) refer to the "Big Crunch", and how difficult it is to pay a mortgage in such circumstances, although all of the male Eastern European respondents were tradesmen, and all were in constant employment. The only couple who were struggling financially were Ray and Tracey (Couple 13, long-term unemployed), although the intervention of Housing and Social Services had ensured that their top floor flat was adequately furnished. There is little direct political comment in the interviews, with the occasional exception, Ray believing that many of the current problems of social discipline from his perspective would never have happened "under Thatcher". The interviews are also interesting in that many of the participants lived in private housing: several were in ex-council houses, some were renting council houses from private landlords, and some were in private accommodation. Owing to the fact that many were paying mortgages therefore, the economic condition of the country was having an effect at their level (and many had chosen to live in Barking and Dagenham because the houses were much cheaper than elsewhere).

3.5.1 The interview participants

No	Mother Pseudonym	Ethnicity - Mum	Time in UK (Mum)	Father Pseudonym	Ethnicity - Dad	Time in UK (Dad)
1	Maleka	African	3 years	Dennis	White	UK-born
2	Mita	Bangladeshi	c. 20 years	Mohammed	Bangladeshi	c. 20 years
3	Shonya	Caribbean	UK-born	Lloyd	Caribbean	UK-born
4	Mary	African	7 years	Irfan	African	Not resident
5	Adelina	Albanian	UK-born	Peter	Albanian	8 years
6	Brunelle	African	4 years	Armand	African	4 years
7	Kristina	Lithuanian	6 years	Vytas	Lithuanian	6 years
8	Eunice	African	2 years	Edgar	African	5 years
9	Lucy	New Zealander	5 years	John	White	UK-born
10	Charlotte	White British	UK-born	Ranjit	Indian	UK-born
11	Meera	Indian	7 years	Amrick	Indian	UK-born
12	Lidia	Romanian	9 years	Marius	Romanian	6 years
13	Tracey	White British	UK-born	Ray	White	UK-born
14	Elena	Belarussian	3 years	Mantas	Lithuanian	3 years
15	Sally	White British	UK - born	Tony	White Irish	UK-born

Table 3.5: The Couples

Couple 1 − Dennis and Maleka - 28th July 2010.

Dennis was a White British man in his forties, who was becoming a parent for the second time, having had children with a previous partner. Maleka was a young Ghanaian woman, who was experiencing parenthood for the first time. Dennis talked about having some counselling work at a local college. Maleka had a masters degree in biomedical science, so had considerable learning and was very articulate. Dennis had a very bad stammer, which made the transcription process of this first interview very difficult. He therefore took quite some time to make a point. The couple's home was a small council flat at the top of a low-rise tenancy block. The interview took place at 3 pm in the afternoon. Their baby was about nine months old, and had a tendency to vocalise whenever Maleka was speaking, which made some of her speech less audible when played back.

Couple 2 - Mohammed and Mita - 30ᵗʰ July 2010

Mita and Mohammed were a first and second-generation Bangladeshi couple, who had both been brought up in the UK. Mohammed had been born in Bangladesh, but came to the UK when he was four years old, where he had been brought up in Tower Hamlets. Mita had been brought up in the South of England, where she had been part of a comparatively small family, whereas Mohammed came from a large extended family. Mohammed was very keen to point out that they were now committed, practicing Muslims, and that they had a happily arranged marriage. Their daughter was conceived after some time of trying unsuccessfully to have a baby, just before they were about to try IVF. Mohammed was a college lecturer; Mita had been a primary school teacher, but was hoping to re-train as a speech therapist. The interview took place at 10 am. Mohammed and Mita lived in a purchased semi-detached ex-council house in Dagenham. They lived in an extended household with Mohammed's parents. Their daughter was about ten months old, and played quietly throughout the interview.

Couple 3 − Lloyd and Shonya - 25ᵗʰ August 2010

Lloyd and Shonya were a couple in their early forties. This was Lloyd's second long-term partnership with children, but Shonya's first baby. Lloyd had a Jamaican heritage, had been born in Bow, and moved eastwards through life to arrive in Barking and Dagenham fifteen years prior to the interview date. Shonya had Guyanese parents and was also born in the UK; her father died when she was fifteen, and she had been working since the age of sixteen. The couple lived in a private semi-detached house in one of the rare private estates in Dagenham. Their daughter was about six months old, and Shonya spent the interview feeding and changing the baby. Quite a lot of her interaction during the interview was with the baby. The interview took place at 7 pm.

Couple 4 −Irfan and Mary - 27ᵗʰ August 2010

Irfan and Mary were both Nigerian. Mary lived in their flat with the baby where the interview took place, but Irfan worked on an oil rig in Nigeria, and commuted on a bi-monthly basis into the UK to be with his family for a month, before returning to Nigeria. She worked for a local charity, and was gradually returning to work part-time. Their son (twelve months old) was asleep during the interview. Mary did most of the talking, as English was not Irfan's first

language, and he did not seem overly confident at first, but gradually contributed more to the interview. The interview took place at 2 pm. The couple lived in a newly-built low-rise block of flats in Dagenham.

Couple 5 − Peter and Adelina - 9th and 16th September 2010

Peter and Adelina were a young Albanian couple - Adelina being second-generation UK-born, schooled locally; Peter being a relatively recent immigrant and brought up in Albania. She was a university lecturer, he was a window fitter on building sites. Her answers tended to be more comprehensive, as she spoke English as a primary language, whereas his answers were confident, but he was slightly less forthcoming than she. They lived in a large private house. The first interview was conducted despite the fact that Adelina had forgotten the arrangement. The baby (about six months old) was fractious for a lot of the time, but was kept occupied throughout. Unfortunately, a technical error with the recorder meant that only 17 minutes of the initial interview was recorded successfully, so a second interview had to be arranged, and much of the material repeated. As a result, the second interview was slightly more formal, there was little for the couple to gain from the process at that point, and I had to repeat many of the questions which I had lost from the first interview. Nevertheless, there was enough for data analysis.

Couple 6 − Armand and Brunelle - 14th September 2010

Armand and Brunelle were a Congolese couple, who had grown up with different backgrounds - his family were well-to-do, with property in the Congo, and he had spent significant time in Belgium; her family emigrated to Scandinavia when she was very young, and so all of their experiences of Britain and Barking and Dagenham in particular were viewed through a prism of life in other countries. They had initially migrated as students, but judging from the interview, there appeared to be little to keep them in the UK. They lived in a low-rise council-run apartment block in Dagenham. This interview highlighted how some of the couples disliked living in Barking and Dagenham and wanted to move out, something which some of the subsequent interviews also underlined. They were the first of three couples in this study who had twins. The twins (about eight months old) were fairly noisy.

Couple 7 − Vytas and Kristina - 15ᵗʰ September 2010

Vytas and Kristina were first generation Lithuanians, both of whom had migrated to the UK relatively recently, and who had met and married in the UK. Their command of English was very good. Kristina started life as a primary school teacher in Lithuania, and in common with a number of the respondents, came to the UK and had to re-train, starting as a waitress in the UK, then as a restaurant receptionist, and finally as an administrator. Vytas was a carpenter (all of the Eastern European men in this study were working tradesmen). The couple lived in an ex-council house which they had bought, and their financial stability was at the forefront of a lot of their thinking and planning for the future. His brother looked after the baby girl as the interview was conducted. The baby girl was almost a year old - one of the older babies in the study, and made very little noise.

Couple 8 − Edgar and Eunice - 16ᵗʰ September 2010

Edgar and Eunice were recent migrants from Ghana. He was a schoolteacher, and was also taking a masters degree in London. He moved to the UK in 2005, and she had moved in 2007. Eunice was training to become an Early Years professional. The couple lived in a private ex-council house opposite a park in Dagenham. During the interview, their son (a year old) was toddling, was very inquisitive and quite fractious - halfway through the process, he was taken upstairs to bed, where he soon settled, and the interview was able to continue.

Couple 9 − John and Lucy - 27ᵗʰ September 2010

Lucy was a New Zealander of Maori extraction, and John was a local man. She was a fitness instructor, and he was a builder. They were pondering a move to New Zealand, although their experiences of life in Dagenham had been quite positive. The interview was conducted without the baby (six months) present, as she had just been put to sleep.

Couple 10 − Ranjit and Charlotte - 5ᵗʰ November 2011

The interview with Charlotte and Ranjit, taking place over a year after the previous interview, and four months before the next, marked the beginning of the later interviews. Interview 10 differs from many of the others in several ways; it was the longest interview of all - conducted

on a quiet Saturday morning; it was also the first interview in Barking as opposed to Dagenham, and in a relatively affluent part of Barking. Ranjit was a second generation Indian man with a Sikh background, but not practicing. His parents had moved into the area many years previously, and he grew up in a large family, attending the local schools, and never moving from the main area around Barking - he even attended the local university when its main campus was still less than a mile from his home. He then worked in IT for a hospital in North London and where he met Charlotte, a Welsh woman, who also worked there. They opted to have their baby at the other hospital, despite the inconvenient distance, because they had been worried about having a baby at the local hospital due to the adverse publicity. Their home was a large, privately-owned house in a quiet residential street, and when the baby became tired during the interview, (he was about ten months old) he was put to bed.

Couple 11 − Amrick and Meera - 3ʳᵈ February 2012

Amrick and Meera were the second couple to be interviewed in Barking. Amrick was a second generation Indian man living with his parents, and his wife was Indian as well, but she had been born and brought up in Germany. Her English was good, but she could not grasp some of the subtlety of the language, and had to have things explained to her on occasion. They were the second couple in this study to have twins. Meera had worked in a Children's Centre prior to the twins' birth, and Amrick was a self-employed accountant. The twins (about six months old) were awake and active throughout the interview - Amrick's parents had looked after them for a few minutes, but it soon became clear that one, then both of the twins needed their parents' care, so the interview was peppered with interruptions and changes of personnel as they came in and out of the room for various reasons.

Couple 12 − Marius and Lidia - 12ᵗʰ April 2012

Marius and Lidia were both first-generation Romanian immigrants. Lidia had been in the UK for several years, longer than Marius. Lidia had also worked as an au pair for an English family, and had held several jobs, before working in a travel agent, and training to do her accountancy exams. Her English was very good, and she spoke for most of the interview. Since Marius had been in the UK, he had lived with Romanians, in a Romanian community, speaking only Romanian. As a result, Lidia spoke alone for almost the whole interview, and from time to time she responded on Marius's behalf, although Marius did say a few things. He

also went upstairs to settle the baby (who was about eight months old) after a few minutes of the interview, and only returned with a few minutes of the interview left. Marius was an electrician, and apparently had never been out of work since coming to the UK. The couple lived in a recently purchased ex-council house in Dagenham. They had moved into the area from Waltham Forest because of lower house prices.

Couple 13 − Ray and Tracey - 18 April 2012

Ray and Tracey were a white couple who lived at the top of a tower block in a condemned council estate, which was due for demolition within the subsequent 24 months. Tracey had been born and brought up in Dagenham, and had worked as a care assistant. Ray was in his early forties, having been brought up in the North of England. He had had a few jobs in his home town, working on a standby vessel for the North Sea oil rigs, although he had also spent a large part of his adult life serving custodial sentences. He was keen to begin a new life, met Tracey on the internet, and they became partners, having their baby once he had moved permanently down to Dagenham. He had been unable to find work since leaving prison. They were both known to Social Services who re-housed them in the tower block, as they had previously been accommodated in a hotel. The flat was pleasantly furnished, and the baby, who was about six months old, seemed well.

Couple 14 − Mantas and Elena - 19 April 2012

Mantas and Elena were Eastern European: Mantas from Lithuania, and Elena from Belarus. Elena had trained to be a dancer in Minsk, and met Mantas whilst he was on holiday and she was dancing. Mantas was a carpenter. Elena had become a Pilates instructor when she moved to the UK, working with clients in the West End of London. They were in the process of moving from their small rented ground-floor apartment in Dagenham to a larger purchased apartment in Romford, Havering. There were many boxes and personal belongings packed away, ready for the move. The sofa was still out, and the interview was conducted there. Elena's mother was looking after the baby (who was about three months old), so the interview was relatively undisturbed. Both Elena and Mantas had a reasonably good command of English, so were able to make themselves understood.

Couple 15 − Tony and Sally - 13ᵗʰ June 2012

Tony and Sally were a white couple who lived in East Dagenham. They both worked at a London cathedral - in different departments, and they had married fairly recently, after she had become pregnant. They were the third couple in the study to have twins. Tony had Irish heritage - he was a second generation son of Irish immigrant parents. He had been born and brought up in the East End, and latterly, North London. Sally was a local woman. The couple lived in a privately owned ex-council property. This interview was interesting from the point of view of observing the parents working with their twin babies (who were about seven months old) - both Tony and Sally were actively involved in changing, feeding, settling them, passing them from one to the other and back again. They had opted to have the delivery at an alternative London hospital, owing to the adverse publicity of the local hospital, and whilst Sally was recovering from her caesarean operation, Tony took responsibility for feeding and changing both babies for the first few hours, a role which he performed consistently with her since that time, except when he was at work.

3.5.2 The sample

Within this particular sample is a broad diversity of participants: couples who have a ethnic heritage which embraces aspects both of the Caribbean and East London, transnational couples who arguably find themselves equally at home in London or Nigeria, Indian couples with German and British backgrounds, couples who were born in the UK but somehow still view their country of origin as somewhere else. The couples were equally diverse economically: from couples who owned their own home (in the rare private estates in the borough) to couples who were unsettled; couples who were housed by the local authority in condemned high-rise apartment blocks, to couples who were proud to own their first home, drawn by the comparatively low property prices. The interviews themselves were diverse in character: the interviews where the children were present (such as couple 8, or couple 11) were naturally harder to conduct and latterly to transcribe, owing to the distractions brought about by the children themselves. The interviews where the child had been put to bed, however, such as interviews 9 or 10, allowed for a greater freedom of expression from the participants.

3.6 Conclusion

This study is informed by grounded theory, not using the pure grounded theory as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but rather owing more to the interpretative approach adopted by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and also expounded by Charmaz (2006). Charmaz also acknowledged the tendency for many grounded theory studies to become more "descriptive" rather than "theoretical", and therefore tend not to focus on the "why", but rather only examine the "what". The use of a grounded theory frame of reference then allowed me to explore concepts within the data, and to select the most appropriate theory through which to interpret the data: a systems theory of human ecology, originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The application of the principles of grounded theory allowed a level of qualitative exploration which was appropriate to the aims of the study: to explore couples' experiences of the transition to parenthood, and to draw from the interviews reflections upon those experiences within the light of their community as a whole, and to understand these experiences within the light of social theory.

Interviewing couples together (as suggested by Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2012) enabled me to gather not only the individual parents' accounts, but also their joint narratives, which can then be interpreted as moral constructions created for the purpose of the interview itself. Silverman (2005) also described the nature of qualitative research in the context of the participants creating "moral accounts" of themselves, particularly when in the company of a researcher who represents an organisation which works together with the family support services in the local borough. Not only would this arguably have affected their responses to me, but also may have affected the way in which I interpreted their responses and subsequently, the data. Living within the researched borough also draws possible perceptions of insider research with its associated complications (van Heugten, 2004), yet I believe that I have been able to view the borough with some distance as well as familiarity.

As the interviews themselves yielded data concerning the parents' interaction with their health services, their communities or reflections on future schooling, to name but three examples, they were then analysed in the context of those categories. Further analysis also revealed a recurrence of concepts, causing me to review the entire data set in the light of those concepts: responses to the community itself whether through a sense of belonging or alienation, responses to local healthcare services, a sense of a lack of control, ethnicity and personal

identity as described through personal biographies and descriptions of events, perceptions of "home" and the adoptive new country, and the nature of transition to parenthood in the context of one's own expectations and an emergent family identity.

The idea of Barking and Dagenham emerging as part of an adopted "macrosystem" then lent some support to the analysis of the couple's experiences in that light, and the coding also facilitated this process; as couples talked about their use of the internet, for example, it was then related to the concepts of feeling isolated, which would then provoke a secondary question such as, "does the use of the internet increase or work against a mother's sense of isolation?" Relationships between the sets of data were then investigated further in this way. The next chapter will be the first of the chapters which discusses the findings from this research, based on the interview data.

Chapter Four. The Geographical Transition of Migration

4. Introduction

This chapter is the first of the main findings chapters, drawn from data from the interviews with the parents. Its aim is to examine the nature of geographical and social transition to the UK in systems terms, as well as to compare experiences of UK-born parents with those of migrants. This chapter also examines the couples' sense of belonging and cultural experiences of life within Barking and Dagenham, asks whether they feel "at home" there, and looks at what their concepts of "home" may be - is "home" in the UK at all? For the migrant couples, their experiences of xenophobia are discussed, and the chapter then goes on to look at multiculturalism from the parents' point of view, supplementing their accounts with the literature. One of the couples is selected as a case study to illustrate the effects of multiculturalism on one migrant couple in particular, examining the rather different experiences of cultural assimilation from the point of view firstly of the mother, and then the father. Issues of isolation brought about by new parenthood are also raised, whether the couple feel "integrated" within their community, and why.

Within the chapter, factors which help parents to feel a sense of "belonging" and which militate against this are considered; whether establishing a "home" in the UK, the existence of an extended family or acculturation all play a part in creating a greater sense of personal belonging. Cortis (2007), in an article about the perception of evaluation from child and family service users in Australia, argued that parents gained a greater sense of community and belonging as they used family support services. Beider (2011) observed that "belonging" is a key factor in community cohesion, as do Green et al (2003): the authors including "shared norms and values … a sense of shared identity or belonging to a common community" in their list of contributing elements to a greater sense of "belonging" (p. 455). Cantle (2001) also stated that belonging is important to cohesion. This chapter will examine some of those elements in the context of this particular research cohort.

4.1 Geographical transition

Just as all of the parents were undergoing an ecological transition to parenthood, many were also undergoing a non-normative transition through migration. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described a primary transition as a "transition between two settings" (p.286, and also section 2.2.3). Whilst this may refer to a more "straightforward" transition between work places, or from one school to another, eighteen of the parents within this study had experienced a transition from one country to another; one set of values, ideologies and cultural mores (macrosystem) to another; thus experiencing the transformative disruption to microsystem processes during the course of it. Six of the parents in this study experienced this transition as a couple; and three as individuals who became partners with UK residents.

From Bronfenbrenner's perspective, when there is a change to these systems - a shift in role or setting, whether workplace (promotion, change of work location) or family role (transition to becoming a parent or sibling for example) - the individual undergoes an ecological transition, and thus by definition, so do the couple. Theirs then becomes a transcontextual dyad (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Another ecological - and non-normative - transition occurs when the couple decide to move to another country - and this introduces a new overarching macrosystem element which has significant potential to destabilise the existing primary dyad - crossing macrosystem "borders" (p. 27); the couple then have to negotiate the changes of setting, role (in some cases needing to find work in the new country), and become acculturated over time (or choose not to do so). The process of acculturation is, by definition, an adoption of a new macrosystem, whether extrinsic or intrinsic. Their own macrosystem is unique to their original country, and any experience of migration will necessarily affect that system. The transition is significantly eased by advance information gathering and similar preparation, whether the couple become informed of their new destination country or whether there are existing relationships in their destination country. Extended families within that country also significantly help this transition process (see also Bronfenbrenner 1986).

Bronfenbrenner also illustrated the way in which macrosystem phenomena (cultural and societal beliefs and practices) can influence individuals at the more intimate microsystem and mesosystem levels. This affects individual beliefs, and the way in which those individuals may therefore feel that they "belong" to a place or otherwise. As noted before however (in section 2.2.3) systems are reciprocal, which means that they are able to adapt (change shape)

to the influence of the person themselves. Therefore if a person does not feel as though they belong at first (for example, when this interview took place) their subsequent life experiences and responses to them may cause them to adapt successfully to their environment. The profound ecological transition which is experienced by migrant couples in this study is examined, both from the point of view of couples who do not feel as though they have made the transition successfully, to those who feel more "at home".

Schumacher and Meleis (1994) defined migration as a "situational transition" (p.120), and in systems terms, the change is quite fundamental as it impacts on every level of the systems hierarchy. In this study, one of the couples were not geographically co-located. Irfan had a particularly transnational existence, living for part of the year at an oil field in Nigeria and for part of the year in England (therefore arguably leaving him unable to undergo a full ecological transition). One couple was palpably not settled (Armand and Brunelle found themselves missing what they felt were the superior health services of Belgium, Norway and the wealthier parts of the Congo, and confessed that they did not feel as though they belonged in the area). The migrant couples who appeared to be more settled (in the UK) were Couples 7 (Kristina and Vytas from Lithuania), 8 (Edgar and Eunice from Ghana), 12 (Lidia and Marius from Romania) and 14 (Mantas and Elena, from Lithuania and Belarus respectively).

The more "settled" couples (7, 8, 12 and 14) were all recent migrants who had settled into the UK within the past five years. At the time of interview, all of those couples expressed feelings of having settled: all had purchased property in the UK (three in Barking and Dagenham and one in Havering), and were looking forward to sending their children to school, whether locally or elsewhere. Couples 1, 2, 5, 9 and 11 all had one partner who was English, although Mohammed and Mita (Couple 2) and Adelina (Mother 5) might have described themselves as having dual nationality, as they both expressed a close link to their parents' country of origin. Lloyd and Shonya were both second generation Caribbean English but saw themselves primarily as "Londoners", Ray and Tracey were both English, and Ranjit and Charlotte were British (Indian English and Welsh respectively). This illustrates the diverse nature of the couples' backgrounds in the context of this study. It also shows that "indigenous" is not primarily an ethnically weighted term, since many of those who had grown up in London were in fact of Caribbean and Bengali origin (also discussed at greater length in section 3.4).

A particularly notable factor for couples who undergo geographical transition is the assimilation of the local language. Since Lidia had worked as an au pair with an English family, she learned to speak fluent English, but Marius (her husband) lived among Romanians in the UK, and did not learn the language (see the comparative case study later in section 4.4.2 of this chapter). When one partner is confident with the language, either because they were brought up in the UK (Adelina, Amrick) or because they have learned it (Lidia) this arguably helps them feel more part of the community. McCourt and Pearce (2000) wrote that a lack of language can be a significant barrier to integration, in these circumstances. Phoenix and Husain (2007) argued that language is a core component of one's "ethnicity", along with religion and territory.

In order to master the ecological transition to another country, it can be argued that language is a key determinant, as it enables individuals to communicate with their family in their primary language and communicate with service providers in the local language (such as with hospitals, Children's Centres, GP services). However, mastery of the language does not necessarily make an individual or couple feel as though they "belong", since Armand and Brunelle both had an excellent command of English (as well as French and Norwegian) and yet still did not feel as though they belonged in the UK.

4.2 Perspectives of non-migrants

Within this study are migrant parents (such as Armand and Brunelle, Vytas and Kristina, Mantas and Elena) and non-migrant parents (such as Mohammed and Mita, Charlotte and Ranjit, Ray and Tracey). As migration is a non-normative transition (Bronfenbrenner 1979), and the experiences of the migrant couples involve not just a geographical transition, but a macrosystem (cultural and possibly ideological) transition as well, some couples might find such a transition overwhelming, particularly when accompanied by the birth of a child. Yet the language of Mantas and Elena, for example (only recently migrated from Eastern Europe) suggests otherwise: their language indicates a sense of optimism and positivity, although in this case it is primarily linked with becoming parents:

> *Elena: Even in the weekends, when you want to sleep, but he cry: we're happy, it's fine! It's – er, life become full, I guess.*

At the same time, contrast that positive outlook with the views of non-migrant Ranjit (who had been a UK resident all his life) which were not particularly positive, citing that *"There's no future here."* Much of Ranjit's perspective was influenced by his feeling that the local area was becoming more depraved, heading toward destruction like an out-of-control train:

> *Ranjit: To be honest with you. I'm, I'm being brutally honest now. It's because the structure of - I would say the council, the police, and the schooling is just absolutely appalling and it's - it's going to come tumbling down, it's a matter of time before it just crashes it is - (Laughs) the tracks are bent, and the train is going straight ahead, it's gonna tumble - It's just going to fall. There is - There's no two ways about it.*

Ranjit's language was particularly expressive here, as he grapples with a very arresting metaphor. As both Charlotte and Ranjit contemplated the future with their baby son, they had to consider his prospects as well as their own comfort: *"the future is the most challenging thing for … any child growing up in this area."* Their discussion ventured as far as the university to which their baby son might eventually go:

> *Ranjit: So, you know, you've got your good and bads there, but, the thing is, for him to go to university, it would be beautiful to have the university down at the end of the road. Absolutely perfect. Because then he's going to save on travel costs, he can just walk down there, come home lunchtime, do the whatever, stay at home, no problems.*

Ranjit's frustration was that the local university "down at the end of the road" (his own alma mater) had been moved to Docklands. It appeared as though Ranjit's frustration was borne out of a desire to protect his child from the unsavoury elements within the local area, and to send him to a local university where he could *"come home lunchtime."* Despite the fact that both Charlotte and Ranjit were non-migrants, their language betrayed an alienation with the state of the local area (also discussed later in section 4.7). It could be argued that they did not sound like a couple who "belonged".

Mohammed and Mita (he from East London, she from Portsmouth) decided to embrace a macrosystem transition from more a relaxed Bengali approach to life to a stricter adherence to Islam, complete with traditional dress and religious observations. This then affected Mohammed's perception of how their daughter might be treated later in her life in Barking and Dagenham:

> *Mohammed: um: I think my daughter's experience would be totally different, eh – because, we won't be living in a sort of Asian – um, predominantly Asian area.*

Mohammed recognised their religious choices would affect their daughter's experience of the local community. (Their religious choices are discussed in greater depth in section 6.3). In a sense, this significant transition (which affected the way they dressed, along with other lifestyle choices) would have made them appear more like recent migrants themselves. Couple 4 (Irfan and Mary) appeared to have found an approach which, if not denying the need for the full ecological transition, certainly postponed it, as Irfan remained in Nigeria, and only visited his UK-based family on occasion.

For Ray and Tracey (he a UK Northerner, she a local Dagenham woman), the perspective of their current situation was exacerbated by the fact that Ray had only relatively recently come out of prison. Therefore, despite the fact that he was British, and "indigenous", in one sense he saw himself as a migrant, looking upon his own future, and that of his baby daughter with an uncertain eye in a cosmopolitan setting:

> *Ray: When I grew – grew up, it was English – English children, English teachers, you got the odd – occasional one [foreigner] that was in the class – but they spoke English, they spoke fluent English, and they understood what was right, what was wrong. Now you can't even explain that to any of them here. Because if you explain it to them, they don't understand it, because it's the language barrier.*

Much of Ray and Tracey's language was similar to that of migrants. They spoke of doctors *"putting their class before our class"*, of his exasperation of people who *"speak foreign"* in the lift of his apartment block, of African midwives who spoke too quickly, and a country which did not feel like "home" to them, echoing the voice of a woman in Dench and Gavron (2006), who described "the whites" as "the ethnic minority in Tower Hamlets" (p. 144). When asked where they would ideally like to live, the couple said halfway between London and the North; not at home in either, able to visit either, but away from the pressures of an urban life which was alienating to them. Comparing migrants to "indigenous" UK residents is not straightforward therefore, since barriers can exist for UK residents as well as migrants; long-term UK residents still have the ability to feel alienated (and isolated) within cities, despite having been brought up in the country. Ray was also from a small Northern town, which had itself suffered some economic decline; finding himself in a crowded city proved to have its own challenges.

4.3 Concepts of "home"

From interview 2, when Mohammed talked about life *"back home"* in Bangladesh (despite not having lived there for extended period of time), the concept of home and its effect on personal identity became one of the central themes of the research. Particularly at a time when couples are seeking to establish a family home through the birth of their first child, the concepts of home, family and personal identity come to the fore. "Home" is at the heart of Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, where primary dyadic (routine) interactions take place, and where an individual may be said to "belong". Giddens (1984) also reflected on the nature of "home" in historic society, as "the physical focus of family relationships and also of production" (p.122). Home is arguably also quite important to a concept of community cohesion, although it is possible for people to retreat to their separate homes without community interaction (Cantle, 2001). Indeed, Cantle recommends finding ways of encouraging migrants to feel "at home rather than as reluctant exiles" (p. 18). Beider (2011), on the other hand, relates the comments of a white participant who has seven half-Bengali step-children, and who remarks, "I can't be racist … there is no division because [Somers Town] is their home" (p. 40).

4.3.1 Building a home

Despite Mohammed's comments about Bangladesh being *"back home"*, as a couple they both seemed to be very settled in Barking and Dagenham. Nevertheless, Mohammed was still keen to point out that there were other Asians in the local area (see later section, integration in the community, also section 6.1.1), which made him feel more "at home". Some of the couples appeared to be relatively at ease in their surroundings, in that they did not express an explicit desire to move away from Barking and Dagenham. Couple 5 however (Peter and Adelina), appeared at ease, but were thinking of moving to a more affluent area, where social ills might be less prevalent. Peter also said that the area might improve if housing prices went up:

> *Peter: I think the only thing makes the area better if – if the area gets more expensive, and then, not everyone can afford it, and that's the only way that people get better …*

Many of the couples had chosen to live in Barking and Dagenham because of the house prices; these same people were now thinking of pricing others out. Edgar and Eunice (Couple

8) had settled within a local church community, and indeed belief played a key role in Mohammed and Mita's life as well. In terms of building a home however, some of the couples, despite positive interviews, showed that they either had not fully settled in their home as a couple, or had elements in their life which militated against a harmonious home. For example, Irfan and Mary were unable to create a permanent family home, since the father was only a temporary resident in the UK, and then absent for long periods of time. In order to adapt, the couple managed to create a life where "home" was both in the UK and Nigeria: they spent two months in Nigeria with their baby son before returning to the UK, and then Irfan would manage his domestic life on a bi-monthly basis. Despite this apparently disrupted existence the couple had chosen to base themselves in Dagenham, within easy reach of a local Children's Centre nursery, and appeared to have settled for that life for the time being: there was no talk in the interview of the need for Irfan to move permanently to Dagenham, or the whole family to move back to Nigeria at that point in time. This illustrates an interesting approach in systems terms - Irfan was possibly avoiding a full ecological transition to the UK, by "keeping a foot in both countries". Despite having a wife and child in Britain, he loved living in Nigeria as well, and had key microsystem relationships there (see section 4.3.5). As Alagiah (2006) wrote, there is a possibility that one's life may be indelibly attached to more than one home, and thereby (in Bronfenbrenner terms) more than one series of macrosystem influencers. Armand and Brunelle (both Congolese) had certainly never settled in the UK, and difficulties with passports and identification papers had exacerbated this:

> Brunelle: The bureaucracy is, everything is so difficult to – to rent a car is a long procedure, to get a bank account is a long procedure.

The repetition of the words "long procedure" gave this comment an almost rhythmic quality, as though Brunelle was echoing the monotony of the experience through her choice of words. They had also had a poor experience of emergency services, who assured them that their twins were "lost" after Brunelle had been admitted to hospital for bleeding (further explained in section 5.5). They compared everything in the UK to life elsewhere, and the UK always compared unfavourably. Whether it was GP surgeries in the Congo, antenatal appointments in Norway or superior hospital care in Belgium, the couple had little positive to say about the UK, and Dagenham in particular. It felt as though their flat was merely their residence at that particular point in time. Again, this was arguably a couple who were resisting the challenge of a full ecological transition from one country to another. However, as both were Congolese, but

Brunelle had lived in Norway and Armand in Belgium for much of their respective lives, they had arguably both experienced many different macrosystem influences over time.

John and Lucy were both "at home", but Lucy's parents in New Zealand had been putting pressure on them to return there (John was a local Dagenham man). Ranjit and Charlotte made it very clear that they were looking to leave, as they had been told by his parents that the area had become less desirable, and it was no longer the best place for them to raise their son. As described in the previous section, Ray and Tracey had struggled to find a home from the beginning. Ray had spent some time living in a tent in a local nature reserve after leaving prison and after meeting his partner for the first time, as they had been corresponding on the internet. After their baby was born, they visited his family in the North of England, but Tracey was not happy there; they then visited her mother, and Ray found that unacceptable. So they lived in a hotel until Social Services had located them a top-floor flat in a condemned tower block:

> *David: And this is sort of indefinite now?*
> *Ray: This is -*
> *Tracey: - Temporary.*
> *Ray: - only temporary, until they knock 'em down.*
> *David: Oh OK – so they're planning to knock these down, are they? I didn't know that.*
> *Tracey: Yeah – they're planning to knock 'em down within the next year or two.*
> *David: Wow – right. And therefore at some stage you will be moving again.*
> *Ray: Yeah, and at that stage hopefully, if all goes well, they might either put us somewhere else like – like this, which I wouldn't mind, because you get nice views, but they could also move us from out of here into a new home. That's newly built. Because this is where the majority of them are going anyway.*

So each attempt by Ray and Tracey to establish a home appeared to be thwarted. Their longer-term plans were to move out of the area altogether, although without work or a secure income, that would probably not be forthcoming for some time. Their own full ecological transition, although not from one country to another, was nevertheless a challenging one: as Ray had to acclimatise to life outside of prison (as noted in section 4.2) , when illustrating Ray's experience as an ex-offender, (arguably a fairly significant macrosystem transition in its own right), and to a life where he had significant daily dyadic and triadic (microsystem) interactions with his partner and baby. In a sense, although he may not even have set foot outside the UK in his life, as an ex-offender Ray may have felt alienated from society following his release from prison; Haney (2011) describes how ex-offenders can become

alienated from society through learned behaviour of emotional self-distancing whilst incarcerated. Ray's own story of societal reintegration was particularly unique:

> *Ray: I stayed on the streets for … how long was it?*
> *Tracey: About three – two - three months, something like –*
> *Ray: Two - three months.*
> *David: OK – so you lived on the – in a tent?*
> *Tracey: Yeah.*
> *David: Whereabouts?*
> *Ray: Er - [mentions a local park].*
> *Tracey: Don't know how you got away with it.*
> *Ray: I did! (Laughs)*

To an extent, this may reflect the process of deliberate self-isolation which Haney describes. It was the birth of their child, however, which caused Ray to place himself squarely within a family context:

> *Ray: It's made a lot of difference. I mean I - I know that – I – and I'll be up front – I was a little – you know what - and I got myself into a hell of a lot of trouble. I was in and out of prison - I had - no hope - of whatsoever. And then - C. came along, and that it – it's changed my life completely. A baby has changed my life - It's my intensitive (sic) to look after her and that is what I'm doing.*

Despite much of his life being spent in the societal structure of institutions (which he freely admitted was due to his wild youth), Ray appeared determined to forge change within his life - to become an active agent of his own future, rather than being passive. His use of the hybrid word *"intensitive"* as a merging of "intention" and "objective" (with "intense" possibly there as well) appears to indicate an added determination to reject the past in order to provide adequately for his daughter. Of course, as with all personal accounts, he may have been presenting his best possible persona in the circumstance.

Mantas and Elena, having remained unsettled in Dagenham, looked forward to a new life, and the possibility of the establishment of a home in nearby Romford. For Elena, integration into her new community would be important:

> *Elena: Yeah, I guess it will - and maybe when we move in the Romford area, I really hope we will find some other mum, with a baby, so if I am not –*
> *David: Where - where do you go to find another mum?*
> *Elena: Oh – because in the new building, we are already know it will be – a young family - who are already - have I guess, seven – seven - kids? So, it's – it's nice, we can –*
> *David: Get to know them.*

Elena: Yeah, it's really nice - I hope, I really hope to have some mum - because it will be nice for D – he play with someone.

They would leave Barking and Dagenham with the hope of a new life in Romford, new friendships, a new home, and someone to play with their new son, which for them was a significant factor in recognising that they would be integrated into their new community. For them, the success of their ecological transition involved a move to a "nicer area" (something also expressed by Peter and Adelina).

4.3.2   Extended families and "home"

Phoenix and Husain (2007) described ethnic minority extended kinship networks, which sometimes span the globe. The term "extended family" is used not only to describe families that coexist with several generations under one roof, but also to describe families which extend across several continental boundaries. As Cowan and Cowan (1992) observed, having extended family living in your home or even nearby can be a mixed blessing, as it can also provide an added strain to the relationship (also One Plus One, 2003). Katbamna (2000) said that, "The fragmentation of families across continents has had serious repercussions on the tradition of the extended family system and on informal social support networks" (p. 4). Yet this study, as well as others (Phoenix and Husain, 2009) indicate that the rise of global technological communication arguably facilitates greater transcontinental family interaction that ever before.

Five couples who were interviewed for this study lived with other family members on a semi or permanent basis. Mohammed's parents lived with them, which provided them with a sense of having an immediate extended family to hand. Amrick and Meera also lived with Amrick's parents, but they were in the process of moving to another area - having an extended family with parents may enhance the idea of being "settled", but it may also hinder the creation of a distinct "home" for the new parents. Both couples were second generation migrants from Bangladesh and India respectively.

For the Eastern Europeans in the study, the family who lived with them were usually siblings. Peter and Adelina (Albanian) lived with Adelina's younger siblings, who would help to look

after the baby when the couple needed to go out for any reason. Likewise, Vytas and Kristina (Lithuanian) had Vytas's brother living with them while he applied for places at university. Armand and Brunelle (Congolese) had Armand's brother living with them whilst he was studying at a nearby university, and as far as Edgar and Eunice (Ghanaian) were concerned, their church community (many of whom lived in their neighbourhood) was their extended family (see section 6.3).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) wrote that extended families have a beneficial effect on the development of young children. He also observed that children from such extended family backgrounds tend to have fewer socialisation issues (1986), as the parents have significant support in their primary and ecological transitions. Armand and Brunelle, who were struggling with the full transition to the UK both said that one of the reasons they did not feel "at home" was because they did not have extended family in the area (Armand's brother was only there temporarily, as a student). Meera (an Indian brought up in Germany) commented how important it was to have her own parents nearby. Although they lived with his (Amrick's) parents, she longed to spend more time with her own mother:

> *Meera: But everybody like, like every girls (sic) wants to stay - near Mum and Dad, and because, then they can play with them, and my kids um, can learn my grandparents, you know – everything you know like this, but I don't have this – this – this choice.*

To her, "belonging" involved a level of interaction with her original family. Deave et al (2008) described the importance of the woman's mother within the new mother's social sphere. Fortunately, this couple were able to visit her parents in Germany for periods of time (Amrick would leave her there with the twins for several weeks, then drive back to Germany to pick them up again). Yet, as with Irfan, this indicates a certain reluctance on her part to undergo a full ecological transition to the UK.

4.3.3 Having family nearby

Dennis and Maleka (Couple 1 - he, a local White British man, she, a Ghanaian migrant) talked about having some support from his wider family, an uncle who lived *"two streets away"*, family members who drove Maleka into hospital, while Maleka's immediate family lived in Ghana. Maleka had some relatives in South London and Scotland, but they had only visited briefly. John and Lucy (Couple 9 - he a local White British man, she a New Zealander) had a

similar experience, whereby a lot of the support Lucy received was at the hands of her partner's family. For Mary, work colleagues had supplemented the place of an extended family:

> *Mary: But as I said, it was fine, work has been brilliant, there are a lot of people from work who live close by, so if I – if there was an emergency, or anything, I could always drop in with one of my colleagues - Yeah. They've been brilliant, actually.*

Work colleagues arguably come within the sphere of exosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979); although here, Mary illustrated that the external system (which affected her own microsystem) was itself becoming a mesosystem - the colleagues were no longer external to the ecology of the family, but had become more primary a support to her, taking the place of an extended family.

Ranjit came from a large Indian family in an affluent area of Barking, who lived just down the road from them and who were, according to Ranjit, beginning to encourage him to leave the area. Adelina (Albanian) also had family down the road, although a little further away in the area of Rainham (Havering). She visited her mother shortly after the birth of her baby, and was able to compare the health services in Havering with those of Barking and Dagenham. Elena and Mantas (Couple 14, Belorussian and Lithuanian respectively) had her mother living with them for six months since the baby was born, yet that was only temporary, and Ray and Tracey (White British) struggled to find suitable family members to spend time with, both in the North or in the local area:

> *Ray: What it was, when - when we had C., was – I – I took C. over to [the North] to see my mam - and my family, and there was complications then, because I text Tracey and her sister that I wasn't going to bring her back to the atmosphere at – at her mam's, and Tracey took it the wrong way, and we – we ended up in court.*

Ray alluded to "controlling atmospheres," both at his home of origin, and that of his partner, Tracey. In their situation, they said that being away from their respective families was possibly a beneficial thing, and would have enabled them to develop something of an independent home in their flat, were in not for the fact that it was due to be demolished within two years (as noted in the previous section, 4.3.1). This therefore militated against a permanent "settling" of their own home microsystem, possibly making them (non-migrants) feel as alienated as the less contented migrants in this study.

4.3.4 Internet and the family

In addition to using the internet to gain information, the couples sometimes spoke of the accessibility of their transcontinental families through instant messaging, and Skype, particularly the Eastern European families. Lidia, who spoke of feeling *"a bit isolated"* (discussed later in section 4.5) said:

> *Lidia: Skype, Messenger, it's – it's - It's much easier - It doesn't seem like such a distance, I don't know - But um, I don't know, sometimes they say, like, 'oh, you are so far away, and I can't help you like -' if I would say, 'Oh, I have so much to do today,' and they would say, 'Oh, I have nothing to do today,' and um, they would say, 'Oh I wish would help you, but you are too far away,' and – actually, it's not that far away, because it's only three hours' journey by flight, and er – um, if I would live in the other side of Romania, which I would be travelling by train from - It would be – nine, ten hours' er – train journey, so.*

What is notable about this comment is that, although Lidia could see and talk to her family via the internet, it appeared as though the messaging service served to highlight how far away they were; she talked about being busy, and her family (although they could see and talk to each other) were only more aware that they were simply not able to come over to her house to lend support. Despite her protestations that *"it's only three hours; journey by flight"*, nonetheless this feeling somehow added poignancy to the encounter. Elena described their family interactions over the web:

> *Elena: You know like er, they was really – not really caring I am pregnant, and just walking one hour for pick up my husband, and it's like, come back, walking it's like (laughs) it's something like I would love to come back home to like, for example, now my mum stay here, but my father, and sister, they just see D., just by Skype - so like, we wish to come back in home, but just we thinking about travel - home - It's like, 'Oh my God!' again, something - it's so complicated, unfortunately. But it's not – it's nothing with England, it's just we are outside the European Communion (sic).*

Again, despite the fact that Elena could see her family, she was reminded that they could not be together, and she used language such as *"they just see D., just by Skype"*. The internet does bring families closer together in a virtual sense, but appears to highlight the lack of their physical presence all the more. Skype and messaging applications like it have revolutionised the ways families communicate, so that it no longer has to cost significant amounts to stay in touch. As Phoenix and Husain (2007) pointed out, the globalisation of families has caused a group of migratory parents to prosper almost irrespective of country:

"...they are often able to speak to their mothers on cell phones and/or Skype, or to have videoconferencing exchanges ... The fact that this group has grown enormously over the last decade demonstrates the fluidity of ethnicised parenting relationships and that culture is dynamic. The mothers, fathers and children involved have to forge new everyday practices to fit with their changing socio-economic circumstances. Their circumstances mean that considerations of parenting and ethnicity need to recognise different kinds of migration-extended families" (p. 27).

Yet the comments of the parents above indicate that, if anything, Skype appears to highlight the longing which families experience through separation. It may also cause the parents themselves to experience a greater longing for their original macrosystems, possibly working against a successful ecological transition.

4.3.5 "Back home"

A throwaway comment by Mohammed alerted me to a singular phenomenon: the concept of "home" and its place within a migrant's life in their new location, but also within the context of his or her identity as an individual. It raises questions such as whether an immigrant can feel "at home" in a new country, and what the key criteria might be; when one's family is spread out internationally, and whether that helps or hinders the process of assuming a new home. Ironically, Mohammed himself spent most of his childhood and adult life in the UK. To all intents and purposes he was an English citizen; his parents' home was in the East End of London, yet he still referred to Bangladesh as "home": *we're both Bangladeshi - Um - both born back home, um: came here at the age of four."* This statement concurs with Alagiah's (2006) perspective; he had a similar affinity with Sri Lanka despite being also able to call both Africa and England "home". Alagiah asked to what extent a concept of "home" might be served by a national identity (a macrosystem phenomenon with microsystem implications). Mohammed was explicit that they were both Bangladeshi as well as British. This, despite having lived the best part of their 30 years in the UK as British citizens. Time, therefore, does not necessarily have an effect on one's sense of home.

For Irfan, there was the added complication of working in one country and having a family in another. This was a man who said that he called his brothers in Nigeria every day at 5:20 pm exactly:

Irfan: ... I have four brothers - I have er - half brothers - so. And, I would say we are very, very close, I would say that, (although we) live far, far apart - like a - one hour flight - from each other - We still get in touch with each other (at) 5:20 every day.

Visiting the family home in Nigeria was quite a significant rite of passage for this couple's young baby for, if circumstances remained the same, the boy might grow up to view both Dagenham and Nigeria as "home". It also illustrated how Irfan appeared to be unable to make a full ecological transition from Nigeria to the UK: whilst his partner Mary was fairly "settled" in her home in Dagenham, he was unable to be, as he still had career and family (significant mesosystem relationships) in Nigeria. This form of transnationalism is described by Phoenix and Husain (2007), although many of the families described by the authors are separated for longer periods of time. This raises a question about Bronfenbrenner's concept of a "developmental trajectory" (as previously stated in section 2.2.3): to what extent travelling to and from England prevents the father from developing a joint trajectory with the mother who is left in the UK. It could be argued however, that their joint trajectory is intact, merely unconventional (assuming that "conventional" is two parents staying in one home together to raise a child). Armand however, was quite unequivocal as to the fact that, for him, the UK was not "home":

Armand: So it was like, when I was a student, it was easy for me to get to school, from this area and er - after we get married, we just decided to stay here, and wait until we go back home.

The idea of "deciding to stay" until they returned "home" involved studying for three years at a university, and subsequently having twins. From other exchanges, it was very clear that Armand and Brunelle had a low opinion of life in the UK; yet they did not appear to be planning to move quickly either. "Home" for Brunelle might well have been in Norway, where she was brought up as a Congolese immigrant, and where her parents were still; it might have been in Belgium where Armand had family, or in Kinshasa where his family still had property. When I pointed out to them that they had few family members in the UK, Brunelle responded:

Brunelle: Um – that's probably another part – another side of the story that makes us not really feel like we belong here, because. We have friends, not any childhood friends, friends that we've made along - but then we don't have any families, we really don't have anything that um, ties us to the UK, and I think that also contributes to the fact that we don't really feel at home here.

From this, one could conclude that, from Brunelle's perspective at least, the presence of some or all extended family members is important to enable one to feel "at home". Their dismissive attitude towards all things British might also have some of its roots in this fact: they were living a microsystem life with their twins in the UK, but were choosing to retain macrosystem cultural, linguistic (French) and familial mesosystem ties with their other "home" countries. It is also entirely possible that, had they felt "at home" in the UK, they may still have felt that the Congo and Norway were "home" as well. Vytas spoke about Lithuania, and how mortgages were lower there, but employment was not as plentiful:

> *Vytas: That - that's the reason why it's difficult. The other way like, things, basic things like food, chairs, and - and this and that, you know, stuff for a baby to - to - to supply that is quite easy - it's no problem with that - it's no problem paying the bills if we – we work, it – it's not a problem, which we could have back home - but we wouldn't have as big mortgage as we have now, we would have lived in different position, you know but – that's the way it goes, here - here we have no choice, we have to rent, or this, so we choose this [mortgage] and quite difficult.*

From this quote, there is a clear indicator that one of the reasons he moved to the UK was for employment. "Back home" they would have had a problem paying bills, but the mortgage would have been smaller. Again, the phrase "back home" indicates a sense of looking over one's shoulder to the past, the home that was then, before facing the future, however uncertain that might be:

> *Vytas: we - we moved here because of the costs - first of all. We didn't know the area, really, we didn't know what's what and what we just heard a little bit, and that was it, and er, hopefully we'll move house in ten years time, hopefully, but you never know. You never know, so.*

Here, Vytas indicates he is willing to devote himself to a life in the UK (at least for ten years and possibly more), and therefore embrace the implications of a full ecological transition.

The phrase *"back home"* was used by Edgar and Eunice, first by Edgar as he quoted the African proverb *"it takes a whole village to raise a child"* as originating *"back home"* and by Eunice, who said that she trained in the theatre arts *"back home"*, in Ghana. For Lucy, the education system in New Zealand had more appeal when considering her daughter's future, and she said *"we're intending to go back to New Zealand"* even though her partner had never been there up to that point. Her parents had expressed their wish that their daughter return, and that was the expectation: *"I think it's the same for every Kiwi, though."*

Despite their desire to move away from the area in which Ranjit had grown up, he and Charlotte were as "at home" in Barking as anywhere at the point of the interview. Much of his grievance with the decline of the local community might arguably be borne out of having seen the area where he had been raised, enter what was to him, a period of critical decline. If the couple were to move away to Essex or Wales (as they had mused during the interview) they might have started to refer to Barking as "back home".

Several couples were either in the process of moving to create a new home, or had just moved. Amrick had never lived anywhere else for long, having grown up, married and raised his twins in the parental home in Barking. Now he and his wife were about to embark on another period of home-making in a nearby town in the neighbouring borough. As seen earlier (in this chapter, in section 4.3.2), Meera made the notable comment that, *"everybody wants living (sic) with Mum and Dad"*. This was said in the context of her having to leave her parental home in Germany to live with Amrick.

Mantas and Elena (Couple 14) were in the process of moving to the neighbouring borough as well, having alighted temporarily in Dagenham, and found it unsuited to their needs. Elena still used the words, "in my country" when she referred to Belarus, and this is unsurprising, since neither she nor her husband had been in the UK for very long. For people like Mantas and Elena who represent two nationalities (she Belorussian, he Lithuanian) and therefore arguably two separate migratory ecological transitions, "home" might be a more fluid concept. Marius and Lidia had just moved to Dagenham from Leyton, so that they could buy a house, rather than rent. Lidia remarked on the permanence of their status as home-owners:

> *Lidia: So – we started from nothing. And we - um, we were thinking the other day, like, oh do we realise – we have a house, we have big commitments here – it's not like you are packing up your things and you just leave, you – you just can't now!*

Again, it is unclear as to whether *"home"* is a place where you *"can't just leave"* due to long-standing financial commitments, as Lidia indicates here. Arguably, financial commitment (and its social class implications) plays a significant part in the development of the ecological microsystem; Bronfenbrenner pointed out that family income was one of the key determinants of social class (1986).

Tony and Sally appeared to be very much at home with their twins, their regular work at the same location in London, and of all the couples they appeared in some respects to be the most contented, the most settled, although that did not prevent them from speculating on a future move, as Sally said: *"I'd like to move out into Essex, that's the idea."* Perhaps the couple whose situation was most poignant were Ray and Tracey. Despite Dagenham being her "home-town", they found themselves homeless for a period of time after their baby daughter was born, before being allocated a "home" which was ultimately due to be destroyed.

There is tension, therefore, for all of the couples who were undergoing the primary transition to parenthood: between the appreciation and longing for their "home" of origin, and yet seeking to embrace a full transition to their current residence and status as parents in their adopted new community. If that adopted community seems to contain cultural macrosystem elements which make them feel unwelcome, however, or alienate them further, then that arguably makes the ecological transition to belonging that much harder. Also, to a certain extent, the constant reflection on life "back home" encourages new parents to be backward-looking, rather than embracing the full implications of the ecological transition to life as a future family unit.

4.3.6 Experiences of xenophobia

Xenophobia is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "a deep antipathy to foreigners," the New Oxford American Dictionary expanding that definition to "an intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries." Despite the existence of local British National Party support (a cultural macrosystem phenomenon in Barking and Dagenham: short-lived politically yet with lingering social manifestations in most borough neighbourhoods), the couples in this study discussed remarkably few incidents of xenophobia. Occasional comments and incidents appeared in their narratives, and these were probed further. Mohammed (Bangladeshi English), for example, twice talked about the Asian people in the local area, and how happy this therefore made him feel. Armand and Brunelle (Congolese) were very forthright in how they felt about living in Dagenham. They were the first to talk about the political situation explicitly:

David: You mentioned the people - are the people friendly?

> *Armand: Not really, first of all, um I think with – um, after analysing the area, and at the elections - um, this part was most of all from people – from um, these extreme – er, British parties - And also with the news, we know that this area is like, poor area, so, it's what you get, especially -*
> *Brunelle: It feels - kind of poor -*
> *Armand: And um (laughs) and also – um, with our background, um – we are not really into … we don't really fit into our shoes here.*

The phrase *"we don't … fit into our shoes here"* is an eloquent expression of a lack of belonging. Armand went on to say that he did not feel safe, and felt "exposed" because of their skin colour:

> *Armand: Yeah. I feel more relaxed, open-minded people may be – lots like feeling maybe when you are walking outside you feel like someone just – you are in danger - yeah? And also as we are from - we are blacks - I think I wouldn't even live in a – a all black community, yeah, in order to bond – to blend in to the British culture - So it would be a kind of - mixed area where you'd have people like - last time I went to - Uxbridge? - that area seems to be good - I went there once.*
> *David: That's interesting you mentioned the elections, that's um, cause one of the things I'm interested in is how people feel that may have influenced their feelings about the area, if at all.*
> *Armand: Because er – those guys were doing their propaganda on the - on the ward here? At the Dagenham Heathway station. So they had everything with them, so it's not a really secured area for people like us.*

This snippet of conversation illustrates several points. Firstly, Armand felt *"in danger"* as a black man simply walking about in Dagenham. Secondly, he was aware that other areas (in this case, Uxbridge) might be more cohesive in a racial sense (Armand had actually only been to Uxbridge once before: *"I went there once"*). Thirdly, he described the British National Party's election campaign of 2010, when he described *"those guys … doing their propaganda … at the Dagenham Heathway station"*. The final point is that it's not a *"really secured area for people like us…"* His language here is almost one of emotional alienation, the use of the term *"people like us"* capturing a sense in which his race are disregarded, or even threatened locally, simply by their colour. The fact that the interview was conducted after the 2010 elections, when the British National Party were deselected from local office had little relevance, because he still felt unsafe and not *"secured"*. He also talks in binary terms of "good" and "bad" areas, although given that English was not his primary language, that is understandable.

Vytas and Kristina (Lithuanian) also observed the attitudes of local people towards foreigners in general, regardless of colour; but rather than using polarised language of good or bad, they

were far more accepting and understanding of local attitudes, though not excusing them. The couple's first reaction to my question about the attitude of local people was quite unequivocal:

> *David: But do you find people are welcoming, they just sort of greet you on the thing, they coo at the baby?*
> *Vytas: No, No.*
> *Kristina: None of them, really.*

They went on to explain,

> *Vytas: You can see the pressure sometimes. We are foreign. You can see – you can feel it, some people - obvious, that's obvious, they, they - especially this time, they don't like, they don't really like – that's why we're not going socialising in this area, because we're not comfortable - that's quite – quite a big issue, but I fully understand, I fully understand - Everybody's er – everybody's angry at the moment, and that's the way it goes - There is no aggression going on - But just feel it. You can feel it. You know.*

This exchange is interesting on a number of levels. The couple saw the situation almost entirely from the viewpoint of local people, and chose to *"understand."* Contrasted with Armand and Brunelle whose language was one of safety and danger, good and bad, they went on to use phrases like *"that's the way it goes ... I can understand that"*. Unlike Armand and Brunelle, however, Vytas and Kristina are white, so there is not an explicitly racial element to their perspective of local attitudes. They also acknowledged that there are a *"few foreigners living in this area",* and later talked of *"loads of Lithuanians"*, and accepted the tension: *"just feel it .You can feel it. You know."* It should also be noted that it is probably quite rare for people to acknowledge a stranger's baby in London.

Despite an official UK-wide acceptance of other cultures and races (macrosystem), it would appear to some of the parents in this study that Barking and Dagenham was still subject to other cultural perceptions: possibly a macrosystem at odds with nationally accepted norms. That this then had an impact on racial perceptions illustrates the tension some of the parents felt within the local area, manifested in Vytas's "feelings". The lack of comfort which he and Elena therefore experienced as a result, could militate against any sense of "belonging" in the local area.

Ranjit (second generation Sikh Indian) joked about his partner Charlotte (who was white Welsh) being *"racist"*, yet her language of the area becoming *"too multicultural"* is similar in its broad sweep to the language of Tracey (white) when she described all foreigners as

"asylum seekers". Ranjit's interpretation of multiculturalism was in the context of government policy, whereas her language was more generic, she used the term to describe the area as being too racially diverse. Charlotte's language was fairly strong when describing new communities:

> *Charlotte: The cultural – multicultural environment around here, and I think that's changing as well, I mean originally obviously it was quite a mix of – of um, different – I think now it's quite Eastern Europeans coming into the area, you've got, I think I've noticed actually a lot more blacks um, and Nigerians moving into the area, whereas I would've said predominantly, a year ago it was predominantly Asian wasn't it?*

She used words such as *"blacks"* and *"Nigerians"* as well as *"Eastern Europeans"*, grouping not only by race, but also by nationality. Her language and attitude did not appear to recognise her own son's heritage as partly Welsh and partly Indian at this point. Ranjit, however, does make this point later on, and considers what effect it might have on his son:

> *Ranjit: But him now, being half Asian and half white - you know, he's er - you know, 'oh!' - we've confused him already, but I don't want him to feel that, you know, 'I can't be friends with this sect, and I can't be friends with that sect.' Because we were never brought up like that, we were brought up to be -*
> *Charlotte: Friends with everyone.*
> *Ranjit: Friends with everyone. As long as they're decent human beings, it's fine, do what you want.*

Here, both Charlotte and Ranjit recognised that their son might have challenges as he is *"half Asian and half white"* but that he will be brought up, as they were to be *"friends with everyone."*

Ray and Tracey (White British) would probably have been archetypal people for the concern of Armand and Brunelle. When Ray prefaced his sentence with, *"I'm not being racist or owt"* it is followed by a comment that they are unable to go anywhere without hearing people *"speaking in foreign."* He then qualified why he could not be racist *"as one of me uncles is black"*. In response to my questioning as to whether they felt the country was *"too open"*, Tracey said, *"Yes. That's Labour, isn't it? That's Labour."* Later on in the interview, she commented why she believed they could not get an appointment for her daughters' conjunctivitis:

> *Tracey: That might be why as well - that might be why there's not enough appointments, because of all them asylum seekers as well, that's what I feel. Too many people – too many*

– it's too overpopulated down here. That's why there's lack of appointments, the health care – lack of health care. And there's – that's why – also, they're saying there's a baby boom. More babies being born because of asylum seekers as well. So there's less beds, you know, less care for pregnant women and that. Giving birth. Cause there's less midwives, ain't there, because of more people giving birth. That's why – that's why I don't like it down here, do we? It's too overpopulated.

Ray believed the GP surgery (where the GP was not White British) had discriminated against them, by *"putting their culture before a new-born baby."* Tracey then went on to use language which described *"asylum seekers"* causing the area to be *"overpopulated"* because *"more people are giving birth"* because *"more babies being born because of asylum seekers."* She used language which talked of others, *"they're saying there's a baby boom"* both Tracey and Ray are quite general in their language: *"might be ... they're saying ..."* and *"less midwives ... because of more people giving birth."*

In terms of Tracey's perception of "overpopulation"; in 2011, the total population of Barking and Dagenham had only increased by 12 percent since 2001; however the ethnic minority population had grown from 20 percent in 2001 to 50 percent in 2011. This could give some explanation to his feelings of "overpopulation".

4.4   Cultural responses to Barking and Dagenham

The families within this study expressed varying responses to Barking and Dagenham. As some couples appeared to resist the pull of acculturation, others were happy to integrate, to settle into a new phase of belonging. Culture is something which is established at macrosystem level, but which has its outworking in all other systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979), as well as at microsystem and dyadic levels. Phoenix and Husain (2007) referred to many of the parents as experiencing "biculturalism" (p. 27); a possibly harmonious coexistence of two or more cultural influences within one's home. The analysis is further complicated by the complex understanding of the word "culture" - something which in itself, is possibly culturally established. In this context, an appropriate definition might be, "the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society" (OED, 2012).

4.4.1 Acculturation

With the influx of new migrant communities, Barking and Dagenham has experienced the beginnings of what Tower Hamlets experienced a generation ago (Dench and Gavron, 2006), something which might be termed a "re-culturation", which, unlike acculturation (the gradual assimilation of cultural mores of the host country), might be said to re-define the host cultures in the light of the migrating communities. Unlike Tower Hamlets which experienced a predominantly Bengali transformation however, Barking and Dagenham has experienced a population change which has seen a great increase in both African (from 4% in 2001 to 15% in 2011) and Eastern European (from 2.6% to 8%). Beider (2011) talked about new populations needing to be acculturated almost as though it is a naturally occurring synthetic process, an individual response to migration. Alderliesten et al (2007) on the other hand, illustrated that it is more than language competency, but that it is a process of choice, frequently made by successive generations to the original migrants themselves: a choice to assimilate macrosystem beliefs, practices and mores (in Bronfenbrenner terms) which then have repercussions at all other system levels.

It is not straightforward to discuss acculturation within such a cohort of couples as in this study, as many are first generation migrants; and determining characteristics of acculturation may differ between couples. For example, it may be more than language, it may be expressed in dress or hairstyles, or more profound lifestyle choices. If anything, as noted later in section 6.3 when discussing identity and religion, Mohammed and Mita illustrated that rather than becoming acculturated, they were returning to their Islamic roots, and not just Bengali traditions, but more mainstream Arabic Islamic traditions.

Therefore they were, as second-generation Bengali British citizens, "re-culturating" themselves from a culturally more Western family into a more traditional Islamic family - transforming their own family culture at macrosystem level. In contrast, some of the parents, although they had ethnic minority roots, were very "British" in their upbringing and outlook. Lloyd and Shonya for example, who both shared a Caribbean heritage, grew up separately in North and East London, with parents who worked for British Rail; Lloyd keen to point out that he was born *"within the sound of Bow Bells."* Both shared a cultural heritage with Tony and Sally, for example: native Londoners, one a Caribbean couple, one a British/Irish white couple. Many of the couples had a mixed heritage. Peter and Adelina shared Albanian roots,

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although Adelina was a second generation Albanian woman who had been brought up and schooled in Essex, and Peter was a recent migrant by comparison:

Adelina: We come from Albania, both of us.
Peter: … she got her family here, and … I got my family back there …

Adelina had been brought up in a neighbouring borough, but Peter had lived in Barking and Dagenham for almost eight years. Ranjit, although second-generation Sikh, was similar to Lloyd and Shonya in his background: Barking born and bred, he dressed as a Westerner, and his opinion of religious and cultural assimilation within the school system was positive:

Ranjit: I mean where I grew up, I grew up in the school when they were singing hymns …
But they stopped that, for the simple reason being a certain sect said, 'No. It's wrong.' But
I – I had no problem with it, my parents had no problems – well I quite enjoyed it (laughs)
to be honest with you. But seriously, we all would go along in the assembly and sang and I
quite enjoyed it and so did my friends, and my family and everything. It didn't – it didn't
faze me on that I weren't – it, it wasn't going to be, 'oh I'm going to be mass converted
now,' my parents were never - didn't think, 'Oh no - he's going to come with a cross now.'

Ranjit appeared to indicate in this passage (where he was talking about the negative side of multiculturalism, as discussed in the next section) that such examples of acculturation can be a positive thing, and that the form of multiculturalism where such acculturation is frowned upon, is negative. Amrick was similar to Ranjit, as a second generation Indian man growing up in Barking. His wife Meera's responses to the community were interesting, however; as an Indian woman who had grown up in Germany, rather than shop in Essex shopping centres such as Lakeside in Thurrock, she preferred to go to nearby Newham, because it was "like India." The concept of gravitating towards locations which feel comfortable because they resemble a country of origin is echoed in Sales et al (2003), where a research participant said:

"There are many Chinese people, Chinese restaurants, Chinese shops, all in 'Chinese style'. If you go to Chinatown, you feel more comfortable, because it looks like China" (Sales et al, 2003: 2).

Marius and Lidia are an interesting case study with regard to differing personal approaches to acculturation within a dyad, and I shall be looking at their relationship in more detail in the next section.

Phoenix and Husain (2007) referred to acculturation within ethnic and cultural divisions: "in general, Hindus were keen to acculturate, while Muslims were more likely to want to maintain their home culture. Sikhs were in between. Class and place were also important in that young people from professional backgrounds were keener to acculturate…" (pp.27-28). It could be said that acculturation, the acceptance of one's assimilation into a new culture and macrosystem characteristics, is an example of a successful ecological transition for migrant families.

4.4.2 Multiculturalism

Unlike acculturation, which describes the assimilation of cultural mores into one's personal sphere (or microsystem), multiculturalism has a different etymology. It is defined as "relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society" (Oxford English Dictionary). Multiculturalism featured as a consistent theme in Alagiah (2006) and Cantle (2001), but in different ways. Both asked questions of multicultural policy. Alagiah asked whether institutional tolerance for diversity has led to an indifference toward the growth of separate communities (Alagiah, 2006: 2). Cantle on the other hand, enquired whether cohesion can be truly achieved in situations where different lifestyles and cultures are not tolerated (Cantle, 2001: 70). The interview with Ranjit and Charlotte raised the issue of multiculturalism directly, although initially Charlotte used the term to describe how she felt Barking and Dagenham was too racially diverse:

> *Charlotte: I think it is just very multicultural around here, so it's difficult when you're in a classroom, where, for teachers, where maybe half the – um, children don't necessarily speak English as their first language.*

Ranjit, however, addressed the issue from a policy perspective and made several points on the issue of local multiculturalism in Barking and Dagenham:

- the policy of encouraging small communities to establish their own cultural centres panders to the minority;
- centres for small communities encourage those communities to mingle at the expense of the wider community;
- Barking and Dagenham is now so diverse, such individual community centres are no longer necessary;

- allowing small community centres creates a society of parallels, where people from different backgrounds do not mix;

- the money should, instead, be given to create cohesive community centres where people from all cultures and faiths can mix.

The nature of multiculturalism from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner is an interesting one: given that culture itself is established as a macrosystem characteristic with microsystem effects, it could be argued that multiculturalism invites a clash of macrosystems within a local framework, or the encouragement of parallel macrosystems which do not interact. Ranjit discussed this issue within the context of bringing up his baby son in the area, where separate communities are encouraged to grow in parallel, thus arguably fostering a lack of community cohesion:

> *Ranjit: The future is the most challenging thing for this - for any child growing up in this area, and, um I'm going to go out on a limb on this – and, with the current climate, with terrorism and people going - opening up their own multicultural centres and you've got one centre just for a particular sects or groups, another one to another sect or group, and another one for another ... the time now at this stage has gone too far now - they, they need to be shut down, and a finance for them to be absolutely revoked. And then the focus should be that all the cultures should mix – you should not have a separate sect there, a separate sect there, and a separate – that's when you, sort of develop hatred towards other people, and you say, 'well, oh no, those people are not - du-du-duh, and those people are not du-du-duh', then you will come to a stage where you don't mingle with him, you don't mingle with him, and you don't mingle with him. And then as you're growing up as a child, you think, 'Hang on, what's going on there?'*

As with Alagiah (2006), Ranjit aligned the lack of multicultural cohesion with terrorism as its most extreme expression. He could only see the need to mix cultural macrosystems. Beider (2011) also talked about the risks involved in allowing separate cultural expressions to grow in parallel, and he made the point that the growth of small community centres encourages separateness and can even increase tension within different communities.

Charlotte commented that when a school facility is labelled as *"Sikh-run"* or *"Muslim-run"*, that *"reinforces the segregation to a certain extent"*. Ranjit remembered that when he, as a young Sikh boy, went to an English school, he participated in the Christian worship, and there "was no harm in that". Yet another father such as Mohammed for example, who had chosen to adopt a stricter Arabic style of Islamic expression, might not be able to tolerate their daughter growing up singing Christian hymns, simply because they had chosen to live in the United

Kingdom. Edgar was particularly articulate upon the point of multiculturalism being separatist, rather than cohesive:

Edgar: I don't see a lot of cohesion – A lot of dialogue between blacks and white or between whites and Asians, I don't see that happening.

It is not clear from reviewing the recording whether this meant that he could not imagine it happening (which would be one interpretation of his comment), or whether he could not actually see it occurring at that present moment in time. Successful dialogue might effect change at the macrosystem level, which could have an effect on subsequent systems. So from Edgar's point of view, social cohesion occurs when there is "dialogue" between the different races, rather than encouraging them to develop separate community identities in parallel to one another. His solution for cohesion was therefore for each community group to "come out of our comfort zones", although he then reduced it to maintaining "good neighbourliness", which would be a mesosystem outworking of the macrosystem values.

The issues of multiculturalism impinge upon this study, as they indicate how far the parents themselves feel the issue has grown, which in turn affects how they feel about their new role as parents, and bringing up their own children in an area where people view other cultures with suspicion and even fear. It affects the primary transition to parenthood, because there is the option of removing the family from the area altogether, so that the parents are always looking to a new beginning in a "better area", never feeling as though they can truly settle, or as though their emergent family actually belong in their current location.

Marius and Lidia - a short comparative study in integration

Out of the fifteen couples, Marius and Lidia presented a perspective on the idea and practice of multiculturalism. The couple were selected as this case study as they appeared to be illustrative of a core dichotomy within multiculturalism, and within one particular family: that of willing acculturation, and that of a resistance to it.

Taken from the viewpoint that both parents were Romanian, and both had been in the UK for some time (Lidia for nine years, Marius for six), Lidia displayed a confident mastery of the English language (which she had not learned before coming to the UK): she was conversant

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with business practices, able to hold down a demanding job as a customer care associate for a travel company whilst taking senior accountancy exams in English in order to complete her chosen career. Her life was relatively fully acculturated at macrosystem (society, culture), exosystem (work), mesosystem (friends, college) and microsystem levels. Her husband Marius on the other hand, though effusive and welcoming, was extremely hesitant in English conversation, with possibly the most limited vocabulary of all of the parents whom I interviewed. He went upstairs during the interview to put their baby son to bed, and only emerged after some considerable time, and even then had many of his questions answered directly or supplemented by his articulate wife.

The reason for this appeared to be straightforward, although it is clear that Lidia was also very capable in languages, as she had already studied French at a Romanian university. She talked about the Western concept of time, which was to her, a cultural phenomenon, as in her home country of rural Romania, time was thought of as fluid: people did not plan ahead particularly, there were few calendars, people made appointments as they went along. This was, to her, an accepted Romanian macrosystem phenomenon. But then she worked as an au pair with an English family for a while, and while she was there, she began the process of acculturation, which saw her acquire the use of diaries (a microsystem outworking of the adoption of a new, temporal-based macrosystem), using English in every day conversation, and even learning about rugby and cricket:

> *Lidia: - because, being an au pair, I've seen the kind of relationship which the families are creating between them, through school, through nurseries, and - they can make friends with the other (children) - because it's very different – in my country, you just say, 'Oh, you go and you will play with the neighbour' whether [sic - whereas] here, you have to, 'oh, this date, you will go to that – that child house, and on this date, that child will come to your house –' whether in my country, it is – not like that. Where there, there is more – um, like choice to, 'OK, I will just knock at the door to er, go over and play or um, I'll just ask my neighbour to look after my child' whether (sic – "whereas") here, first of all, it doesn't happen – doesn't happen to ask your neighbour to look after your child, and I think will look strange if I will ask my neighbour to look after my child, and um – yeah, it's more – you have to plan in advance here than. And also I was saying to – to Marius: 'we have this Bank Holiday, also – what are we going to do? Let's plan it.' And he was like, 'Why to plan it?'*

Therefore living according to his original Romanian macrosystem values, Marius found her desire to plan a Bank Holiday in advance rather unnecessary. Lidia then went on to explain Marius's recent life story in the context of hers. After she had come to the UK, she had lived and worked with an English family, becoming part of the daily life not only of the family, but

of the community around her as well. She had become naturally acculturated: in systems terms, adopting English macrosystem values and allowing them to impinge on all her life systems. Marius, on the other hand, had had a different experience of England:

Lidia: And I was saying, 'well we have to get used to, you know, here, when D. will be in the nursery and everything, we will have to plan in advance what we do, when' and er, so and yet, because I have also lived in families and I have seen this kind of um, schedule and routine, and for me it is much easier – for him, it is a bit different because he lived with, mostly with Romanians. So he lived with here for, I think he came in 2006, so nearly 6 years – less then - five years, and I've been here for, er- since 2003. So that - nearly nine years. Eight years and something. And he lived mostly with – and we met only three years ago, so before then – each of us, we had separate lives. So he lived only with Romanians, and the Romanian community, and, I don't know, watching Romanian television and things like that, whether me, I was in English families, and only with them, doing, I don't know rugby, cricket all these kinds of things.

So Marius, despite having spent a comparable amount of time in the UK, had spent his time here among Romanians, in the UK Romanian community, and *"watching Romanian television".* He had not had to make any ecological or systems transitions, as his community had embraced his desire to remain firmly Romanian on British soil. In the early twenty-first century, with communication advances such as digital television, Skype and the internet, it is perfectly possible for a person to live in any country within a community which is completely separate from the greater society of that country: their language and culture (macrosystem) being entirely represented in their choice of websites, their newspapers, their local supermarkets, their choice of television programmes (mesosystem) , their food, their books, their friends, their community, their individual lifestyle (microsystem). This illustrates what Alagiah (2006) and Cantle (2001) talked about when they said that multiculturalism allowed for an indifference to a wholly separate community within a larger society. Phoenix and Husain (2007) also illustrated the extremes which arise when "informal segregation can mean that people living in a multicultural society lack interethnic knowledge" (p.25). Having a baby however, did mean that Marius had to interact with health services. Noting as well that he and Lidia had taken out a mortgage, and that he was regularly employed illustrates the fact that for some people, being culturally isolated does not necessarily result in economic deprivation. This case study shows that acculturation (even within a close relationship) is not always straightforward, yet the outcomes can be positive, despite a seeming reluctance on the part of one party (in this instance, Marius) to immerse himself more wholeheartedly into the British way of life.

4.5 Isolation within the community

Lucy, Kristina, Lidia and Elena actually used the word "isolated" at times to describe their feelings after the birth of their children. Tracey remarked that the area around their new flat on the condemned estate was "isolated" compared to the estate where she grew up. Drawing from Mauthner (1995), isolation is a particular issue with new parents, and mothers in particular, borne from the isolating effect of the primary transition to motherhood, and vulnerability to depression. Looking at Bronfenbrenner's model - it is the primary transition from being a couple to parents which alters the primary dyadic couple-relationship into a triadic one, and one which potentially alienates the father (Bronfenbrenner 1979). This moment of transition is critical, and both mother and father are vulnerable: the father vulnerable to a baby displacing their primary dyadic interaction, the mother vulnerable to isolation as the father seeks identity in his exosystem relationships, such as work colleagues. The mother may be reduced to a small number of mesosystem relationships, or potentially (especially with migrant mothers, unsure of their belonging in a relatively new country) none at all. Schumacher and Meleis (1994) underlined the importance of social support in aiding successful transition, as did Priel and Besser (2002), "Social support has been found to represent a major psychosocial variable involved in the adaptation to motherhood" (p. 345).

Cowan and Cowan (1992) also observed how isolating motherhood can be. Mauthner (1995) wrote that isolation is a high-risk factor in postnatal depression. Deave (2008) described one mother feeling "alone" after the health visitor had paid her last visit. Most of the parents in this study had some experience of the isolating nature of new parenthood. For some, like Maleka, it was difficult, others like Lidia chose to embrace the challenge of the issue. Maleka described the effect which her parenthood had on her existing friendships, and how her friends had pulled away: *"If I don't call, they don't call me - I don't find - some of them – um, it's a bit distant."*

Few other couples stated that friends had ceased to contact them as Maleka had, although Meera found it difficult to attend their local Children's Centre in order to establish new relationships, as the Centre policy was that a mother could only bring one baby. For Meera, who had twins, this was a considerable obstacle: *"Yeah, bring only one child, and I said, 'where shall I leave another one?' Because I've got two kids –"*

Despite this, Amrick and Meera had a fairly good social circle, talking often of spending time with their "friends". Mary, however, relied on her colleagues at work for socialising, as she did not know many of her neighbours, and her husband spent months away, working in Nigeria. When asked about her circles of support and relationship, she described her work colleagues as *"brilliant, actually"*. Mary's social support network, therefore, was with her exosystem "colleagues" from her workplace. Mauthner (1995) emphasised the importance of social support to combat isolation: "mothers' feelings of psychological and emotional well-being are intertwined with the quality and nature of the many different relationships in which they are involved" (p.312). This is particularly true of first-time mothers in her study. Mauthner also pointed out that going out to work does not necessarily help; for some of her mothers it was a postponement of loneliness. Mary's experience in this study can be said to be a positive anomaly. Other mothers, such as Lucy, struggled with the concept of a *"mothers' network"*, and found that, despite meeting other parents at Children's Centre courses and the like, they often ended up still feeling fairly isolated: *"If it wasn't for John's sister and the friends that I already had - oh, my goodness, I don't know what (laughs) - what I would have done."* Lucy received support from her husband's family, and her existing friends. Her words are quite telling, *"if it wasn't for - oh, my goodness, I don't know - what I would have done."* It shows that, if she had not had the support of her husband's family and friends (mesosystem relationships), she may have become even more isolated than she already felt she was. Like Lucy, Charlotte found the idea of a mother's network appealing, but the reality was different:

> *Charlotte: So the Yummy Mummy network's not very good - at all - in that - you don't form strong relationships - with consistent, um - consistent women, so that your children can form bonds if that makes sense.*

Despite the ideal model of a new mothers' network being formed, the reality was that no strong relationships were coming from those groups, owing to the group's "fluidity". Nevertheless, Charlotte had the fairly strong support of Ranjit's extended family who lived nearby. For the Eastern European contingent, the lack of family was all too evident. As Vytas said: *"No family. No-one's here, there's no-one to help, that's very difficult."* His language started to become slightly more distressed at this point, as the couple repeated the words *"no family"*. Both he and Kristina felt a strong sense of isolation in London:

> *Vytas: At the weekend, we just – literally, go shopping - this and that, and that's it. No social life in this area.*

Kristina: Yeah. In this area really, there's no sort of like, cafés, nice cafés, you could just go with a - just with a girlfriend just to have a cup of coffee, that – that really lacks. You know, that kind of thing.

Kristina also talked about depression in the context of social isolation, although only Vytas called it depression:

Vytas: She had baby blues for a long time – big time. Big time.
Kristina: Yeah. I did. Yeah … Especially –
Vytas: - depression.

Notably, Kristina did not call it *"depression"* - her husband Vytas called it that, as he (like Ray) often finished his partner's sentences - but both attributed it to feelings of isolation, of an incomplete and chaotic house (Vytas was a carpenter and the house was in the process of renovation), and a lack of *"socialising - going out."* Their situation was similar to that of Mantas and Elena, who had the baby's grandmother staying with them for six months, but were unsure what social support they would get when she returned to Belarus:

David: Do you have a network of other friends around?
Elena: Um – not really, actually.

Many of the couples struggled with isolation, both from the viewpoint of being new parents, but also being new citizens of the UK, and coming to a new country, trying to establish a new home, and to connect with local people: similar families, or colleagues from work. Characteristically, Lidia laughed at the thought of isolation, though she confessed to feeling it at times. Tracey admitted to depression (Ray noting that she was *"shy … with other people"*).

Despite this, very few of the parents in this study actually referred to "depression": only Tracey and Vytas, although it is clear that the language of some of the other mothers (Maleka, Kristina, Lucy and Charlotte) at times bordered on the more distressed. From a systems prospective, the families are going through quite radical change, as their microsystems fluctuate, as their mesosystem (e.g. friends) and exosystem (e.g. careers) alter. Bronfenbrenner's ecological transition is fundamental, and yet is only negative if the parties involved are unable to cope with the pace of the change within their individual systems (1979). Although both Bateman (2009) and Burgess (2008) reasoned that fathers can become depressed, there was no indication of that within this particular cohort; and de Montigny et al (2006) wrote that greater social support for parents can contribute to greater "maternal

perceptions of efficacy" (p.1), which indicates another important reason for developing effective community-based social support networks for new parents.

4.6 Integration in the community

Many of the couples described positive experiences in their local area: whether with neighbours (mesosystems) or a growing sense of ethnic diversity, which made them feel more comfortable. In fact, much of the more positive feedback centres around the closeness of local neighbours; several couples (Couples 5, 8, and 9 for example) expressed a positive view of their neighbourhood, in particular the kindness of neighbours:

> *Adelina: Oh – we've got lovely neighbours. And the people opposite are also lovely. Yeah, they all bought us cards, and things, and they all anticipating her birth, and always asking me about it.*

For John and Lucy (Couple 9), who lived in a small cluster of houses particular to Dagenham, called a "banjo[5]", the proximity of the neighbours acted as a positive factor in creating community cohesion:

> *Lucy: Our - our wee banjo here is very friendly and very family orientated.*
> *David: Do you find the banjo thing encourages that kind of - community?*
> *Lucy: I think so. I think so, yeah, because you're - you're meeting - you're meeting people as you walk up and down, and yeah, you know. You can't help but say 'hello'.*

In this regard, their experiences of the closeness of the "banjo" community created something of a community cohesion in present-day terms, in contrast with the supposed "Golden Age" of the past which some parents described (Gabriel, 1993). As described previously, Edgar and Eunice expressed their contentment with their neighbours (who were part of their church): *"and also, we have very good neighbours. Lovely neighbours. They are just amazing."* This interview highlighted the importance of cultural or religious communities in creating cohesion, which Beider (2011) touched upon, although Beider argues that community cohesion can be achieved in spite of religious boundaries: approaching the religious element

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[5] A "banjo", peculiar to Barking and Dagenham, is a small circular cluster of terraced houses built around a common piece of shared land, reached from the main road by a pathway, which from above, resembles a banjo.

as a potential community divider, rather than connector. Cantle (2001), similarly, viewed religion as a community separator.

Lloyd and Shonya viewed their own neighbours in a more functional sense, as they were local councillors, and therefore could become a support in a time of potential discord:

> *Lloyd: Thing is, if that place spirals out of control, next door's a councillor, and across the road is a councillor -*
> *Shonya: - Yeah, we're quite sitting pretty here!*

Mohammed, a British Bengali, defined feeling more secure in his neighbourhood in terms of seeing *"Asian and black faces"* locally. In an area where racism was not only prevalent, but had only recently been discarded at a local political level, the existence of people from other races and cultures provided comfort to him. He then went on to say: *"There are more - Asian families moving in to this area - which there wasn't before: like, Asian and blacks, so we've got: I don't know if that's a good thing or bad thing."*

Amrick and Meera also drew comfort from identifying ethnic similarities in the community: *"Um – er - Germany is more clean than England. But now I'm used to it, it's like - India."* Mary's experience is probably more akin to people who live in a large city:

> *Mary: I work with a few of my neighbours, so we do get together, and we do – and I don't know if it's because I work with them. Because my neighbours in this building, there's some of them that I don't even know. You know I've lived in the building for about four years, so it just depends. But there's some that I know.*

So community cohesion (or the lack thereof) can be seen in terms of close proximity to one's neighbours, as well as identifying people from a similar background to one's self. Mauthner (1995) wrote how, in order to combat isolation, mothers look for relationships in the community which promote "affinity": they look to find people who are in the same position as themselves (although this is arguably a common factor in all relationships):

> "They were looking for psychological and emotional affinity, and for relationships in which they could share their common experiences with other mothers who might be more responsive to them, and better able to share the joys, and understand the constraints, of motherhood. Both the "working" and "nonworking" mothers felt a need for friends who could understand their lives as mothers" (p. 314).

For the parents in this study, such emotional affinity, and thereby arguably a greater sense of "integration" arose from many places, whether in observing ethnic similarities (as Meera and Mohammed did), with neighbours (as Edgar and Lucy expressed) or with work colleagues (as Mary experienced).

4.7 Urban systems

Bronfenbrenner (1986) described "urban systems", where the fluidity of change within the systems hierarchy becomes more volatile, more agitated. He drew upon comparisons with London life and life in the Isle of Wight, from a study by Rutter (1975): "With the degree of family adversity controlled, the difference between London and the Isle of Wight in rates of child psychiatric illness all but disappeared. The authors interpret this result as indicating that the main adverse effects of city life on children are indirect, resulting from the disruption of the families in which they live" (p. 731). He describes these as "contexts" - part of his *person-process-context-time* model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). In Popay et al (1998) the authors described the tendency to "stigmatise neighbourhoods" and the inherent problems associated with people's perceptions of safety and the reality (p. 635), as did Smith (2005) when describing people's tendencies to "label" locations (in that instance, the St. Helier estate in South London).

Ranjit expressed his concerns with the local area when he talked about the young people who gather on street corners, or wherever there are "chicken shops":

> *Ranjit: Now, if you or your wife or your child was to walk down past any, any shop in Barking or – or Ilford, or even Dagenham, past any – any chicken shop, any chicken shop, not saying if it's whites, blacks, don't care who it is – you will see a cohort of children, boys, or adults whatever, there, in a group, and that is intimidating. No matter who it is, I don't care if you are six-foot tall and you're built like whoever, you will pass that shop you will feel – you will feel intimidated because the amount of people walking down there.*

The sense of palpable intimidation which Ranjit described is something which was echoed by other parents. Adelina, for example, said that as a pregnant woman, she found those community elements unnerving:

> *Adelina: Honestly, when I walk home from work, if - especially when I was pregnant, I used to feel quite intimidated, with, you know - just with people looking at you walking*

around, you know the way the gather round street corners I think if that could – I don't know if they could do something to remove that.

Kristina made a similar comment to Adelina: *"But given in the evening by the station, you know - oh, different crowd gathers, and sort of, you know a bit worrying sometimes."* Lloyd and Shonya were wary of the area becoming too "boisterous", and Armand and Brunelle told the story of the unconscious body of a man being found behind their flat:

Armand: One year ago or less: there was um, there was a nightclub - just behind the house, and um there was last time, plenty of um, police man and um, they said that had stabbed someone and they found his body, or – his unconscious body around, um East London University.

Ranjit, having grown up in Barking and lived there for most of his life, discussed with his wife Charlotte how he felt the area had degenerated:

Ranjit: Well I have had, what is it, well near enough now three good families who that we grew up with–there was, um – [the] P's, they have moved because he – his mum got mugged right outside the cashpoint, and they actually attacked her very savagely.
Charlotte: I think it's certain – I think people are selling drugs. When you walk down their road in open daylight, I don't think that's very nice. You know, when you've got young children and you - you don't want them sort of witnessing that.
Ranjit: Of the worst place is just down the road – round the, go – go straight round the roundabout, so you're hitting Ilford Lane, you've got prostitutes walking up and down the street.

At this point, the comments almost appeared to outdo one another, as Ranjit began with an attack, Charlotte countered with drug-selling, and Ranjit finished with prostitution. Whatever the structure of the conversation however, it was clear that both felt the pressure of living close to a challenging urban environment. Again, the concerns which the couple have are very much rooted in the context of being new parents: *"when you've got young children."* Ranjit then complained about the lack of discipline from teachers within a local school:

Ranjit: It was rubbish even then. One of R's friends is a teacher there and even he said - he goes 'Pft! It's just, oh, it's just - we got the curriculum, we just – we don't want to - can't say anything to the kids, we'd lose our jobs. So what's the point?' That's – that's the attitude of the actual teachers that, 'if we say anything to them we going to lose our jobs so we can't shout them, we can't hit them' which – I can understand – so, you know, you shouldn't hit them anyway, so he can't hit them, he goes, 'you can't shout at them', he goes.

This comment was reflected in previous comments some of the parents made about a perceived lack of respect and discipline, in the context of "Golden Age Thinking" about the past, which Gabriel highlighted in his study (1993): "Nostalgia is not a way of coming to terms with the past (as mourning or grief are), but an attempt to come to terms with the present" (p.132). What is notable here, however is Ranjit's opening line, *"it was rubbish even then"* - Ranjit was acknowledging that, from his point of view at least, life was no better when he was younger. Continuing the theme of the demise of the community, he then talked about the development of local gangs, where older youth encourage the younger to beat other children up:

> *Ranjit: And this is what I - I - I've actually seen - witnessed this, you always see this – these kids who are growing up they got these little role models, and they're going, 'yeah – go and do this don't worry about it. Do it, do it, do it, do it.' And when they do it, they're, 'Oh' - and you see these kids have their, like all of these older people coming down after school to support them, to beat another child up - And it's not on!*

It was an interesting monologue, which does not appear to have any basis in a particular incident, but contributes to the general sense of neglect and decline which many of the parents had toward the area. For Dennis, Ranjit and Ray there was a sense of frustration that young people today could no longer be disciplined corporally. Ranjit retracts the statement *"we can't hit them"* by adding, *"which I can understand - you shouldn't hit them anyway",* whereas Dennis describes the intervention of *"social services"* preventing proper discipline, *"if you give someone a slap, oh like a slap, they can be like, 'that's violence' and all that"* and Ray described the way in which he was smacked by the police, *"straight across the ear"* when young.

In his 1986 paper, however, Bronfenbrenner argued that urban systems can help young people's cognitive development, which is "a product of exposure to richer and more differentiated cultural environment" (p. 731). Certainly for many of the couples in this study, the exposure to "urban systems" left them feeling bewildered, and not a little scared for the future of their children:

> *Tony: Just - you know, are they gonna be, you know, growing up, um – keeping out of trouble? Away from drugs and things, away from trouble - are they be going down the right track, or will they go off onto the wrong track, you know?*

For many of the parents, the safest option was to move away; into rural Wales or Essex (Couples 10), to New Zealand (Couple 9), to next-door borough Havering (Couples 5, 11 and 14). This echoes the search for "better housing" which Dench and Gavron (2006) described - whether that describes a search for nicer properties or a more peaceful existence outside of the urban systems and their "oppression".

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated the parents' responses to geographical migration as a key transition point in their lives, and compared the experiences of migrant and non-migrant parents, as well as the experiences of individual parents who, for whatever reason, may resist the process of acculturation. The chapter has also examined the effect of both migration and childbirth on parents' sense of isolation within the community, and the urban systems in which they find themselves.

The significance of geographical transition along with the transition to parenthood can not be underestimated, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) described both childbirth and moving house as "ecological transitions". Nevertheless, despite the nature of both transitions, much of the couple's ability to cope with either transition appears to be rooted within their own perceptions of the environment, and their place within that - their sense of belonging. Belonging, as a theme, runs throughout this chapter (and indeed this thesis) as it enables the creation of a home, adaptation to a new environment (acculturation), or even merging elements of one culture with another. Belonging is defined as "rightly placed in a specified place or environment" (Oxford New American Dictionary), something which is central to the experience of the parents in this study, particularly (although not exclusively) the migrants. The non-migrant couples who had been UK-residents for their whole lives (such as Ray and Tracey) were not always completely "settled" –did not necessarily feel as though they "belonged" - but there were other contributing factors for them as well, such as an adoption of a new lifestyle (as seen with Mohammed and Mita) - at macrosystem level. There may alsohave been a rejection of their environment due to what they perceived to be its rapidly degenerating nature - what Bronfenbrenner referred to as "urban systems" (as seen with Ranjit, when he described the "savage attack" at the cashpoint, or the prostitutes walking along the road not far from their home).

Bronfenbrenner listed "the fragmentation of the extended family, the separation of residential and business areas, the breakdown of social networks, the disappearance of neighbourhoods … geographic and social mobility … commuting, the working mother, the delegation of childcare to specialists and others outside the home, urban renewal, or the existence and character of explicit national policy on children and families" (p. 526) all as manifestations of the exosystem, formal and informal, which encompass our families. Within Barking and Dagenham such manifestations are evident (as with any other urban environment) and are bound to affect the lives of our couples in their transition to parenthood at the individual and couple (i.e. microsystem) level. At that point, and at the critical point of ecological transition which childbirth brings to a couple, the active role of the mesosystem is important in creating an additional sense of belonging; whether through an integrated neighbourhood or strong local external family networks. In the next chapter I shall be examining the transition to parenthood, and the impact of that particular ecological transition upon the lives of the couples.

Chapter Five. The Transition to Parenthood

5.   Introduction.

This chapter, the second of the findings chapters, looks at the transition to parenthood itself. The transition to parenthood is one that was defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an "ecological transition", that is to say a transition which re-defines the ecology of the person or persons experiencing it: "shifts in role or setting, which occur throughout the lifespan" (p. 6). Bronfenbrenner (1995) defined other such transitions as, "the arrival of a younger sibling, entry into preschool or school, being promoted, graduating, finding a job, marrying, having a child, changing jobs, moving, and retiring." The transition to parenthood in particular affects the primary dyadic relationship of both mother and father, the two become three (and in three cases with twins in this study: four). From that point on, all molar activities (regular, repeated patterns of behaviour) and proximal processes (reciprocal microsystem processes within an environment) are thereby affected. Bronfenbrenner called them "molar" to emphasise the continuity of the activity with a momentum of its own - as opposed to an "act" which has a beginning and an end. There is an element of the routine to them as well; something which Giddens (1984) also wrote about, when he said that: "all social systems, no matter how grand or far-flung, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life" (p. 36).

When the family then expect a baby, surrounding systems have an impact on the routines of family life, and on the family's development, whether in the hospital mesosystem, or indeed in the larger systems at the national level where economic pressures can have a ripple effect on the family's finances (Bronfenbrenner 1979). This is exacerbated when twins are expected (as with three of the couples in this study), or when there are significant cuts to the welfare system, for example. Then, once childbirth occurs, the primary dyad changes; the couple relationship, by extension, becomes a triad, and another ecological transition takes place (p. 27). If the emergent family are in an unfamiliar country, this adds yet another significant factor to the transition process. Once the child is brought home, the microsystem becomes triadic (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p.56), provided that there is no relational compromise between father and mother. Yet the primary transition shifts necessarily between the mother and child (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) - theirs becomes a reciprocal dyadic relationship, where the

development of one party affects the development of the other. They also engage in their own set of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) and molar activities (1979 p.56). If the father does not become involved in such processes, he may become alienated (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), and seek to pursue his identity elsewhere, either in settings outside of the family (which then become exosystems to the mother and child) or in other relationships, which then creates alternative systems, significantly weakening the original primary dyad - like Bronfenbrenner's three-legged stool (1979 p.5). Conversely, if the family works together with a common set of goals and objectives then that has highly beneficial effects for the development both of the family unit and of the child within that unit (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As discussed in Chapter 4, belonging recurs as a theme given that both mother and father need to feel that they belong within the family as it expands, in order to weather the transition. The nature of the primary dyad is disrupted during the transition to parenthood, which is the point where belonging is tested for the father, and to an extent, the mother as well.

For Schumacher and Meleis (1994), the process of transition was examined from the point of view of managing expectations, planning effectively, and gaining adequate information about the forthcoming process. This chapter will examine that transition process in the context of becoming parents within the lives of the couples in question, and how that relates to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of human development. It will look at the role of local health settings in facilitating the transition process, the primacy of information within the process of transition, as well as the role of the parents' expectations, the disruption of proximal processes and their effect on the couples' lives. The concept of "becoming a family" is explored, the negative role of anxiety and a loss of control, as well as the positive nature of adaptation and how that can aid successful transition, is also considered.

5.1 The role of expectations in transition

Bronfenbrenner (1986) asked how prior "connections" between settings affect the final outcome of the transition process. These connections might be the dissemination of information from one to the other (effective communication as observed later in section 5.4, when describing the importance of communication) or "expectations existing in each setting about the other" (p.734). He also writes about the importance of "transition feedback" - where the individual is able to reflect upon and discuss elements of that transition, as well as how "post-transition" experiences affect that person. As the people who are undergoing transition

in this study are couples, that impact is arguably further complicated by the fact that the couple enjoy their own "mesosystem" - their unique dyadic interaction of microsystems which then are further affected by the addition of a third (and sometimes fourth) individual. Puthussery et al explored those expectations from both healthcare providers (2008) and mothers (2010), whereas McCourt and Pearce looked at the "dissonance" between expectation and reality (2000). Schumacher and Meleis (1994) said that: "expectations are the subjective phenomena that collectively influence the transition experience" (p. 122).

5.1.1 Expectations of childbirth

Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that thinking about a future event is almost akin to creating a "mental mesosystem" (p.47) which incorporates that event, whether positively or negatively. These mental mesosystems then form a set of expectations as to the future event; and how reality measures up to those expectations is a key factor in transition.

As the couples prepared themselves for parenthood, their expectations ranged from a birthing ideal (Mita's desire to go to a birthing centre) to Kristina's lesser expectations: "*I – listen to … my other friends' stories, and you know they had difficult births*" although in this particular mother's case it ended well: "*… and for me, it was pretty straightforward.*" One of the more unusual preparations for childbirth was experienced by Couple 14 - Mantas and Elena. Mantas stated categorically that he had dreamt that his wife had become pregnant:

> *Mantas: May be strange, but I knew it – that, she pregnant - I – I just: I dreamin' - it was like - let's say, er - I dream in one night, but I – I didn't tell her. So, after three weeks, er – it- it was Friday, after job, she - she say, 'I have present for you.' Yeah, and show me the test. And I said to her, 'I knew it.' Because three weeks - two or three weeks ago, I – I just dream, that – that she's pregnant.*

He also said that he knew that the baby was a boy:

> *Mantas: And then after this, er - I dreamed that I have son.*
> *Elena: Yeah, he knew, like – second time like.*
> *Mantas: And I was like, prepared, you know that he's gonna be son, and -*
> *Elena: And even, like, you know, we was thinking like, ah - we have to calm down, maybe it will be girl, so it's like, but he say like, 'I know, he's a boy!'*

Not all expectations were quite so unusual. Couple 15 literally slotted the birth date into their diary, as the caesarean could dictate the timescale:

> *Sally: [the midwife] said, 'it's gonna have to be – you know, a caesarean.' And I am thinking it was gonna be the following - Friday, Friday 20th of Jan, and she was like – this was Wednesday - um, the 11th, and she sort of done a few things, and come back and said, 'how about this Friday?' And we were a bit like (gasp) – we were shocked, and I didn't sleep from that day –*

5.1.2 Expectations of breastfeeding

Lidia (Mother 12) had a singular experience with regard to breastfeeding, which affected her transition to parenthood. As she explained, prior to giving birth, her expectation was to breastfeed her son; she had no expectation that it might be difficult: *"Because before that, I never even have a concept for the baby to not be breastfed."* When the time came for Lidia to breastfeed, she was shocked that her baby refused the breast:

> *Lidia: and then what was really upsetting, is that he didn't want the breast at all. Well, he started a bit in the hospital, but only a bit – and then he'd fall asleep. And then, um, there was at some point, one midwife coming around to ask if we needed help with breastfeeding. And I didn't – I wasn't pretty much half asleep or something, and I missed that, so I didn't ask for help. And – er, then, at some – one evening, one night, during the night about five o'clock, I asked another midwife for help with breastfeeding, but she was like, 'oh, I'm nearly finishing the shift, and, er -' so, I – I'm not sure if the baby was the problem, or I didn't get enough support on that matter. Which for me was, really, um, a bit depressing.*

For Lidia, this was a serious issue, and she became quite upset:

> *Lidia: Well probably I was too set up, that he has to breastfed (sic). Rather than, it might be a possibility he will not breastfed. For me, it wasn't an option. He will not breastfed. And for me, it was like, a bit of a shock at what I had to adjust –and what I had to deal… um, pretty much myself; because, if I would say to Marius - he would be looking at me - and, 'why is he not breastfeeding?' That – that make the situation even more -*

The situation was exacerbated by the response of Lidia's husband, and by the fact that both culturally and maternally, Lidia had every expectation that she would breastfeed her son. It was the lack of information which prevented her from doing so (*"I'm nearly finishing the shift …"*) Bronfenbrenner (1979) cited a similar example when detailing the success of a mother in

being able to feed their baby: "The husband-wife relationship was linked to the mother-infant unit. When the father was supportive of the mother … she was more effective in feeding the baby" (p. 68).

This indicates a fundamental reciprocity between the husband-wife dyad and the mother-infant dyad, which is, to a certain degree, apparently borne out in the example of Lidia and Marius. Burgess (2010) also wrote that the right type of support offered by the father to the mother can "have a strong influence on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding" (p. 9). The converse to Lidia's expectation that she would be able to breastfeed is the expectation of Armand and Brunelle that they would not be able to breastfeed their twins, until they came across a YouTube video informing them how to (which is discussed more fully in the later section on the role of the internet). What is notable about that example, however, was how supportive Armand was during the whole process.

5.2 The role of settings in facilitating transition

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the importance of settings within the human ecology framework, "Since almost every transition involves more than one setting, reciprocal processes occur not only within but also across setting boundaries" (p. 525). Schumacher and Meleis (1994) referred to environmental factors as "external facilitative resources" (p.123). Giddens (1984) refers to locales as "settings of interaction", vital to be used by agents "in the constitution of encounters across space and time" (p. 119: see also section 2.2.5). In the context of this study, the primary settings would be the home, hospitals, Children's Centres and local services, as well as peripheral settings such as town centres or universities.

Hospitals

Bronfenbrenner (1986) described hospitals as mesosystem settings, and expressed surprise that so few studies had (at the time of his writing) focused on the family's experiences of hospitals: "Given the critical importance that hospital care can play in the life and development of young children, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the relationship between the hospital and the home as a moderating influence on the child's

recuperation" (p. 726). This quote specifically looks at the effect of the hospital in the context of child illness, yet the implication is that at the time of writing, more research was needed in the area of the hospital-home balance. He also explained that hospitals are strongly influenced by macrosystem phenomena (1979) as well as describing the hospital birthing delivery room as a microsystem - which is also ultimately where the transition from dyad to triad, from expectant couple to fully-fledged family unit takes place. Hospitals are perhaps the most critical setting for prospective new parents, owing to their dependence upon them.

Understanding this last point, and owing to the negative press experienced by the local hospital, two of the couples (10 and 15) deliberately went outside of the borough to have their babies:

> *Charlotte: I - was always quite adamant that I didn't want to go to Queen's Hospital to have my baby - just because of the reputation of the place really.*

From this cohort, five of the couples who had their babies at Queen's had positive experiences overall. Out of the fifteen interviews, two had poor experiences at Queen's hospital, and one couple had a difficult time at another hospital (King George) just after the mother first went into labour, although they subsequently chose to leave that hospital during their labour process, and travel to Queen's to have the baby:

> *Elena: We arrive in the night - no people, no light, and we just ask, 'excuse me, I am in labour, someone can help me?' (Laughs) They tell me like, 'Um – you have to go, left, right, and then maybe you'll find someone.' And it was like, 'sorry, I – mean someone can help me!' No-one. So, was thinking like, 'Oh my God, we never come here.'*

Having moved from one hospital to another whilst in labour, Elena subsequently had a positive time, and her own private room. As Mantas said: "*she feel like queen, you know.*" Couple 2 (Mohammed and Mita) visited a birthing centre, but ended up having their baby at the local hospital, as Mohammed felt it was safer for their first birth, in case there was an emergency. Once they arrived there, however, they found themselves at the mercy of a scheduling crisis:

> *Mohammed: There were people in the corridors, just sort of screaming and shouting (laughs)*
> *Mita: - we was in the corridor as well. Er – you know and it's just – you're just going through - they're just doing you as - it's full, isn't it, basically ...*

Many of the couples found the hospital system too bureaucratic: Lidia (Mother 12) found herself without breastfeeding support as the midwife on duty was finishing her shift at the critical moment (as discussed in the earlier section, 5.2.2: on the expectations of breastfeeding). The overall sense for many of the parents here is one of being at the mercy of an impersonal hospital system, whether indifferent (as with Elena) or overcrowded (as with Mohammed and Mita). The experience of these couples points toward a loss of personal control (see the later section in this chapter: 5.5) but differs greatly from Lucy who described her experience of hospital as "awesome": she and John had a dedicated senior midwife for the duration of their stay, and of Elena's later experience when she was eventually "treated like a queen".

Children's Centres

Children's Centres recurred regularly within the data as a part of the community response to new parents. As a setting, the Children's Centre provides an ideal gathering point for parents within the community; a free location where perinatal support, information and help could be obtained, as well as encouragement for the family's future. As Maleka (Mother 1) said, *"[Children's Centres] make you feel very important and wanted."* In fact, the feedback about Children's Centres was consistently positive from the parents; although that can be due to the fact that many of them had been recruited from those centres to participate in this research. Mother 5 (Adelina) felt that, for such an important local setting, Children's Centres were not adequately promoted, *"either they're not publicised enough or people are not, sort of, taking to it as much"*. This research was carried out in 2010-11, when there were eighteen centres in Barking and Dagenham; since then the number has been cut to eight. Mary found all of her local amenities to be perfectly adequate for bringing up a small child, of which the Children's Centre was the focal-point:

> *Mary: ... in terms of where we live ... I've got a park there ... a park there, there's a little Children's Centre there, there's parks over there with swings, so I'm sort of in the middle.*

Her own experience of the local Children's Centre was very positive, as her son was cared for at the nursery there, and she was able to participate in all of the *"activities and events"*:

> *Mary: Before I had my baby, I went there for maternity ... services; ... that was why I decided (the baby) was going to go there ... because I saw the nursery and everything else that was going on there.*

Shonya attended the breastfeeding peer support course and baby massage classes at her local centre, Lidia spoke highly of her centre; Angela used her Children's Centre to attend a sleep clinic, which she felt had been *"really helpful"*, and which enabled them to regain their night's sleep. Edgar and Eunice attended two separate centres for different services: one for antenatal appointments, and one for a play group once the baby had been born. Meera and Amrick's experience had not been so positive, as they were unable to bring their twins to their local centre, because each child had to be accompanied by a separate adult: something which is complicated with twins (as described in section 4.5).

As a universal setting, Children's Centres are very important to community perinatal health and wellbeing; in Bronfenbrenner terms, they provide a series of services which enable new parents to access the appropriate levels of support to enable them to make the ecological transition to parenthood. Where hospitals might have associations of waiting rooms and queues, Children's Centres offer prospective parents a glimpse into the world of parenthood, and new parents the multi-faceted support that they need. Sure Start Children's Centres were modelled on the American Head Start, of which Bronfenbrenner was a founder (as noted in section 2.2.4).

For Couple 6 (Armand and Brunelle), as new migrants to the UK, the passport office had temporarily become an important player in their life, and their ability to feel "at home" in the UK. Given that their interaction would have been largely postal, it can perhaps be described as a "virtual setting". This couple had previously undergone another life transition - the loss of a baby, whilst Brunelle was in Norway, but Armand was in transit in the UK, waiting for a passport:

> *Armand: Everything was sent, when we'd done the passport, they lost it on the way. So we had to ask for a new passport, I received a new passport, and what is very tragic and that is why I can say I hate the UK, is when I received my passport with the visa, the day after, Brunelle lost her child - the - the baby - we were supposed to go to Norway to have it – to have the baby but in that moment, when I received my passport, I called her to say, yeah – I have now my passport I have to ask for a visa to join you there for the baby, but the day after the – er, yeah: she lost the baby.*

For couple 6, therefore, the loss of the baby is inextricably linked with their hatred of the UK, their feeling that the bureaucracy of UK settings was working against their familial harmony. This was underpinned by their experience of the dismissive paramedic staff when Brunelle

experienced bleeding, or by the response of midwives to their questions (described later in section 6.1.2).

5.3 The importance of communication between settings

Bronfenbrenner (1979) laid out the importance of communicating information in order to ease the process of transition:

> "Development is enhanced to the extent that, prior to each entry into a new setting … members of both settings involved are provided with information, advice, and experience relevant to the impending transition" (p. 217).

This is something he then echoed in 1986 and in 1995, stating that the information provided can change the parents' behaviour towards their children in "significant ways" (1995 p.629). He also cited examples of two-way information between settings, where an individual may transition from one setting to another (such as a child's progress from nursery school to reception). The importance of information pertaining to the effect of childbirth is something which was highlighted by other authors, such as Deave et al (2008), whilst Deave and Johnson (2008) wrote about the importance of information for fathers in particular, "frustration was expressed at the lack of information intended specifically for new fathers" (p. 629). Given the fundamental nature of the ecological transition to parenthood, any information that would facilitate the transition should be welcomed. This point was brought out by Puthussery et al (2008), where mothers felt that they had to be assertive in order to gain information:

> "they also felt that they needed to be assertive and 'forward' to be able to communicate their information needs. Some women recounted experiences which made them feel that they were causing a 'nuisance' to professionals by asking for more information" (p. 159).

Schumacher and Meleis (1994) note that "when physical discomfort accompanies transition, it may interfere with the assimilation of new information" (p. 123); something which may be said to be a key factor with mothers in pregnancy. Information also plays an important role in preparing the parents themselves. For example, Maleka (Mother 1), despite having attended a local antenatal class and breastfeeding groups, felt particularly aggrieved that she had not been

prepared for sleeplessness: *"I didn't know about waking up at night, which was very horrible. Very, very horrible."* Adelina realised that it was probably impossible to be prepared for everything which childbirth could raise: *"You think you're prepared, you think you know everything and then oh my God, something comes up and says, 'I didn't read about this' ".* Elena had a similar experience, *"I guess it was my mistake, I was not prepared for this."* Pridham et al (1991) observed that primiparae frequently express a lack of preparation for childbirth, something which understandably diminishes as they have more children, so the perspective of the parents' experience of the birth alters in retrospect, depending on whether they had given birth previously.

5.3.1   Antenatal programmes

Antenatal programmes are important to consider as they seek to use information to prepare couples for the birth itself, and sometimes address the further implications involved in the transition to parenthood. They also may potentially create cohesion within couples which in turn may combat isolation (Mauthner, 1995). The experiences of the parents in this cohort, however, illustrate that it is not straightforward. Antenatal classes also introduce parents to new settings - many took place in Children's Centres - and to the new skills and roles expected of them as parents. Having attended an antenatal class, for example, following the birth of her baby, Maleka (Mother 1) became an advocate of breastfeeding:

> *Maleka: I liked the antenatal class - afterwards I joined the LifeLine breastfeeding group so um - I've done the course and I have the certificate and we - we went to Queen's Hospital to promote breastfeeding.*

Some of the parents in this study managed to attend some form of antenatal provision, and frequently went as a couple. Given that the first nine parents were drawn from the list of attendees of the antenatal course "Getting Ready for Your Baby", this is unsurprising. The extent to which antenatal classes help in the transition experience is something which was explored by the Cowans in their literature, and they tend to advocate programmes which are slightly more directed toward preparing parents for the transition to parenthood itself, not just the birthing experience (Cowan and Cowan, 1995). This was also noted by Deave and Johnson (2008) who illustrate how antenatal provision can sometimes exclude fathers:

"Despite feeling very involved with their partners' pregnancies, men's experiences of antenatal healthcare provision were very disappointing, and they often felt excluded from antenatal appointments and classes" (p. 629).

Given that, in systems terms, fathers are experiencing a critical ecological transition which could leave them feeling excluded from the new primary dyadic relationship between mother and infant, this is concerning, although the couples in this cohort appeared to have varying experiences of the local antenatal information classes (some did not get round to attending). Burgess (2008) wrote that the involvement of the father in antenatal provision is critical, not just to the couple's transition process, but also with regard to his own:

"Fathers who have participated in baby-care courses take on more care of their babies than fathers who have not: such fathers keep closer to their babies, engage in more face-to-face interaction with them, smile at, look at, and talk to them more" (p.4).

This is underpinned by Deave et al (2008) as well as Deave and Johnson (2008a), who also state that the fathers in her study were "frustrated by the lack of information intended specifically for new fathers" (p. 629). Mary (Mother 4) attended two sets of antenatal classes in case she missed anything the first time, *"Just to make sure everything was covered."* Her approach to this illustrates the importance of using information to prepare for such a key life transition.

5.3.2   The role of healthcare staff in giving information

Perinatal healthcare staff (GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors) are ideally placed to provide information to prospective parents, and those who have recently given birth. Many are based in local healthcare settings, and therefore fulfil the role of providing communication between settings (Children's Centre to hospital, or GP surgery), as well as information to the parents themselves. This is vital to a successful transition process (Schumacher and Meleis, 1994).

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GPs

As Davies and Bath (2001) wrote: "Women preferred to use their general practitioner (GP) during pregnancy" (p.309). GPs have an information-giving role, whereas the midwife arguably has one of reassurance as well (McCourt and Pearce, 2000: 151). From a healthcare viewpoint, Lucy explained how the information-giving role of GPs was undermined locally:

> *Lucy: I just went round for a second opinion, um, cause (the baby) was having trouble with constipation and I (told the health visitor) what the doctor had told me, and she didn't look very happy at all about the information that I had been given.*

She went on to say: "*I find it very hit and miss when it's GPs."* She also said that her GPs lacked continuity: "*I've only ever had the same doctor - once."* Armand and Brunelle found GPs "rude" and that *"the healthcare here is so poor".* Brunelle also described how she was made to feel as though she was wasting the doctor's time (she said this twice during the interview): "*It's like I'm – I'm stealing his time, or I'm a free patient like he's not getting paid for it."* Armand and Brunelle touched upon the perception that doctors in a free health system aren't paid as well, and are therefore poorer in their outlook (*"I'm a free patient"*). Sally and Tony felt something similar:*"They don't really have a lot of time, and - you feel you're sort of wasting their time."* Mantas and Elena debated the concept of "General Practice" themselves: *"it's really strange like, how he can know everything?"* Mantas, a Lithuanian carpenter, compared general practice to the work of tradesmen:

> *Mantas: If I'm carpenter, I'm carpenter. I know everything about carpenter. I – I know about tiles, but I'm not professional. Yeah? I know about the plumber – but I'm not professional. And, that carpenter, I – I perfect. I know. By myself. So that's – how is supposed to be doctor so know, child is child, adult is adult - you know, you can't be professional for everything. It's impossible.*

The couple could not understand how a general practitioner could have information about everything; for many of the parents who grew up in Eastern European countries such as Mantas and Elena (Lithuania/Belarus), Marius and Lidia (Romania) and Meera (Germany) the idea of a general practitioner as opposed to a series of specialists appeared to be an alien one. Elena then went on to describe how their GP was not only uncaring and detached, but apparently ended up using the same internet diagnostic resource that she had used only hours before that same day. The effectiveness of GPs may not be a serious issue if GPs are seen to be merely one link in the transitional information chain; however Davies and Bath (2002)

illustrated how their cohort were particularly dependent upon GPs, and also discussed the issue of doctors displaying "patronising and insensitive behaviour" (p.151). Such attitudes were also evident in this study. Brunelle for example, who pondered moving to West London when she had some contacts, wondered aloud whether West London doctors: *"would still be rude to me. I don't know if Indians have problems with blacks."* Part of the issue may be one of expectation. For example, when Lidia was concerned that her baby had a persistent cough, she took him to the GP:

> *Lidia: The GP said, 'oh, we don't give anything for coughing,' and then I was looking on the Romanian website and they will say, 'no, you use this,' which, there are medications over there, in Romania which I wouldn't be able to give here, or I wouldn't know the terminology.*

This is a clash of the culture of medication: where one country (arguably influenced by macrosystem values) may still prescribe certain medicines, antibiotics, for example, another may eschew those in favour of staying at home. Edgar and Eunice had a bad experience of their local GP's registration system, so they moved to another GP where they were able to register, and who Edgar described as *"very brilliant"*.

Midwives and health visitors

A clear role of midwives within the transition to parenthood is the preparation of the parents for childbirth through the dissemination of information; to reassure about the forthcoming event. McCourt and Pearce (2000) stressed the importance of dialogue, "they emphasised the importance of information as a matter of dialogue rather than a one way information transfer from professional to woman" (p. 149). This sense of dialogue was certainly present when Brunelle (Mother 6) describes the midwife-mother relationship in Norway:

> *Brunelle: … there, I used to have an appointment with the [same] midwife every week, or every two weeks, and she would always have a subject, so I would just come there, and she actually had - you know, the schedule going, and so she told me what we would talk about and – and then we would have like a quiet – have like a half an hour, 45 minutes - where we would sit, and we would chat, and she would ask about anything.*

Brunelle's experience of the UK was markedly different: "*… but I felt like, here you have to – unless you ask, no-one is going to tell you."* Charlotte's experience of community midwives

on the other hand, was very positive, describing the *"continuity of care"* that she received. After the birth, the information support role transfers to the health visitors, at least for first births. As Schumacher and Meleis (1994) pointed out, the transition process is still very much underway after the transitional event. Mita found local health visitors were only able to repeat what she felt she already knew: *"they're very quick to refer you to go to the - doctor and … whatever they come up with I already know about that through my own research, or talking about it."*

Adelina found Barking and Dagenham health visitors not to be as effective as the ones in Havering (where she spent some weeks with her mother after the birth):

> *Adelina: … and the (health visitors) in - Havering – I took her there, I think they knew more and they were more into, you know, making sure you know that I was OK as well as the baby. Whereas the ones who came round here they were just sort of, on the surface if you like, they didn't sort of seem to be - into detail.*

Ray and Tracey found the health visitor "spoke too quickly" for them to understand (discussed before in section 4.2), whereas Charlotte said her own health visitor was "excellent" - particularly in giving important information, but that the clinic in which she was placed (in a local shopping centre) was "impersonal":

> *Charlotte: I go on Thursday, and it is like dog eats dog – it's terrible. You hand in your book, they call you in - so then we're stood there then for up to sometimes half an hour waiting to get your child weighed. And then, if you want to, you can see a health visitor but you don't even have a private room to have a conversation with them - they just sit you in a chair to the side of the weighing – the weighing area, where it's all chaotic, with people, and babies are getting weighed. I mean, it's a terrible service. There is no confidentiality, you know there's not – there's not really an opportunity for you to have a private conversation, um, and I – and I think it's – it's appalling really.*

Davies and Bath (2001) discussed the importance of health visitors in communicating information as part of the transition process, as did One Plus One (2003) who recommend using their Brief Encounters training to assist in the process:

> "In a randomised control trial of 1000 new mothers in a Primary Care Trust, health visitors received Brief Encounters training - an evaluated 3 stage skills model drawn from good practice which provides guidelines for helping, and evidence based information about

couple and family relationships (especially at key transition points such as the birth of a baby)" (p. 5).

There certainly appears to be a lack of consistency in the care expressed by all the parents in this cohort, from Charlotte's "continuity of care" before birth to what appears to be a rather chaotic clinic in the middle of an indoor shopping centre in Barking.

Health staff therefore play a vital role in communicating clearly with couples, thus helping them through the transition process. For some of the couples, simply getting past the perceived attitude of their GP appeared to be enough of a barrier to be overcome. Brunelle's apparent perception of the paucity of UK-based health service information is in comparison with Norway's private health service, yet for some of the couples it seems as though they have to work particularly hard to receive adequate information and care. McCourt and Pearce (2000) strongly advocated for effective communication between healthcare staff and patients, particularly in a critical time of transition such as this. The paper also placed the centrality of communication within the context of a sense of control (discussed later in section 5.5): "These women appeared to suffer a greater degree of dissonance between expectations and experience than ethnic majority women, often feeling either ignored or talked 'at' rather than 'with' (p. 151). Puthussery et al (2010) also drew out the importance of "good communication and consistent information" (p. 156).

5.3.3   The role of the internet in providing information

Rather than merely attend antenatal programmes, or draw upon healthcare staff to provide information, many of the parents decided to access the information themselves via books and the internet. Studies examining the use of the internet by parents are on the increase; as the literature review (section 2.2.8) illustrates (Fletcher, 2008, Plantin and Daneback, 2009). Those studies are supplemented by Deave and Johnson (2008) who discussed the internet as a primary source of information for parents, as well as by Deave (2008b).

For most of the parents in this study, the internet was an essential source of information (except for Tracey, who preferred to read books). All couples used it, but while Armand and

Brunelle used YouTube videos to help them understand how to breastfeed twins (something other parents of twins did not manage to do, and reverted to simple bottle-feeding instead), many couples used the internet to observe how the baby was developing in utero, some couples used the internet to try to diagnose early childhood illnesses, and one or two joined online forums. As Armand said: *"They discuss all the subjects, actually - so it was very easy for Dads – young Dads to be in touch and discuss about that matter."* For Armand and Brunelle, the internet gave them the answer they required after they had consulted their local health services about ways to treat colic:

> *Brunelle: After the support system in the UK, so I just had to - to kind of see someone - and I tried to call, and you know to ask 'what can we do?' and only thing they said, 'oh no, that's just a phase they have to go through unfortunately, there's nothing you can do' ... but he went on YouTube and then he saw a technique how to massage the children.*

That particular couple also described how YouTube facilitated the twin breastfeeding process:

> *Brunelle: Actually I have been checking on YouTube. Before, during the pregnancy -*
> *Armand: (talking over) - How to breastfeed the babies. The advantage with us is we speak like - more than three languages. So we checked on the Norwegian -*
> *Brunelle: (talking over) - Norwegian site, and French site, and English speaking -*
> *Armand: - and er, we saw how – er, there was like er, a nice lady, she showed how to breastfeed her twins - Different techniques. Like, you have to hold them here, like, and -*
> *Brunelle: - Because that - nothing prepared me for that beforehand.*

The dialogue here is interesting, as the parents finished or echoed each other's sentences - they were quite enthusiastic about the internet, and wanted to communicate it at this point. Their cosmopolitan background also facilitated this ("three languages"). Language is a facilitator in the transition process therefore - a macrosystem factor which permeates into the individual microsystem - and something which is borne out by Couple 12 (Marius and Elena) in section 4.4.2 where Marius was able to stay in the UK for a prolonged period of time without learning the language, but Lidia thrived from having immersed herself in the culture. The internet brought Peter and Adelina together as parents: *"I registered with loads of different sites, I got all different perspectives - we'd read it together!"* Charlotte and Tracey tended to prefer books to the internet, and Amrick and Meera (Couple 11) used NetMums, as *"every search points to NetMums."*

The internet is an all-pervading factor in today's society, something which was not present in Bronfenbrenner's work. In systems terms, it traverses many system boundaries - individuals blogging about their experiences at microsystem level (as the woman who illustrated her

breastfeeding technique on YouTube), yet potentially commenting on cultural, macrosystem phenomena. Bronfenbrenner may well have described it as a mesosystem, but one which reflects and has a reciprocal effect on macrosystems over time. As a supplemental resource to existing literature (such as books or guidance leaflets) the internet is something which needs to be effectively harnessed by health care providers in order to guide parents effectively. Deave et al (2008) point out the eagerness for information displayed by the parents, in terms of both the internet, and DVDs as well:

> "information from a variety of sources, both before and after their baby was born. Family and friends, work colleagues, healthcare professionals, discussions at antenatal appointments and antenatal classes, leaflets and books, television, videos and the internet were all referred to" (p. 9).

This illustrates the continuing parental demand for effective sources of information, in tandem with a rapidly developing technological marketplace.

5.4 A loss of personal control

A concept which I began to recognise as it recurred during data analysis was the sense in which parents felt as though events were getting the better of them. To a certain extent, this must be the experience of most patients in hospital, whereby life events are no longer theirs to command, but they find themselves increasingly powerless in the hands of professionals; all of whom have many other patients to care for, priorities to think about, homes to go to, while the patient stays in hospital, their spheres of influence considerably reduced. When the patients are new parents, to whom all events are different, potentially challenging and possibly painful, this sense of powerlessness can become overwhelming, particularly if they have added anxieties such as their baby's health, their own health, the possibilities of emergency caesarean sections, or an inability to communicate with loved ones.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the situation where systems begin to feel as though they are in control of the person's life - in the case of a hospital, a mesosystem; and how one's sense of control is restored when the systems themselves slowly begin to respond to us (or we learn to "master them") rather than vice-versa. A loss of control in relation to maternal experiences is also found elsewhere in the literature (Davies and Bath, 2002), and can be exacerbated when

the individual is trying to communicate in a second language. In addition, Davies and Bath said that the feeling comes to a head particularly with regard to a lack of information. McCourt and Pearce (2000) indicated that continuity of carer (in this case midwife) increases women's sense of control in childbirth. Chin et al (2011) focussed particularly on the father's sense of control, and how that can be undermined if he is not given an active role: indicating a potential tension within the expectant family. Hemingway et al (1997) made the point that the ideal of being in control applies to prospective mothers of all classes and backgrounds.

Within this study, Maleka expressed concern that she had been treated roughly by midwives, even when she was in pain: *"the midwife didn't mind me - and, and this is my first time, so I think they were very - being cruel to me."* It is interesting that the mother here complained that the staff were "being cruel", yet she later said that this was *"what every woman goes through"*. Adelina remarked how persistent midwives were in encouraging her to bottle feed her baby when breastfeeding became difficult:

> *Adelina: Yeah – they: they tried, yeah. They – they tried at the hospital. One thing I didn't particularly like was that the baby wasn't feeding a lot because I had pethidine during labour, and um they were saying, 'If the baby's not feeding, she's likely to get jaundice, therefore I have to feed the baby' so they um, brought me a bottle, said, you know, 'feed the baby with the bottle.' But I wanted to exclusively breastfeed so I was rather against the bottle, but you know, they were quite persistent, so I thought, 'OK the baby can try it,' but she didn't take it. She didn't take the bottle at all.*

The sense of control which Adelina wanted to have over her baby's feeding was temporarily undermined by this advice. For Armand and Brunelle, who had previously experienced a stillbirth in Norway, the arrival of paramedics to their home in Dagenham when the mother experienced bleeding at 16 weeks exacerbated their sense of powerlessness:

> *Armand: Because we had – um, she – she had a problem, er – that was, around the sixteenth week I think. She was bleeding around 5 o'clock in the morning. But all we get was – no insurance [sic - reassurance], I mean we called the er – the emergencies, they came and the only one thing that they told us was – 'Yeah, you have lost the babies' so it was quite, um - scary.*

Eunice panicked when she was sent home during labour, as she had a friend who had given birth "in a cab". Sally found herself expressing her insecurities to her husband about the midwife at the time, when the midwife had proposed that her husband go home for a rest:

"I was a bit - a bit – not hysterical, but a bit like, 'I can't believe someone would say that to him.'"

For Lidia, the experience was made more difficult by her perception of having been abandoned:

> *Lidia: Yeah, well actually I – so, well I went - I was in the hospital for - er, three days, and asked them to take me to the labour room, and they um, they said, every time there were other woman which – water broke, or whatever, so they were more priority than me.*

Lidia went on to have a caesarean section. When I asked her husband Marius whether he felt out of control at the time, he just laughed, and said *"Control? (laughs) ah, not really. I was thinking, um, all depends by er - midwifes, by doctors, not by me."* He accepted that he should have no control. Puthussery et al (2010) wrote that following caesarean sections, many of their cohort received far less support than they had been led to expect. This was certainly the case with Charlotte:

> *Charlotte: Because basically, you know the assumption was they would come in and say, 'dinner is ready,' and you would have to walk. Well of course when you had a major caesarean, you can't walk to get your food.*

In Bronfenbrenner (1979), the convergence of systems (micro- and meso-) creates a reaction in the mesosystem which affects the individual; in this case through the perceived "loss of control". The inference being that the formal/informal structures of those institutions impinge upon individuals (at the microsystem level) as they operate at the local point of need. When the mesosystem is itself permanently evolving (as the NHS and its local manifestations are), this in turn, has an effect on those who experience that system on a daily basis, such as the families in this study.

5.5 The disruption of processes

Bronfenbrenner (1995) illustrated the nature of transition as something which brings substantial change to existing proximal processes. Proximal processes are defined as activities where the person interacts with their environment (or "context"), such as "play, reading, learning new skills, studying, athletic activities, and performing complex tasks". The "context" itself influences the process. For the couples in this study, additional such processes might be housework, dining out, spending time with peer groups (friends, work colleagues) or

extended family, going to clubs, films, simply watching television, or sleeping. The nature of early parenthood introduces an element of chaos to such processes, which either change, or are eliminated altogether, albeit temporarily. As discussed previously in section 5.4.1, disruption of such processes also results in a sense of a loss of control. Bateman (2009) described how the nature of the parents' ability to cope with the disruption of such routine processes in turn affects their overall ability to relate to one another following the birth. The author also refers several times to this period as one of "crisis" - not necessarily negative, but a crisis which needs effective support, "Research into transition to first-time parenthood reveals a pinch-point of crisis for the couple's relationship and the wellbeing of parents. The decline in relationship satisfaction is a serious threat to family wellbeing and places a responsibility on healthcare professionals to ease this transition" (p.17).

The topic of the lack of sleep recurred with several couples (as Maleka described in section 5.4), as did the sense of chaos which babies bring, as Armand puts it: *"the organisation, I mean the clothe, foods, um – yeah, all the material that we have to spend for one baby because with the first one, it was kind of easy."* This in turn, was accentuated by the presence of twins, in some of the cases: *"they were sleeping like, two hours each, but not - two hours at [the same] time."* For Couple 7, it was the lack of social activity which they rued*: "I think – now I think that the lack of um … Socialising, going out, just going, even you know when the baby's small."* This was echoed by Amrick and Meera as they reflected on a recent past of restaurants and dinners:

> *Amrick: You can't really do any recreation at the moment, you know like, go to a restaurant -*
> *David: So you don't have much of an evening life, or – or not?*
> *Amrick: Not really, no! (Laughs) Though I er, sometimes – leg it!*
> *Meera: Last time, two days before I say to him, 'come on, let's go to restaurant!' Because er, you know in my pregnancy we'd been, and with the kids it's hard to go out –*

Couple 8 found that there was *"no time left"* once the baby's needs had been met, Sally described the "three hour bath" that she used to enjoy before her twins were born. Ranjit and Charlotte put it eloquently when they spoke about the restrictions which a new baby brings, and how the now slightly diminished world is consumed by one small person:

> *Ranjit: Yeah. We don't have no social life left - um - we don't have any kind of - life - left. He is -*
> *Charlotte: - our life.*

Ranjit: - our life.

Bateman (2009) also wrote that there is a danger for primiparous couples that their only communication will be around the baby, "to the detriment of the relationship" (p.22). Deave et al (2008) wrote about the "sadness" that some parents felt, that no-one warned them about the impact of the child's birth upon their relationship as a couple; that to some extent, their expectation of the physical birth had overwhelmed any preparation that was necessary for their primary dyadic relationship to survive. The interviews of Deave's research provided an opportunity for some of the couples to talk about these issues for the first time. De Montigny (2006) also said that the couple relationship should be supported throughout the transition process. This is something which also recurred throughout the One Plus One (2003) paper, with dissatisfaction and levels of conflict increasing following the birth. This then, is possibly a true redefinition of the family microsystem, where both father and mother have accepted the status quo of life with a baby, and their dyad has truly been redefined as a triad, at least in this example. Bateman also said that most primiparous couples find that the birth overshadows their relationship. Maleka reflected on the change which motherhood had brought to her, but after listing the difficulties, she said, "*So even though it is challenging ... the happiness overshadows all these things*".

5.6   Becoming a new family

Intrinsic to the transition into parenthood is the concept of becoming a new family, where the lives of the parents converge upon a common direction and a shared future. The original partner dyad no longer has primacy: two become three, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological transition takes place. Whilst control is perceptibly or actually "lost" and existing proximal processes become disrupted (as discussed in the previous section), a new family unit emerges as a result of this ecological transition. De Montigny (2006) characterised this moment as "the birth of the new family" (p. 6).

For Mohammed and Mita, it meant emerging as an extended family, as they saw the joy which their baby daughter brought to their relatives: "*Just by looking at her, you know you can tell, like they - they sort of enjoy her, and er - she enjoys them as well.*" Edgar and Eunice (Couple 8) regarded their neighbours and church as their extended family:

Edgar: So the church was there, even when P. was being born the church was there – we have members of the church that were there. And er – so we consider the church and our neighbours, you know - yeah, we consider the church and our neighbours as the extended family. So what we lack in Ghana is being provided for here by the church.

Both extended families and church communities are mesosystem phenomena (Bronfenbrenner 1979) which can then provide support to the emergent family. Ranjit and Charlotte were aware of the nature of new families, and listened to their parents' advice, but ultimately decided they wanted to become an independent unit:

Charlotte: Yeah - they have their ideals, don't they, you know your mum says, 'oh, you know: give him to me, he'll be sleeping all night,' my mum says 'oh, you should put him in his room, he'll be sleeping all night,' you know, you have like, you do have like, their views of how you should do it, but they're not – neither: neither of them are particularly forceful.

Meera reflected upon the realisation that she and her husband had become their "own" family, whilst she was in hospital: *"it's nice – It's – it's feels like er, we got own family. You know like with kids and everything. Yeah, our own, our own."* She was quite unequivocal that the change was a positive one, which was echoed by Tracey, who also felt that the baby had a positive effect on their relationship as a couple, and that they had become a family unit:

Tracey: Um – it's nice having her. It's made us closer as well, hasn't it? Cause we find we're a family, ain't we, instead of being just a - a couple - it's just nice to have, it's nice to have - it's nice to have a baby, to you know, give you something to live for. Yeah.

For Tracey, having "something to live for" was very important in the context of her acknowledged depression. Deave and Johnson referred to the time of becoming a new family as a critical part of a family "life cycle" (p. 626). They then wrote about the fathers in their study responding positively to the transition into their own unique family unit (p. 631), and that the identities of fathers need time to evolve from that of husband/partner to that of one of a growing family (p. 631). The families in this study were uniformly positive about having become a new family unit, but this may be part of their natural response to the research process and part of their desire to give a positive account of themselves within that. Accepting the process of becoming a family also contributes to the parents' sense of belonging to each other, to the new family, and sometimes, to their new environment.

5.7 Anxiety and responsibility

Many of the couples expressed a growing sense of the weight of responsibility that they faced with the ecological transition to parenthood, and with it, an attendant anxiety. The "ecological journey" about which Bronfenbrenner (1995) wrote is something which encompasses the families in this study. The anxiety which accompanies new parenthood is one of the five continuum elements described by Cowan and Cowan (1992), and is highlighted by One Plus One in their 2003 paper. In addition, such anxieties are either allayed or exacerbated by exosystem characteristics:

> "… parents' evaluations of their own capacity to function, as well as their view of the child, are related to such external factors as flexibility of job schedules, adequacy of childcare arrangements, the presence of friends and neighbours who can help out in large and small emergencies, the quality of health and social services, and neighbourhood safety" (1979, p.7).

In this case, the external factors were such things as NHS guidelines around flu vaccines:

> *Adelina: When the – er, Swine Flu - was all, you know, quite – cause I was working, and er – um, I was very worried, you know – um, do I have the vaccine, do I not have the vaccine, and um I consulted the NHS Choice. We decided against it in the end.*

For some parents, the anxieties were internal, such as with Maleka, who was just *"scared that something might happen to her"* (the baby). For Maleka, the anxiety related to an unknown problem: "something might happen": her imagination being very active at this point. De Montigny (2006) acknowledged the prevalence of anxiety which relates to parents' feelings of inadequacy, and the need for healthcare professionals to be on hand to support parents in this instance. Marius and Lidia then talked about the change which would occur when the baby moved into his own room:

> *Lidia: … because now I hear him during the night, you know – wanted a cuddle, I can just grab him, and – whether [sic - whereas] in his room, I will not hear him all the time, so – the baby monitor, will not catch all the – all those, so it will be, I will feel a bit guilty, like not being there for him all the times when he needs.*

It would appear that here, Lidia was experiencing some anxiety when she talked about her baby having to sleep in a separate room. She also spoke of "guilt" that she was expecting to

feel, when she was no longer there for him at all times. Tracey found herself simply *"overwhelmed and worried"* before the birth that she *"wouldn't be a good mum"*, but she then went on to say: *"...but I'm OK now, ain't I?"* As a couple, Ray and Tracey both accepted that the responsibility of parenthood brought the added benefit of a greater sense of maturity, of "growing up":

> *Tracey: And growing up. Growing up a lot - It's being responsible for someone else, other than yourself - because you don't feel like a single – don't feel like a single person, it's - because you've got a baby now, you've got someone to look after – something to look after, protect.*

For Mantas and Elena, the weight of responsibility affected every aspect of their life:

> *Elena: Yeah, I feel like, huge responsibility, (laughs) from the beginning and until now, it's like maybe too much! - Yeah because it's like we're joking like, you know, sometimes when – when you have a baby, you don't have any instruction - how to do with the baby and, if you read in the internet, they – everything, even when you speak with the doctor, they give you many options? And you have to choose - what better for your baby, and er, sometimes you don't know what choose, and maybe you're wrong. I guess it's a huge responsibility.*

This sense of responsibility may be said to be an acknowledgement of the serious nature of the transition - itself part of the transition process (Bateman 2009). That sense of responsibility was discussed by the parents in Deave's (2008) study, and Phoenix and Husain (2007) wrote about wider families sharing that sense of responsibility, to help the couple accommodate the significant change in their lives (this need for extra help would especially be true of those parents in this cohort who gave birth to twins).

5.8 Adaptation

Bronfenbrenner described the human ability to adapt as a "growing capacity to remould reality in accordance with human requirements and aspirations that, from an ecological perspective, represents the highest expression of development" (1979, p. 10). Thus, within the parameters of an ecological transition such as the one to parenthood, the couples can adapt themselves ("remould reality"). Schumacher and Meleis (1994) described the ability to deal with the incongruence of reality and expectation as part of the transition process. One couple described the sleepless nights, and the ways in which they and their babies adapted to those:

Ranjit: - and then, go to bed, and as soon as - as soon as we go to bed -
Charlotte: - he wakes up -
Ranjit: - he wakes up. And, he does not want to sleep on my side, you doesn't want to sleep on your side, he wants to sleep slap bang in the middle with his foot in my face, and his head right under her chin, because he has to touch both parents. And then he can get to sleep.

Armand said that, despite the inconvenience of sleepless nights, they found that they were able to "adapt" to the changes in routine:

Armand: And so one would be sleeping for an hour, the other one will – er, wake up, and then after an hour he will be sleeping - like this, so we used to sleep around - twelve o'clock in the morn – in the, afternoon – in the noon: maybe for six hours and then we'd continue round, and she had to breastfeed them, er – during the night, holding them like this and I have to – not to sleep, to watch her, and then to make them burp after that, and so yeah, it was very difficult in the beginning, and I think our bodies now - have just adapted to the situation yeah, nothing has changed actually, but (laughs) we are just - we adapt ourselves to the situation.

This ability to accommodate change and to adapt to changing lifestyle patterns is important when undergoing an ecological transition. Elena talked about the strange moment when she realised that the baby whom she had been carrying as a "belly" for nine months had become a person in his own right:

Elena: You can't believe I mean like, you can't - because when you're pregnant, I was thinking about my pregnancy just as a belly, not baby, you know like, it's a belly! But then like, it, here nothing, and then you have baby! So - and now you have to believe like, it's your son! Like, even sometimes like, I woke, and I think like, 'Oh my God, it's my son!'

There is a sense with Mantas and Elena that the baby (no longer "the belly") is the new reality, and that they therefore have to adapt to their new life, to become "used to" being a responsible mother and father. The reality of a "belly" having become her "son", and the consequent change of her role from wife to mother is also reflected in her husband's words: "*it's – it's difficult to understand that you - already father, you know?*" For Sally, the transition meant less time for herself:

Sally: The things I miss more than anything, which I don't miss anything, as in – I wouldn't swap it for the world, but I used to have my, like, three hour bath. Didn't I? - you know, that's what I miss, that's the only thing, but I'm sure that will get easier and easier again as they are getting older.

The idea of sacrificing a three-hour bath (as also discussed in section 5.6) for *"rush-rush-rush"* might have been unique to Sally, although whether life would get *"easier and easier"* for her would be material for another study. Nevertheless, those words indicate a sense of hope which carried her through the difficulties of day-to-day life with two baby twins, and enabled her to view the future with that hope, *"I'm sure that it will get easier."* Elena also echoed something similar when reviewing the prospect of life with the baby without the help of her mother, *"I guess it will be fine."*

So within these excerpts is evidence of the disruption to life which a baby brings, but also a sense of responsibility with the emergence of a new individual person who needs looking after, as well as the demise of the old routines of life, at least for a period of time. The adaptation from one lifestyle to another is ameliorated by a sense of hope that things will get better. The concept of adaptation is important to successful transition, as is the hope that at some future stage, life will once again become more bearable, however difficult that adaptation may be (Deave, 2008).

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the nature of the transition to parenthood: the role of settings and the importance of information to facilitate that transition, expectations of the transition itself and a sense of loss of control within that process, a growing sense of responsibility, aligned to anxiety, as well as the emergent family and the ability to adapt to one's new circumstances.

For all of the couples in this study, there was an acceptance of the fundamental transition which they had undergone, from couple to parents, with anxieties and responsibility. This study has shown how, as Bronfenbrenner wrote, information can play a primary role in the preparation stage, when parents acquaint themselves with both societal (macrosystem) and personal (microsystem) expectations, as well as those of an extended family (mesosystem). There is a clear role, too, for health providers in that information provision; although the evolution of the internet has both supplemented and, to a degree, superseded the role of those providers. In Bronfenbrenner's terms, the emergence of the new family (microsystem) interacts with the pre-existent "wider" family and interacts with it (mesosystem) - in some cases harmoniously (for example, Mohammed and Mita, Amrick and Meera living with their

respective parents) and in some cases less happily (Ray and Tracey's thwarted attempts to live with his extended family up North, and later with her mother in Dagenham, illustrate this).

Expectations of life transitions assist in the couple's experience of those transitions, and to an extent information plays a role in this, too; and this is critical when discussing the fundamental nature of an ecological transition such as this one, from primary dyad to family unit. Although existing microsystem proximal processes are disrupted and change, they are then replaced with new ones, as the couple assume responsibility for the care and nurturing of the infant in question. Part of accepting the responsibility is the role played by adaptation, as the couples allow their processes to change, and their lives to adapt to the new reality, enabling those systems to change, and enabling them to look to the future with some degree of hope. Successful adaptation then enables parents to "belong", to their burgeoning family and to their surroundings (see also section 5.6). In the next chapter I shall be examining the effect of migration, and the transition to parenthood upon the parents' identity.

Chapter Six. Identity

6.   Introduction

This chapter is the third of the findings chapters. It examines the parents' sense of changing identity as they experience the transition from couple to parents. It firstly looks at identity in terms of race, with an examination of how the parents perceived the race of others (in particular health care staff), then at identity in terms of family, gender, culture and religion, and finally as students - which was an unexpected theme which kept emerging from the data, that of the parents as continuing students in their lives and careers. Schumacher and Meleis (1994) observed "the pattern of change within transition, in identities, role, relationships, abilities, and patterns of behaviour" (p.131). Pridham et al (1991) viewed an acquired maternal identity following childbirth as critical in the successful transition process, and yet what these data from this particular study show is that identity is far more far-reaching than simply "maternal" or "paternal".

Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognised the importance of "roles" within the immediate sphere of people's existence (dyads, microsystems) and the impact of role transitions as one-off occurrences within an individual's life course, "These transitions are not limited to the early years but recur, in various forms, throughout the life of the person" (Bronfenbrenner 1977 p. 526). "Roles" can be seen as intrinsic to identity; and whilst not exactly interchangeable terms, roles are part of the fabric of which identity is comprised. Giddens (1984) is less enamoured of the role concept, finding its roots too deeply embedded in historical social theory where there is a more "clear cut closure of relationships than is found in social systems as a whole" (p. 86: also discussed later in section 7.2).

Role transitions can occur for children as well as for adults (for example, when an only child suddenly finds themselves becoming an older sibling). This then, will have an effect on the behaviour of the individual in question, whether child or adult, which then has an effect on the person's surrounding relationships (1979). Social role (or class) was defined by Bronfenbrenner as being a microsystem element, in how it (class) is exhibited on a daily basis (1995), although he illustrates that the determinants of class are defined by the macrosystem (1979). Within the "*Person - Process - Context - Time*" model which the author introduced in

1995, the process is one of internal change which affects external (and visible) processes. Schumacher and Meleis (1994) also noted the importance of "sociocultural context" in transition. The extent to which an individual's identity is married to that of role within society, and how new parenthood affects that is also explored in this chapter.

6.1 Characteristics of identity

Throughout this study, aspects of the respondents' identities became clear as they talked about their life, their history, their countries of origin or their religion. In further developing Bronfenbrenner's themes of the systems of human ecology, Cowan and Cowan (1992) recognised identity as a key factor in their study, when they asked participants to identify which aspects of their identity had become subsumed in relation to their parent part. Where parents have put aside elements of their past, for example, it could be argued that they were determining that the "parent" part of their identity was to gain more prominence than other parts as they faced their future. Ethnicity forms an important part of identity in this context as well (Bradby 1995, Phoenix and Husain, 2007) as do family culture and national identity - some of the parents were still acclimatising to the UK, some were looking to leave, and many of the "ethnic minority" parents were second or third generation British, and arguably as "indigenous" as any of their White British counterparts (Puthussery et al 2008). From the perspective of Human Ecology, it is a case of determining the impact of a role transition from primary dyad to triad (or tetrad in the case of a family with twins) upon the individuals themselves (father, mother, child) and upon their changing systems, within settings such as the home, workplace and elsewhere (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

6.1.1 Identity in terms of race

Race, like class, is an example of something which was defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) at macrosystem level - defining culture and ideologies, which then cascades downward, and is felt by individuals at the microsystem level, in their daily life. Phoenix and Husain (2007) said that "race" is intersectional with other categories: "It is necessary to recognise the effects of 'race', ethnicity, class and gender, and to see them as operating simultaneously and as

intersecting rather than isolated" (p.3). Puthussery et al (2008) wrote that a multiplicity of conflicting cultures could result in "hybrid identities" being experienced by ethnic minority women (p.199).

For some of the interviewees, the concept of race and colour would recur as one component in their life - not necessarily the defining one, but an important element in their interpretation of who they were as individuals. Occasionally it would be through a humorous reference. Ranjit and Charlotte (Interview 10) were quite happy to banter with each other about their respective racial backgrounds, in that Charlotte (a white mother) would prefix a statement with, *"I'm not racist"* while Ranjit, her Indian husband teased her by saying, *"You are!"* The racial interplay was all the more interesting in that the mother openly talked about school pupils being disadvantaged because the area is too "multicultural", whilst arguably being in a very happy, mixed cultural relationship herself. Ranjit then talked at greater length about the multiculturalism of the area (see Section 4.4.2).

Armand and Brunelle were very clear that their race made them stand out in an area which they saw as racially intolerant, when he asserted that he felt *"in danger"* because *"we are blacks"* (as discussed in section 4.3.6). This lent an element of sadness to that particular interview, contributing to the sense that this couple would not want to stay in the UK for longer than was strictly necessary. Certainly from their language, it appeared as though the ecological transition of their move to the UK was not for them, to be a permanent one. Mohammed also made mention of race, both in terms of his upbringing: *"When I went to school it was like ninety – I don't know – ninety-four percent sort of Asian"* and in terms of his feeling about the local area of Dagenham in which he now lived as not being a *"predominantly Asian area"* (see section 4.2). The concept of racial identity was clearly one which played a significant part in his views about the future in Barking and Dagenham. It is arguable that Mohammed and his wife Mita were able to perceive a change in the culture of Barking and Dagenham, as evidenced by a growing local Asian population, as a transition taking place at macrosystem level within the local area. This was shown when he was talking about taking his daughter to the local park *"you get a lot of Asians, blacks, and - white people, so: it'd be quite nice, and it's very close, so."*

When Meera thinks about her attitude towards London as opposed to Germany, she says London is *"more like India"*, to which Amrick quips, *"lots more brown faces."* This reaction

is something which was highlighted by Dench and Gavron (2006) with regard to the rapidly evolving community in Tower Hamlets, which underwent a significant transition at macrosystem level in the 1960s and 1970s, and where one of the respondents says, "In another 40 years [Tower Hamlets] will be like New Delhi" (p. 175). Social cohesion, to them, was encompassed in a homogeneity which reflected their own race. Conversely, the white working class couple Ray and Tracey appeared to have something of a siege mentality with regard to their surrounding community, recognising changes at macrosystem level which, to Ray's mind, have recently disadvantaged them as a white couple, and citing it as a reason why they would have liked to have moved away:

> *Tracey: That might be why - there's not enough appointments, because of all them asylum seekers as well, that's what I feel. Too many people – too many – it's too overpopulated down here. Also, they're saying there's a baby boom. More babies being born because of asylum seekers as well. So there's less beds, you know, less care for pregnant women and that.*

It appears to this couple that their identity is one of an underprivileged couple being squeezed by the demands of a local population swollen by "foreigners". This is a form of essentialism (to an extent many of the above quotes might be deemed to be essentialism, when talking about "Asian", or when Edgar calls for dialogue between "whites and blacks" - as discussed in section 4.4.2). Perhaps this essentialist perception is a key factor in the attitudes which can be found in Barking and Dagenham; a misconception about race and preference, essentialising all foreigners as "asylum seekers" (and therefore dependent on hand-outs), and a lack of communication on both sides. This need for intra-community dialogue is something which was described by Beider (2011) in his exploration of community cohesion. It was also highlighted by Puthussery et al (2010), with regard to how health staff work with their patients, which is examined in the next section.

6.1.2 Health staff and perceptions of race

Hospitals and health services feature as settings within the mesosystems of a couple's life; as discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.3), their influence being directly felt upon the new family as they acclimatise to the role transitions and ecological transitions which they have undergone, and as they negotiate the boundaries between family (Bronfenbrenner's microsystem) and healthcare service (mesosystem). Occasionally, within the interviews,

couples would comment on the attitude or behaviour of a member of staff; a GP, or midwife. As a black Congolese couple, Armand and Brunelle felt racial tension first from an Indian GP who made the mother feel "horrible": *"I feel like I'm wasting his time while I'm there to, I don't know I feel like is it because it's free that he feels like he can treat me like some piece of - whatever."* Here, therefore, we have an identity clash: a reaction to the doctor in question on the basis of race (a possible macrosystem determinant affecting the mother's response at microsystem level). Responses to the race of individual staff are a recurrent theme within this section. Armand and Brunelle's experiences did not end there, however; it extended to the character of a midwife whom they encountered at the local hospital. It should be noted, that when Armand explained what the midwife had said, he put on a strong West African accent to "characterise" her. He started by comparing the attitude of the young, white trainee midwives with what he perceived as the less-caring West African:

> *Armand: So my conclusion to that point was maybe that woman was someone that was doing – she studied something else in her country, but when she arrived here in the UK, she decided to, to work, and the only one possibility was doing those kind of studies – being a midwife, that would take – less time, and it not a vocation. And what I saw which was different with these young, white ladies, they were like, into their job. It was like a passion – you have to take care of your passion. But the other was like, she came with the - sorry for the (laughs) for the imitation, 'at the end of the day, baby is yours!' I can imagine that, say – yeah. You treat me like, I'm black, you're black, but you're treating me like – um - an animal, maybe. But for the others, you – you feel like there's a kind of consideration, because I remember when my mum came, there was two er – white – er – women there were working there, then I said, 'yeah, it's already time for you to close, but my mum came from Congo she wanted to see her first er, grandchildren,' they said, 'OK, you have to do - to – to be quick, because the – the person in charge isn't here yet.' So we get into the – the room, she saw the baby, she prayed for the baby and then we left after an hour. But the next day, we saw another - er, person from er, West Africa – probably Nigerian, I said the same thing, and they said, 'No, you have to wait until the time that, er, they open the doors properly.'*

This characterisation was unexpected, as Armand polarised his feelings about white staff who were "into their job" whereas in his opinion, the West African woman had trained as a midwife because it would "take less time" (another example of an essentialist position). Armand also apologised in advance for his negative stereotype, which seemed to acknowledge that it may have been an intra-African stereotype: *"I'm black, you're black, but you're treating me like ... an animal"*. He also specified her country of origin as *"probably Nigerian"*. His contrast with the "white women" was also very marked here: and yet, how might he have framed the conversation had I, the researcher, been a West African woman?

Shonya (second generation Guyanese) also said that, when she came across a midwife whom she deemed to be negligent, the woman responsible was African:

> *Shonya: When I spoke to the actual midwife, um – er: she was an African lady, um – I told her what was happening, and she said to me, 'Oh, just go and take two paracetamols and call me back a couple of hours.'*

What is particularly interesting about both stories, is that both Armand and Shonya felt the need to press the point that the midwife was from Africa (West Africa in Armand's case, so as to differentiate from the Congo) so that it became clear during the interview that, from their viewpoint, African midwives - and West Africans in particular - appeared to be uncaring. For Ray and Tracey (white, unemployed) the issue of race was very straightforward. When they presented their baby to a surgery when she had conjunctivitis, they felt discriminated against because they were white:

> *Ray: But the way that the - the doctor's were, was unbelievable. It – it was as though, 'why don't we put our class before their class?'*
> *David: Class? What do you mean?*
> *Ray: Their – their culture before - a new-born baby - if someone - someone lives a different culture to us, will come before any of us. That's how I see it. Now, you should not be doing that if it's a new-born baby.*
> *Tracey: That might be why as well - that might be why there's not enough appointments, because of all them asylum seekers as well, that's what I feel. Too many people – too many – it's too overpopulated down here. That's why there's lack of appointments, the health care – lack of health care.*

So Ray and Tracey, for whatever reason, felt slighted by the doctors at their GP surgery, and attributed it to a form of racial discrimination against them as a white couple. They had also been treated by an African health visitor, and she left them feeling disempowered and bewildered which the couple felt the need to discuss:

> *Tracey: Couldn't understand her, really did we?*
> *Ray: No, we couldn't.*
> *David: Why not?*
> *Tracey: She was African, weren't she? Just couldn't understand.*
> *Ray: I think what it was – her speech was too quick … and you – you couldn't understand what she was saying.*

The feeling of disempowerment aligned to a lack of understanding is keenly felt here, both by Ray and Tracey, and to a lesser extent by Armand and Brunelle. Racial stereotyping by health staff is something which was investigated in Puthussery et al (2010), a study of the healthcare

experiences of ethnic minority women who were born in the United Kingdom. They wrote about "interpersonal issues with professionals arising from staff stereotypes, racism and cultural barriers" (p.157). The response of Armand and Brunelle to their "West African" midwife appears to illustrate a form of essentialism (Phoenix and Husain, 2007), certainly on the part of the parents themselves. This is also interesting from Shonya's point of view - as a Caribbean second-generation British born woman, she still felt it necessary to point out that her midwife was "African".

It may be that for many patients, there is an expectation of a macrosystem cultural value which is held by staff from other countries which is opposed to their own, "British" expectations (though as we have seen, what it means to be "British" is itself arguably evolving at macrosystem level); "The macrosystem also undergoes a process of development" (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 265). The parents' own macrosystems, informing their own cultural and racial inclination, were therefore informing much of their conversation during the interviews.

6.2 Gendered roles

One question arising from this study was the extent to which couples enacted gendered roles, either within cultural contexts or not, and how this played out within their identities as new parents. Again, like race or class, an individual's perception of gender is influenced by the cultural mores which are affected by their macrosystem; although the macrosystem itself may well be in flux, as gendered roles will alter according to country of origin, religious beliefs, expectations of their respective role as "mother" or "father" and experiences of migration. Mohammed, for example, expressed a feeling of guilt that he should spend more time with his daughter:

> *Mohammed: (laughs) I think I could do a lot more as a - as a - as a father, and as a - you know - er: like um, feeding Z. - most of it's left - to Mita, and changing – changing her clothes and nappies and - and stuff like that, I do - try, but I think I could do a lot more.*

What is fascinating about Mohammed's speech here is that it became quite fragmented as he grappled with the issue. He also repeated on a couple of occasions that his wife *"keeps saying things like that"* and *"keeps bringing it up"*. He used a lack of time as an excuse, *"cause I just – I don't have the time, really"* which might be fair if he was away at work for a fair

proportion of that time - something other fathers also said. This does, however highlight the standard norm of "father at work, mother at home" thinking). Mohammed then went on to say what a difference a brief three day holiday had made, as *"she's a little bit more closer to me now."* Irfan also struggled, in that he was physically absent from the home for months at a time, as he returned to work for two months at an oil rig in Nigeria. When he did return to see his son, he continued to treat him as he had before, not realising that his son had grown and changed in that time, and therefore did not need the same sort of attention as he had previously:

> *Mary: (To Irfan) I'd say the biggest challenge from your point of view, would be because you're away, and then you're here, and then when he's here, what he wants to do is just cuddle and carry him, and I keep saying, 'Don't spoil him because when you're gone, I'm not going to break my back', because he keeps wanting to carry him, and they do all this, Oh, come on baby, he's a grown-up, he's not a baby any more – if he wants to sleep, he'll lie down and he'll sleep.*

Again, Irfan was forced, by circumstance, to play out a typical gendered role of the distant father returning to his family, before flying away again, and not picking up the fact that his child had changed significantly since the last time he had seen him. Peter talked about how easy it is for fathers who go to work and only see their child in the evenings, when they are ready for attention: "*I'm only spending, like, good time, like, you know - Loving her, kissing, hugging, but she [Adelina] has to - you know, look after her all the time."* Vytas recognised the work which his wife did: *"She had no – no time off, like twenty-four-seven ... and every day the same, same, same."* But again, Vytas ended up conforming to gendered male expectations. Edgar was far more terse and very frank when it was time to wake up in the middle of the night to feed their son:*"I would just tend to go to the other side of the bed and say, 'I don't have a breast, you - do that', because when he wakes up he eats a lot".* This reinforces the idea of the father being absent during the day and the night as well, as he did not "have a breast." It does raise the issue of the biological imperative within the gender roles; as to what role a father can play when breastfeeding takes place. John (Father 9) explained how he spent his working day constructing the Olympic Centre, would come home, and then disappear to work on his garden shed: *"... I go to work, and then I've got to decorate, and I've been building a shed out the back there, and it's a pain in the arse. You just don't get time. So you hardly get to see her.'"* It is interesting to see John's frustration, denoted by the phrase, *"pain in the arse"* - yet presumably he had made an active choice to come home from work and then go straight to his shed. His wife Lucy then explained that she had wanted to do some

work on the shed herself so that John could spend time with the baby, but had been "told off" for mixing the cement incorrectly, again reinforcing gendered role models. Lucy did say that she was trying to get more done in the garden herself so that her partner could spend more time with the baby.

Meera was very keen to point out how committed her husband Amrick was in helping with their twins, but Tony (who also had twins) found himself forced into the position of main carer after his partner Sally was rendered temporarily unable to do so after a caesarean section. She began the point by saying that her expectation of his ability to manage with the children was low:

> *Sally: Tony's not exceptionally like, anything bad, but just typical, really, which - don't mean to sound sexist, but - I was a bit thinking, 'oh no God, is he going to be a bit lazy with the babies, and not - give me a hand with the twins.'*

Prefacing the statement with *"don't mean to sound sexist"* echoes earlier quotes from the parents when they say, *"I'm not being racist…";* the statement immediately prepares the listener for the possibility of a sexist comment. Sally's preconception of her husband was then belied however, as Tony then went on to explain that after the babies were born, he had to get on with the job of feeding them and changing them, whilst Sally was recuperating. Then he had to teach Sally how to do it:

> *Tony: No, Sally– like, found it hard first time we come home, cause I done everything, in the hospital, and cause she had a caesarean, she wasn't able to do anything, so it's like, well, these are her babies, but - she hasn't really had that contact.*
> *Sally: Yeah, I felt a bit like, 'oh, you need to teach me your bit -'*
> *Tony: - left out of it, she worried, cause she thought I was doing so well -*
> *Sally: - I wanted to make sure I wasn't doing it wrong -*
> *David: That's interesting – could they bond with her, as well as they had with you?*
> *Tony: Yeah, and you know, the changing and all that, when – cause she hadn't changed a nappy yet, and all that, you know, things like I was – they had to be done, and I was doing it, she worried that, 'Oh you – you're doing it so well", and I goes, "you're going to be all right as well, you'll be fine.'*

The parents in this study tended to reinforce gendered norms. It was not always clear whether there were cultural aspects to it, for example whether Eastern Europeans might be any more culturally predisposed to gendered conformity than White British, or Bangladeshi Muslims. Tony's example was an exception, and by the time of the interview, he was back at work, and Sally was again at home, doing the bulk of the work with the twins. For the parents in this study, the aspect of gendered conformity had not changed much since the days of Cowan and

Cowan (1992). Burgess (2008) did, however, observe that fathers of caesarean born children are typically more engaged than other fathers, "Fathers of caesarean babies usually undertake relatively high levels of infant care due to mothers' incapacity …" (p. 17). Whilst Bronfenbrenner (1979) talked at length about "role transition" however, the parents in this study mostly kept within gendered roles during that transition, and played out those roles in the same way as many generations have before them. Again, Bronfenbrenner wrote that the systems themselves evolve over time - so a macrosystem (which might influence individual cultural responses and gendered perspectives) can itself evolve, and indeed reshape itself reciprocally to the changing attitudes of the individual; although in the case of these parents, it appears that it had yet to do so.

6.3 Identity in terms of culture and religion

Religion has its roots in the macrosystem, with manifestations both at microsystem level (family adopting religious practices, for example) and at mesosystem level - attending church and interacting with a religious community to give two examples (Bronfenbrenner 1977 and 1979). Whilst few of the couples were openly religious in the interview, for those who were, religion played such a significant part in their identity that it merited some time to explore. Mohammed, for example, was very keen to talk about his faith. He was also keen to differentiate between the cultural faith with which he had grown up, and the stricter form of Islam which he and his wife now followed:

> *Mohammed: Sorry, but the other thing is –*
> *David: Yeah –*
> *Mohammed: We're Muslims, so. Um, there's a lot of Muslim, sort of Islamic influences in our lives as well - which we've - er, which she will, er – experience as well - and um - and er - so. Religion will play … a big part - and I mean, when I – when I grew up, it was more to do with culture, Bangladeshi culture, and eh … we've sort of moved towards a more Islamic culture now. Because I think - some of the things that were - um: that we were influenced by was actually Bangladeshi culture which is slowly fading away, and, um I think Islam is more of a bigger part – playing a bigger part in our lives … that will be a sort of challenge for her in terms of you know, going to school, and um – being brought up as, as a Muslim, really, in – in Dagenham … So um, that could be a bit of a challenge for her.*

The intriguing thing about this exchange is its opening; Mohammed starts with *"sorry, but …"*, the context being a polite interruption to a train of conversation, because he felt that this

was a very important part of their life, and appeared keen to explain exactly what part Islam now played in their lives, regardless of where the conversation had been going up to that point. He was also keen to make sure the point was well communicated. It is also interesting that he differentiated between the old *"Bangladeshi culture"* and the new *"Islamic culture"* in their lives. He and Mita had been British all of their lives, and yet had undergone something of an ecological transition themselves. He rounded off his point by noting that their daughter will be one of the few Muslims in Dagenham when she grows up, something which was a concern to him in terms of her upbringing. In terms of identity, their religion played a foundational point, therefore. It also illustrates how, despite a couple being "indigenous", they may still undergo a fundamental macrosystem transition (i.e. religious) whilst still remaining "at home" in the UK.

Irfan (Father 4) had a Muslim name, although he did not talk about religion during the interview. Vytas and Kristina talked about a local "Catholic school" to which they were keen to send their daughter, and Ranjit explained that he had been brought up as a Sikh in a predominantly white community, but did not consider attending school assemblies when he was a child as a threat to his family faith or identity. Edgar was similar to Mohammed in his desire to communicate his faith, or at least to highlight the benefits of his church life:

> *Edgar: Back at home, there's this proverb that 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'. But it's not so in England. It doesn't take a village it takes a – a group of just maybe the nuclear family and – and maybe few friends, er – to raise up a family. So there is a different – it's , it's - it's a different paradigm. Altogether. Here, when P. was born – we are blessed, in the sense that we belong to a church, and the church is a family for us, You know. Apart from just the two of us, we have a family – bigger family, which is the church. So the church was there, even when P. was being born, the church was there – we have members of the church that were there.*

Similarly to Mohammed, Edgar had a point which he wanted to communicate, from which no disruption from his baby son would distract him. His point was that far from needing a *"whole village"* to raise a child, it took a *"church"* - who thus acted as the couple's extended family. At another point in the interview, he made a similar point, when describing his neighbours as *"like our family"*, as they were also part of his church. To an extent, like Mohammed (whose extended family lived with him, and whose wife taught religious classes in their home), Edgar and Eunice were able to supplement the local neighbourhood care with care from their spiritual community. Their church life was foundational in their establishment of a community, and family and even individual identity. This is an outworking of the

mesosystems which can act as a support to those who are undergoing fundamental transitions in life (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Tony and Sally discussed their religious beliefs, or differences, in the context of their children's upbringing. Tony had an Irish Catholic heritage, and Sally did not, as she was keen to say:

> *Sally: We were saying, yesterday, the Italians and Irish are very – quite, quite similar –*
> *Tony: Well, Catholic, yeah, (inaudible)*
> *Sally: Yeah. I'm not Catholic.*

The conversation became more animated when they were planning the christening of their children. The couple worked (and met) at the same work place in London, where they were pondering the possibility of the children being christened as Anglicans:

> *Sally: You could let them be Church of England for a while, wouldn't you?*
> *Tony: Yeah, then later on have a Catholic, you know – have a –*
> *Tony: Or even – re-christened Catholics, or something … Cause it's – you know, it's all set up, it's there, we won't have to do anything –*
> *Sally: Do one Church of England, one Catholic!*
> *Tony: Christen him Catholic.*
> *Sally: Oh, why?*
> *Tony: Cause that's how I want it.*
> *Sally: What?*
> *Tony: Cause that's how I'd like it.*
> *Sally: Who – who Catholic?*
> *Tony: Cause he'd keep the name, wouldn't he? She'd lose hers.*
> *Sally: Yeah, I was very upset that I lost my surname.*

What is interesting about this exchange (which became very slightly heated) was Tony's concern that the son be christened a Catholic, regardless of his daughter's christening. The reason for this is one of identity: so that the family name would be continued as Catholic, regardless of whoever his twin daughter grows up to become. Sally recognised that she had to rescind her surname for the sake of his, and *"wanted it all (to) be together."* It mattered less to Tony whether the daughter was Catholic or not (which again, might have been a manifestation of gendered point of view), but the issue of his own inherited Catholicism was certainly a key element within his own microsystem, presumably affected by the macrosystems with which he had grown up (he had attended Catholic schools in North London).

Religion was stated as a key aspect of ethnicity (Phoenix and Husain, 2007) - and part of a "shared destiny" which was also seen as important to "ethnicity" (Bradby, 1995). Phoenix and Husain brought evidence of religion highlighting differences in approaches to parenting,

although this was not illustrated in this cohort, probably because the children were still babies. The authors also accepted that the effect of religion on parenting in general needs to be explored with further research. From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) perspective, culture and ideology belong to the macrosystem (p.515). The macrosystem is therefore an important generator of the ideology or belief systems (or absence thereof) to which the individual couples adhere, as they prepare to venture into the future as parents.

6.4 The parents' identity as students

Studentship (particularly in higher education) was a common theme which regularly recurred somewhat unexpectedly through this study as I analysed the data. Every parent who was (or had been) studying was keen to explain the exact nature and context of their studies in the course of the interview. For some of the parents (such as Maleka), the studies were historical but still an important part of their identity. For others, it was vital to developing a career outside of the home, a vital expression of their personal aspiration to something greater than their immediate circumstances (and an exosystem concern), for others it was a hope of future studies. This indicates that this cohort of respondents was particularly aspirational, including Ray, the unemployed father who was trying to improve his status in life by studying in order to make himself more employable within the construction industry. Attendance at a college or university independent from the family microsystem is an illustration of an exosystem - an external system which has an indirect (but nonetheless strong) influence on the home microsystem and the dyadic and triadic relationships within that. The hope of future benefits which may arise from further and higher education (both in terms of work, and positive role transitions) give an added sense of purpose to the immediate difficulties of the primary transition into new parenthood. Education may also provide a much-needed opportunity to transition from one social class to another (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

Maleka (Ghanaian) was keen to point out that she and Dennis had met whilst she was studying for her masters degree:

> *Maleka: So I used to come first in 2001. Then in 2005 when I came I – I finished school so I – I went back and came to do my masters in 2006. So I - I - I said: I met Dennis when I was doing my masters and then I finished with the graduation and everything then, um I -*

I had, I got pregnant so I - um - before then I was working in a care home because I had to do - um, part time. So that is what I will – intend to do later.

Adelina was a psychology lecturer at a university, and was in the process of doing her own PhD. Armand and Brunelle met whilst both were doing a masters degree, Edgar was undertaking a masters degree and Eunice had every expectation of returning to train as an early years professional once her maternity period was over. Lidia stated that her studies were in the context of her career: "*Yeah. I'm actually – also studying, self-studying ... Um – so, I'm looking for a job in accountancy in the company where I'm working.*" She was also undergoing a change from answering telephones to becoming an accountant within her company, something which resonated for her, as her parents had also been an accountant (mother) and electrician (father), just as she and her husband were becoming:

Lidia: Um, my father is an electrician, and my mother, um, she – she is an accountant.
David: What about you - two? What sort of things do you do? I know you have to speak for Marius, because the baby's out, but -
Lidia: - Um – I'm working in travel industry. And um – call seller, recall seller in the city, and Marius, he is an electrician! (Laughs)
David: Oh – like your father!
Lidia: Yes – and I'm training for um – to be an accountant! (Laughs) ... so history repeats itself!

In this way, apparently coincidentally, Lidia was establishing a joint identity with her husband which directly echoed that of her own parents a generation previously. The resonance of roles here is particularly significant, as they are repeating the roles of the previous generation, possibly creating a link with the past which might offset the effect of their own ecological transition into a new country. Although Ray and Tracey were both unemployed and housed at the top of a condemned high-rise tower block, Ray was nevertheless keen to point out to me that he was determined to gain the qualifications necessary to begin a career in the building trade:

Ray: I actually enjoyed my education but I didn't actually take my exams. I'm, I'm registered dyslexic anyway. I – I've done so much since coming over here from where I originated from, I've done so many courses like my Level 1, Level 2 English and Maths, and that. I passed them. Um I did my – CSCS card. I thought I was going to fail that. And that is one hard thing that you can ever take – I did that, and I passed that. I got - think it was, I think you have to get so many out of it, and I got – about three questions wrong, and I still passed it. And they said, 'it - it is that complicated for someone of any - any age, any kind, it doesn't matter whether you've got this problem, or whatever, you are the only one that's done it. No-one else can.' And it – it is unbelievable what they say.

Ray's undoubted pride at having overcome many barriers to achieve this certification (worklessness, dyslexia, being an ex-offender) was tempered by the subsequent difficulties which he had had in getting sustainable work. Nevertheless it was the voice of a man who had worked to adopt a new identity for himself, and was battling to use the qualification in a particular career, thus initiate his own role transition, and therefore a new aspect to his identity. Role transitions are a pivotal element within identity itself, as individuals seek to re-shape the present and mould their future. They are not only transitions which affect the individual but within the systems themselves, which affect the dyadic interactions around them, and which perpetuate throughout the person's life (Bronfenbrenner 1977). The parents from this particular cohort frequently demonstrated a desire to improve their life prospects through self-improvement, and therefore rather than being passively influenced by their surroundings and consequent systems, appeared in turn, determined to effect their own influence upon their world.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the concept of the parents' identity within this study: how it may be affected by their race, gender, identity and culture. Within the wider context of the transition to parenthood, there are still many aspects of the parents' identity as individuals and as emergent families which play a significant role in their lives; not just as "mum and dad", whether that is in the context of their race, culture, gender, religion or studentship. As the parents hold on to key aspects of who they are, their identity, carried over from their pre-parenting past or looking to their future careers, is still an essential aspect of their lives and (as the Cowans' segmented identity "pie" illustrates) assists them in their transition to parenthood (Cowan and Cowan, 1992). The Cowans observed that when a woman's "parent" identity is greater than all other parts of the "pie", they tended to have lower self-esteem. They also noted that, from a father's point of view, their "parent" identity was always smaller than the "worker/student" segment (which is borne out in the gender roles in this particular study). One Plus One (2006) also talked of "role conflict" experienced by mothers as they look for work as well as looking after an infant. Therefore, the data shows that, as the parents themselves undergo role transitions, these then affect their surrounding systems (micro- and meso-) and are in turn shaped by societal systems at the macro- level. The way in which systems react and adapt to change and transitions illustrates their own flexibility, and ability to change slowly.

Identity is also a core aspect of belonging, which will be explored further in the next chapter. The next chapter is the final chapter, where the elements of this study will be discussed and the threads drawn together. The study's limitations as well as an overview of the predominant themes will be examined, and the thesis will finish with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Seven. Discussion and Conclusions

7.   Introduction

As described in the first chapter of the thesis, the aims of this study were to:

- Explore some of the couples' experiences of the transition to parenthood and migration to the UK;
- Seek to understand all of the parents' experiences of transition in the context of their wider families and community;
- Compare and contrast experiences of local indigenous couples and migrating couples;
- Seek to understand these transitions through analysing existing theoretical approaches.

The location of Barking and Dagenham was chosen both for its convenience for the researcher, but also because it is an area which is in itself in some considerable transition: from an industrial white working-class enclave of the 1930s to 1980s, to a more post-industrial location (literally post-Fordist) which has become a residential borough for London commuters, primarily due to its affordable housing. The study was also an exploration of migratory parents, combining their experiences of the transition to the UK with their transition to parenthood. The use of Bronfenbrenner's 1979 ecological systems theory then enabled me to interpret the data through the prism of those systems. This chapter discusses the use of Bronfenbrenner's systems theory within the context of other transition theories and explores the health and social care implications of the findings of the study for Barking and Dagenham and elsewhere, looks at the limitations of the study, before discussing the literature relating to the study and looking at areas for further research within this field, thus bringing the thesis to a close.

7.1   The work of Bronfenbrenner and this study

Initially, to apply Bronfenbrenner's systems theory to the lives of this particular cohort was not particularly straightforward: for example, to what extent one experience might be that of a mesosystem, as opposed to a macrosystem - which refers to "general prototypes existing in

the culture or subculture" which sets "the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 515). Then the challenge was to establish whether various systems overlap, or impinge upon one another's influence upon the lives of the couples in question, as well as the extent to which systems responded to the actions of the couples themselves.

Yet, as the study progressed, a clarity of application emerged. Some of the parents' experiences (such as the Congolese parents, for example) might be seen to be viewed through an existing cultural macrosystem lens; other experiences (such as that of the young Muslim couple as they chose to embrace a stricter religious life) can be viewed through a prism of a couple undergoing a macrosystem transition. The concept of the macrosystem affecting all the other systems in the couple's life – leading finally to the microsystem (in which the family activities are primarily concerned) emerges quite strongly in such contexts. It is also important to remember that, despite the macrosystem transition, the couple made their own choice as agents to change their cultural context (as illustrated by Giddens in 1984, where the agents can affect the structure as well as vice-versa); there was still the conscious desire to embrace a different culture from the one in which they had been brought up. Thus, the couple can be seen as actors who are willing to change their personal systems, which then had a reciprocal effect on their lives. Bronfenbrenner always maintained that the systems themselves were responsive to the influence of the individual; the theory is phenomenological and experiential in its perspective (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 22). He also remarked that the systems were strongly influenced by the individual, and that the individual and their systems are inter-relational: "If you wish to understand the relation between the developing person and some aspect of his environment, try to budge the one, and see what happens to the other" (p. 37).

Within the context of social theory, there is a tradition of early to mid-twentieth century thought (such as Parsons - see Literature Review section 2.2.5) which describes human beings as "subjects" who are at the mercy of social structures. With structuration, Giddens (1984) formulated the argument that human beings are able to act autonomously within their social structures, even if their motivation may not always be clear to them. Bronfenbrenner's work, although arguably structuralist in its form (particularly his earlier work) nevertheless points to a reciprocal relationship between the individual and their social structure. There is undoubtedly an element of the macrosystem dictating the character of the other systems, but Bronfenbrenner also emphasised the role of the individual in shaping their own environment:

"In other words, the developing individual begins to move into and to master those segments of the external environment that control his life" (p. 289). With the development of the *person-process-context-time (PPCT)* framework in 1995, Bronfenbrenner brought his theory within the bounds of structure and agency; where a person (agent) experiences or carries our processes within the structure of a context, over a period of time. These are described by the author as "proximal processes" - processes within the proximity of the individual's environment (or context). It is the PPCT framework which Olds incorporated into his theory base for the Nurse-Family Partnership programme (Olds et al, 1997), as discussed in section 2.2.4, where the influence of the framework was noted upon Olds's work:

> "Bronfenbrenner's model has evolved from one with considerable emphasis on contextual influences … to one that gives greater attention to characteristics of persons and processes as influences on human development" (p.10).

So Olds recognised the limitations of Bronfenbrenner's 1979 work, and its apparently regressive nature. Nevertheless, he encompassed the PPCT model of the later theory (1995) in the development of his own programme; where the *person* elements referred to "parent" and "child", the *process* referred to programme processes, the parents' own processes (developmental and psychological), the *context* to the services which surround the individual. The programme then relied upon the adaptive abilities of the parent (the agent) to their life circumstances. The limitations of the model for Olds's purpose have been discussed more fully in section 2.2.4.

In the twenty first century, there is now an opportunity for further social theory development. Giddens (1984) alludes to this, when he considers the impact of the global systems upon micro elements. It is almost as though there is a need to acknowledge a new system (in Bronfenbrenner terms) - akin to a metasystem, which encompasses the effects of nation states upon one another, and upon the lives of citizens within (and outside of) them. For example, the extent to which the lives of the participants of this particular cohort might have been affected by the banking crisis in the USA or the war in Afghanistan. With the development of the world wide web, there emerges too, a global system of interlinear social and economic dependencies quite unlike anything that has been considered by social theory before. Bronfenbrenner's theory remains a product of its time. The 1979 model certainly looks retrospectively, drawing upon historical psycho-social literature of the early to mid twentieth

century in its scope. Bronfenbrenner's later amendments (1986, 1995) were possibly written in response to sociological developments of the 1980s, not least of which was Giddens's structuration, which itself has been much analysed, critiqued and reviewed[6].

7.2 Review of the themes

In section 2.6, the following quote was used, from Corbin and Strauss (2008) with regard to data analysis:

> "Though a researcher does not want to enter the field with an entire list of concepts, some may turn up over and over again in the literature and also appear in the data, thus demonstrating their significance … However if a concept is truly relevant, the question to ask is how the concept is the same and/or different from that in the literature" (p. 37).

The challenge for this thesis was to discover not only which concepts arose in the research that mirrored concepts within the literature, but to establish whether they were in fact "significant". From this approach, the themes of migration, parenthood, identity and belonging were identified; along with related themes such as "home" and "isolation" (belonging), adaptation (migration and parenthood) or multiculturalism and culture identity (migration). The iterative review of the literature (the articles remained on Mendeley for regular checking, re-reading and reviewing) then enabled the concepts to be reflected upon in the light of that continual process.

7.2.1 The transition of migration

For the parents in this study who were undergoing the transition of migration as well as the transition to parenthood, the geographical migration arguably added an extra dimension to what Deave et al (1998) described as "a stressful event" (p. 2). For some of the parents in this cohort (both migrant and non-migrant), this added dimension increased their sense of displacement within the UK; other parents, whilst the sense of displacement was no less real, appeared able to accept a certain level of alienation as they got on with their lives. One

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[6] Not least by the author himself, in the 7th edition of his book "Sociology" (Giddens and Sutton, 2013).

migrant couple's choice to buy a house in the area despite an awareness of xenophobia illustrated a certain determination both to settle and to adapt to the circumstances by creating a home which in itself, was a sign of permanence when other elements in their life were in a state of flux.

Phoenix and Husain (2007) described situations in which migrants maintain close ties with their countries of origin, in order to maintain a certain cultural connection with those countries; arguably resisting full acculturation in the destination country (something borne out in one of the fathers, as he lived in two countries simultaneously). That resistance also occurred with some of the other families in this cohort, understandably because they had only moved from their country of origin relatively recently. Maintaining links with home countries is far easier even now than it was in 2001 when Phoenix and Husain's paper was written, given the prevalence of communication tools such as the internet, email, mobile phones, and Skype with which to communicate (also noted by Chambers, 2012). These modes of communication recurred frequently within the data, as sources of both information as well as communication. Whilst the technology makes communication easier however, there is still some indication that tools such as Skype merely serve to accentuate the geographical distance between the parties involved (as discussed in section 4.3.4).

The phenomenon of individual migration into a community which is culturally separate from the rest of the country is something with which Dench and Gavron (2006) grappled (and to an extent Alagiah, 2006, too), as they considered the effect of a significant part of a population developing autonomously in Tower Hamlets. Cantle (2001) also examined the effects of "segregation" (deliberate or otherwise) of whole communities, which can result in a reinforcement of divisions within the community, leading ultimately to suspicion and fear. His suggestion of balancing the effect of separated communities with "action that fosters understanding of other communities" is however, rather vague in its approach. Alagiah (2006) warned against becoming complacent, "sleep walking to segregation" (p. 166). For Bronfenbrenner, migration was a non-normative transition. Coupled with childbirth (an ecological transition), this illustrates that, for some other families in this cohort at least, there were potentially powerful stressors within their life. As well as possible experiences of the xenophobia, the parents had to deal with issues of acculturation, perceptions of multiculturalism, isolation (something which Cowan and Cowan observed to be a prime factor

in new parenthood), and the transition from one family identity to another: in the creation of a new home.

Despite some subtext of fear and alienation borne out in one or two of the interviews, the perspectives of the migrants was however, largely positive. The couples who had chosen to buy a property in Barking and Dagenham were optimistic, despite occasionally feeling isolated, and in some cases there was a determination to adapt and to settle. Others (both migrants and non-migrants) however, were looking to move, whilst for some (who did not have extended family nearby) there was an added sense of isolation, of disconnectedness. When couples undergo a such dual transition (such as migration and childbirth), there is an increased need to provide health and social support to them, since there are frequently issues of language and culture to accommodate, as well as issues of childcare and weaning. There is also clearly much still to do in the area of community cohesion, despite reports which are usually commissioned after moments of civil unrest. Owing to the nature of xenophobia and suspicion of migrants (especially within urban areas, and not helped by popular journalism), ex-patriate communities can hardly be blamed for creating their own units of cohesion; the danger is, however, that those smaller communities turn inward rather than outward in their expression and grow in parallel to one another, with no external integration.

7.2.2   The transition to parenthood

For this cohort of parents, the transition to parenthood was initially influenced by their expectations which encompassed childbirth. Bronfenbrenner described the role played by settings in any transition, and in this case the settings include health and community services such as hospitals, Health Centres or Children's Centres. For settings, clear communication with expectant parents is a vital facilitator to the transition process; the role of antenatal programs, healthcare staff (such as midwives and health visitors) and the internet all play an important part in this dissemination of information. Once the transition was underway, parents experienced a sense of a loss of personal control, as well as disruption of the regular processes as they embraced the responsibility of becoming a new family. This study has shown how adaptation then not only enabled them to endure the transition itself, but also to begin to build a new future for their emergent family (section 5.9). Bateman (2009) detailed the need for adaptation within the couple relationship so that the relationship can progress through the transition to parenthood, which is echoed in the One Plus One study (2003). The authors of

the latter also wrote that couples should be aware of the risk to their relationship, so that they can plan their response to the transition adequately.

For many couples undergoing the transition to parenthood, support from their own parents is very important. This was borne out in the experience of some of the couples in this study who had access to support from their own parents (section 4.3.2), but is also supported by the literature: such as Cowan and Cowan (1992), although the authors described the complications which can arise from parental expectations, as did Chambers (2012). In terms of preparing for parenthood, Burgess (2008) explained about the importance of both parents attending the scans of their baby, as a key factor in helping them come to terms with their impending responsibility[7].

Reviewing the data illustrates a common theme; that of overstretched health services which are either struggling to care for expectant couples in labour, or to provide adequate post-natal care, and resort to using open clinics in order to see as many mothers within a short time frame as possible. The fieldwork for this study (2010-12) was conducted when services were still relatively well provided for; since that time, many further hospital services have been cut, placing the already strained provision under even more pressure. The need for effective and clear communication both before and after the birth recurred as a motif within the data, however; further work should be done in finding ways of ensuring couples have access to adequate information. Part of this can be achieved through continuity of care: so that a couple can see the same midwife on a recurring basis. Antenatal education should also be tailored to accommodate the needs of both mothers and fathers, welcoming the father as a co-partner in the process of new parenthood, and preparing the parents not just for the birth of the child, but also for the transition of roles and added responsibility that parenthood brings. The sense of a loss of control in childbirth is perhaps inevitable to a degree, but surely may be ameliorated through such an arrangement. Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and other local government documentation pay constant lip-service to "holistic" services; yet here is an ideal opportunity to provide exactly those sort of services within the sphere of perinatal care.

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[7] Scans were understandably very important for the parents of the twins in this cohort, as the discovery or confirmation that they were expecting twins became a key rite of passage in their lives as expectant parents.

7.2.3 Identity

The third overarching theme which appears regularly within the data is that of identity, and its place within migration and the transition to parenthood. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described "roles" as component part of identity, and describes the effect upon identity when a person's role is altered. Within this study, the characteristics of identity in terms of race, gendered roles, identity in terms of one's culture and religion as well as the parents' identity as students are all considered. Alagiah (2006) explored issues of identity and race in some depth, as did Phoenix and Husain (2007). Chambers (2012) talked about maintaining cultural identity through community ceremonies; marriage for example, and childbirth celebration ceremonies come into this category as well. For many of these parents, their racial identity was highlighted by how they felt health staff perceived them (highlighted in section 6.1.2), which challenges the notion of increasing community cohesion through accessing local services (Beider, 2011). Identity was only recognisable in religious terms for a small number of the parents, and yet the identification within a religious framework enabled them to find an immediate connection with neighbours and community (section 6.3). Cowan and Cowan (1992) approached the identity of their parent participants through their pie metaphor, the couples' identities as parents fluctuating in size in proportion to the rest of their identity: in the father's case, the "parent" element always being smaller than the "worker or student" segment (p. 82). For those couples, the greatest challenge was not to ignore the "partner" slice of the pie at the expense of their relationship.

Identity is important in the transition to parenthood, as new parents embrace the change in identity, role and circumstance which parenthood brings (Cowan and Cowan, 1992). There are elements of identity segmentation within this particular research cohort. As new parents (all of them), as an ethnic minority within a predominantly (although rapidly diminishing) white area (six of the couples, and two of the other parents). Some of them saw their identity as migrants, or in terms of their national origin, despite being British (section 4.3). The concept of the parents having a clear identity as students was an unexpected one, but one which was revealed by the data, as almost every couple had at least one member who was either involved in university, had recently gained a masters degree, was involved in social self-improvement, or on a career development plan. Out of the 15 couples, nine of the mothers were either participating in further training or had a clear career development plan in mind. Out of the remaining six, four of the mothers either had a masters or a Level 3 or equivalent education,

so could return to the workplace if they needed to do so. To have an identity as a student and parent enables them to maintain a certain autonomy, giving them something else to pursue, to aim for, outside of the home (exosystem), but doubtless influencing life within the home microsystem. The need for clear identity and a future aspiration beyond the confining years of early parenthood are both strongly represented in the data; the student aspect of the parents' lives illustrated the fact that many of them had aspirations above and beyond being parents. Two of the couples were in the process of moving out to "a nicer area" within the days following the interview. Many of the parents were in the process of improving their circumstances or career opportunities.

7.2.4 Belonging

As noted previously in Section 6.5, belonging is closely aligned to identity. Issues of community cohesion often begin with the individual (Cantle, 2001), and this study was particularly pertinent in this area when exploring issues of belonging, and isolation within the community. Simply becoming a parent does not address this issue, since it is easy to become isolated within one's own home (Cowan and Cowan, 1992, Mauthner, 1995) and therefore community cohesion and belonging are to some degree, coterminous. Community segregation in itself creates a crisis with belonging (as illustrated in section 2.4.3); it is important that such things be addressed in terms of the whole community, not just in terms of ethnic groups within the community. A lack of support for fathers can also result in subsequent isolation for them (Deave and Johnson, 2008, Burgess, 2008): they no longer feel as though they belong to the growing family (see section 5.0). Simply returning to work does not necessarily help either, as mothers in such situations have often become "doubly isolated" (Mauthner 1995, p.315). Belonging has to do with finding a role within one's own community (Beider, 2011), something which is intrinsically aligned to identity (also Section 6.5). This sense of belonging can arguably aid the transition process.

Cantle (2001) proposed teaching British history to migrants, so that at least young migrants can foster a sense of national belonging; he also suggested creating a sense of "community belonging" through the use of designs and street furnishing. Rather than focusing on inter-ethnic difference, there should be a "greater emphasis on common rights and responsibilities" (p.74). There is a clear need for inter-community dialogue (Beider, 2011), but this does not

happen naturally when imposed at local authority level. Within this cohort of parents, there was a degree of resistance to elements of the community which they found distasteful, which was illustrated by thoughts of raising house prices in order to exclude unsavoury elements (as noted in section 4.3.1). Establishing a home is also a core aspect of both belonging and the transition to parenthood: whether choosing to buy a new home outside Barking and Dagenham in order to look to a future outside of the borough, or buying one within the borough and accepting the challenges of staying put within a community which appeared to be relatively unaccommodating (section 4.3.6). As seen in Dench and Gavron (2006) as well as Beider (2011), resentment of migrants and new communities often comes with a sense that the "indigenous" community has been abandoned by the authorities: "we are the forgot-about people" (white resident, Beider 2011, p.48). In terms of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Transitions, if a couple move from one country (with its macrosystem manifestations) to another (with some similar, but also some very different macrosystem values), they have to be able to acclimatise to the change in culture (or feel as though they can change the culture themselves) at the level of the microsystem (home and family). From this acclimatisation comes the sense of "belonging" and for those couples who felt somehow "disjointed", that sense of belonging did not appear to be forthcoming. The notion of "home" is a powerful one, yet to a certain extent the belonging of these couples may not have been in the physical home location (which Giddens described) but within the context of their immediate family; as long as they had a role in the family, they belonged to their partner, or their children. A "home" is a physical location, but can also be a place of emotional attachment, that is not necessarily represented by bricks and mortar. That adaptation to the new family and home, when successful, also facilitates a sense of belonging, which underpins the transition process: a sense of belonging to one's self (identity), to one's partner and child (family), to one's home, and by extension, community (cohesion).

Figure 7.1 (below) illustrates some core aspects in assisting the transition process, which applies to both migrants and non-migrants. Belonging is at the centre, as the core process identified within this thesis, and has its core in the personal and family or home microsystem. Adaptation is important (also section 5.9), which takes place at micro level. Community and extended family then take their place - which occurs at the macro (community) and meso (extended family) levels. Respite and a career path can also assist greatly (giving exosystem opportunities), which are tied in with aspiration (as explained in Section 6.4), and a sense of hope for the future.
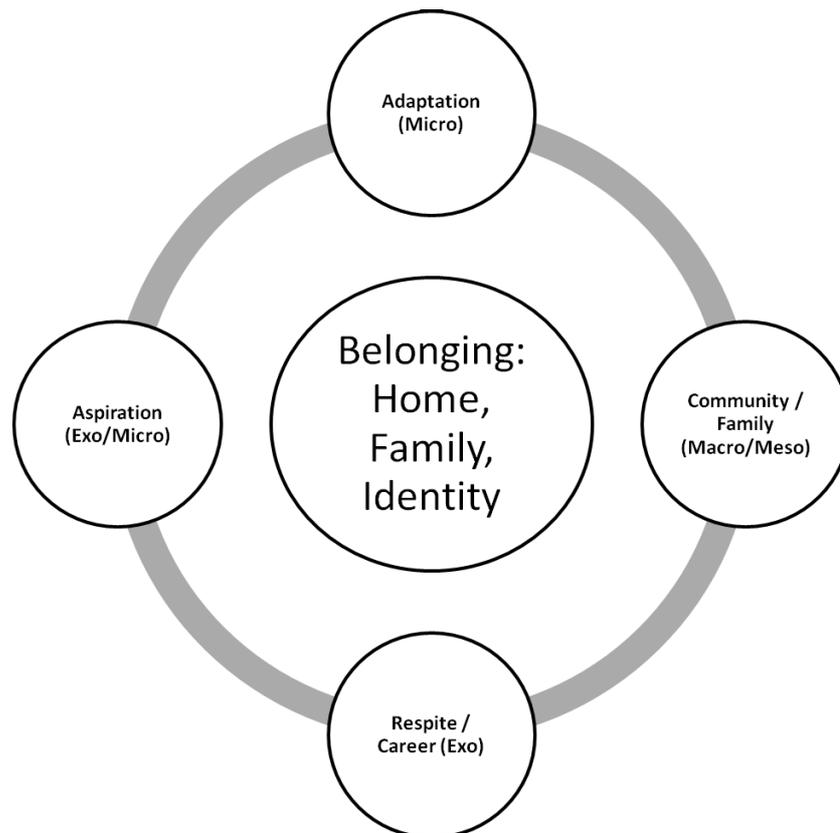
Figure 7.1 Factors assisting transition, with belonging in the centre

7.3   A comparison between local and migrant couples

To make a straightforward comparison between "migrant" and "indigenous" couples is a particular challenge with this cohort. This serves to illustrate that such terms are, in themselves, problematic. Four of the couples, for example, were mixed: consisting of both a migrant and a non-migrant parent. Six of the couples were recent migrants, yet the remaining five "indigenous" couples also presented anomalies: one seemingly "indigenous" couple were born in Bangladesh and viewed it, rather than the UK, as their "home" (section 4.3.5). Another "local" father viewed his life in Dagenham through the perspective of having spent a length of time in prison, after having grown up in another part of the country. One of the "indigenous" mothers was a second generation Albanian (whose husband was a recent Albanian migrant) and saw herself as both British and Albanian. One father was born and bred in London, yet was at great pains to ensure his Irish heritage was not forgotten. This therefore calls into question terms such as "migrant" and "indigenous". It also highlights the transnational nature of such lives: something which Phoenix and Husain (2007) also note.

No	Ethnicity - Mum	Status	Ethnicity - Dad	Status	Couple
Couple 1	African	Migrant	White British	Indigenous	Mixed
Couple 2	Bangladeshi	Migrant	Bangladeshi	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 3	Caribbean (Guyanese)	Indigenous	Caribbean (Jamaican)	Indigenous	Indigenous
Couple 4	African (Nigerian)	Migrant	African (Nigerian)	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 5	Albanian	Indigenous	Albanian	Migrant	Mixed
Couple 6	African (Congolese)	Migrant	African (Congolese)	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 7	Lithuanian	Migrant	Lithuanian	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 8	African (Ghanaian)	Migrant	African (Ghanaian)	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 9	New Zealander	Migrant	White British	Indigenous	Mixed
Couple 10	White British	Indigenous	Indian	Indigenous	Indigenous
Couple 11	Indian (German)	Migrant	Indian (British)	Indigenous	Mixed
Couple 12	Romanian	Migrant	Romanian	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 13	White British	Indigenous	White British	Indigenous	Indigenous
Couple 14	Belorussian	Migrant	Lithuanian	Migrant	Migrant
Couple 15	White British	Indigenous	White Irish	Indigenous	Indigenous

Table 7.1 Comparing the couples

The perspective of one migrant couple was particularly forthright with regard to healthcare; however that particular couple were negative about all of their experiences in the UK. Their primary concerns had been around excessive bureaucracy, and the nature of the National Health Service, whether a system which was free at the point of need was therefore sub-standard. Other migrant couples commented on the nature of general practice; whether a person could be an effective doctor if they did not specialise, comparing the GPs in the UK to their doctors in their countries of origin. One migrant couple stated that they felt their GP was condescending, possibly due to race: yet this had also been an experience for one of the White British couples, who felt that the local doctors favoured migrants. Analysing the experiences of all couples shows that there is a fairly equal series of experiences both negative and positive for the migrants as for the non-migrants.

In terms of experiences of life in the whole community, both migrant and non-migrant mothers battled with isolation. The issue of xenophobia was present for some of the migrant

parents, yet non-migrant parents had also expressed a concern for the future of their young daughter growing up in a traditionally white working class area such as Dagenham. The issue was not restricted to race either: since one of the Lithuanian fathers recognised a sense that British people viewed Eastern Europeans with suspicion. Both migrant and non-migrant parents viewed the area as somewhat neglected, and a selection of both viewed the future as one to be lived more happily elsewhere.

For all of the parents, the challenges were similar. Naturally, migrant parents also faced challenges of settling and establishing roots. Nevertheless, some of the indigenous couples were unsettled or looking to move elsewhere, had just moved into a home which was due for demolition, or viewed themselves as different to the majority community. Many of the non-migrant parents were no more "settled" than the migrants therefore. In terms of the transition to parenthood, there were similar struggles regardless of migratory status. Despite the non-normative nature of the transition to a new country, many of the migrants appeared to adapt to both transitions equally well.

7.4 Implications for social cohesion

The rapid growth of multicultural communities in previously homogenous areas such as Barking and Dagenham provides one of the biggest challenges for any government in establishing community cohesion. In an age where it is wholly possible for migrants to live for several years in a uni-cultural bubble (section 4.4.2), further consideration should be given to issues of community cohesion. In an area which is known for its xenophobia (evidenced by the support which the BNP received in 2006), that has an effect on migrating people whose sense of belonging is already being challenged, as well as indigenous people whose sense of belonging appears to be rooted in "Golden Age" thinking (Gabriel, 1993), or in a sense of "Englishness" which is not necessarily based on reality. The term "indigenous" itself may have implied ethnic meaning, but in the case of this particular study, the "indigenous" UK-born parents are White British, Bengali, Caribbean, Albanian and white Irish (also discussed in section 3.4 and 7.4).

Despite government efforts at attaining a sense of cohesion in the midst of this period of social transition (Cantle, 2001 and Beider, 2011), further thinking needs to be made at policy level in order to attain greater social cohesion. An acknowledgement of the feeling of indigenous

white working-class communities must be considered (Beider, 2011) as well as finding ways to integrate new communities such as the Romanian community as seen in section 4.4.2 – so that they do not become isolated, or autonomous in a way that they do not integrate into the rest of society as a whole. That said, some acknowledgement must be made that expatriate communities across the globe exist where the focus is primarily inward, rather than outward towards integrating into the wider community. Also, evidence does exist (Au and Fukuda, 2002) that expatriates frequently have more diverse social networks and a greater ability to "use the resources … found within different communities of the host country" (p. 285). It is a challenge to integrate certain cultures where isolation and segregation may be actively encouraged, possibly through faith (Cantle, 2001), and yet steps can be made to breach such gaps provided all communities are engaged and involved in the discussions (Beider, 2011). Where such individuals or communities exist, surely the hope for greater community cohesion must come from a greater involvement within the wider community: through volunteering, pro-social activity or other forms of community participation.

7.5 Implications for new parents

As Bronfenbrenner wrote, information is a key resource for people who are about to undergo major life transitions; this is particularly true for parents as well (see, for example, Deave, 2008; Davies & Bath 2002; Pridham et al, 1991). For some parents, this might mean having the right books available; for others, leaflets about local services; for some it might mean the internet; and for others it might be through frequently encountered health service providers, such as midwives and health visitors. The parents in this study proved to have an eclectic approach to gathering information – through websites, YouTube, books and magazines, Children's Centres, as well as friends and relatives. Mauthner (1994) stressed the importance of human support; whereas the parents in Deave et al (2008) discussed the possibility of a comprehensive DVD. Plantin and Daneback (2009) reported the development of parents using the internet both for information, and also for social support: "Today's parents are more accustomed to finding companionship and communication closeness via the internet" (p. 3), although I would argue that the "closeness" of such interaction can only be really fulfilled when the parents meet other parents face-to-face. As one respondent indicated, she wanted to meet a network of other mothers in community "coffee shops", as opposed to internet chat

rooms. Other parents were pioneers in this regard however, as they "met" each other for the first time on the internet.

Many of the mothers in the study expressed feelings of isolation and loneliness – something which features quite prominently in the literature as well (Cowan and Cowan, 1992; Schumacher, 1994; Mauthner, 1995 to name but three). A critical time of transition such as new motherhood should present an opportunity for community integration, yet new parents still seem to be vulnerable to community isolation. Being separated from one's own family (as many of the migrants in this cohort were) merely serves to accentuate this isolation. Some of the respondents also chose not to be integrated with their wider families, for the sake of harmony in their immediate home (examined in section 4.3.3).

Multifaceted universal services such as Children's Centres illustrates that government policy had gone some way to addressing this (prior to the 2010-15 government cuts), yet still more should be done. Antenatal courses are a prime opportunity to integrate parents not just as prospective carers of new babies, but also in their changed role as members of the community (Deave et al, 2008), with a particular focus on fathers (Deave and Johnson, 2008; Burgess 2008). A decision to involve fathers at this crucial point can have positive repercussions later on in the partner relationship (Cowan and Cowan, 1992, Burgess, 2008). Mauthner (1994) called for the development of community support networks, something which wasn't always forthcoming for this particular cohort. Online developments such as MumsNet and NetMums go some way to addressing some of the information needs, as does jeunepapa.com for the French-speaking fathers community. Yet internet-based services only serve one aspect of the new parent's needs; a computer cannot replace human contact. The development of community-based social networks for new parents could become something which is considered as part of a community of approach to perinatal health care.

7.6 Implications for healthcare

The parents' perceptions of the local hospitals were particularly notable; in spite of catchment areas, some of the parents chose to have their babies in different hospitals, although many of the parents did have positive experiences locally. For the most part, the parents' experiences of their time in hospital were good, with the occasional anecdote illustrating a certain sense of

being "out of control" – something which many hospital patients must feel from time to time. (It could be argued that, to a degree, the sense of being out of control and then regaining control is a central aspect of transition.) There were comments about bureaucracy and overcrowding, yet the overall tenour of the responses described supportive services; something which may be owed in part to the fact that the respondents for this study were all confident to access their local services.

The role of GPs is clearly a much debated one within the lives of expectant parents; the experiences of this cohort in particular being quite salutary as various parents described their GPs as objectionable, "very brilliant", "hit and miss", "not too clever", or simply felt that they were unqualified to work with children (as they were not paediatricians - an assumption made by the Eastern Europeans). Midwives were often seen to be very dedicated, although there were examples of parents being alienated by a more officious approach (section 6.1.2). The role of health service staff cannot be underestimated in the process of the transition to parenthood, as the literature highlights. McCourt and Pearce (2000) for example, who advocated for a continuity of midwives, or Burgess (2008) and Chin et al (2011) as they described the need for health staff to involve the father actively in the birthing process. The respondents in Puthussery et al (2010) passed comment on their maternity services, stating that they would have appreciated some continuity of care from the midwifery practice, something which is also brought out by McCourt and Pearce (2000). The authors wrote that continuity of care is something particularly favoured by ethnic minority women: "Reviews of maternity services have recommended continuity of midwifery care, and it has been argued that such issues are particularly important to ethnic minority women" (p. 161), although probably many expectant mothers would appreciate this. For many of the parents in this study, health visitors were another part in the chain of support; and although one father's fear of being "told off" by health staff might be thought extreme, it may indicate the position some fathers feel in the supporting process - Burgess stressed the importance of engaging with fathers rather than treating them as "irresponsible adversaries" (2008, p.14). One mother's experience of health visitor consultation in an impersonal mass health clinic in a shopping centre is again, possibly extreme, showing a health service which is trying to adopt innovative methods in order to appear open and accessible, but is occasionally failing in the process.

In Bronfenbrenner's terms, Children's Centres act as a key point in the mesosystem, where parents can interact positively, and experience the influence in their own microsystem.

Children's Centres appear positively throughout the data (unsurprising perhaps given the nature of the cohort in the first place), and as a halfway point between GP services, hospitals and other health care services, they act as a community connector which, in theory at least, should be able to encompass a range of perinatal services together with childcare; with services such as midwifery care, antenatal classes, breastfeeding support, baby massage and sleep clinics. For the parents in this cohort, Children's Centres were central in their thinking, whether through attending crèches, breastfeeding classes or sleep clinics. However one mother did observe that after six months parents tended not to attend anymore - as they had returned to work, and were merely dropping by to leave their child in the nursery, leaving her feeling less "connected" (she eventually returned to work after a year).

Comparing the UK health services with other European services is always a challenge: given that successive governments look to "best practice" elsewhere which is funded in completely different ways. This is something which is highlighted when one couple compare the UK system to that of Norway, where there was continuity of midwifery consultation (open access antenatal appointments with the same midwife at regular intervals) being able to ask any question, and having any concern alleviated. What is particularly notable about their case was how important it was to them to have a midwife who was able to talk to them about any concern they may have had through regular appointments (section 5.4).

7.7 Limitations of the study

This study makes no claim to be generalisable: to begin with, it is a limited-cohort qualitative study. All of the parents were recruited through local Children's Centres, they were all accessing universal services at the point of need, and therefore were not "hard-to-reach". Almost all of the parents demonstrated that they had a certain level of social aspiration, as illustrated in the fact that many of them were studying or aiming to improve their employability, had completed masters degrees or were proving to be adaptable. They were also particularly recruited for their ability to speak English: one of the criteria was to be able to speak in the future tense, something which is a measure of a more advanced grasp of English (despite this, some did struggle in this area). All demonstrated an open willingness to participate, they were keen to give an account of themselves, of their experiences of childbirth, local health systems and life in London. Only four of the couples lived in flats, the

rest lived in houses – and some of those houses were in the very rare private housing estates in the borough. In addition, most of the couples were from an ethnic minority; this was good with regards to determining experiences of migration, but less good in terms of comparing them with local white working-class families. In addition, some of the couples had had twins - which in itself is a potentially complicating factor, since the experience of childbirth and new parenthood is arguably different to that of a single child. This, therefore might have affected the way in which the parents gave an account of their lives, given that so many had been recruited through Children's Centres, and therefore they might want to give a more positive account of their own experiences of childbirth and health services.

The first nine couples were recruited through an antenatal programme called "Getting Ready for Your Baby" (November and Easter, 2008), which again, might affect the data, given that these were parents who were conscientious enough to want to attend such a programme. Within the parameters of the study, single parents were not included, and therefore data pertaining to those particular needs were not addressed. When analysing the data, some shortcomings in the topic guide appeared, with regards to exploring all of the issues which were discussed; in retrospect, further questions or probes might have been used in certain circumstances, which might have illustrated the effects of a transition from one culture to another, from one set of social expectations (such as in post-Soviet Eastern Europe, for example) to another. In addition, some of the earlier interviews lack some of the rigour of the later ones, as I became more familiar with the qualitative interview process and its parameters.

A further limitation of this study is the extent to which issues such as multiculturalism, post-multiculturalism, diversity, race, xenophobia and community cohesion have been put to one side as the central issues of transition to parenthood, identity and belonging have come to the fore. Whilst personal adaptation plays a key role in a successful transition to parenthood, especially one within a new country, the concepts and themes of community cohesion which were outlined in the Literature Review have had limited scope for further exploration within this thesis.

Limitations exist in other qualitative studies, such as Deave et al (2008), who accepted that many of their parents were in stable couple relationships, and it became very hard for them to recruit single parents. The authors also acknowledged the need for further studies with ethnic

minority parents, which is something that this study has sought to address in part. This discussion should therefore be considered with these limitations in mind.

7.8 Recommendations for future research

Existing research has examined the issues generated by the transition to parenthood, yet I am aware of no studies which deal with the experiences of new parents who are also experiencing the transition of migration into the UK. Studies which compare experiences of perinatal healthcare in Eastern European and other Western European countries would be valuable, particularly with regard to access and availability, continuity of care and community integration. Isolation for new parents will continue to be a much-needed research topic, together with studies which analyse issues of community cohesion, integration and belonging: from the viewpoint of a new parent, and also from the viewpoint of a recent migrant.

Further studies which probe the relationship between new parenthood, career and aspiration are needed along with the role of childcare in enabling new mothers to fulfil such aspiration, the relationship between transition, security and belonging (micro and macro). Further research should also incorporate globally extended families, ever-changing interpretations of the word "family" in the context of the world wide web, global travel and transnational job-roles (and family roles), as well as aiming to ascertain a greater understanding of the concepts of "home" and "belonging".

Longitudinal studies (such as the one carried out by Cowan and Cowan, 1992) frequently yield rich data; a longitudinal design in the case of this particular study might have incorporated data from the parents' antenatal experience, as well as postnatal (as with Deave et al, 2008), but could also have analysed the respondents' changing attitude to their place in the community, to look for signs of acceptance, or further rejection of their place in Barking and Dagenham in particular. There is further scope for studies of parents in urban areas such as Barking and Dagenham, perhaps with parents in rural areas as a comparator. The role played by community-based healthcare services in the area of community cohesion and the integration of new parents should be further examined, along with further studies which look into the role played by the internet in information provision, as well as social support. The rapid rise of internet self-disclosure mechanisms such as social media and Skype creates opportunities to research (and theorise) the nature of the projected self, particularly with

regard to how actors (in this case new parents) portray themselves and their childcare in such a public sphere.

7.9 Conclusion

This study addresses a unique gap in the literature of transition to parenthood by placing it in the context of the transition to another country. It builds upon existing parenthood transition literature and underlines the nature of the transition study by viewing the data through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Transition to parenthood (a primary transition) is therefore placed within the context (for some of the parents) of the transition to another country (an ecological transition). More information and support may be given to parents throughout the transition experience, not just before the birth of the child. Both primary and ecological transitions combine to make the transition to parenthood a particularly arduous prospect for a couple who are also learning to live in a new country. It is at that point that parents need a strong community to support them at this time. Nevertheless, people are able to adapt and accommodate change. It is that sense of adaptation which is central to coping with the stressors of a dual transition: and clear information and support services can aid that adaptation process. Within that adaptation is the creation of a home: a place of belonging, where new identity (as parents or as new citizens) can be expressed and explored, as a microsystem within the macrosystem of the whole community. When faced with the transition to parenthood, migrant parents face an even greater set of challenges than non-migrant parents, yet the evidence from these data indicates that migrants do not necessarily face greater adversity.

As the world becomes ever more interconnected through more accessible travel, and in particular through the world wide web, it has never been more important to address issues arising from the transitions of migration, re-culturation, and parenthood. Despite the growing world population concentrating ever more increasingly in urban environments, isolation, disconnectedness and a lack of belonging still prevail, which for new parents can become debilitating factors in the quest to bring up a family within those environments. Despite the stressors of transition, the parents within this study have shown the importance of adaptation, and having something outside of the immediate family environment to aspire to. Even when in a relatively alien environment, the parents have shown a certain resilience, and the creation of home is primary in establishing a locus from which to demonstrate that resilience.

No matter how global the issues (macrosystem), the effects are always ultimately felt at individual level (microsystem), therefore the challenges are most keenly felt in the local communities (mesosystem). It is in those communities that greater resources should be placed: in community healthcare certainly, but also in the creation of universal (and wherever possible, culturally neutral) community connection points, whether that be Children's Centres or even coffee shops. The internet provides a brave new resource for connection, but it is in the connection points with other individuals and families that true community cohesion can begin.

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Appendix One - Ethical approval letter

the
UNIVERSITY
of
GREENWICH

Mr David Simmons
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Mary Seacole Building
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University of Greenwich

Direct Line 020 8331 8842
Direct Fax 020 8331 8824
Email research_ethics@gre.ac.uk
Our Ref   UREC/09/10/2.5.4
Date: 11 February 2010

Dear David

University Research Ethics Committee – Minute 09/10.2.5.4 - Application for ethical approval
Title of Research: A study of local young families, the sources of advice they use, and the
experiences of parenting in Barking and Dagenham, with particular reference to parents from an
ethnic minority

I am writing to confirm that the above application has been **approved** by the Committee and that you have permission to proceed.

I am advised by the Committee to remind you of the following points:

- You must notify the Committee immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware, which would cast doubt upon, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment, submitted to the Committee and/or which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research;

- You must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998;

- You must refer proposed amendments to the protocol to the Committee for further review and obtain the Committee's approval thereto prior to implementation (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the subject is paramount).

- You are authorised to present this University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee letter of approval to outside bodies in support of any application for further research clearance.

On behalf of the Committee may I wish you success in your project.

Yours sincerely

John Wallace
Secretary, University Research Ethics Committee

cc: Prof. Liz Meerabeau, Dr Jane Reeves (Supervisors)

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Appendix Two - Ethnicity data in Barking and Dagenham

Ethnicity	1991	% of total	2001	Change + -	% of total	2011	% of total	Change +-
All Groups	142,272		165,700	23,428		185,911	12%	20,211
White: British	133,903	94.12%	132,566	-1,337	80%	91,949	49%	-40,617
White: Irish	2,809	1.97%	2,753	-56	1.66%	1,730	1%	-1,023
White: Other White	-	0.00%	4,348	4,348	2.62%	14,708	8%	10,360
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	-	0.00%	1,420	1,420	0.86%	2,669	1%	1,249
Mixed: White and Black African	-	0.00%	572	572	0.35%	2,128	1%	1,556
Mixed: White and Asian	-	0.00%	534	534	0.32%	1,246	1%	712
Mixed: Other Mixed	-	0.00%	550	550	0.33%	1,835	1%	1,285
Asian or Asian British: Indian	2,807	1.97%	3,681	874	2.22%	7,436	4%	3,755
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1,674	1.18%	3,055	1,381	1.84%	8,007	4%	4,952
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	200	0.14%	673	473	0.41%	7,701	4%	7,028
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	593	0.42%	877	284	0.53%	6,450	3%	5,573
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	1,790	1.26%	3,434	1,644	2.07%	5,227	3%	1,793
Black or Black British: Black African	919	0.65%	7,284	6,365	4.40%	28,685	15%	21,401
Black or Black British: Other Black	638	0.45%	722	84	0.44%	3,228	2%	2,506
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese	593	0.42%	775	182	0.47%	1,315	1%	540
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other	653	0.46%	700	47	0.42%	1,167	1%	467

*Ethnicity data in Barking and Dagenham 1991-2011 (source: ONS)*

Appendix Three - Primary Literature

Authors	Title	Date	Publisher/Journal
Alagiah	A Home from Home	2006	Little, Brown
Bateman	The impact of the birth of the first child on a couple's relationship.	2009	Royal College of Midwives
Black	Child health in ethnic minorities. The difficulties of living in Britain.	1985	British Medical Journal
Bradby	Ethnicity: not a black and white issue	1995	Sociology of Health and Illness
Bronfenbrenner	Towards an experimental ecology of human development	1977	American Psychologist
Bronfenbrenner	The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design	1979	Harvard Press
Bronfenbrenner	Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives.	1986	Developmental Psychology
Bronfenbrenner	Developmental Ecology Through Space and Time: A Future Perspective	1995	American Psychological Association
Burgess	Maternal and infant health in the perinatal period: the father's role. A Literature Review	2008	The Fatherhood Institute
Cowan & Cowan	When Partners Become Parents: The Big Life Change for Couples	1992	Los Angeles: Routledge
Deave & Johnson	The transition to parenthood: what does it mean for fathers?	2008	Journal of Advanced Nursing
Deave et al	Transition to parenthood : the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood	2008	BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth
Dench and Gavron	The New East End: Kinship, race and conflict	2006	Profile Books
Katbamna	Race and Childbirth	2000	Open University Press
Mauthner	The Significance of Social Contacts Between Mothers	1995	Women's Studies International Forum
McCourt & Pearce	Does continuity of carer matter to women from minority ethnic groups?	2000	Midwifery
One Plus One	The transition to parenthood-the magic moment	2003	One Plus One

Phoenix & Husain	Parenting and ethnicity	2007	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Puthussery et al	'They're more like ordinary stroppy British women'	2008	Journal of Health Services Research & Policy
Puthussery et al	You Need that Loving Tender Care - experiences of British-Born ethnic minority mothers	2010	Journal of Health Services Research & Policy
Schumacher and Meleis	Transitions: a Central Concept in Nursing	1994	Image - the Journal of Nursing Scholarship

Appendix Four - Examples of the Literature Search Terms

My primary searches were for 'experts' in perinatal parenting experiences, in January 2009, using a list of starting authors from my supervisor. This then progressed as I searched for articles about Barking and Dagenham.

From the articles I had read I compiled a list of further "secondary" references which I thought worth investigating. By May 2009 I was working through lists of David Olds's articles about his Nurse-Family programme, before focusing later that month on articles about the theory and experience of transition:

I would also incorporate searches around ethnicity and childbirth:

Some of the search sessions were as follows:

Early searches for experts in perinatal care and parenting (15.01.2009)

Investigated literature by Sarah Cowley, Ann Oakley, Toity Deave, Christine Bidmead, Hilton Davies, Stephen Scott, Sheila Wolfendale, Eia Asen, Barking and Dagenham as place.

Looking for particular studies (22.09.2009)

Professor Olds, Newham Newpin, Stephen Scott (Multi Centre RCT's of parenting interventions).

Follow-on citations (29.04.2009)

Burgess – Bowlby – Buttigieg – Abidin – Bandura – Cowan and Cowan.

Generic antenatal search on Wiley (30.04.2009)

Barlow – Pridham – Pearson – Fletcher.

Search for "classic studies" (30.04. 2009)

Mellow Parenting – antenatal interventions – Rutter – Effects of Early Experience – Walter Barker – Transition on Wiley Interscience.

Mellow Parenting & Scott (03.05.2009 and 09.05.2009)

Fletcher – Silberberg – Mauthner (isolation in motherhood)

Searching Specific articles (06.05.2009)

Fletcher – Mauthner – Quinton - Bowlby

Searching for Olds specifically (11.05.2009)

Google Scholar – Science Direct – Wiley Interscience

Transition Literature (27.05.2009)

Cowan and Cowan (1995) – anything else by Cowans (using JSTOR, Dialogue DataStar, ERIC, Scholar, Swetswise, Wiley, Pub Med.

Sarah Cowley (Health Visiting – 04.06.2009)

Systems Theory (04.06.2009)

Just putting "Systems Theory" into search fields to see what will happen. Finally narrowing down to Wiley.

BME Studies (12.06.2009)

Searches on Google, ISI -550 articles returned, Swiss studies, domestic violence, teenage parenting. Little of use.

Specifically Cowan and Cowan (17.06.2009)

To see whether there were any further studies to note (and which I could access).

Ethnicity Searches (19.06.2009)

Web of Knowledge – 10,000 articles returned for Topic = (parent*). Refined by adding the word "natal" which refined the search to 106. However it yielded many articles about Natal in Zululand. Google Scholar:

"Ante*natal parent" returned 5,310. Changed to "ethnic antenatal" which yielded 450. Also looked at papers regarding Government commissioning research into ethnic minority communities.

NetMums (01.07.2009)

Searching for any academic analysis of the internet websites "Netmums" and "MumsNet". Found article by Sally Russell in Community Practitioner.

Stigma of parenting support (01.07.2009)

Or factors affecting participation in antenatal services.

Further research around the Cowans (03.09.2009)

Interventions to ease the transitions to parenthood – specifically.

Uniqueness search (10.09.2009)

How unique is this study? Looked at

"Ethnic; parent; ante+natal; birth". Many of the articles found so far on SWETSWISE and Google Scholar indicate an understandable preoccupation with either mothers or fathers (rarely), interviewing either/or. None interview both together. Of the studies which incorporate elements of ethnicity, most concern themselves with one particular ethnic grouping - or none at all.

Measuring tools and scales (14.09.2009)

Looking specifically at methods of evaluating the effectiveness of antenatal programmes. A journey through Google Scholar, Wiley, JSTOR, Sage Journals (Clinical Nursing), Dialogue DataStar, NFER, Journal of Pediatric Psychology, Swetswise.

Further uniqueness search (10.03.2010)

Narrowing search from September's to papers printed between 2009 and 2010.

Secondary references (26.05.2010 - from my Access database)

Whittled list from 141 to 91. Meanwhile, my Access database was transferred to EndNote (Online) and later to Mendeley.

Secondary Priority List (02.06.2010)

List of 38 key titles to find. Included Burgess, Cowan and Cowan, Fletcher, One Plus One among others.

Uniqueness Nov 2010 – (19.11.2010)

parenting ethnicity uk (uniqueness) – drop the UK if want to go anywhere (Google Scholar)

ethnic; parent; ante+natal; birth anywhere in the article (Google Scholar)

ethnic all fields AND natal all fields (Swetswise)

culture all fields AND birth all fields (Swetswise)

ethnic and birth and natal and parent (ISI Web of Knowledge)

ethnic and birth and parent (Wiley Interscience)

Then I created a map of the literature review thus far (20.12.2010)

Overview
(Trace thru Transition, Ethnicity, Social Cohesion, LBBD ,Fathers, Research theory)

Transition
(Deave x2, Bateman, Cowan and Cowan x2, de Montigny, One Plus One, Pridham, Priel, Schumacher)

Ethnicity
(Phoenix, Black, Bradby, Dearden, Free, Katbamna, McCourt, Puthussery, Rowe (x2), Sidebotham,

Social Cohesion
(Hemingway, Mauthner, Dench, Asthana, Dodd, Mail) and any of above articles which cross over into Soc Coh. (Dodd, e.g.)

LBBD background
(Asthana crosses over, Haste, borrowed elements from Dench book too, and National Office of Statistics)

Dads
(Burgess, NCT, and any secondary references which come out of those)

Internet
(Plantin. Where are all the other internet articles? Find them)

Theory and interpretation
(Cox, Davies,Lang,Silverman, Smith, Whittaker,Wolfendale)

Appendix Five - Interview Participation Letter

Dear participant,

Experiences of new parents in Barking and Dagenham

You expressed an interest in taking part in the research following on from the Getting Ready for Your Baby questionnaire.

As I mentioned before, the interview will be with you and your partner, about your experiences of being new parents in Barking and Dagenham, and your experiences of local support services for parents and families.

You will not be identified, and I will send you a summary of findings at the end of the study, should you wish.

I will explain more about confidentiality before we start the interview. We are able to pay you a one off payment of £50 to compensate you for your time taken during the interview. All information gathered on digital recorder will be securely stored by the University of Greenwich, without any name and address information. It will be password protected, and participants will not be able to be identified by the data.

If you have changed your mind and do not want to take part, then please ignore this letter.

Best wishes and thank you again, for your interest

David Simmons (Manager at LifeLine and PhD student at the University of Greenwich

Enc.

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the **UNIVERSITY** of **GREENWICH**	Mary Seacole Building Avery Hill Campus Avery Hill Road Eltham London SE9 2UG	Supervisor: Professor Liz Meerabeau - 020 8331 9150 Supervisor: Dr Jane Reeves – 020 8331 7837

Appendix Six - Research Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research: A study of local young families, the sources of advice they use, and the experiences of parenting in Barking and Dagenham, with particular reference to parents from an ethnic minority.
Researcher: David Simmons – 020 8597 2900
Supervisor: Professor Liz Meerabeau - 020 8331 9150
Supervisor: Dr Jane Reeves – 020 8331 7837

This is to explain the Second Phase of the study.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and by all means, discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Why is this study being carried out?

This Phase of the study is to find out how new parents feel about parenthood, about local community services (e.g. playgroups, baby massage sessions, post-natal health care, Children's Centres, day care and parenting courses); to find out whether their confidence has increased as a result of those services, and to examine cultural and traditional influences in parenthood.

Why have you contacted me?

You have been contacted, either because you took part in the LifeLine course "Getting Ready for Your Baby", or because you are a new parent who lives within the Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. You can decide whether or not you want to. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep this information sheet, and before the interview, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form.

If you do decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to stop at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect any services you may receive from LifeLine. If you decide to stop after the interview has begun, £50 will still be paid.

What will happen if I take part?

If you want to take part, I will be in touch to arrange a convenient time for the interview to take place. It can take place either at your home or at LifeLine House offices, or at a nearby Children's Centre.

How long will it take?

 Once we arrange the interview, it will take between 45 minutes to one hour. Should any part of the process prove to be upsetting for any reason, you may stop the interview immediately.

What will happen to the information that I may give?

All interviews will be recorded digitally, and will be securely stored by the University of Greenwich, without any name and address information. All data will be anonymous, password protected and encrypted.

Will I benefit directly from this research study?

Although you might not benefit directly, we hope that this study will help to inform service providers in the local area, to improve the services for new parents in Barking and Dagenham.

What to do now

If you would like more information before you decide about taking part, please contact David Simmons (manager at LifeLine, and PhD student at University of Greenwich) at the LifeLine Office number above. If you would like to take part, the consent form is enclosed.

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Appendix Seven - Confidentiality Clause

I am interested in your experiences as new parents. There are no right or wrong answers; it is your experiences I am interested in. I hope you will be able to answer these questions as freely as possible. If there is something you do not want to talk about, then please tell me and I will stop. Your answers will be used as part of the research and your name will be changed in the writing.

You will be aware that I am interested in your views about being parents, and this may include good and bad things.

Most of the information that you tell me will remain anonymous, however if you tell me things that involve hurting or neglecting children or breaking the law in the UK, Europe or elsewhere, I will encourage you to seek further advice, or I will be responsible for passing this information on through the appropriate services.

Appendix Eight - The experiences of new parents in Barking and Dagenham: A Topic Guide.

First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this interview. Just to reassure you everything will be recorded anonymously and in confidentiality.

- READ Child Protection caveat statement here -

1. **How long have you lived in Barking and Dagenham?**

2. **As parents, what do you think about living in this area?**
   - ☐ What opportunities are there for families with babies and small children?
   - ☐ What can a small family do in the local area? Where can you go?
   - ☐ What could be done to improve the area, for families with babies and small children? Is the transport good enough? Enough places for children to play?
   - ☐ What about transport? Parks and public facilities? GPs and health services?
   - ☐ Are local services (such as above) easy to get to? Public transport? Do you feel welcome at Health Centres, Children's Centres etc?
   - ☐ What do you think of the community life? Neighbours? Is the area clean? Do you feel safe here? Why?
   - ☐ How do you feel about schools in the area?
   - ☐ Do you want to stay in Barking and Dagenham? How do you feel about the future of your child's education here? How can the area be improved to help your child grow up to become a responsible adult?

3. **Tell me a little bit about yourselves, and your family background.**
   - ☐ Where do your family come from? How close were you as a family when you grew up? Are your parents or siblings still around? Is there an extended family? How big?
   - ☐ Is your family helpful? Are they located in the UK? Whereabouts?
   - ☐ If your own parents are not in the UK, how does that make you feel?
   - ☐ How do you feel about living in the UK?

4. **Tell me something about your employment background.**
   - ☐ What's your educational background?

☐   What was your employment status before having the baby?

☐   Have you returned to work / are you planning to return to work?

☐   Have you found having the baby has altered your thoughts about work?

☐   Do you have career aspirations?

5. Tell me about your experiences of childbirth.

☐   How was the pregnancy? Did it go according to plan?

☐   Did you go to antenatal classes? How were they?

☐   Where was the baby born? Hospital?

☐   How was the birth for Mum? For Dad? Adequate pain control?

☐   What kind of midwifery care was available? Were they helpful? Caring midwives?

☐   Was the birth as you had planned? Complications?

☐   If there were unplanned element (e.g. C-Section) were you well-supported?

6. How have you been cared for since the baby's birth?

☐   Health visitors – other professionals. Did you feel well supported?

☐   How was the availability of local services (GP, baby clinics, Children's Centres, health centres, baby and toddler groups).

☐   Was your baby healthy after that? Any concerns? Issues with weight and feeding?

☐   Did your own family support you? How was the reaction of friends, neighbours, informal arrangements.

☐   Did you have to observe any traditions, cultural practices?

7. Have you been able to meet other parents?

☐   Where have you been able to meet other parents? Have you been part of the community, or have you been alone? How did that make you feel?

☐   How were you made aware of services for parents?

8. How did you chose to feed the baby?

☐   How did you chose to feed the baby initially? If you chose to breastfeed: were hospital staff/midwives supportive? Did you join a breastfeeding network? Have your family helped or got in the way?

☐   How have people reacted to your feeding choice? How has that made you feel?

9. **Do you use the internet?**

☐ How have you found it useful? What websites do you use? Do you use forums, or YouTube, or specific websites, or just to check for information?

☐ How vital has the internet been to your development as a new parent?

10. **What has been the biggest challenge of being a parent?**

☐ From both mother and father's perspectives.

☐ What sort of adjustments have you had to make?

☐ Have you found it easy to adjust? What has been the hardest thing to get used to? How does it make you feel about the future, and where you live? Do you have any concerns for your child's education?

☐ Are you able to keep going? What gives you the most concern?

☐ As a father, what is your biggest challenge? Are you helping enough? What else could you do?

11. **What do you think of being a parent?**

☐ Has it lived up to your expectations?

☐ Have you felt ready for everything having a baby throws at you?

☐ Have you felt supported when things have been difficult?

☐ Where has the support come from? Family/Friends/Centres

12. **How would you summarise your experiences of being new parents, in one sentence?**

13. **Is there anything that you would like to mention or ask me, that you haven't been able to already?**

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix Nine - Research Consent Form

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The consent form **must** be signed by the actual investigator concerned with the project after having spoken to the participant to explain the project and after having answered his or her questions about the project.

I am taking part, and …	**Circle the answer**
1. I have read the information sheet about this study	YES / NO
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	YES / NO
3. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	YES / NO
4. I have received enough information about this study	YES / NO
5. I understand that I am free to stop: • at any time • without giving a reason for stopping • and it will not affect me if I want to study at the University of Greenwich • and it will not affect me if I am receiving services from LifeLine	 YES / NO YES / NO YES / NO YES / NO
6. I agree to take part in this study	YES / NO
Signed (Your name)	Date
Name in BLOCK LETTERS	
Signature of researcher	Date
University of Greenwich Mary Seacole Building Avery Hill Campus Avery Hill Road Eltham London SE9 2UG	**This Project is Supervised by:** Professor Liz Meerabeau Doctor Jane Reeves **Contact details:** Researcher: David Simmons – Supervisor: Professor Liz Meerabeau - Supervisor: Dr Jane Reeves –

Appendix Ten - Support Organisations in Barking and Dagenham

Organisation Name	**African Youth League**
Support provided	Advice for African families and young people
Address	Heath Centre,
Address	2nd Floor, The Mall, 218-224,
Address	The Heathway
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM10 8RE
Contact number	020 8593 3222
Email	africanyouthleague@yahoo.co.uk
Organisation Name	**Carers of Barking and Dagenham**
Support provided	Help for families coming to terms with a disability
Address	15 Althorne Way
Address	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM10 7AY
Contact number	020 8593 4422
Email	carers@carerscentre.org.uk
Organisation Name	**Family Information Service, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**
Support provided	Information for all families in the borough
Address	3rd Floor
Address	Bridge House
Town	Barking
County	Essex
Postcode	IG11 8BB
Contact number	020 8215 3004

Email	fis@lbbd.gov.uk
Organisation Name	**Harman House Counselling Centre**
Support provided	Counselling, advice and help
Address	3 Harman House,
Address	341 Valence Avenue
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM8 3RA
Contact number	(020) 8597 7686
Email	harman.house@btconnect.com
Organisation Name	**Home-Start, Dagenham**
Support provided	Free, confidential support to local families with at least one child under 5
Address	18 a Church Street
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM10 9UR
Contact number	020 8270 6614
Email	homestart@barkingdagenham.freeserve.co.uk
Organisation Name	**Relate**
Support provided	Help and advice for couples
Address	11 Althorne Way
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM10 7AY
Contact number	020 85936831
Email	enquiries@relatenelondon.org.uk
Organisation Name	**Victim Support, Barking and Dagenham**
Support provided	Support for victims of crime
Address	Unit 5, St George's Centre,

Address	St George's Road
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM9 5AJ
Contact number	020 8595 4455
Email	vs.barkinganddagenham@vslondon.org
Organisation Name	**Young Peoples Project**
Support provided	Support for young parents
Address	60 Oaklands Park Avenue,
Town	Ilford
County	Essex
Postcode	IG1 1TG
Contact number	020 8911 9268
Email	office@youngpeoplesproject.com
Organisation Name	**Barking and Dagenham Women's Aid**
Support provided	Support for victims of domestic violence
Address	Kingsley Hall
Address	Parsloes Avenue
Town	Dagenham
County	Essex
Postcode	RM9 5NB
Contact number	0800 980 1993
Email	info@womensaid.org.uk

Appendix Eleven - Participant Debrief Letter

Dear participant,

Thank you.

I would like to thank you for taking part in the research today.

As I have said, please be reassured that you will not be identified, and I will send you a summary of findings at the end of the study, should you wish.

Everything we spoke about, and all the data will be securely stored by the University of Greenwich, without your name and address information. It will be password protected, and you will not be able to be identified by the data.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, or my research supervisors, Professor Liz Meerabeau or Dr Jane Reeves at the University of Greenwich (details below).

With very best wishes, and thank you for taking part
David Simmons (Manager at LifeLine and PhD student at the University of Greenwich)

	University of Greenwich	Researcher: David Simmons –
the UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH	Mary Seacole Building	Supervisor: Professor Liz Meerabeau –
	Avery Hill Campus	Supervisor: Dr Jane Reeves –
	Avery Hill Road	
	Eltham	
	London SE9 2UG	

Appendix Twelve - Glossary of Bronfenbrenner Terms

(Either directly quoted, paraphrased or abridged from Bronfenbrenner)

Bioecological paradigm

The model of how Bronfenbrenner's theory applies to human behaviour and ecology.

Chronosystem

The importance of measuring the impact of systems over time was not lost on Bronfenbrenner, and the chronosystem was defined as a separate system which influenced the others as time progressed.

Dyadic reciprocity

In any dyadic relationship, especially in the course of joint activity, what A does influences B, and vice versa.

Ecological transitions

Shifts in role or setting, which occur throughout the lifespan, which may occur throughout the life span of an individual. A few examples: a mother is presented with a newborn infant for the first time; mother and baby return home from the hospital; there is a succession of babysitters; the child enters daycare; a younger sibling arrives;… And the final transition to which there are no exceptions – dying.

Exosystem

An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that effect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person. It is peripheral to the person, but not peripheral in its influence.

Life course

The cumulative effects of a sequence of developmental transitions over time.

Macrosystem

General prototypes which existing in the culture or subculture, and which in turn set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the basic human level. For example, in any society, one school classroom looks and functions much like another.

Mesosystem

The relationships surrounding two or more settings in which a developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life).

Microsystem

The complex of relations between the developing person and the environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g., home, school, workplace, etc.)

Molar activities

Regular patterned activities in which people engage, often unconsciously (building a tower of blocks, reading a book, having a phone conversation). An ongoing behaviour which has a momentum of its own, and is perceived by the person as having meaning or intent. Molar activities as exhibited by the developing person serve as indicators of the degree and nature of psychological growth.

PPCT

Stands for "Person, Process, Context, Time" - the model to which Bronfenbrenner refers in his later work (1995) which maps the individual's life course over time, and the factors which influence it.

Primary settings

Microsystems: of Home, Nursery, Primary School, Secondary School, College, Workplace.

Primary transitions

A transition between primary settings.

Proximal processes

Life processes which are frequently (but not always) carried out in an environment: solitary or group activities, sun as parent-child or child-child activities, group play, pursuing athletic activities. Some can be solitary however, such as reading or studying alone. They are influenced (consciously or unconsciously by the person's immediate environment (or context).

Ripple Effect

The effect of people on their systems, of systems on individuals, of one system on another. "If you wish to understand the relation between the developing person and some aspect of his environment, try to budge the one, and see what happens to the other."

Roles

A set of behaviours and expectations associated with a position in society, such as that of mother, baby, teacher, friend, and so on.

Role transitions

Changes in role and setting as a function of the person growing older, or of events in the life cycle of others responsible their care and development. For example: the arrival of a younger sibling transforms the previously only child into an older brother or sister, a pupil is left back to repeat the same grade, a wife and mother becomes a single parent, an employee is promoted to supervisor.

Settings

A place with particular physical features in which the participants engage in particular activities in particular roles (e.g., daughter, parent, teacher, employee, etc.) for a particular period of time.

Sleeper Effect

The effects of transitions which are invisible at first, but gradually have an effect on the individual or people over a period of time.

Systems

The overarching conception of how elements of social life affect one another: "The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls."

Trajectories

Persistent patterns of motivation and activity which primary settings exert on the individual.

Transcontextual dyads

Dyads which find themselves in transition from one macrosystem to another, one culture to another, one society to another.