

**‘BETWEEN TWO LIVES’  
PARENTING AND IMPACTS ON  
ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL  
ACHIEVEMENTS AND SOCIO-  
EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES FOR  
BRITISH-GHANAIS**

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requirements of the University of Greenwich  
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## DECLARATION

I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised another's work.

Signed.....Supervisor

Signed.....Student

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Between Two Lives: Parenting, Education and Achievement of British-Ghanaian Students**

Research undertaken within the Sociology of Education frequently highlights concerns about the underachievement of Black students in education and, later, within the labour market. Yet, there are a number of shortcomings associated with research in this area. Firstly, there is a tendency to homogenise the achievement levels of *all* Black students. Thus observations made about the outcomes of African-Caribbean students are often applied to all other Black groups. When distinctions between African and African Caribbean groups have been made, the achievement levels of students from different African backgrounds are often merged, creating a misleading impression of their different academic outcomes. Secondly, studies seeking to provide explanations for the low attainment levels of Black students are often critical of life within Black families, in particular their assumed use of an ‘authoritarian’ parenting style, which is seen as creating psychological problems in children and as hindering their achievement. Effectively, such notions serve to pathologise Black families in Britain. This thesis presents a critique of existing studies concerning Black families in Britain and the academic achievement of Black (African) children, and also seeks to address existing gaps in the knowledge about Black Africans residing in Britain. Life history interviews were conducted with 25 British-Ghanaians who have achieved highly in their academic and professional pursuits. The findings suggest that not *all* parents adopted an ‘authoritarian’ approach when raising their children, and that those who did were influenced by their own socialisation experiences in Ghana. While some respondents experienced some socio-emotional problems resulting from their ‘authoritarian’ socialisation, these were generally resolved and did not have a long-term impact on their attainment. The thesis also suggests that the use of discipline, associated with this parenting style, may have had some beneficial effects in relation to respondents’ academic and professional outcomes.

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## Introduction

On a yearly basis at my school, we had a careers ‘interview’ with a counsellor. At these meetings, there were discussions about possibilities for the future based on how we were progressing academically. It was at one of these meetings during my sixth form that I had an experience that seriously impacted on my academic trajectory and interests. During that year, I, like many others in the group, had been struggling to make the transition from GCSE to A’Level. This was in no small measure due to the way that we were being taught. In my own case, it was also a result of learning in a ‘mechanistic’ way. Nevertheless, this was not to say that, eventually, I would not have overcome the hurdle. However, this had made me somewhat apprehensive about attending the careers meeting and I was concerned about what the outcome would be. My fears were also intensified because friends who had been to see this particular counsellor told me that he had made sexist and racist comments. One girl who was interested in joining the police was advised not to on account of the fact that she was female. Another who had a flair for biology and sought a career in genetics was informed that she would be ‘better off going into business because of her Asian background’. In spite of these comments and views, this particular careers counsellor remained in the school because ‘he was excellent and had lots of experience’, as our Head continually informed us.

One morning towards the end of January 1993, I was called out of class to go to the meeting. As I walked down the corridors towards the meeting room my stomach began to turn. Nevertheless, I attempted to remain outwardly calm as I entered the room because I did not want him to think that he could intimidate me. The first comments made by the counsellor were about my GCSE grades, and how they ‘weren’t that good, but it’s a good job that you re-took and got a couple more.’ (By that time I had obtained 7 A-C grades, which was far better than the national average.) The second and perhaps the biggest blow came shortly after. He asked about my ‘intentions for the future’. When I told him that I intended to go to

university he drew his chair close to me, near enough so that I could smell the cigars on his breath, and said in a dismissive tone that I ought to consider quitting my A'Levels to undertake either factory work, which needed few qualifications, or a career in auxiliary nursing. Apparently, it would be easier for me to enter these 'careers' because of my skin colour and, as he said this, he rubbed his face to emphasise his meaning. At the end he 'magnanimously' added that if I *insisted* on going to university, then I should go to an institution which would take me with 2 or 4 A'Level points, which is the equivalent of 1 or 2 of the current 'E' grades, or a 'D'.

I felt devastated by his comments and also furious, because although I was struggling, it did not mean that I would not pass. Moreover, I was *not* going to limit myself academically or in terms of my career, especially in given that I was raised to do otherwise. I could feel tears of anger prickling my eyes, but I was not going to let the counsellor see how much he had upset me, so I terminated the meeting and went and sat in the toilets for a while to gather my thoughts. One of my main concerns was how I was going to tell my parents what he had said and, although, somehow, I made it through the day, these thoughts plagued me continuously.

During the long walk home from school, I decided that I would tell my parents outright what had happened and then I would take the situation from there. When I explained everything, my father simply asked if I would prefer to continue my studies at the college where he worked. Needless to say I was very grateful to my father for this and I jumped at the chance of leaving my sixth form and continuing somewhere else, where I knew I would feel happier and almost certainly progress. Interestingly, however, when I informed the Head of the school that I would be leaving, he attempted to stall me by suggesting that I change my A'Level courses. I was also offered the position of 'head girl', which I declined, because I knew that I could not remain at the school.

Despite my experience, it must be acknowledged that there are numerous excellent careers advisors who provide invaluable advice for young people, and that careers advisors do not all display the same negative racist, sexist and classist attitudes. For example, as Bhopal (2010) observed in her study of Asian women's experiences in higher education, many respondents found that careers' advisors expectations were not racist or stereotypical. Rather the advice given was supportive and useful.

Research, however, indicates that many Black students have encountered similar difficulties to those that I experienced (see for example Mirza 1992, 2009, Mac an Ghail 1988). This issue has also been continually highlighted in the media. For example, in an article written for the *Guardian* newspaper entitled *Racism in Education: Have we learned nothing?* (John, *The Guardian* 5 August 2008) Gus John explains that teachers' low expectations concerning the academic abilities of Black students contribute to their 'alienation from learning', which prevents them from fully applying themselves to their academic pursuits. Unfortunately, this in turn does not help to raise the attainment levels of many Black students and may also mean that they decide against continuing into further or higher education, which limits their employment opportunities. However, as I found, and John and many others advocate, the family also plays an important role in determining academic outcomes. I return to this issue shortly.

In many ways I identified with the Black female respondents in research undertaken by Mac an Ghail (1988) and Mirza (1992, 2009). These respondents all viewed education as 'a strategy for success' and as a way to 'better themselves' (Bhopal 2010:44). They understood the importance of a good education, especially in the context of their greater susceptibility to racism and sexism in society, and believed that a good educational background would help to enhance their opportunities. However, the women were not necessarily in agreement with the education *system* or, more specifically, the way in which it functioned against women and

minorities. I had also been brought up to value education highly and, prior to the experience with my careers teacher, I was pro-school despite being very aware of racism within the education system.

After that incident, however, for a while I became disillusioned, despite my continued belief in education for success. Although my college experience helped me to resume my 'pro-school' stance, I viewed school and the education system more critically than previously. It was this that influenced my decision to undertake A'Level, undergraduate and Masters' academic research projects which examined racism in the education system, and later to work with Black children who were at risk of school exclusion when I completed my undergraduate degree. As with the Black females in Mirza's and Mac an Ghail's research, my experience was also a major influence on my decision to resist being steered towards careers which others regarded as acceptable for Black women. It also reinforced my interest in pursuing research into the experiences and achievements of Black and minority ethnic groups in education for my PhD project.

Considerable attention has been paid to the academic achievement levels of Black students within the British education system. Research generally indicates that African and African-Caribbean students are underachieving or are not achieving to their full potential. This issue has been a primary concern for over 30 years, although the initial emphasis was on the achievement of African-Caribbean children. Government reports, such as the Rampton Report (1981) and later the Swann Report (1985), showed that in comparison to Asian and White groups Black African-Caribbean children underachieved. Studies undertaken from the 1990s onwards (see for example Gillborn and Gipps 1996, Mirza and Gillborn 2000 and Demie 2005) incorporated Africans, but reiterated previous findings that, overall, Black children's attainment levels were considerably below those of White and Asian groups.

Recent statistical evidence further demonstrates that ‘Black heritage students lag far behind the average achievement of the majority of their peers’ (Demie and Mc Clean 2007:419). Data from the Office of National Statistics (2004) and DfES (2006) show that less than 50% of African-Caribbean and African students obtain 5 A-C grades at GCSE, compared to over 70% of Chinese, 63% of Indian and 52% of White students. In relation to further and higher education, Black students, especially those from African backgrounds, have high participation rates. Despite this higher participation rate, the claims of underachievement continue in relation to university education, as the results for ethnic minority groups continue to be below those of other groups (Modood 2004). In relation to career and professional pursuits, evidence further reiterates that Black African and African-Caribbean groups are under represented in management and professional occupations, and also have a much greater susceptibility to unemployment than other groups (see for example Berthoud 1999 and Theodoropoulous and Dustman 2006).

Although most research indicates that Black students are generally underachieving, a criticism may be levelled at these studies in so far as researchers tend not to distinguish between the variations in attainment levels of different Black groups. The achievement levels of students from African backgrounds are, for example, often homogenised, which affects perceptions of their academic outcomes. Moreover, if results are considered according to the individual African nations from which students’ families originate, the picture would be somewhat different. DfES statistics reflecting GCSE results, for example, show that of all African groups, Nigerian students were the highest achievers, with 56% obtaining 5+ A-C grades, which is 1% above the national average for *all* cultural backgrounds. The Nigerians were followed by Ghanaians, 53% of whom attained 5+ A-C GCSEs, which sharply contrasts with the figure for Somalian students, which was 29% (DfES 2008).

In addition, there is also a failure to recognise that there are groups of Black students who do not fit the stereotype of the failing Black student and who, instead, achieve highly in their educational and professional pursuits. Moreover, as Demie and McLean, point out, ‘there is a lack of research into the factors which contribute to educational success and high attainment of African heritage pupils in schools’ (Demie and Mc Clean 2007:417).

In attempting to explain the ‘low’ achievement levels of Black students, the role of institutional racism, which has been highlighted by numerous writers within the field of education (see for example, Mac an Ghail 1988, Ofsted 1999, Mirza 2005 John 2007), cannot be ignored. While institutional racism may be viewed as unintentional, it nevertheless contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes of Black students as being disaffected and low achieving. Consequently, they are treated less favourably compared to White (and sometimes Asian) students (Mac an Ghail 1988) and it is this which often contributes to their underachievement.

Concerning the link between race, parenting and academic achievement, somewhat troubling and perhaps prejudiced claims and generalisations have been made by policy makers and educationalists, many of which emphasise the role of the family and of ‘poor’ parenting practices. This assumption that ‘poor’ parenting is the cause of low attainment is traceable to early studies conducted during the 1970s, which analysed the academic achievement of minority groups. This research often generated stereotypes of Black families as ‘disorganised and constituting a pathological structure’ (Hendrick 2005: 185) and as having a tendency towards strict, ‘authoritarian’ approaches to parenting (Coles 2006, Cheetham and Stewart 1999). Commenting on Black families in America, Dornbusch *et al.* (1987) reiterate this view concerning Black parents and ‘authoritarian’ parenting practices, and add that Black families with limited socio-economic resources are likely to exercise greater restrictions upon their children and to provide little emotional support. Brian and Martin (1983 in Hendrick 2005)

have also claimed that, within the home environment, Black children are not encouraged to be 'self regulating' and are likely to be subjected to harsh discipline. The discipline is perceived as bordering on 'physical abuse' at times and is regarded as reflecting 'authoritarian' methods. The 'strict' 'authoritarian' style that is associated with Black parents is considered problematic, partly because it has been connected to the behavioural problems that Black children supposedly display within the school environment (Brian and Martin 1983, in Hendrick 2005). Roopnarine *et al.* (2006), who also reiterate the view that authoritarian approaches are adopted within Black families, suggest that the emphasis placed on discipline prevents open engagement between parents and children. This may, in turn, contribute to emotional and psychological damage for the child, which is claimed to have a negative effect on their academic achievement.

As Hendrick points out, however, such notions of Black families are 'degenerative' and serve to further pathologise them. Despite the prejudiced and even racist nature of these assertions and their problematic implications, they are frequently reinforced by academic research (see for example Dwivedi and Varma 1996, Cheatham and Stewart 1990), the media and other influential sources. More worryingly, such information is also taken as an 'authoritative confirmation of the popular belief' about the so-called problematic nature of Black families (Hendrick 2005: 189). As a result of these assertions, Black families are held culpable for their children's low achievement levels. Furthermore, as is the case in relation to other studies of academic achievement and family life generally, these generalisations continue to be made about *all* Black groups, although they are based primarily upon 'observations' of African-Caribbean families.

Generally, however, the lives of those from continental African countries have been relatively under researched within the field of social science, although, during the 1960s, a small number of studies were concerned with the experiences of West African student migrants and

their children in Britain. Researchers (see for example Ellis 1978; Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972) were particularly interested in understanding why Ghanaian and Nigerian student migrants frequently sought White foster parents to care for their children while they studied and worked. However, a shortcoming of some of these studies is that they failed to understand the migrants' actions within the context of West African traditions. This was evident in the conclusion of Muir-Groothues and Goody's study, where they continued to question *why* the migrants had resorted to fostering as a method of negotiating childcare, academic and work responsibilities. Despite Goody's anthropological background and experience within the West African context, when it came to comparisons in Britain, West Africans were compared unfavourably to other ethnic minority groups who did 'not see this (fostering) as a possible answer to similar problems', who 'resemble English families in this respect' (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972:142). Arguably, such a conclusion indicates an ethnocentric attitude and represents a further example of the pathologisation of Black families in Britain.

More recently, a study undertaken by Peart *et al.* (2005) analysing the experience of British-Ghanaian and British-Nigerian children who had been fostered during the 1960s and 70s, was more sympathetic towards the migrants' backgrounds and experiences and especially to those who had been fostered. Significantly, all of these studies were undertaken primarily within the field of social work rather than in the social sciences, and they focus mainly upon the experiences of those British-West African children who were fostered and so exclude the experiences of those who spent *all* of their formative years at home with their biological parents.

British-West African children have been omitted in other key research areas within Sociology and the Social Sciences as a whole, such as the investigation of issues pertaining to negotiating ethnic identity in Britain. From the late 1960s onwards, a great deal of attention

was given by researchers to British-born children of migrants from the West Indies and Asia. While it was initially assumed, by policy makers and theorists in this area, that the children of these migrants would automatically assimilate fully into British society, with time it became apparent that their situation was not so straightforward, since ‘new commonwealth migrants and their children would retain distinct cultural and demographic characteristics in the future’ (Compton and Corbage 2002:514). Furthermore, rather than the second generation ‘becoming fully acculturated into the dominant Western culture they possess manifold advantages from retaining their ethnic heritage and cultures’ (Song 2003:116). Yet at the same time, because they were born and raised in Britain, the second generation were perceived as integrating into British culture more than their parents’ generation. As a result, they were often referred to as being ‘between cultures’ (Ballard and Ballard 1979; Anwar 1979, Song 2003). Thus researchers became interested in understanding their methods of ‘navigating’ between the British culture and that of their parents (see for example Ballard and Ballard 1979, 1994, Anwar 1979, 1998, Foner 1977).

The limited acknowledgement of African migrants and their British-born children within social science research is perhaps partly explained by the fact that during these periods the African population in Britain was much smaller than that of other migrant groups. Interestingly, ‘Black African’ as an ethnic category was introduced as part of census data in 1991 (Daley 1997). This may also be attributed to the fact that African-Caribbean groups represented the largest Black population in Britain, which often meant that studies analysing their experiences were applied to African groups (Daley 1997). However, in more recent census data the Black African population in Britain has increased somewhat and, in some locations, appear to be greater than that of other Black groups (ONS 2001).

The current research seeks to critique the existing studies and perspectives concerning Black groups in Britain, more specifically those relating to the relationship between their family

lives and academic achievement. It aims to provide an alternative insight into this issue and also to begin to address the existing gaps in knowledge concerning Africans living in Britain. In order to do this, the research considers a small group of 25 British-Ghanaians who have achieved highly in their academic and professional pursuits.

Furthermore, it examines the role of parenting in contributing to their positive outcomes. While it was apparent that some Ghanaian parents adopted 'authoritarian' approaches to socialising their children, this was not the case for all. For those that did, this was often because it reflected their own childhood experiences of life in Ghana; a collective culture, where interdependence between the individual, family and community is emphasised, as is the importance of socialising children to be obedient and to respect authority figures. Moreover, the discipline that is a part of this approach was generally considered by respondents as an ingredient in their academic success. 'Authoritarian' parenting, then, was *not* necessarily detrimental to the respondents' academic achievement in the ways suggested by other researchers in this field. While it is acknowledged that some respondents did experience emotional problems, which they attributed partly to their socialisation experiences, they also adopted a variety of approaches to resolve them, and overall, these issues did not affect their academic and professional outcomes.

Since the research focuses upon respondents' reflections on their socialisation experiences, and their impacts, in conjunction with broader social and cultural influences on their socio-emotional outcomes, it was felt that a combination of Psychological and Sociological approaches would be beneficial in examining these issues. Debates, have however taken place concerning the usefulness of Psychology in explaining Sociological issues. The thesis summarises some of these debates, and also includes a justification for using the two disciplines in the research.

This research has relied upon a small snowball sample of an 'elite' group of predominantly high achieving British-Ghanaians. There are a number of issues associated with the use of a snowball sample, one of which is that it may be limited to specific groups and networks who possess similar characteristics and this may narrow the scope of experiences that can be explored. Nevertheless, the sample used in this study was deliberately selected on the basis that they reflected a group of high achievers of Ghanaian origin. It must, however, be acknowledged that the current research *cannot* and *should* not be used to draw conclusions about the academic and socio-economic achievement levels of *all* Ghanaians or Africans in Britain. Yet it does, nevertheless, begin to provide an alternative view to prevailing ideas about the achievements of Black students.

Class and socio-economic backgrounds of Black and minority ethnic groups have also been recognised as a 'strong predictor' of academic achievement (Archer and Francis 2007). As Mac an Ghail also notes, acknowledgement of socio-economic issues in relation to academic achievement provides an important insight into the 'structural subordination' of Black and minority ethnic groups (Mac an Ghail 1988:3). For many, limited access to resources in the home, which are seen to facilitate academic achievement, can significantly reduce opportunities for success, which further contributes to their 'structural subordination'. Having said this, as Mirza (2009), Robinson (1995) and others have shown, in light of experiences of socio-economic difficulties, many students from poor Black families seek to achieve highly, and often succeed so as to enhance their chances of upwards social mobility. While class and socio economic background of students is crucial in understanding academic achievement, it is, however, an issue that is too complex to analyse within the scope of the current research, not least because of the difficulties associated with determining the migrants' class backgrounds in their country of origin. Ascertaining the migrants' class status is also made more difficult by the fact that they may have experienced upward or downward social

mobility after moving to Britain. Furthermore, the focus of this research is upon parenting and academic outcomes of British-Ghanaian respondents.

### **Thesis structure**

The first chapter of this thesis ‘The Second Generation: Predictors of Academic and Professional Achievement’ outlines the existing literature on Black academic achievement and on theories of parenting. It examines, in particular, the factors or inputs affecting academic and professional outcomes for second generation minority groups. Factors considered include influences in wider society, including the education system and labour market conditions in Britain, which may affect opportunities for professional success and upward socio-mobility for minority groups, and familial factors, that is, styles of parenting and forms and levels of socio-emotional support. This section also briefly outlines debates concerning the use of Psychology in the examination of Sociological issues, and justifies drawing upon both disciplines within the research.

Chapter 2 explains the methodological approaches that have been employed in this thesis. This includes a discussion of various philosophical positions that are central to sociological research including Positivism and Interpretivism, as well as the critiques of each. Within this section, I explain why Interpretivism, and more specifically Phenomenology, Symbolic Interactionism and Standpoint Theory were adopted in the current research. This section also describes the use of ‘life histories’ as a data collection method and snowballing as an approach to sampling and the strengths and limitations associated with each of these research strategies.

The following chapter entitled ‘Ghanaians and Educational Achievement’ offers some insight as to *how* and *why* educational achievement came to be regarded as a key social and familial value amongst Ghanaians. In doing so, the chapter examines the combined role of European

missionaries and colonisers in the expansion of the Ghanaian education system from the colonial era until independence in 1957, and also the range of influences, both positive and negative, that a colonial education had upon the attitudes of Ghanaians. In relation to the family and the community, it describes their approaches to parenting and how they pooled resources in order to facilitate children's educational development and achievement. The latter part of the chapter also addresses the choice of Ghanaians to further their education in Britain, particularly from the 1960s onwards, and also some of the problems faced in the process.

Chapters 4 5 and 6 constitute the findings and analyses of the research. Chapter 4 focuses specifically upon respondents' reflections and perceptions of their parent-child relationships and socialisation experiences. Chapter 5 explores the respondents' academic and career choices in light of personal preferences, parental expectations and support provided. It also discusses the respondents' academic, professional and socio-economic outcomes as a result of the above factors. Finally chapter 6, examines the socio-emotional outcomes of the respondents' parent-child relationships and socialisation experiences.

While acknowledging that there is a serious problem with educational attainment for Black students in Britain, this thesis focuses on those who do achieve well educationally and professionally. This thesis hopes to challenge the stereotype that all Black students are low achievers and to contest the idea that the parenting practices adopted in Black families lead to low achievement. The aim is to demonstrate that, like any other cultural group, there is huge variety within the Black community and to suggest that it is important to understand and recognise the differences in educational attainment amongst Black students. The stereotype of the failing Black student contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy that is detrimental to Black students. In order to encourage achievement and success it is important to also examine how and why some students achieve positive outcomes. This research hopes to make a small

contribution by focusing on high achieving Ghanaian students and looking at the role of parents in their success.

## **Chapter 1: The Second Generation: Predictors of academic and professional achievement**

The traditional method of studying Black families (in social science literature) has often focused on the pathological rather than the strengths of the Black family.

*Lena Robinson*

Much of the research on Black pupils' educational achievement has suggested implicitly or explicitly that the causes lie in the children themselves.

*Catherine Mabey*

Underachievement has become part of the received wisdom of the essential ineducability of Black students.

*Maud Blair*

Much of the research concerning the academic and professional outcomes for Black students in Britain presents a misleading picture in that it implies that their achievement levels are the fault of the individual student or their families. Numerous explanations have been put forward for this but, perhaps, some of the most troubling are those that blame Black families. More specifically, Black families' approaches to parenting have been criticised by researchers, educationalists and psychologists as inept and detrimental to positive academic outcomes. Notions such as these serve to undermine Black families and reinforce prevailing prejudiced and racist perceptions of them as pathological. They provide limited scope for the acknowledgement of positive attributes, including the fact that many are pro-education and have high aspirations for their children. In light of these concerns, the following chapter analyses existing research data regarding the academic achievements of Black (and minority) students, from GCSE, through to degree level and provides a critique of ways in which it has been interpreted. Furthermore, it discusses studies pertaining to parenting styles, and in doing so, critically considers how these have been applied in relation to Black families. It draws upon literature which challenges the common assumption that Black families are not supportive of their children's academic pursuits, though it acknowledges the pressure that some Black and minority ethnic children face in fulfilling family expectations.

### **Academic attainment levels for Black children**

The academic achievement levels of Black, particularly African-Caribbean, students has been at the forefront of attention at national and local levels especially since the children of post war immigrants entered the education system. Research repeatedly indicates that Black students are underachieving in comparison to other groups. As detailed in the introduction, government statistics show that less than half of African and African-Caribbean students attain 5 A-C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. In contrast over 50% of White, 60% of Indian and 70% of Chinese students achieved this standard.

Nevertheless, in spite of this, studies have shown that participation rates in further education of most minority groups, including Africans, Indians, Chinese and Bangladeshis, surpass the national average (Parekh 2000, Modood *et al.* 2004, HESA 2008). This is partly attributable to the fact that second generation ethnic minority groups are often aware of their vulnerability to unemployment (Berthoud 2000). These concerns are being reinforced by the current difficult economic climate, especially as the likelihood of unemployment for minorities becomes greater during periods of economic downturn. Recognition of their potentially 'shaky' future employment status is entwined with a motivation to succeed, which is often a key cultural and familial value. Therefore, further and higher education is often regarded as a positive alternative to joblessness and the part-time irregular employment to which many of the indigenous population as well as the descendants of other immigrants and minority perforce now resort.

Despite the large numbers of Black and minority ethnic students in further education, their participation in Advanced level (A'Level) courses, as a route to higher education, appears to be much lower than for other groups. In contrast, they are more likely to be enrolled on Business and Technological Council (BTEC) and National Vocational (GNVQ) courses (Blair *et al.* 2003). One possible explanation for this is that, at school some minority groups (notably Blacks) are 'steered away' from academic subjects, because of teachers' negative

perceptions of their abilities (see for example Mirza 1992, 2009 Mac an Ghail 1991). This may be internalised to some extent, and therefore although many Black and minority ethnic students may be interested in continuing their education, they may feel unprepared to do so through the 'traditional' routes. For those Black and minority ethnic students who do undertake A'Levels, attainment levels seem to be lower than those of Whites, although Indian and Chinese students tend to obtain a higher number of points than other minority groups (Connor and Modood 2004). Nevertheless, it would appear that students from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely than other groups to re-sit A'level examinations (Blair *et al.* 2003).

At tertiary level, once again, students of African and Asian parentage are over-represented, as their participation is greater than their proportion in the general population (Modood 2004). Those of African parentage, for example, are three times more likely to be in higher education than would be expected from their numbers in the overall population of Britain (HESA 2008). Interestingly, however, a large majority of minority ethnic students in higher education are likely to be found at institutions which were polytechnics before 1992, rather than at traditional universities (Modood 2004, Paresh 2000, Mirza 1998, Bhavnani 1994). Mirza (1998) found, for example, that, African applicants to 'new universities' were overrepresented by 223%. For Asian and Caribbean applicants, the figure was 162% and 43% respectively.

In attempting to explain *why* these disparities exist, there are a number of reasons which might be explored, one of which is advice given to students during the university application process. As many studies and my personal experience have shown, Black students are, at times, discouraged from taking qualifications which would enhance opportunities to attend traditional institutions, which partly arise from 'common sense' and value laden judgements of teachers and careers advisors (Mac an Ghail 1988). Such views have their origins in

negative stereotypes about Black students' abilities. A respondent interviewed in Mac an Ghaill's ethnography *Young Gifted and Black*, for example, recounted an experience of being advised against taking 3 A'levels, in spite of possessing the prerequisite number of CSEs and O'Levels to be able to do so. Another who sought to re-sit her A'Levels so as to be able to achieve the grades necessary to attend a traditional institution received similar advice, which in both cases the students declined to accept.

In conjunction with the problematic guidance offered, at times, to Black and minority ethnic students, it has been suggested that racial bias may be inherent in acceptance procedures at traditional universities (Pareesh 2000, Modood *et al.* 2004). While acceptance processes for academic institutions are often assumed to be 'neutral' and 'transparent' this is not always the case due to the existence of concealed criteria that determine whether applicants are accepted for university places (see for example Robbins in Ainley 1994). The criteria may be based on how an individual 'fits' into an organisation. If, for any reason, they are perceived not to 'fit' this may automatically disqualify or at the very least limit their opportunities for entry, which may explain gender, class and ethnic biases within the acceptance process (Carter, *et al.* 2000). The existence of such exclusionary practices may undermine 'Widening Participation' programmes, which aim to ensure that individuals from *all* backgrounds are given equal opportunities in terms of accessing universities of their choice, although the outcome appears to have been to heighten gender, class and race differences.

The reluctance of some minority ethnic individuals to apply to traditional institutions may also be due to the fear of alienation on the basis of their ethnicity. Despite the Government's attempts to open higher education to groups who had not considered undertaking degree courses at traditional institutions, those renowned for research are predominantly attended by White middle-class students (Reay *et al.* 2001). Reay *et al.* (2001) conducted interviews with Black and minority ethnic students on this issue. It appeared that many respondents were

concerned that they would not 'fit in' at traditional institutions; hence their preference for institutions which they considered ethnically diverse.

Bhopal's (2010) findings from her study of Asian women in higher education provides support for Reay, as respondents also commented upon how an important element in their decisions to attend specific universities was their need for a sense of 'belonging' within an institution, and being able to engage with others from similar minority backgrounds who had shared life experiences. Furthermore, 'non-traditional' students, including those from minority ethnic groups, women and working-class students, in many ways, remain 'outsiders' in higher education, since it is White middle-class males who dominate the institutions. Thus it is this that may also determine the university choices of 'non-traditional' students (Bhopal 2010).

University entry qualifications also play a key role in the higher education trajectories of minority students. Minority ethnic students generally attain lower entry qualifications than White students and more enter university with vocational qualifications (Bhopal 2010). Existing research in this area (see for example Modood 2004, Blair *et al.* 2003) suggests that minority ethnic students are more likely to attend newer institutions with lower entry requirements and where qualifications such as BTECs and GNVQs are accepted (Modood *et al.* 2004).

Degree results for *all* minority ethnic groups fall below those of White groups with the majority obtaining lower degree classifications, and a substantial number attaining a third class degree or lower. Interestingly, the lowest achieving group appears to be Black Africans (Modood *et al.* 2004). Research in this area, however, fails to make distinctions between the achievements of Africans born and raised in Britain, and those who have experienced the majority of their education in African countries. Many students from Africa and other

overseas countries coming to Britain for their education struggle within the British education system as a result of having to adapt to new and different learning styles, as well as the language. Initially, this may impact negatively on their academic achievements, although there may not be a negative impact long term. In contrast, those who have received *all* of their education in Britain are likely to have fewer problems in this respect (Kanu and Marr 2007).

Furthermore, generalizations are made in studies and statistics regarding the academic and professional achievements of minority ethnic students, as differences in achievement *within* a specific group are frequently not acknowledged (Pareesh 2000). The variations in achievement levels between Somali and Nigerian students, illustrates this issue. As discussed in the introduction, considerable disparities exist between these two groups in terms of GCSE results. If factors such as these were recognised, variations in the achievements *within* and *between* groups would be revealed.

### **Employment**

The perceived low academic attainment levels of minority groups, in conjunction with their higher levels of attendance at ‘post 1992’ universities, often places them at a disadvantage in terms of employment. This is a result of companies’ preference for employing highly qualified graduates from traditional universities (Modood 2004). This raises questions about the extent to which higher education enhances professional opportunities, particularly for minority ethnic graduates who have attended ‘new’ universities, as it appears that this contributes to their already unstable position in the labour market. Theodoropoulous and Dustman (2006) sum up the difficult employment situation for minority ethnic individuals:

The picture of the labour market situation is bleak for minority groups even though their educational attainment is on average considerably higher than for Whites. (Theodoropoulous and Dustman 2006:13)

Theodoropoulous and Dustman suggest that such disadvantages are greatest for African groups and that this pattern of disadvantage continues inter-generationally. Their findings show that second generation Africans have, on average, a 5.4 percentage lower employment level than Whites and African-born males have some of the lowest employment rates, despite being amongst the highest qualified. Theodoropoulous and Dustman's findings concerning Africans are supported by earlier research conducted by Berthoud (1999), which suggests that African graduates are seven times more likely to be unemployed than White graduates. Overall research findings indicates that Africans and African-Caribbean groups have the highest average risk of being unemployed, although this is dependent upon individual characteristics. Although Berthoud does not specify what these individual characteristics are, it has been suggested that they could be related to the individual's job search attitudes and behaviour (Modood 2004). Job search attitudes and behaviour may include the frequency of job searches and the types of jobs which individuals apply for. These factors may also be influenced by the individual's aspirations and perceptions about what is available to them. Berthoud suggests that those minority groups with lower qualifications will most likely have lower aspirations. This may translate to their job search in that they will apply for jobs which require lower skills. Earlier evidence from analysis of the Youth Cohort Study (1998), however, challenges this notion, as it shows that the educational and career expectations of *all* Blacks, Indians and Bangladeshis often transcended those of Whites (Rothon 2001 in Heath 2002).

For those who are engaged in careers, concerns remain about opportunities for advancement within certain fields. Despite numerous anti-discrimination acts spanning the past three decades, too few minorities (and women) are to be found in senior management positions (Bhopal 2010). In areas such as academia, for example, Carter *et al.* (2000) note that

minorities are more likely to face a 'glass ceiling', as their opportunities for progression beyond the level of senior lecturer are limited. Similarly, the number of Blacks and minorities in senior management positions generally remains extremely small (Modood *et al.* 2004). In contrast, within arenas such as sport and entertainment, career advancement seems to be far easier for minorities, particularly Blacks (Modood *et al.* 2004).

### **Social mobility**

The situation for minority groups in terms of academic and professional outcomes reinforces questions about their potential for upward social mobility. Interestingly, however, limited attention has been given to this issue or to the existence of a Black or minority ethnic middle class in Britain (Sarre and Phillips 1995) although it has been suggested that the presence of such a group dates back to the Edwardian era (Green 1998). Nevertheless, the general lack of acknowledgement and discussions about the Black and minority middle class can perhaps be explained by the fact that, compared to race, *class* background is perceived as being of less significance for minority ethnic groups (Platt 2006), although in relation to educational attainment Gilborn (1990) Mac an Ghail (1991) and Mirza (1992) have shown that the opposite is true. In contrast, in the United States inter-relationships between class and race have generated considerable debate. Since the 1950s, affirmative action programmes have enabled African-Americans access to high status careers, which have, in turn, facilitated their upward social mobility towards the middle and upper classes. As a result, small pockets of the African-American population own considerable wealth, whereas larger numbers live under conditions of extreme poverty. These changes have created a 'polarisation of class structures' amongst African-Americans (Devine 1997:146). Nevertheless, while the African-American middle-class continues to expand, it remains on the periphery and separated from the White middle-class, as racial oppression is deeply embedded within American society.

While it may be concluded that there is a need for a greater understanding of social class

outcomes for specific minority ethnic groups in Britain, the limited amount of existing research suggests that some proportion of those from Black African, Chinese and Indian backgrounds are achieving inter-generational upward social mobility. For African-Caribbean groups (particularly women) although their ultimate level of upward social mobility appears to be slightly higher than for White working class groups, it seems that their overall outcomes are restricted (Platt 2006). This is partly due to the fact that they are more susceptible to unemployment than other groups and also because it takes longer for their qualifications to be reflected in their class position (Platt 2006).

Moreover, in analysing this question the role of education should also be considered more carefully because, as Platt also found, amongst some groups, especially those from African-Caribbean backgrounds, academic attainment is often distinct from outcomes in terms of class. In contrast, for Indians coming from more affluent backgrounds, education has a greater impact on upward social mobility. Although much of the evidence above suggests that minorities will utilise education to enhance their opportunities for social mobility, in some cases, the outcomes are not as straightforward as initially envisaged. A combination of poor qualifications, attendance at 'new' universities and discrimination in the labour market, appears to have a negative effect upon employment opportunities and socio-economic outcomes.

### **Black and minority ethnic achievement: An alternative picture**

In a government paper on young Black people and the criminal justice system, John (2007) emphasises the necessity of instilling in young Black people the belief in the importance of academic learning and the success and social mobility that can come from this. However, as the situation stands, he points out, young Black people are continuously informed about their low academic and professional outcomes. This applies in relation to media reports and much

of the research concerning the academic and professional attainment levels of Black and minority ethnic groups. Yet as John points out there is a continual failure to acknowledge the groups of Black students who are achieving highly, a view which is supported by several other theorists (see for example Bagley *et al.* 1979 in Robinson 1995, Demie and Mc Clean 2007). John adds that academic studies *should* begin to consider these Black students, and the reasons behind their high levels of achievement. It could be argued, however, that this has not occurred because ‘acknowledging Black achievement seems problematic, especially to those wishing to assert simplistic models of race culture and achievement’ (Mirza 1992:193). In addition, as pointed out in the introduction, there is a tendency to generalize the academic achievement levels of students from Black backgrounds. Thus the achievement levels of African-Caribbean groups are often taken to represent that of *all* Black groups. As indicated earlier results are rarely broken down to reflect different African nations but, when this does happen, the results suggest an entirely different picture of achievement (Paresh 2000).

One study that sought to address these gaps in knowledge is that conducted by Demie and Mc Clean (2007). The research focuses specifically upon a group of British-African students, based in the borough of Lambeth, an area with the largest African (Ghanaian and Nigerian) population in London. Their findings showed that 79% of their research sample obtained 5+ A-C GCSEs and had continued onto further and higher education. Several reasons were identified regarding these achievements, including family and community emphasis upon academic achievement and the fact that children shared parental aspirations for their success. In addition, there was a general understanding that strong qualifications were necessary for professional success.

Heath (2002) presents a slightly different picture of Africans’ progress within the labour market. To a certain extent, his research findings correspond with those mentioned above, in that minority ethnic groups are still less likely to be employed than Whites, despite their

increasing levels of educational attainment. This, he suggests may also be a result of ethnic penalties, which broadly incorporate the disadvantages faced by minorities in the labour market compared with Whites of the same age and human capital (qualifications and experience). Nevertheless, his findings suggest that the gaps in occupational attainment between all minorities and Whites appear to be narrowing, which he explains may be attributable to the increase in minority ethnic individuals in non-manual, professional and managerial work. Africans appear to be doing particularly well in this respect. Since 1992, for example, the number of second-generation Africans in managerial and professional positions increased by 7% (Heath 2006). Furthermore, although Africans are still behind Whites in this area, Heath points out that the difference is just 2.3% (Heath and Cheung 2006).

Several other factors may also explain the occupational attainment convergence between minority ethnic groups and Whites, one of which is a British-based education. Despite disadvantages faced by minorities, British qualifications are more likely to generate 'higher returns' than those obtained in less developed countries, as migrant generations often experience (Heath and Cheung 1992, in Heath and McMahon 2000). Furthermore, the second generation, seems to recognise the importance of social capital and contacts to enhance job opportunities, which may be explained by their awareness of the labour market situation for minority ethnic groups. In light of this, as Heath notes, they are more likely to establish formal and informal networks as a way of enhancing employment opportunities, and ensuring that they are commensurate with their qualifications. This may challenge the findings of Modood *et al.* (2004), which suggest that many minority ethnic groups lacked the social contacts necessarily to enhance job opportunities.

### **Explanations for low achievement of Black students**

Despite the fact that some Black groups *do* achieve highly, the focus overwhelmingly is upon those who do not (Robinson 1995). Although concern about the academic achievement of Black (African Caribbean) children dates back to the 1960s, when it was observed that their attainment levels were lower than Asian and White students (Demie and Mc Clean 2007), and when Bernard Coard (1971) described how the British education system makes Black children educationally subnormal, it was not until the late 1970s and 1980s that the Government began to seriously consider this issue. The government's decision to respond also arose from fears that Black students were increasingly becoming disengaged from the education system, thus further limiting their employment opportunities, which could potentially contribute to violent outbreaks in their neighbourhoods. Arguably, for example, such issues contributed to the disturbances in Brixton in 1981 (Troyna 1983 in Cashmore 2004). As a result, the Rampton Report (1981) and later the Swann Report (1985) were commissioned by the Government to review the situation.

Both reports and later research highlighted links between the poor academic attainment of Black students, and teachers' unsupportive attitudes towards them. Much of the research conducted in this area suggests that Black children (especially boys) are more likely to receive negative attention from teachers than other groups, which often results from preconceptions about their supposed 'behavioural problems' (see for example Mac an Ghail 1988, Blair 2001, Wright 1992). A large body of research has also shown that teachers often have low expectations in terms of their academic abilities, which has serious ramifications for future educational pursuits (see for example Coard 1971, Gilborn 1990, 2008). For example, numerous studies (see for example Mirza 1992, 2009 Mac and Ghail 1988) show the link between teachers' perceptions and Black students being 'steered away' from academic subjects and encouraged towards areas such as sports and music. Moreover, they appeared to face a greater likelihood of being placed in lower streams at school.

Racist notions about Black children's intellectual capacities being inferior to those of other groups were previously espoused by educationalists and psychologists, including Jensen and Eysenck, who sought to prove this hypothesis through IQ tests. This research, however, was discredited, not least because of the questionable nature of IQ testing, the fact that IQ will vary within populations, and that such differences are often greater between *individuals* than between *populations* (Cashmore 2004).

As explained in the introduction, the role of institutional racism cannot be negated when seeking to explain the achievement levels of many Black students. In *Young Gifted and Black*, Mac an Ghail (1988) provides valuable insights regarding how certain aspects of teachers behaviour, for example, the categorisation of ethnic minority students, can perpetuate institutional racism within schools. The responses of some teachers in his study, for example, reiterated the age old view that African-Caribbean students were perceived as continually seeking trouble and as being low achievers. Asian students were, in contrast, regarded as 'conformists' to school rules and this was seen as contributing to their high attainment levels. Such views appeared to have been formulated on the basis of the high achievement levels of a small number of middle-class Asian students, which served to negate those who rebelled, although Mac an Ghail found a number of Asian students who were engaged in anti-school groups. Clearly, labelling students in these ways will affect the ways in which both groups are treated, impact upon their academic achievement and effectively work against Black youth in the long term (Mac an Ghail 1988).

Black and minority ethnic students, however, as Mac an Ghail shows, develop a variety of coping mechanisms for dealing with institutional racism, one of which involves participation in various sub cultural groups. In his research, based in a comprehensive school in the Midlands, Mac an Ghail identified various students groups that rebelled against school regulations and programmes. The 'Rasta Heads', 'Funk Heads' 'Soul Heads' and 'Warriors',

were effectively ‘anti-school’ groups, consisting of Black and minority ethnic boys whom often displayed rebellious behaviour as a form of resistance to racist and authoritarian practices within schools. Black Sisters, were also ‘anti-school’, and often challenged the school’s routines, albeit in more subtle ways than the boys. These young women however, valued the importance of education and qualifications, especially in light of the racism and sexism operating within the labour market that could potentially restrict their career opportunities, thus they attended school regularly, and worked hard. Such an approach is what Mac an Ghail refers to as ‘resistance through accommodation’. Interestingly, these approaches to dealing with institutional racism would seem to be gendered, but as Mac an Ghail acknowledges, it was not unusual for some males to participate in ‘resistance through accommodation’, and for girls to actively rebel.

Responses to institutional racism by Black communities as a whole also include the establishment of voluntary supplementary schools in major cities across Britain, one of which I attended between the ages of 9-15. (I discuss the role of this school in my educational development in chapter 5.) These organisations date back to the 1950s when the first wave of post war immigrants arrived (Mirza 2009). Black parents were concerned that as a result of institutional racism, mainstream schools were not catering to the needs of their children, which in turn contributed to their low academic achievement rates (Hines 1998, Mac an Ghail 1991). Thus the supplementary schools ‘represent a response of the Black community to their children’s racist experiences in mainstream schools’ (Mac an Ghail 1988, 1991:133), and aimed to improve academic achievement, especially amongst those who had been labelled as academic ‘failures’. In his work entitled *Black Voluntary Schools: The Invisible Private Sector* Mac an Ghail (1991) demonstrates some effective outcomes of this approach to education. He refers to the Marcus Garvey supplementary school in which several Black students, who were perceived as underachieving, made a marked improvement in their work

at mainstream schools. This enabled them to ‘renegotiate’ White teachers perceptions of them, and as a result teachers could not fail to acknowledge their improvement.

The establishment of the voluntary schools indicates the importance attached to education by Black and minority ethnic parents and the high expectations that they have of their children, more specifically that they will obtain the necessary qualifications to be able to follow ‘high status’ careers (Mac an Ghail 1991).

### **Government responses to institutional racism and educational achievement**

A number of Government Acts have been introduced which are aimed at preventing racial discrimination in employment, the provision of goods and services and also in education. This includes the 1976 *Race Relations Act*, which saw the introduction of the Commission for Racial Equality, a body in which was responsible for reviewing legislation and ensuring that the provisions of the *Act* were followed. In 2000, the *Act* was extended to cover public authorities and bodies, in part, to ensure that the workforce within central and local government bodies reflects the ethnic diversity within their communities and to ensure that policies do not directly or indirectly discriminate ([www.archive.official-documents.co.uk](http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk)). These changes were motivated by a realisation that institutional racism was still prevalent within a range of institutions, including the education system and in particular the police force.

In spite of this *Act*, it appears that institutional racism continues to negatively impact on the academic experiences and overall achievement levels of many Black and minority ethnic students. It will, however, be important to monitor the impacts of the more recent *Equalities Act*, introduced in October 2010, on the education system and the academic and professional outcomes of minority ethnic students.

The new *Equalities Act* aims at interlinking previous *Acts* and regulations which formed the basis of earlier *Anti Discrimination Acts* (for example the *Equal Pay Act 1970*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*, *Race Relations Act 1976* and *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*). In relation to race, the new *Act* places specific duties on schools and further and higher educational institutions, to maintain racial equality and to assess the impact of race equality policy on pupils, students, staff and parents. More specifically, they are required to review the impact of policies on the attainment levels of students and on a yearly basis action must be taken to publish the results of the reviews. In higher education, the level of admission, academic and career outcomes of minority ethnic students are to be monitored, as should recruitment and progression of black and minority ethnic staff ([www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)).

In spite of attempts made by Black and minority ethnic communities and Government policies to alleviate the underachievement of Black students, this issue is continually emphasized, and thus remains a key social problem. As noted by Mac an Ghail (1991) and many others (see for example Carby 1982), explanations frequently offered for their ‘low’ achievement levels is the so-called pathological structure of their families. This is the focus of the following section.

### **The family and academic achievement: Blaming the victim**

A number of prejudiced claims have been made by psychologists and educationalists, concerning the role of Black families in their children’s ‘poor’ educational outcomes. During the 1970s and 1980s, and to an extent in the present day, studies have characterised Black families as ‘pathological’ (see for example, Murray 1989). These troubling conclusions have been based on the assumption that Black families are characterised by ‘widespread disorganisation’ (Frazier 1964 in Ratcliffe 2001:49), which includes the assumed high incidence of female headed single parent households. However, as John (2007) points out in

his commentary about young Black people in the criminal justice system, it is necessary to analyse the impact of structural issues such as socio-economic circumstances that may affect the ability of some Black single parents to provide the necessary support for children.

In conjunction with assumptions made about the prevalence of single parent families within the Black community, criticisms have been levelled at the perceived inconsistent parenting practices within Black families in which punitive ‘authoritarian’ approaches are presumed to be adopted. The preoccupation with the ‘weaknesses’ associated with the ‘authoritarian’ socialisation techniques, which Black families are reputed to adopt, can be seen in the following excerpt from Cheetham and Stewart’s ‘analysis’ of Black families:

Black parents of all social classes tend to be more authoritarian than white parents in their disciplinary techniques, including the use of physical punishment. There is a consensus amongst researchers that Black parents use strict, rather harsh techniques in order to socialise obedience to authority in their children. (Cheetham and Stewart 1990:336)

Cheetham and Stewart also draw upon ‘evidence’ from mental health researchers who have suggested an interrelationship between the suppressed hostility of Blacks, and their purported experience of ‘authoritarian’ socialisation. This supposedly culminates in the ‘use of aggressive behaviour as a way of dealing with problems’, depression, poor school performance and classroom disruption. They then arrive at yet another disconcerting ‘conclusion’ that ‘it is reasonable’ to assume that the problems faced by Black children at school result from the way they are raised (Cheetham and Stewart 1990:336).

Roopnarinarine and Gielen’s (2005) research on families in Trinidad and Jamaica also reiterates the belief that use of ‘authoritarian’ parenting styles is characteristic of Black families, particularly those from working-class backgrounds. Once again, it is implied that the majority of Black families are single parented and headed by mothers who appear to

enforce harsh punitive measures on their children, particularly their sons, in preparation for ‘the rough outside world’ (Roopnarine and Gielen 2005:319). As a result, however, they conclude that males are more susceptible to higher educational and psychological risks than females, although they acknowledge that reasons for this are complex (Roopnarine and Gielen 2005).

Further research undertaken by Roopnarine *et al.* (2006) focused upon the interrelationships between parenting styles, parent-child academic interaction, parent-school interaction and early academic skills and social behaviours in young children of English-speaking African-Caribbean immigrants to the United States. This research reiterates the use of ‘authoritarian’ parenting styles within Black families. It suggests that African-Caribbean parents see it as their role to maintain discipline within the family but the ‘controlling strategies’, which characterise authoritarian parenting styles and are used in disciplining children, were perceived as limiting opportunities for verbal and emotional engagement, which ultimately becomes psychologically and emotionally damaging to the child. In turn, this ‘damage’ may extend to the child’s academic achievements.

Findings and claims such as these serve to reinforce pathological notions about Black families, ‘blame the victim’, and generally imply that Black parents act as ‘inhibitors’ to their children’s education. This situation is further compounded by the fact that Black families are often compared unfavourably with White middle-class families, who are constructed as being representative of the ‘ideal’ standard (Robinson 1995, Ratcliff 2001).

Nevertheless, stereotypes such as these continue to be propagated by researchers, policy makers, psychologists and educationalists and are now accepted as an accurate description of the ‘true’ situation within Black families (Mac an Ghail 1991). The general population thus remains ignorant about Black family life and the fact that it is as diverse in nature as for any

other ethnic group. As Carby (1982) also points out, during the 1970s and 1980s, such ideologies were used to justify the intervention of state agencies, such as social services, schools, and the police, as ‘compensation’ for ‘poor parenting’ within Black families.

There is also a failure to acknowledge that cultural variations may dictate what constitutes discipline and good parenting. The research discussed above suggests that within many Western (and some non-Western) contexts ‘authoritarian’ parenting styles are considered as ‘emotionally damaging’ for the child. However, within numerous other cultural contexts ‘authoritarian’ parent-child relationships may indicate positive parental involvement. As Ellis (1978) notes of West African contexts, and also Chao (1994) of Chinese families, for example, strictness and punishment are considered to be integral aspects of caring and good parenting. Like many other cultures, West Africans and Chinese are also concerned with academic achievement and standards and this constitutes a focal element of a child’s socialisation. Thus a combination of an emphasis on hard work, punishment and strictness within the contexts of the home and school are seen as key in ensuring the child’s future academic success.

The misleading views about Black parents, are partly a result of research that has been conducted around parenting styles. Although the research in itself is not problematic, it is clear that this has often been applied to Black parents in a way that portrays them in a negative light.

### *The origins of parenting styles*

The parenting that children receive during their formative years can have a long term impact upon the children’s personality, orientations, life choices and general wellbeing. As Diana Baumrind (1978) notes, ‘There is no way in which parents can evade having an impact upon their children’s personality, character and competence’ (Baumrind, 1978:239). Thus

parenting invariably shapes children's development (Arendel 1997 cited in Cramer 2002). Socialisation represents one of the key aspects of parenting and this process requires the adaptation of parental expectations and guidance as children become older, so as to encourage positive outcomes for the child (Cramer 2002). For Baumrind (1978), a 'socially competent' child is one who displays characteristics such as social responsibility and 'achievement orientation' - that is the desire and motivation to engage in academic or intellectual challenges. Several studies have drawn upon Diana Baumrind's 'Typology of Parenting' in order to examine the correlation between parenting styles and children's outcomes, and they have emphasised the benefits of 'authoritative' styles of parenting over 'authoritarian' and 'permissive'.

### ***Parenting styles***

Baumrind describes authoritarian parents as:

low warmth and high control. They are more likely to be emotionally detached and to use punitive measures in order to curb the child's self-will. Although they are consistent in discipline, these parents are less likely to use rational methods of control. Authoritarian parents also use power assertion, whereby they assert that the parent should be obeyed by the child because she is bigger, more powerful and more significant than the child. (Baumrind 1966:891)

In contrast, authoritative parents:

attempt to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue oriented manner. She encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind her policy and solicits his objections when he refuses to conform. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued by the authoritative parent. Therefore, she exerts firm control at points of child-parent divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. She enforces her own perspective as an adult, but recognises the child's individual interests and special ways. The authoritative parent affirms the child's present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct. She uses reason, power, and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve her objectives

and does not base her decisions on group consensus or the individual child's desires. (Baumrind 1966:891)

Permissive parenting is described as that in which:

The parent attempts to behave in a non punitive accepting and affirmative manner toward the child's impulses, desires and actions. She consults with him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules. She makes few demands for household responsibilities and orderly behaviour. She presents herself to the child as a resource for him to use as he wishes, not as an ideal for him to emulate, nor as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering his ongoing future behaviour. She allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey externally defined standards. She attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power to achieve her ends. (Baumrind 1966:891)

### ***Authoritarian parenting***

The concept of 'authoritarianism' can be traced back to the eighteenth century belief system of Puritanism, which characterised early modern Western societies (Cramer 2002, Griffiths Fox and Hindle 1996). In this system, the 'governing principles of rank, gender and age' meant that the 'values of hierarchy and place were ordained and elaborated' (Griffiths *et al.* 1996:5). Through the law, state and communities, the Crown and the Church, the notion of 'authority' and unquestioning obedience were enforced nationally, and 'from loyalty to the Church and State sprang a Protestant popular culture which shaped the commitments of many people' (Griffiths *et al.* 1996:6). Thus the majority of individuals seemed to embrace these notions uncritically. Further outcomes associated with 'authority' were nationalism and patriotism. Theodore Adorno shows in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1982), however, that these outcomes, if taken too far, may create negative consequences particularly in relation to individuals' attitudes and, in some cases, their actions. Adorno's study examined the link between the individual's social and political beliefs and inherent personality traits. His

research referred to the World War Two context, when, authoritarian attitudes precipitated anti-Semitism and fascism (Adorno 1982). Thus, Adorno's main concern was attempting to understand the 'potentially fascistic' individual, and the factors making him susceptible to 'anti-democratic' propaganda (Adorno 1982:1). Adorno maintained that those who were predisposed towards these beliefs had specific characteristics in common, which formed a 'syndrome', that is the 'authoritarian personality' (Adorno 1982:1). According to Adorno's colleague Frenkel-Brunswick, a major characteristic forming the basis of this type of personality is a strict and rigid upbringing:

Prejudiced subjects tend to report a relatively harsh and more threatening type of home discipline which is experienced as arbitrary by the child. Related to this is a tendency apparent in families of prejudiced subjects to base interrelationship on either clearly defined roles of dominance and submission in contradistinction to equalitarian policies. In consequence, the images of the parents seem to acquire for the child a forbidding or at least a distant quality. Family relationships are characterised by fearful subservience to the demands of the parents and by an early suppression of impulses not acceptable to them. (Frenkel-Brunswick in Adorno 1982:256)

Adorno's research has been criticised for the assumption that the 'authoritarian personality' was a key contributing factor in the rise of fascism. This is because it focuses specifically upon individual characteristics, and less acknowledgement is given to socio-economic problems, such as the Great Depression and the political instability that was happening at the time (Leary and Hoyle 2009). Nevertheless, it has been highly influential within the fields of Sociology, and Cultural Studies, particularly in the United States. Fromm (1941) who wrote at approximately the same time as Adorno, also utilised the concept of 'authoritarianism' within psychology to describe a controlling parent whose authority inhibited the child (Baumrind 1966). Later Baumrind, adopted this concept within her 'Typology of Parenting' (1966).

‘Authoritarian’ parenting has been associated with high levels of conformity but also emotional and cognitive disturbance in children, which includes hostile withdrawal, personality problems and nervousness (Baumrind 1966). An additional perceived outcome of ‘authoritarian’ parent-child relationships is aggressive and anti-social behaviour (Rohner, Borque and Elordi 1996; Turner and Finkelhor 1996 in Roopnarine and Gielen 2005). Baumrind suggested a link between class and gender and the uses and effects of ‘authoritarian’ styles of parenting. She maintained that a father’s punitiveness, particularly within working-class families, creates increased levels of emotional disturbance in the child since it is said to be far harsher than the mother’s approach. A criticism of this view, however, is that Baumrind fails to explain why greater punitiveness has been associated with working class fathers. It is possible that she may be inferring that stress is greater in families with limited socio-economic resources and that this can have a bearing upon familial relationships and actions. As with race and parenting, however, associating greater punitiveness with working-class fathers may serve to pathologise them.

Baumrind and others have suggested a link between ‘authoritarian’ parenting styles and long term emotional and psychological problems. ‘Authoritarian’ parenting has also been characterised as underlying poor academic achievement or, using Baumrind’s terminology, ‘poor schoolroom efficiency’ (Baumrind 1966:896). Cramer’s analysis of the relationship between parental practices and behaviours and the child’s motivation regarding academic success lends support to Baumrind in that ‘authoritarian’ or ‘over controlling’ parenting styles often underlie a child’s disinterest in education, which reinforces adverse impacts on their achievements (Cramer 2002:13). Similarly, Dornbusch (1987) and later Leung (1995) also drew upon Baumrind’s research in order to examine outcomes in terms of academic achievement. Their findings also suggest that ‘authoritarian’ and ‘permissive’ styles of parenting each have negative effects upon school grades. While these studies highlight some

of the negative outcomes of ‘authoritarian’ parenting on academic achievement they provide no explanation about *why* this is the case.

A further limitation identified in the work of Baumrind and others’ analyses of this issue is their primary concern with *how* families raise competent children and their lack of focus on *differences* in family types (Lamborn and Felbab 2003, Malandra and Murray 2002). In this context, Mandara and Murray (2002) identified ‘types’ of African-American families. These ‘types’ are based on family functioning (e.g. parent-child interactions) and included ‘cohesive-authoritative’, ‘conflictive-authoritarian’ and ‘defensive-neglectful’, which broadly replicated Baumrind’s typology. Their findings were broadly consistent with Baumrind and others, in terms of the effects of these styles of parenting. However, they also highlighted how ‘conflictive-authoritarian’ parents laid considerable emphasis on education and thus had high expectations of their children’s attainment. However, parents within this category seem to focus mainly upon the children’s achievements rather than their intellectual stimulation, though this was equally necessary for academic success.

### ***Authoritative parenting***

A considerable body of evidence suggests a correlation between far-reaching positive emotional outcomes for children and parental warmth, acceptance and ‘non-punitive measures’ that characterise ‘authoritative’ parenting styles. For example, Maccoby and Martin (1983:225) found that children experiencing ‘authoritative’ styles of parenting exhibit ‘higher levels of competence, achievement, social development and mental health’. In reviewing studies of race and family functioning, Mandara (2006) also observes that African American children who had experienced (cohesive) ‘authoritative’ parenting styles were more likely to engage in more ‘pro-social’ behaviour at school and within the community.

Mandara and Murray (2002) provided some explanation regarding *why* ('cohesive') 'authoritative' parenting styles were perceived as more beneficial to the child than ('conflictive') 'authoritarian' approaches. They suggest that ('cohesive') 'authoritative' parenting styles emphasised personal development and growth of family members, which resulted from their family-oriented leisure and recreational activities, as well as from the 'encouragement of family members to be assertive and think things out for themselves' (Mandara and Murray 2002:332). Moreover, ('cohesive') 'authoritative' parents appear to pay specific attention to the child's emotional wellbeing and are less likely to be overbearing or critical of their achievements. If anything, ('cohesive') 'authoritative' parents are more likely to express appreciation of their children's values and individual attributes, which enhances their self-esteem and contributes to greater levels of behavioural and psychological adjustment.

The work of Baumrind and others who have developed her theory seems to reinforce the notion that 'authoritative' parenting may be linked to higher levels of educational attainment than 'authoritarian' or 'permissive' approaches. For example, Pitman and Chase-Lansdale (2002) refer to Taylor *et al.*'s study (1995), which emphasises the benefits of 'authoritative' parenting styles for academic achievement amongst African-American children aged between 5 and 18 years. They observe that African-American parents develop an alternative style of 'authoritative' parenting that incorporate greater emphasis on 'demandingness', which seems more conducive to children's academic achievements and general emotional well being. A cross-ethnic comparison of the impact of parental involvement and 'authoritativeness' in education conducted by Park and Palady (2002), also suggested a link between 'authoritative' parenting styles and higher levels of academic achievement. Their findings also associated parental 'authoritativeness' with a reduced likelihood of behavioural problems at school for African-American, Hispanic and Euro-American teenagers.

Within Sociology the concept of 'intensive' parenting has been used to highlight parenting styles which are deemed beneficial to academic achievement. This form of parenting takes the child as a good 'starting point', as this is seen to facilitate their emotional and intellectual development. It also involves warm and playful interactions between parents and children and emphasis on educational skills, which is also considered beneficial for the child's long term learning. This approach is seen as creating 'caring' parent-child relationships. As Evans (2006) notes, 'intensive' parenting is often associated with families from affluent backgrounds. (I will return to a discussion of economic status in relation to parenting, and academic achievement shortly). Elements of 'authoritativeness' and 'authoritarianism' appear to co-exist within 'intensive' parenting styles. For example, both 'authoritative' and 'intensive' parents regard warm and loving relationships as conducive to their children's academic achievement. Like 'authoritarian' parent-child relationships, however, 'intensive' parenting may also create pressure on children to excel academically, which can contribute to problematic repercussions in terms of children's emotional (and sometimes physical) wellbeing. As Power (2003) demonstrated in her study *Education and the Middle Class*, 'intensive' parenting and high expectations of academic success engendered feelings of low self-esteem amongst middle-class children. This was particularly true of those who attended schools with a reputation for high levels of achievement. She notes that these children often felt a sense of failure if they did not achieve the highest scores or were unable to gain a place in prestigious universities.

Reay (2002) describes further costs of 'intensive' parenting, one of which is parents' withdrawal of emotional support. This is particularly evident in situations where 'intensive' parenting borders on maternal control, insofar as mothers place limitations on the amount of free time available to children and sometimes use force, to ensure that their children take their education seriously. Use of force also appears to increase the potential for 'resistance, non

compliance and the breakdown of communication' between parents and children (Reay 2002:10). Yet Reay also finds that in some cases, strict parenting results in children redoubling their efforts to achieve. West African and Chinese (see Francis 2007) parents frequently adopt similar approaches as a way of ensuring academic achievement amongst their children. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.

### ***Permissive parenting***

The notion of 'permissive parenting' has its origins in Rousseau's concept of the 'free agent' (Cramer 2002:11). In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau (1968) advocates the concept of a social order in which no man is constrained to a specific behaviour. Interestingly, in *The Education of Emile* (1911), Rousseau adopts a less permissive attitude to women and education. In his writings he suggests that differences in terms of educational opportunities emanate from sexual differences. Thus, he suggests that men who are 'strong and active' should be educated and not kept in ignorance. In contrast, he considers women as 'passive and weak' (Rousseau 1911:322) and while he advocates that women should 'learn many things' he also suggests their education should be restricted to 'such things as [are] suitable' (Rousseau 1911: 327). The underlying implication is that women's education should by no means be as extensive as that of men.

In addition Rousseau asserts that:

Man's first law is to watch over his own preservation; his first care he owes to himself; and as soon as he reaches the age of reason, he becomes the only judge of the best means to preserve himself; he becomes his own master. (Rousseau 1968:50)

Essentially, Rousseau implies that the main responsibility of individuals is to themselves, since only they can determine what will be most beneficial to their wellbeing. This

knowledge enables the individual to maintain a better control their lives. Similarly, 'permissive' parenting is based on the notion of 'self-actualisation' whereby the child develops the necessary self-knowledge and acts upon it accordingly (Baumrind 1978). Baumrind (1966) describes 'permissive' parenting styles as those where children are unencumbered by constraints, especially in terms of discipline. These parents adopt what she describes as a 'non-interfering' approach (Baumrind 1966:900), which is indulgent and readily accepting of the child's behaviour.

Children experiencing 'permissive' parenting are said to exhibit a mixture of positive and negative outcomes. This parenting style has been linked to positive self-esteem and good social skills which may develop from the 'high levels of warmth' in parent-child interactions (Cramer 2002). In addition, children of 'permissive' parents are regarded as being less susceptible to depression than children who had experienced 'authoritarian' parenting (Marsiglia *et al.* 2007). However, this type of parenting often has negative implications for the child's overall behaviour. Baumrind refers to studies (e.g Siegel and Kohn 1959) that indicate that limited parental discipline means that children are more likely to display aggression during their nursery school years. Furthermore, the findings of Baumrind's later studies (see Baumrind 1991) suggest that 'permissive' parenting can also contribute to delinquency and other forms of anti-social behaviour, such as drug taking, in the child's later life. She explains that 'permissive' parenting may lead to this type of behaviour because children are more likely to interpret their parents 'non-action' or lack of response as acceptance of their actions. As Marsiglia *et al.* (2007) also note, children experiencing this type of parenting are less likely to assume responsibility for their actions. Moreover 'permissive' parenting may also prevent the child from 'vigorous interaction' with others, despite the fact that he or she may possess good social skills (Baumrind 1966). Furthermore, when 'permissive' parents fail to deal adequately with conflict and set low standards for their

children, this can ‘understimulate the child so that he fails to achieve the knowledge and experience which could realistically reduce his dependence on the outside world’ (Baumrind 1966: 901).

Although less attention is given by researchers to the impacts of ‘permissive’ parenting on children’s academic achievement, existing evidence suggests that it has a negative bearing on the child’s academic competence. Lambourn *et al.* (1991), for example, observe that children experiencing this type of parenting display a lack of interest in educational achievement. Daniels *et al.* (2006) also note that children from homes with low levels of discipline and structure achieve poor results at school, particularly in areas such as maths and reading. While the researchers point to a correlation between ‘permissive’ parenting, poor behaviour and low academic achievement they provide little explanation about why this may be the case. A possible suggestion is that limited discipline in the home, could potentially contribute to a disregard for authority figures including teachers. In turn, this may well mean children are more likely to resist rules and regulations set by the school, which will inhibit their interest in learning and subsequently their academic achievement. However, in order to develop a further understanding of this issue, additional research is necessary.

### **Parenting styles, socio-economic status, cultural capital and academic/professional outcomes**

A number of studies suggest an interrelationship between parental socio-economic status (measurable by parental education and income) (Rumberger and Arellano-Anguiano 2004), and approaches to parenting. Mandara and Murray (2002), for example, suggest that the majority of (cohesive) ‘authoritative’ parents have higher formal qualifications and higher annual incomes than (‘conflictive’) ‘authoritarian’ or (‘defensive’) ‘neglectful’ parents. In contrast, (‘conflictive’) ‘authoritarian’ parents are more likely to have moderate incomes and

education levels. Research conducted by Rumberger and Arellano-Anguiano (2004) and Ramkisson (2002), amongst others reveal similar findings.

However, these studies deal extensively with the *links* between academic attainment, parenting styles and familial economic status. Less attention is given to examining *why* more affluent families seem more able to provide forms of support which facilitates the child's academic achievements than less affluent families. A combination of Bourdieu's theory of capitals, and Reay's (2002) work entitled *Gendering Bourdieu's Concept of Capitals* may serve to provide a possible explanation.

Bourdieu's theory suggests four forms of capital: social, symbolic, economic and cultural. Symbolic capital is that which is obtained through individual prestige and personal qualities, such as authority and charisma. Social capital encompasses social processes, and interactions that take place within the family and in wider society. This form of capital can be maintained and reinforced, and the amount of social capital that is generated is determined by the size of the networks that have been assembled by the individual. Furthermore, it is dependent upon the amount of economic and cultural capital the individual possesses. Economic capital refers to economic resources that individuals and families have access to, while cultural capital comprises academic credentials and cultural knowledge, and is transmitted through the family.

Cultural capital affects the child's thought processes, individual dispositions and style. Command of language or the child's preferred selection of books, constitute some examples of style. Individuals are also able to draw upon their cultural capital to cultivate their status and power within society, particularly if they possess what dominant classes consider culturally valuable. Taking education as an example, at school, students from different classes utilise the different amounts of cultural capital they possess. It is more likely that

children from affluent backgrounds will have greater access to the forms of cultural capital which are valued by the dominant classes than do children from less affluent homes, although at school all students are taught the same things. Wealthier students are thus able to invest cultural capital within their education, which enhances their chances of academic success (Bourdieu 1986).

Returning to academic outcomes for recipients of ‘authoritative’ parenting, if, as the studies have suggested, there is a link between this approach to parenting, familial affluence and children’s academic success, this may be attributed to the fact that ‘authoritative’ parents, as a result of higher levels of economic capital, potentially have greater access to cultural capital, including cultural knowledge and resources. In turn, these values may be transmitted to their children, who can then draw on them during the course of their education. This, in conjunction with a range of other factors (e.g emotional support etc), may partly contribute to positive educational outcomes for children of ‘authoritative’ parents.

Reay (2002) broadens Bourdieu’s original theory of capitals to incorporate emotions in order to analyse mothers’ involvement in their children’s education. She develops the concept of ‘emotional capital’ and specifically examines the extent to which this is invested in children’s education. Furthermore, Reay argues that ‘emotional capital’ can be understood as ‘gendered capital’, since her findings suggest that it is mainly mothers who are ‘intensely engaged’ with the child’s education. ‘Emotional capital’, as a concept was first coined by Nowotny (1981) who describes it as:

Knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by affective ties. (Nowotny 1981:148 in Reay 2002:9)

Emotional capital is thus a variation of Bourdieu's notion of social capital and is primarily located and utilised within the private sphere of the home. However, there are more difficulties associated with converting emotional capital to any of the other forms suggested by Bourdieu (Novotny 1981 in Reay 2002).

Reay illustrates the link between emotional capital and familial economic background and a child's academic outcomes by drawing on the work of Allat (1993). Allat focuses upon affluent families in which children are privately educated. Within the study, Allat draws upon the concept of 'emotional capital' in order to show how the various forms of capital intersect with each other when parents transfer educational privileges to their children. Here, emotional capital is defined as 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time attention, care and concern' (Allat 1993 in Reay 2002: 5). Her findings suggest that mothers invested 'emotional capital' by drawing upon the skills gained from their own education to facilitate their children's academic achievements. Moreover, she describes how 'emotional capital' is underpinned by parents' demonstration of positive emotions towards their children, which is also beneficial to the child's academic achievement and overall well being.

Allat's observations are, in many ways congruent with ('cohesive') 'authoritative' parent-child relationships as described by Baumrind, Mandara, Mandara and Murray and others, who suggest that love and parental investment of time, attention and care are emphasised within these relationships, and also that it is these factors which facilitate the child's academic progress and emotional development. Allat's findings further echo these researchers, in that she finds a positive correlation between higher socio-economic background and parents investing more emotionally to ensure children's academic achievement and emotional wellbeing.

In light of the above research, it appears that affluent parents, who are more likely to possess greater levels of cultural capital, can provide their children with the higher levels of emotional and practical support that are central to 'authoritative' and 'intensive' approaches to childrearing. These factors combined are considered conducive to emotional development and academic achievements. Yet, Power and Reay's research shows that in affluent families where academic achievement may be (over) emphasised, pressure to fulfil parental expectations may place a strain on parent-child relationships and the child's emotional wellbeing, thus potentially negatively affecting their academic outcomes.

There is less understanding about how children from families with limited economic, social and cultural (and possibly) emotional capital are able to succeed academically and professionally (Reay 2002). Within the Sociology of Education more attention is given to the reasons behind the academic *underachievement* of children from poorer families (see for example Evans 2006, Willis 1977).

### **Parental expectation, academic/professional choice and achievement**

As discussed earlier, a number of studies and critiques of Black families portray them as pathological and as failing to support and encourage academic achievement. This research, however, fails to acknowledge that many Black families have high educational aspirations. Indeed in some cases Black educational aspirations are higher than those of White families, and Black children are often encouraged towards further and higher education (Hill 2003). These elevated Black educational aspirations may be partly influenced by knowledge and understanding of potential limitations in terms of labour market opportunities. While it may be argued that, of late, employment opportunities are less stable, which restricts choices

(Cieslik 2003) many Black and minority families are aware that they face greater constraints than many other groups.

At the same time, as Cieslik (2003) points out, currently there appear to be greater opportunities in terms of education and training. Thus, as a result, members of older migrant generations perceive that their children, born and raised in Britain and other Western countries have greater opportunities for success in education and in the labour market than they themselves had experienced. For example, they strongly believe that their children's fluency in English places them in a stronger position (Modood 1997, Heath 2001). Interestingly, many Ghanaian migrants make a conscious decision *not* to converse with their children in Ghanaian language, as they are keen for their children to have an excellent command of the English language, so as to enhance academic and professional success. Furthermore, as will be shown in the following chapter, many Ghanaian and Nigerian migrants placed their children in White-English foster homes during the 1960s and 70s partly to ensure that they acquired 'special skills', including English language (Ellis 1978).

Migrants also believed that those who had experienced all or most of their education in British schools had unlimited access to learning resources, including books, computers, and also support, as a result of freer and more open communication with teachers, all of which served to facilitate their learning. Moreover, careers guidance and advice is readily available to assist students in making their vocational choices. Thus, it was an inherent belief amongst migrants that children raised in Britain could draw upon these opportunities to enhance their chances of success.

However, as Cieslik (2002) points out, attitudes concerning education, employment and training have changed, as a result of increased opportunities and flexibility and choices. Thus younger generations, experiencing their youth in a post modern era, do not necessarily need

to emulate the academic and career trajectories of previous generations. Since many Black and minority ethnic parents, (especially those who have experienced difficulties in terms of their own academic and professional pursuits) are aware of these opportunities, which mean that their children can advance academically and professionally in ways that they perhaps could not, this often further increases the aspirations and expectations that they have of them.

To ensure that their children fulfil these aspirations some parents may act in ways they believe will enhance their children's educational chances (Hays and Falconer 2006), for example adopting strict socialisation practices in which education is prioritised. Parents may often also have specific expectations about what constitutes academic and professional success. 'Success', for many parents (especially those from Black and minority groups), includes a profession in a 'respected' area, such as medicine or law (Falconer and Hays 2006, Dundes *et al.* 2009). In research examining factors affecting career choices of African-American teenagers, Falconer and Hays (2006) find that many of their respondents reported that they were urged towards such careers by their parents as well as by expectations of financial reward. Respondents appeared to understand that they have greater access to careers than were unavailable to their parents' generation, although some implied that they felt 'coerced' into following medical or legal careers. Moreover, an element of 'conditionality' seemed to inform the interactions between participants and their parents, which involved parents rewarding respondents with gifts when they pursued prescribed careers.

The findings of a British study undertaken by Whiteheat and Rattan (2005) correspond with those in Hays and Falconer's research. Their study involved an analysis of post-16 educational course options of children of migrants from South-East Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. As in Falconer and Hays' study, the respondents were 'encouraged' by parents to undertake subjects leading to careers in medicine, law or sciences due to the financial

benefits and status attached to them. Interestingly, however, those in this situation achieved poorer results than those who studied subjects that they enjoyed.

These studies suggest that although the aspirations that Black and minority ethnic parents have for their children are generally high and well intentioned, their expectations may also result in pressure on children to fulfil them. For second generation minorities in Britain who have been depicted as living between the cultures of their parents' countries and Britain, an outcome is that they experience two distinct value systems: one from the society in which they attend school and work and another relating to their families' original culture that is instilled within the home. Cultural values and expectations may apply in relation to academic and professional choices and outcomes, as Whitehead and Rattan's study demonstrates. However, conflicts may arise between fulfilling parental and cultural expectations, and achieving individual aspirations. In their study of British-Sikhs, for example, Ballard and Ballard (1974) observed that many respondents faced this issue, which, in some cases, contributed to strained relationships between the generations.

For previous generations the lives and identities of young people were very much centred on their work and education (Cieslik 2002), and the older generation continues to emphasise academic achievement so that academic and professional achievement continues to form a large part of their identity. However currently, consumption and leisure are equally important in shaping the identities and experiences of young people (Bauman 2000, Cieslik 2002, Bahr 2007). Thus, as the attitudes of young people shift towards a decreased focus on work and education, this may also represent an additional dimension in conflicts between older and younger generations.

**Combining Sociological and Psychological approaches in understanding parent-child relationships and their impacts upon academic achievements**

The proceeding discussion suggests that a combination of Sociological and Psychological theories and studies can be used in developing an understanding of social phenomena, including that of this research on the academic achievement of Black students. There have, however, been longstanding debates surrounding the usefulness of Psychology in understanding and analysing Sociological issues, which partly arises from the difference in their focus. Whereas Sociology is the study of human society including examination of the functions of social structures and systems within it, Psychology is primarily concerned with individual experiences and ‘realms of consciousness’ (Mauss 1979:3).

This debate can be traced back to the earlier days of Sociological analysis and key thinkers such as Comte and Durkheim. Durkheim, for example was keen to separate Sociology from other disciplines such as Philosophy and Psychology. In his attempts to differentiate these areas, he maintained that the main concern of Sociology was to study social facts, which in turn should be treated as things, and studied empirically, as opposed to philosophically (Smith 1998).

Moreover, he claimed that although ideas are known philosophically, they cannot be examined through mental activity alone. In order to fully conceive them, they must be considered in relation to data from the outside world. Durkheim, nevertheless, remained somewhat concerned by the overlap between Sociology and Psychology since both adopted highly empirical approaches. In time, however, Durkheim was able to establish key distinctions between the two, as he suggested that social facts are external to and affected an individuals’ actions, whereas Psychological facts, which represented the primary focus of Psychology were also ‘inherited phenomena’ (Smith 1998:114). While this is not regarded as an accurate depiction of Psychology, these views did enable Durkheim to make a clear distinction between the fields and reinforced the notion that Psychological facts were ‘internal’ to the individual, while social facts were ‘external and coercive’ (Smith 1998:114).

While such a differentiation went some way towards separating Psychology and Philosophy from Sociology, Durkheim has been criticised for limiting Sociology to a study of social facts (Smith 1998). With time, however, he did recognise that Sociology was, in fact concerned with 'mental phenomena' (Smith 1998:114), although these were different to the mental issues analysed in Psychology. Whereas Sociology focuses on norms and values that in Psychology is on human instincts.

Although theorists such as Mauss (1979) also acknowledge key differences between Psychological and Sociological disciplines, he argues for a 'rapprochement', if not an exchange of information between them. Although they do not have to be unified, he maintains that interlinks between the two areas provide a more developed understanding of the effects of society upon the body and minds of the individual. Moreover, he observes that in conjunction with each other, Psychology and Sociology have enabled social scientists to establish insightful accounts of natural history, more specifically of humans living within society. More recently, Tim Ingold (1999), in a paper entitled *Three In One: Dissolving the Distinctions Between Body Mind and Culture*, further advocated this approach. Drawing on the work of Mauss (1979), Ingold also suggests that so as to fully understand the interrelationship between 'biological and social human existences', a 'psychological mediator' (Ingold 1999:1) is necessary.

Moreover, in his analysis of the 'self' in late modernity Giddens (1991) combines Sociology with elements of Psychology. Both approaches facilitated his exploration of late modernity, on individuals attempts to maintain a coherent sense of 'self'. Giddens highlights the psychological problems and anxieties which arise from attempting to define the self in light of the continual changes inherent within late modernity.

For the purpose of the current research I also combine Psychological and Sociological perspectives in examining the experiences of the British-Ghanaian respondents. In order to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and British-Ghanaian's academic, professional and socio-emotional outcomes, Psychological theories, especially that of Baumrind (1966, 1991), are used. Sociological approaches, on the other hand, are useful in the analysis of the parents' expectations in relation to their achievement and in understanding respondents' negotiation of parental/community aspirations and their own choices. Moreover, Sociological research is also drawn on in the consideration of possible links between parenting styles, respondents' socio-economic background, and forms and amounts of capital invested in children's education and in preparation for their careers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on research regarding the academic and professional achievements of Black students in the British education system. Much of this research suggests that Blacks are amongst, if not, the lowest achieving group at all educational levels and that they are at a disadvantageous position within the labour market. It was also pointed out, however, that there has been little consideration of those who have achieved highly and that more attention needs to be given to this issue.

Explanations for the 'low' attainments of Black students have also been discussed and in doing so, through the work of Mac an Ghail (1998) consideration was given to the role of institutional racism within schools, more specifically teachers' involvement in propagating this further, and students' responses to it.

It was also acknowledged that the focus of educationalists and psychologists amongst others, appears to have shifted away from explanations in terms of IQ towards the Black family, with

its supposedly malfunctioning, 'pathological' nature, in which 'harsh' punitive parenting have been considered a key feature. Such views continue to perpetuate the perception of cultural 'deficits' within Black and minority ethnic groups. Stereotypical perceptions of 'inadequate' parenting practices within Black families result from the way in which research on parenting styles has been applied in relation to Black parents, although it is not necessarily this research in itself that is problematic.

Further research is necessary to challenge these negative, yet dominant notions about Black achievement and the perceived impact of the family. It needs to be recognised that not *all* Black children achieve poorly, and that the family often has a role to play here, as many Black families are achievement oriented and have high aspirations for their children. These families will take measures to ensure their children's success, and as Demie and Mc Clean (2007) point out, there is a need to examine the factors which contribute to this success. As indicated in the introduction, the current research seeks to address these issues, by focusing specifically upon 25 British Ghanaians who have achieved highly educationally and professionally. The following chapter describes the methods which have been adopted within the research.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

As I entered Manjaro, a glitzy Ghanaian restaurant based in Holloway Road, North London, on a cold Friday night in March 2006, I observed a number of smartly dressed young Ghanaian professionals, who, in the 1980s would have been referred to as ‘buppies’ (Black urban professionals). They were members of Ghana 100, a networking organisation for young Ghanaians working in London. Dressed in what could be described as ‘smart casual’, clothing, that is, jeans and a smart-ish black velour jacket, I stood out somewhat. Behind me, two ‘suited and booted’ bankers with accents akin to those of stereotypical ex-public school boys were engrossed in a deep, loud conversation about acquisitions and the money they had made during that quarter. To my left, senior local government workers and computer analysts discussed software systems with unpronounceable names. To put it mildly, I felt a little intimidated, and although this was only for a very short while, I did wonder how on earth I was going to break the ice with these people.

Nevertheless, I swallowed my fears and soon made conversation with the bankers, analysts and others nearby. Eventually, Julian, the host of ‘Ghana 100’ arrived. A fellow academic had suggested that I might find potential research respondents within ‘Ghana 100’. She had also arranged with Julian for me to join the gathering to talk about my research. In spite of a hectic day at work, Julian was extremely jovial, and introduced me to professionals from other fields that were very friendly.

Later on in the evening, Julian devised what I considered a ‘crafty’ plan to facilitate introductions and further networking within the group. His approach was to wander around with a microphone, give it to a random person, who would then have to speak for three minutes about themselves and what they did. To add a further twist, the speaker was placed beneath a spotlight with a drum roll to herald their introduction. I laughed uproariously as I

saw people tripping over themselves as they scurried towards the toilet, ran downstairs to the bar, or huddled deeply into dark corners so as to avoid Julian. But as tears of laughter ran down my face the spotlight fell on me. Needless to say, I sobered up pretty quickly!

Although I had not intended introducing myself or speaking about my research to ‘Ghana 100’ in this way, I realised that it was a ‘now or never’ situation, as it was getting late and there might not be another opportunity that evening. Shaking off my nervousness and pasting a huge smile across my face, I delivered a short, humorous speech which, to my surprise, was followed by a standing ovation and the offer of several business cards and telephone numbers from potential participants. My engagement with ‘Ghana 100’ and other Ghanaian networks and individuals formed a key but exciting aspect of the research for this project. Moreover, working with these organisations provided first-hand experience of dealing with issues commonly faced by qualitative researchers, such as having to negotiate with gatekeepers in order to gain access into settings where possible participants can be identified, undertaking observations and developing field notes so as to substantiate the research.

This chapter also describes other elements involved in the research. It includes a summary of debates between two key epistemological positions, Positivism and Interpretivism, and justifies the adoption of an Interpretivist standpoint within the research. Furthermore, the methods associated with both epistemologies are described, as are methods adopted for the purpose of the study. The research is largely based upon life history interviews with British-Ghanaians although autobiographical reflections and secondary data are also incorporated. This chapter also describes the use of purposive snowball samples as a method of obtaining potential participants, and the broad background characteristics of the respondents. Finally, ethical issues arising in the research are considered.

## **Epistemological considerations**

In discussing the methodological considerations underlying the current research, it is necessary to acknowledge the different epistemological approaches represented by Positivism/objectivity and Interpretivism/subjectivity. In this section, I also justify the use of a subjective, Interpretivist/ qualitative approach within the research as opposed to positivist, quantitative methods.

### **Positivism**

A 'Positivist' epistemology would suggest that social action is a result of objective laws, which govern from the outside (Mc Neill and Chapman 2005, Devine 1997) There is also an assumption that society and social facts can be examined through the use of scientific methods. As Durkheim, a key proponent of this notion asserted, the social scientist should seek to analyse social facts 'in the same state of mind as the physicist, chemist or physiologist when he probes into a still unexplored region of the scientific domain' (Durkheim1982:60). Such an approach is believed to allow for 'objectivity' and 'detachment' in social investigation and the findings are said to remain uninfluenced by researchers and their interpretations.

Since Positivism is concerned with 'objectivity' and the use of approaches which are aligned with those adopted in natural sciences, those working within this framework favour the use of quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis, as they involve developing hypotheses and measurement of social facts so as to be able to understand the causes of events. From this, laws and statistics are generated. A strength associated with quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis, is its reliability, as replication is likely to produce similar results. Moreover, quantitative findings may be generalised to a large population (Seale 2004) and are considered as 'hard evidence' of social phenomena.

Positivism, and quantitative methods associated with it, has, however, been subject to criticism. Blumer (1954 in Hammersley 2004), for example, argued that quantitative, or more specifically statistical methods, are useful only in dealing with static situations and do not allow for much consideration of how situations emerge over time. Effectively, statistical approaches are best suited to analysing routinised behaviour and for providing correlations as opposed to examining causal relationships. Yet at the same time, he does acknowledge that statistical evidence may be useful in terms of initial explorations of phenomena. While some statistical data is drawn upon in the current study to provide an ‘initial exploration’ of Africans’ and Ghanaians’ academic attainment levels, beyond this, quantitative methods have been considered inappropriate as an overall approach to the study, as the primary focus is on the participants’ *views* of their socialisation experiences and the impact of these upon their life choices. Perceptions and responses to socialisation experiences will thus vary depending upon the respondents, which suggests that behaviour is not fixed or routinised and also that generalisations about such experiences cannot be made.

### **Interpretivism**

In contrast to Positivism, Interpretivism is primarily concerned with human interpretation of given experiences, the idea that the knowledge of the world is based upon this understanding and the fact that human experiences cannot be generalised. As indicated, the study is concerned with British-Ghanaian respondents’ recollections, views and interpretations of their childhood experiences of parenting and impacts upon their educational and professional outcomes. As Bhopal notes, such an approach is ‘flexible and better suited than quantitative methods to exploring the understandings of meanings, interpretations, and subjectivities to particular groups’ (Bhopal 2010: 8).

Moreover, as with other research in this area examining how many families place considerable emphasis upon children's educational achievement (see for example Reay 2002, Crozier 1996, Bhopal 2010), the current research acknowledges that parental approaches to ensuring academic success appears to differ, and as explained above, that the child's interpretations of the impacts of these experiences may also vary. Again, this further highlights some of the difficulties associated with making generalizations about such issues, and further justifies drawing upon an Interpretivist epistemology.

The decision to adopt an Interpretivist, qualitative approach is also influenced by my relation to the research area. As a member of a Ghanaian family, where educational achievement was a central concern, and in which two of my siblings were fostered, this issue has personal relevance for me. These personal experiences suggested to me the importance of the family's role in shaping an individuals' attitude towards educational achievement, so as to facilitate greater opportunities within the labour market. As my personal experiences and values are intrinsic to the research process, and are generally closely interlinked with the findings, adopting an 'objective' position, which Positivists maintain is necessary in generating social scientific knowledge, was problematic. The approach that I have chosen also values identification with the research area as it enables insights not available to 'outsiders'. Moreover, personal connections and familiarity with the Ghanaian community mean that the research process is more productive and involves more open and detailed discussion of ideas experiences and feelings.

Contained under the banner of Interpretivism, are perspectives such as Phenomenology, Symbolic Interactionism, Standpoint Theory and Ethnomethodology, all of which I draw upon, not only because of their emphasis upon the importance of understanding personal experiences, but also because each perspective contains specific characteristics which

correspond with issues which arise within the research. These perspectives are briefly summarised below.

### ***Phenomenology***

Phenomenology is primarily associated with Husserl, and his belief that human consciousness is an essential element in the process of understanding social reality. More specifically, his focus was upon how things appear in the conscious mind, and the structure of individual consciousness which makes things appear as they do (Malhorta-Bentz and Shapiro 1998). Phenomenology has been regarded as additional critique of the positivist approach especially since it questions the idea that natural and social worlds should be viewed solely in terms of facts. Husserl claimed that such an approach, ‘does not attend to the more fundamental process of the social production of both worlds’ (Husserl 1913 in Seale 1998:31). In addition, he maintained that the ‘subjective life world’ was frequently drawn upon by natural scientists to analyse theories and ‘critical constructions’ (Williams 1992:202). Thus, one’s subjectivity influences ‘objective verifications’ (Seale 1998:31). In essence, if those adopting a scientific approach imply that ordinary interpersonal communication is based upon opinion and is invalid, the same could be said of theoretical claims made by natural science because these claims are informed by the scientists’ own attitudes (Malhorta-Benz and Shapiro 1998).

Schutz developed Phenomenology further, as part of his own theory of Social Action. In doing so, Schultz referred to Weber’s concept of ‘*verstehen*’, that is understanding. His approach is based on the view that ‘social actors are governed by a principle of reciprocity of perspectives’ (Seale *et al.* 2004:31) and that the perceptions that individuals have of others informs subsequent interactions. This notion may apply to the current research, in the sense that in many cases, parents perhaps had specific ideas about the respondents’ behaviours and life choices (academic, professional and personal), which may have been similar to or

contrasted with those of the respondents'. Potentially, these factors could have had some bearing upon the interactions between the two generations.

Schutz points out that it is assumed that if an individual 'steps into the shoes' of another, each will see the same situation in the same way. Moreover, variations in life experiences are considered as inconsequential to immediate interactions between individuals, which reiterates the notion that individuals view the interaction in a similar manner. In reality however, such an interaction is an 'idealisation' and will not be true of all relations (Schutz 1972). In relation to this study, it could be argued that since life experiences of the respondents and their parents clearly differ, not least because of the fact that the migrants spent a considerable amount of time in Ghana, and as the second generation were based in Britain, such differences in terms of generation and cultural experiences may well mean that perceptions of the interactions between respondents and their parents will not be the same.

A key criticism levelled at Phenomenology, however, is that it is 'subjectivistic and relativistic' and that its primary focus is upon the consciousness of the individual, as it is taken as the 'central point of study'. Arguably such an approach may result in 'solipsism', that is, knowledge not extending beyond the individual (Malhorta-Benz and Shapiro 1998).

### ***Ethnomethodology***

Ethnomethodology, an additional branch of Interpretivism, founded by Garfinkel, is closely linked to Phenomenology. In fact, as Udeihn (2001:159) explains, Ethnomethodology 'started out as a continuation of Phenomenology'. Both emphasise the ways in which 'individuals understand and give a sense of order to the world they live in' (Hesse-Biber and Levy 2005:14).

As an approach, Ethnomethodology is specifically concerned with ‘the investigation of methods by which individuals make sense of their activities, both to themselves and others’ (Seale *et al.* 2004:32) and analyses the ways in which the social world can be envisaged through theories. Moreover, it considers how individual experiences may be understood in terms of typifications, and how these may be added to those which already exist in society (Sharrock *et al.* 1986). In line with this approach, within the current study, I draw upon existing theories, including that of Diana Baumrind, which have already used typifications to describe life experiences (e.g. parent-child relationships). I also develop further categories/typifications in order to analyse academic and professional choices.

Ethnomethodology, however, has been criticized for its rejection of structural analysis, and its focus on ‘trivial’ issues (Blaikie 2007, Coulon 1995). Furthermore, as with Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology is seen as over-emphasising analysis and description of contents of individuals’ minds, and taking these descriptions as social reality (Coser 1975 in Coulon 1995). In addition, some feminists also argue that Ethnomethodology ‘engages in problematising subjects without making any theoretical contributions’ (Coder 2003:185). Furthermore, because Ethnomethodological focus is on the observation of interactions between individuals, feminists maintain that it borders on an ‘objectivism’ which fails to consider ‘social and political past and present contexts’ (ibid).

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

Like Ethnomethodology, Symbolic Interactionism also originated from Phenomenology. Like the other approaches, the primary focus of interactionism is on interactions between humans, and the role of language in this process. Symbolic interactionism is associated with Mead who, like Husserl and Garfinkel, argues that a controlled scientific approach does not facilitate the understanding of groups and subcultures. He maintains that in order to obtain

this knowledge, researchers should observe actors in their natural environments, hence the use of qualitative approaches such as ethnographies by symbolic interactionists in their research.

Mead argues that human social behaviour includes a '*symbolic character*'. This suggests that human interactions and relationships are based upon symbols and the ability to understand gestures and responses. These symbols are often incorporated within a shared language. Symbolic Interactionists also maintain that communication is based upon language use which enables an understanding of others and symbols facilitate this process. It is this, coupled with the idea that the 'self' is formed through interactions with others and that individuals take on board others' perception of their behaviour, which forms the basis of Mead's theory of the 'self.'

Mead explains that the 'self' has two components: the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' represents impulses, whereas the 'me' is the response of the 'other' which the individual internalizes. The sense of 'self' is constantly shifting throughout life, because as we age, we adopt new roles and interact with new 'others'. It is due to this, Symbolic Interactionists maintain, that human behaviour cannot be explained in terms of laws or generalised.

The fact that Symbolic Interactionism is concerned with the responses of significant others, and their impact upon an individual's actions is of particular relevance in the current study, as it examines the extent to which the views of 'significant others', most notably parents, immediate and extended family members, and sometimes the wider Ghanaian communities may have determined the respondents' academic and career choices. Moreover, in line with this approach, it considers how the respondents sense of 'self' evolves in relation to the inputs of the significant others and also as a result of other life experiences.

Symbolic Interactionism became increasingly influential during the 1960s, as a critique of and alternative to scientific sociology. It also underpinned changes in approaches to examining key areas such as education, deviance and sexuality. Nevertheless, some of the criticisms of this approach echo those levelled at ethnomethodology and phenomenology, namely the failure to deal with issues surrounding social structure, economics and history. Moreover, it is regarded as giving considerable attention to 'marginal' as opposed to key aspects of group life (Turner and Roth 2003).

### ***Standpoint Theory***

Standpoint Theory stresses the importance of highlighting the position of 'excluded' social groups within social research, and seeks to incorporate their experiences in specific areas of knowledge. Therefore, this approach is also of relevance to the study, because, as pointed out in the introduction, with the exception of issues relating to fostering, Ghanaians/West Africans have been omitted from social research, such as that pertaining to education. A key aim of the research is, therefore, to begin to address this gap in sociological knowledge about their educational experiences.

Standpoint Theory was developed on the assumption that those from 'different social positions would produce alternative forms of knowledge about the social world, as different social positions will produce different social experiences' (Seale 2004:26). There are two strands to this approach: Identity Standpoint and Standpoint Theory. The former is centred upon oppressed groups, who have 'different' experiences to socially dominant groups. It is argued that their experiences involve a 'critical knowledge of the social world' (Seale 2004:26). Standpoint Theory incorporates this notion but also highlights the necessity of acknowledging the role of social structures in producing the individual's experience of social life. It also incorporates analysis of inter-subjective discourses, and draws upon racial,

gender, socio-economic and class differences in order to obtain a 'strong objectivity, reliability and rationality of science' than previously used within this field (Harding 2008).

Standpoint Theory has several roots, one of which is in the works of Hegel. In analysing the institution of slavery, Hegel sought to understand the relationship between the oppressed (slaves) and the oppressors (slave owners). He maintained that in order to fully understand the relationship between the two factions, one must consider the standpoint of the slave (Malask 2003). It is also traceable to Marx, who argued that a universal 'man', constructed by philosophers advocating the notion of individualism, was primarily 'man' as bourgeoisie, or 'man as citizen'. Thus 'man as worker' was negated. In response to this, Marx advocated the 'standpoint of the proletariat' (Calhoun 1995:193). Following Marx, Lukacs, in his analysis of the history of modern philosophy and science, also recognised that these areas were incomplete without the standpoint of the proletariat (Calhoun 1995).

Standpoint Theory was further embraced by marginalised groups, particularly during the 1960s and 70s as a form of resistance against social inequities. Adopting a 'standpoint' enabled them to reject 'the realities made natural and obvious that certain groups should remain oppressed and disempowered' (Smith 1990 in Davis *et al.* 2006: 420). Furthermore, it was argued that political struggles by marginalised groups were necessary to expose the 'institutional and disciplinary practices' which helped to maintain these inequalities (ibid) and that the structural positions of marginalised groups ensured that they were best situated to understand their own situations (Harding 2008, Hartstock 1997). In light of this, Standpoint Theory was incorporated in academia, so as to recognise the experiences of these groups.

Since the 1970s, feminists have been key proponents of this approach, particularly as it was perceived as underpinning the redefinition of science. Following the Enlightenment, scientific knowledge was considered as the main way of understanding *reality* and *reason* the most

reliable method of obtaining truth. Clear distinctions were made between '*rational*' and '*irrational*' thought. Rationality was considered to underpin 'objective' knowledge and as 'eradicating subjectivity by the application of rules of method' (Brunskell-Evans 1998:43). 'Objectivity' and 'rationality' were (and are) primarily associated with males, while subjectivity and emotion was considered characteristic of females. Feminists are critical of what they refer to as the 'masculine nature of Eurocentric science' (Harding 2008), in which objectivity takes precedence over subjectivity. Thus, a key aim of Feminist Standpoint is to broaden social science, acknowledge subjectivity, and recognise how knowledge develops through the day to day experiences of individuals. This, as Harding suggests, results in a new 'strong objectivity' which identifies the origins of knowledge, and accepts that not all knowledge claims are valid. Additionally it enables 'robust reflexivity', that is, the ability to fully reflect upon the approaches to generating knowledge.

While the Standpoint approach has been embraced by those regarded as in marginalised position within society, critics have suggested that ethnocentrism and essentialism are inherent within this approach. From a Black Feminist perspective, Patricia Hill-Collins (1990), for example, notes that it neglects traditions of knowledge associated with 'women of colour'; hence the development of an alternative standpoint theory which specifically focuses upon the experiences of African-American women. Such an approach, she maintains, would provide less biased and more accurate accounts of social life.

In accordance with feminists and others adopting a standpoint perspective, Joan W. Scott (1992) recognised that the experiences of Women, Gays, Blacks and so on had traditionally been omitted from the writing of history and social science, which she suggest has resulted in a 'hegemonic construction of social worlds' (Scott 1992:24). However, despite the drive towards acknowledging experiences of oppressed groups within social science, Scott points out that there has been limited acknowledgement of the *practices* which facilitated this

exclusion. She argues that it is necessary to address these issues if the experiences of these groups are to be made 'visible'. One key element of this practice of negation is the process involved in socially constructing these groups as 'different'. Another is how the social system has historically operated to exclude certain groups. To begin to resolve this issue, Scott suggests that it is necessary to revisit history and consider factors inherent in the social structure that places individuals in specific positions, which then create or have an effect on their experiences.

In addition Scott argues that there has been inadequate consideration of the individual's perceptions about how the 'self' has developed. Instead, broad categories such as 'Black' or 'Gay' have been applied in describing the 'self', which arguably contributes to the homogenisation of groups and their experiences. In examining 'experience' Scott adds that there is a tendency to take a single aspect of social identity into account, for example, gender or race, and as a result, there is a failure to consider how these interact with other forms of identity, such as sexuality or class. Scott makes a valid point, and while, other aspects of the respondents' social identity, such as the respondents' socio-economic backgrounds, have been acknowledged to an extent within the research (see chapter 4), as explained in the introduction, the scope of the research does not allow for further analysis of this area, partly because it is difficult to ascertain the socio-economic backgrounds of many of the respondents' parents as it was in Ghana and how this has changed in Britain. Moreover, the research focus is upon the respondents' experiences of parenting.

The notion that 'the personal is political' as it had been adopted by women, and other oppressed groups, as a challenge to 'objectivity' within social sciences, did involve highlighting the 'lived experience' of the oppressed. However, as Scott points out, an implication of this approach is that the 'political' is based primarily on oppression and domination, which contributes to the 'massing together' (Scott 1992:31) of women and of

other oppressed groups and a failure to recognise that their experiences are centred upon other issues besides oppression. Although the implications of institutional racism as a form of oppression which affects academic achievement rates of Black and minority ethnic students should be acknowledged, nevertheless, as explained in the introduction, many studies within the Sociology of Education that analyse the link between race and education, focus specifically upon these problems within the British education system. Consequently, less attention is given to Black and minority students who perform well and to the factors which contribute to their success. In light of this, this study specifically focuses upon the role of the family in emphasising and facilitating academic success amongst the respondents.

Stanfield (1993) also questions the process involved in the shift from ethnocentric, male dominated research, towards approaches which aim to 'centre' marginalised groups. From his observations of studies relating to race in Europe and America, Stanfield argues that research is still conducted primarily through the lens of 'mundane logical positivism' (Stanfield 1993:16). Like Scott, Stanfield suggests that within European and American cultural contexts, individuals are defined by citizens and researchers solely in terms of a singular aspect of identity, which for Stanfield is 'race'. Race, in turn, is hinged upon their phenotypical characteristics. Furthermore, interpretations of individuals' racial experiences are undertaken uncritically, without consideration of diversity *within* a racial category.

Research centred on the experiences of African-Americans, for example appeared to:

do little to draw analytical status distinctions (for instance gender, ethnoregionism, age, and especially ethnic differences) among African-Americans. (Stanfield 1993:19)

It could be argued that Stanfield's observations are applicable to studies of race and education in Britain. As explained in the introduction to the thesis, researchers in this field often

homogenise the experiences and achievements of Black students. Few analytical distinctions were made between 'Black' ethnic categories, although this is beginning to change (Daley 1997). As a way of addressing this issue, the current study seeks to address these problems by focusing specifically upon the individual life stories of 25 British-Ghanaians, who are an under-represented group within the sociology of race and education.

### **Approaches to data collection adopted in the current study**

The aim of this research is to explore the links between parent-child relationships and the academic and professional choices and outcomes of second generation British Ghanaians and the impacts of these factors upon self-perception. In order to explore these issues the following will be investigated:

*How and why did educational and professional achievement become a key social and family value in Ghanaian societies?*

*What is the nature of parent-child relationships in Ghanaian societies in the past and how did this affect children's academic achievement?*

*What was the nature of parent-child relationships between Ghanaian migrants and their British-Ghanaian children? To what extent does the migrants' own socialisation impact upon the way they raise their children?*

*Is academic and professional achievement a key value in the socialisation of British-Ghanaians? What are some of the educational and professional aspirations and expectations that Ghanaian migrants have of their children? How do the children respond to them?*

*To what extent do the aspirations and expectations of the migrant parents' have a bearing on subsequent academic and professional choices and achievements of the second generation?*

*What are some of the occupational and socio-emotional outcomes in terms for the second generation?*

Answering these questions involves a detailed examination of several areas. It is necessary to consider the diverse cultural experiences of the two generations, since the migrants experienced most of, if not all of, their formative years in Ghana, and the second generation have spent theirs in Britain. In order to analyse the experiences of the first generation this research project firstly revisits life in pre-colonial and colonial Ghana, mainly through existing literature in this area. Excerpts from informal discussions with family members, about their memories of life within this context, are also included. This enables some understanding of what could be described as an 'intense' social and familial emphasis on educational and professional achievement and of how this value forms the basis of socialisation experiences of second generation British-Ghanaians.

### **Use of existing literature in revisiting life in pre colonial and colonial Ghana**

As explained above, secondary data in the form of literature is used to provide some insight into the nature of social life and education in West African societies during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, and also to describe the experiences of migrants who arrived in Britain for their education during the 1960s-1980s. This approach is advantageous in that it enables a detailed account of the situation in colonial Ghana and for the migrants in Britain. It also serves to substantiate the accounts provided by family members. Moreover, no costs were incurred in terms of time and finances (Stewart and Kamins 1993; Becker and Bryman 2004). A disadvantage of this approach, however, is that difficulties may arise in terms of obtaining up-to date secondary data on specific subject areas (Stewart and Kamins 1993), as I found when searching for more recent studies on the experiences of Ghanaians in Britain. It

therefore became necessary to rely mainly on research conducted during the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Familial accounts of life and education in colonial Ghana**

I visited Adumasa, Ghana in December 2008 and in doing so, I had the opportunity to meet with family members, and to engage in an informal discussion about a range of issues, including educational and professional achievement and why it remains an important element within our family and in Ghanaian culture generally. Information provided by my relatives was based primarily upon recollections of family events, which had been passed down orally through the generations. These discussions and recollections constitute a type of oral history, which is considered as the 'primary means of preserving and passing down traditional knowledge' (Silliman and Hall 2006: 11) within African societies. Although this approach is useful in terms of obtaining insight into past events, when drawing upon these accounts, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that respondents may 'glorify' certain aspects of the story and negate others (Hong-Lysa 2000).

Nevertheless, the discussions provided additional insight into attitudes towards education in Ghana, and serves to corroborate data obtained from the literature. Furthermore, these discussions were useful in terms of providing links between the past and the present (Miller 2002). More specifically, connections were made between the lives of my forebears in Adumasa during the mid-late nineteenth century and those of later generations based in England from the late twentieth century onwards. The conversations also enabled consideration of the constraints and opportunities for previous generations and their approaches to dealing with these issues (Miller 2002). For example, it emerged that relative poverty appeared to be a constraint for many in my grandmothers' generation. Through the discussions it was established that she and others sought to ensure that children were

educated in order to enhance their chance of socio-economic mobility. The focal point of this research is, however, to analyse the responses of the second generation to their socialisation experiences. Thus life histories that also represent an example of Interpretivist/qualitative methods have been adopted for this particular purpose.

### **Life histories and the exploration of the second generation's experiences**

Life histories are 'extended unstructured interviews, whereby the individual reflects upon his/her life' (Bryman 2005:49) that form a bridge between personal life and social structures (Bornat and Chamberlayne 2000). In the current research, life histories are used in exploring the experiences of the second generation as this enabled an examination of intergenerational change within families (Bornat and Chamberlane 2000). Moreover, they allow for an exploration of respondents' personal development and enables them to 'define their socialisation experiences and to focus upon critical and fateful moments' (Marshall and Rossman 2006:116). These factors are central to the current research project as it considers some of the processes and (sometimes critical) experiences forming the basis of the respondents' childhoods and subsequent life choices.

The research analyses the experiences of British-Ghanaians, some of whom were raised during the 1960s and 70s, when children of West African origins had a greater likelihood of being sent to live with White foster parents. Thus life histories are a particularly useful method, as one of its aims is to 'depict an era and experiences of a particular social group' (Marshall and Rossman 2006:117).

Using life histories, however, means that individuals will remember the past in hindsight, or in the perspective of the present. Thus questions might be raised about the accuracy of facts recalled. Within the current study, this was an issue that some respondents acknowledged, particularly when it came to remembering the times at which specific events took place.

Furthermore, as with other qualitative interviews, there is a potential for respondents to provide inconsistent and/or unreliable information. An example might entail glorifying certain aspects of their lives and downplaying others (Bryman 2008). Thus, the researcher has to assess the authenticity and reliability of what has been said.

During the course of the research it was necessary to make judgements regarding the reliability of the information given. In most cases, there were broad similarities in the accounts of respondents from 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' families. For example, across both categories, all highlighted the emphasis on educational and professional achievement during their childhood years. Despite some variations between the respondents' accounts, those from 'authoritarian' families generally spoke of experiencing 'strict' parenting, in which there was little opportunity for open engagement with their parents. In contrast, respondents from 'authoritative' families described 'positive' parent-child relationships. Since the data obtained in both cases appeared to be consistent, I made the judgement that the issues raised were genuine.

In some instances, however, I felt that certain elements of accounts given by respondents were questionable. It thus became necessary to re-check what had been said at later points in the discussion. When doing so, questions were worded differently partly to disguise my concerns about the reliability of the data, and as a method of avoiding interviewee fatigue. After interviews have taken place, data can also be analysed and re-analysed in case of concerns about further inconsistencies (Mc Neill and Chapman 2005, Marshall and Rossman 2006). Fortunately, answers given during both rounds of questioning and after data analysis were consistent with each other, which enhanced my confidence in the legitimacy of the accounts provided.

It is acknowledged that a further shortcoming of life histories is that focus on the life of the individual, means that it becomes unrepresentative of a larger population (Marshall and Rossman 2006). However the objective of this project was not to represent a large population, rather, it was to highlight the experiences of a small group of high achieving British-Ghanaians.

### **Autobiographical approach**

Autobiographical research, which is a further example of an Interpretivist/qualitative approach, involves the ‘telling’ and ‘documentation’ of an individual’s life story (Bryman *et al.* 2004). Those undertaking this approach are effectively biographers of the lives of others but can also be ‘simultaneously involved in autobiographical work of their own’ (Bryman *et al.* 2004:46). While the current research is mainly informed by narratives and biographies of the British-Ghanaian respondents, I incorporate elements of the autobiographical approach, more specifically my own life story within it. This includes my recollections of life in a family in which academic and professional achievement was a central concern as well as my experience of pressures associated with attempting to navigate between my own wishes/interests, parental expectations and those of the Ghanaian community.

Autobiographical methods have been beneficial to the research in that they have contributed to an understanding of some aspects of the cultural, political and social experiences of British-Ghanaians. The inclusion of personal experiences further augments my research and provides an ‘insightful analysis’ into these issues (Bryman *et al.* 2004:46).

I was, however, also aware that this approach and my position as a ‘cultural insider’ potentially increased the risk of ‘over-identification’ with the research area, and subsequently reduced the distance and level of objectivity that is considered necessary for research (Brannick and Coughlan 2007, Oliver 2010). However a ‘triangulation’ of methods, that is,

combining autobiographical information with the life history interviews, and also drawing on secondary data served to enhance objectivity, and also corroborated my research findings. I return shortly to a more in-depth discussion of my insider-outsider status during the course of the research.

An additional problem which has been identified with this approach is, however, the ‘potential for romanticizing the self’ or for ‘engaging in self indulgence’ (ibid). However, given that the experiences of the British Ghanaian respondents is at the forefront of the research, this minimizes opportunities for me, as the researcher, to make my own experiences the central element of the study.

### **Alternative approaches considered for the research: Focus groups**

An alternative method which was considered in conducting this research was focus groups. This is an approach commonly used by Interpretivist/qualitative researchers, which involves informal interviews with groups of respondents, so as to ‘stimulate discussion and thereby understand (through further analysis) the meanings and norms which underlie those group answers’ (Bloor *et al.* 2001: 1-3 in Marvasti 2004:22). For the purpose of this study, the initial aim was to undertake three focus groups with British-Ghanaians, which would have been organised around the decades in which the respondents were born, as in some cases, those born into particular cohorts shared broadly similar experiences, for example spending their formative years in foster homes.

Attempting to organise the focus groups, was problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to find a common location for the respondents to meet, as were relocated in different parts of the country. Even if this was possible, co-ordinating convenient times for participants would prove difficult, because of the respondents’ work and family commitments. As a

result, I decided to abandon the use of focus groups and to rely on individual interviews with respondents.

A further weakness identified with the focus group method is that sensitive topics may arise, and discussing them within a group context could prove uneasy. For example, in the case of the current study, those participants who may have experienced a particularly difficult childhood may have felt somewhat uncomfortable discussing it in the presence of a number of other people. These reasons further justified the appropriateness of individual interviews for the research.

### **Locating and accessing Ghanaian networks and participants**

Participants for this study were either born, and raised in a large regional city, or in London. Since I currently live in London and have connections with the large regional city, this facilitated access to British-Ghanaian participants in these areas. However, as a British-Ghanaian it might be assumed that I would have fewer problems accessing groups immediately, but this was not always the case, especially in London where initially I had fewer personal contacts. Even though London has a significant Black population, determining who was or was not Ghanaian was not an easy process, therefore, as a result it was necessary to identify and make contact with the Ghanaian organisations and networks.

Accessing participants, particularly those such as Ghanaians, who are not easy to identify or may be 'hard to reach' can at first prove challenging. However, it is possible to locate initial research samples through a variety of approaches, for example placing advertisements in shop windows, in magazines and newspapers and on internet websites (Liamputtong 2007). The actual process of accessing research participants can either be 'open' or 'closed'. 'Open access' enables the researcher to reach participants, with few or no problems. Situations of 'closed access' are those where it becomes more difficult to reach potential participants. This

is more likely to occur when researching organisations such as firms, schools, cults and social movements (Bryman 2008). Regardless of whether the process is ‘closed’ or ‘open’, the recruitment of potential research interviewees often entails going through intermediaries or gatekeepers and snowballing (Seale 2004). I discuss the use of snowball sampling for purpose of this study in the next section.

In terms of gaining entry to networks and access to participants for the purpose of the current study, situations of ‘closed access’ to London-based organisations arose, and as was to be expected, the process involved a level of intervention from ‘gatekeepers’ and intermediaries, whom had to be identified beforehand. My entry into ‘Ghana 100’ was facilitated by a fellow British-Ghanaian academic, who negotiated with Julian, the ‘gatekeeper’ or group organiser. In addition to the meeting at Manjaro in March 2006, described earlier, I attended additional group events during the course of that year.

In February 2008, I was also invited to the Ghana Youth Association (GYA) by a British-Ghanaian student. This association consists of British-Ghanaian Catholics in their late teens and twenties and is co-ordinated by student migrants who arrived in Britain during the 1970s and 80s. The group meets monthly on a Sunday to discuss issues affecting their community and to develop funding strategies for future projects. As with ‘Ghana 100’, the student negotiated my access to the group with the primary co-ordinator, who was also in effect a gatekeeper. I frequently attended monthly meetings, so as to strengthen my relationship with the gatekeeper and to establish a rapport with potential participants. At the first meeting, which, incidentally involved a debate between first and second-generation Ghanaian migrants concerning intergenerational relationships, the co-ordinator allowed me to speak to the group about my research, as a result, several individuals expressed an interest in participating. Although the main intention of my involvement with this group was to recruit participants for the research, attending the debate and other meetings involved using similar skills to those

used in qualitative research, such as observation of reactions to specific points raised, listening, and on some occasions asking pertinent, open ended questions while being sensitive to the perspectives of both generations.

Arguably, coming from a similar ethnic background to those within the groups and the gatekeepers was advantageous in facilitating my access to the organisations discussed earlier. With regards to Ghana 100, given that it was formed of British-Ghanaian professionals, my own professional status as a lecturer and a doctoral candidate in conjunction with my ethnicity further eased access to this organisation. However, it is not in all cases that commonalities in terms of ethnicity will ensure automatic access to minority ethnic research respondents. Bhopal (2010), for example, describes some of the difficulties that she experienced in accessing participants for her study of Asian women in higher education. Initially, she faced barriers from institutions, as they were unwilling to give her information about Asian students, on the grounds that the personal details of students could not be divulged by the university. In some cases, institutions were concerned that the aim of her study was to criticise their equalities policies, despite her reassurances to the contrary. As was necessary in the current study, particularly when identifying Ghanaian organisations and respondents who were not part of any networks, Bhopal resorted to drawing upon personal contacts from those she knew within various institutions. Even though her contacts assisted in publicising her research within their institutions by discussing them in lectures, to begin with few responded. After what must have been an arduous, time consuming process, and as a result of adopting a snowballing technique, respondents began to come forward. However, what Bhopal's experience illustrates is that shared ethnicity cannot always be considered an 'opening gambit' to accessing minority ethnic research participants.

## **Designing samples**

As previously explained, so as to develop a sample of respondents from both London and the large regional city, it was necessary to use snowballing techniques. These involve ‘a small number of subjects who in turn identify others in a population’ (Gray 2004:88) and they also represent an example of ‘purposive sampling’, which is where ‘participants are selected on the basis of having a significant relation to the research group’ (Seale 2004:199).

Within the organisations that I had been able to access, individuals readily volunteered to be part of the study, and often suggested other British-Ghanaians from outside of the group to participate, which formed one part of my snowball sample. Identifying respondents based in London and the large regional city, who, were not members of any Ghanaian networks entailed an even greater reliance upon snowballing methods. I was familiar with several Ghanaian student migrants and their families in the large regional city, and while some migrants still resided there, it was often the case that their children had relocated to London or to other cities. Nevertheless, the migrants assisted me in re-establishing contact with their children, thus effectively, they acted as intermediaries. If the potential participants consented, I arranged meetings in London for further discussion.

There were however, two respondents who were not difficult to locate as they had remained in the large regional city. One of the respondents still lived with her mother at the time of contact. A migrant who arrived in the large regional city, as a student during the 1960s was also identified and the research was discussed with her. She proceeded to contact her sons. In turn, the youngest son agreed to an interview and also pointed me in the direction of two other potential respondents who were born and raised in the regional city, but had relocated to London.

Snowballing has been recognised as being beneficial in terms of identifying ‘difficult to reach’ or ‘hidden’ populations when there is no available sampling frame (Berg 2007, Seale 2004) and, indeed, it was useful for the current research, as it facilitated the identification of respondents, most especially individuals who might be considered ‘hard to reach’ as they did not belong to any of the Ghanaian networks. As shown above, Bhopal (2010) drew upon this method, in light of the difficulties she experienced in obtaining respondents. A similar approach was adopted by Goody and Muir-Groothues (1972), in their research, as their attempts to generate a sample of West Africans through other methods proved problematic. Initially, they sought to identify respondents through census enumeration lists of four London boroughs. The recorded number of migrants was, however, often inaccurate since many had overstayed their time in Britain, thus there were more students than was recognised in the census. Several who had been identified refused to participate, especially if they had been in Britain beyond the time that their visas permitted for fear of being reported to the immigration authorities. Therefore their personal contacts and others from the British Council were called upon to provide them with information about potential participants.

The use of snowball samples for the current study could, however, have presented problems in that the research may have been restricted to respondents from a specific network or group. As a result, individuals’ experiences may not vary much because participants will often refer the researcher on to others who share similar characteristics to themselves (Seale 2004). However, as a way of addressing this issue, I sought to broaden the sample as much as possible under the circumstances by accessing more than one Ghanaian organisation and by including a range of other individuals from London and the large regional city.

## **The interview process**

I commenced the interviews by asking the participants about their backgrounds, which included their birthplaces, schools they attended and so on. Questions were also asked about their parents, more specifically, the year that they arrived in Britain, what they came to study, their occupational aspirations and whether these were fulfilled. Participants also discussed their childhoods, including their relationships with their parents, foster parents and other elders in the community, their recollections of their parents' approaches to socialisation and the extent to which educational achievement was emphasised in the process. I also raised questions about their academic and professional choices and attainments in the context of their socialisation experiences. The final part of the interview involved the participants' reflecting on connections between the above factors and their socio-emotional outcomes. At the end of the interviews, the participants were asked whether they had any additional comments or questions. Each interview took approximately 45 to 120 minutes. All were taped and transcribed. Whenever necessary, additional notes were taken. Transcribing and data analysis was a time consuming process, since the interviews generated a large amount of data.

## **Power relationships**

Power relationships are a feature in the relationships between the 'researched' and the 'researcher', and they generally reflect those existing within society more broadly. They play an undeniably important and influential role in social research (Bhopal 2010, Blauner and Wellman 1973, Anderson 1993). Therefore it is essential to acknowledge the effect of power relations within the current study. While there are many commonalities between myself and my research participants there are also differences which I have endeavoured to fully

recognise and reflect in my research. In addition I have made every effort to be aware of the power dynamics that inevitably arise within this research approach.

The characteristics of the British-Ghanaian research participants extend beyond their ethnicity. There is diversity, for example, in terms of their class, gender, sexuality and age. These identities are complex, multiple and constantly shifting, which in turn position them differently in society and are reflected in their relationships of power. Power relationships may lead to the formation of the 'other' and such relationships of power and powerlessness may affect research relationships (Anderson 1993). Ladner's (1971) study *Tomorrow's Tomorrow*, illustrates the nature of power relationships between the researcher and participants. Her work analysed the life experiences and aspirations of African-American women from deprived neighbourhoods in St. Louis. On the one hand Ladner shared similarities with her research participants in terms of race and gender. Yet her level of education as a doctoral candidate and her middle class family background placed her in a position of power in relation to her research participants.

Similarities in terms of ethnicity and experience between the British-Ghanaian participants, and myself put us on an equal plane to an extent. Although gender did not pose any major issue in the interactions between me and the respondents, it did place us in positions of difference, and contributed to a shifting power dynamic within the research.

### **Research respondents and my status as an 'insider'/'outsider'**

The concept of an 'insider', within a research context, refers to those who may share cultural, social, and linguistic characteristics with those that they are researching, whereas an 'outsider' may not. It is said that being an 'insider' can reduce cultural (and in some cases linguistic) barriers, and also facilitate the establishment of a rapport between researchers and participants (Liamputtong 2008). Bhopal (2001), in her paper entitled *Sameness/Difference*,

*Researching South Asian Women in East London*, for example, explains how a shared ethnic origin and ability to speak fluent Panjabi enabled her to 'mingle in' with her respondents and meant that she did not 'stand out in any way' (Bhopal 2001:284). She also shows how these factors reinforced her status as an 'insider'. Her familiarity with her research group and/or 'insider' status also facilitated her sense of *knowing* (Bhopal 2001:284), that is a deeper understanding of cultural issues than may be possible for a researcher from another background (Bhopal 2001).

In a later paper, *Gender Identity and Experience*, in which she reflects upon her research experience with Asian women in higher education, and also in her book *Asian Women in Higher Education: Shared Communities*, Bhopal (2010) further demonstrates her role as an 'insider', or more specifically 'an Asian woman who had shared experiences and knowledge of particular aspects of cultural identity' (Bhopal 2010:191). As with her research in East London, it was these shared experiences (e.g. in terms of gender, ethnicity and culture) that were central in establishing a rapport with her respondents. However, her academic positioning, and socio-economic status often set her apart from her respondents, and thus placed her in the position as an 'outsider'.

Some researchers such as Carter (2004 in Liamputtong 2010), however, have noted that there are advantages to being an 'outsider' in research contexts, one of which is the potential for discovering new perspectives. As he recalls from his research on Black nurses within the NHS:

so taken for granted assumptions just below the surface in interviews where interviewers and interviewees share the same identity are likely to be made explicit in cases where interviewers and interviewees do not have the same identity (Carter 2004:347 in Liamputtong 2010:116)

Carter makes a valid observation and further notes that despite the sensitivity of issues such as racism which were highlighted in his discussions, respondents may also feel equally able to talk freely and openly about given issues. Bhopal (2001, 2010), however, raises several equally valid and pertinent issues, which indicate some of the problems resulting from being a ‘cultural’ outsider. She notes that although an outsider may have an interest in the particular topic, they may not have the same level of cultural awareness or *knowing* (Bhopal 2001) as a cultural insider. Furthermore, she observes that ‘outsider’ status ‘can create difficulties in terms of gaining access, establishing rapport and understanding the situation of the ‘other’ (Bhopal 2010:191). Yet she also acknowledges the dangers associated with making an assumption that being an ‘insider’ ensures a more ‘valid and reliable interview situation’. Rather there are a number of difficulties, which include the fact that it may underscore tensions in the research process.

Within the current research, it was mainly gender which positioned me as an ‘outsider’, as some of my respondents were male. Commonalties in terms of class and education, however, enhanced my status as an ‘insider’. Many of the respondents had like, myself, achieved upwards socio-economic mobility and occupied ‘professional’ positions. A considerable majority had achieved undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications, and some had achieved a doctoral degree or, like me, were working towards one. Obviously, my ethnicity and cultural background also placed me as an ‘insider’, and it was this which was an essential element in the development of a rapport between the respondents and myself. At various points in most interviews, we were able to discuss particular common experiences in relation to upbringing, notably parent-child relationships, and (‘over’-) emphasis on academic/professional achievement during our formative years. Discussing these issues with respondents enhanced ‘shared understanding and empathy’ (Bhopal 2010:29) between us. In reflecting upon her own experiences when researching Asian women in universities, Bhopal

(2010) explains that as a result of adopting a similar ‘open’ method, and revealing her own life experiences to her respondents, this allowed her to ‘move away from the preconceived role of the academic researcher’ (Bhopal 2010:27). Several of her participants also commented upon the ease with which they could talk with her.

Being open with my respondents also proved to be effective in the current research, as some of the respondents expressed that they could discuss issues which they had not been able to discuss previously. After a long and fascinating interview with a respondent named Araba, she went as far as to describe the experience as being ‘cathartic’ and the research as ‘being necessary to get our (British-African) voices heard’.

In relation to discussions with family in Adumasa, although these were not a formalised part of my research, my ‘insider’/’outsider’ status was, however, highlighted once again. Again, shared ethnicity, culture and the fact that I was family, illustrated my position as an ‘insider’, and again, in many ways enabled me to build a rapport with them. My academic/professional status, on the other hand, placed me as an ‘outsider’ and in some ways highlighted my position of power. This was because although some family members had been educated to tertiary level, and my mother’s ‘cousin-brother’ had been a school teacher, many had not gone on beyond this, due to limited finances. In contrast, I had access to resources which enabled me to pursue higher education. Interestingly, my ‘outsider’ status as a doctoral candidate, made my relations keen to establish a rapport with me, which might partly be attributed to the way in which educated individuals are revered in Ghana.

Although I have a considerable amount of insight into Ghanaian culture, having been raised by Ghanaian parents, and as a result of strong connections with the Ghanaian community in my home town, my relatives clearly possessed far more in-depth knowledge of the traditions than I did. These differences further contributed to my ‘outsider’ status, but also placed them

in a position of power. Thus while it is commonly assumed that the researcher is in a position of power, my experience showed that this is not always so, since participants may have a greater level of knowledge in a given area (Liamputtong 2007), and ultimate control over the amount of information they wish to disclose (Bhopal 2010, Reynolds 2002).

### **Analysing the data**

The data has been analysed according to the main themes which have been identified as impacting upon the academic and professional and socio-emotional outcomes for the second generation. These themes include ‘parent-child relationships’, ‘academic and professional choices and achievements’ and ‘socio emotional outcomes’.

Reading and analysing the individuals’ life stories involved gaining an understanding of how the participants perceived relationships with their parents during their formative years. Diana Baumrind’s *Typology of Parenting* (1966, 1991) was drawn upon in order to broadly categorise the participants’ descriptions of their parent-child relationships, and how these parenting styles influenced of the transmission of the value of educational achievement.

‘Academic and professional choices and achievements’ as a theme were also divided into three sub-sections, which reflected participants’ responses to the academic and professional expectations and aspirations that their parents had for them. The sub-categories include ‘conformity’ (unquestioning acceptance of parental aspirations and expectations) ‘compromise’ (maintaining a balance between individual and parental expectations and aspirations) and ‘rebellion and resistance’ (rejection of parental expectations and aspirations).

‘Outcomes’ were considered in terms of socio-emotional aspects’, which potentially resulted from the individuals’ experiences of socialisation and subsequent academic and career choices.

## **Ethical concerns**

As with most forms of research and in conformity with the guidelines of the University of Greenwich Ethics Committee, it was necessary to address key ethical concerns within the investigation. Use of the Ethics Committee guidelines ensured that I had considered key ethical implications within the research. In addition, I came to appreciate the rigour adopted by the Committee, in their analysis of my proposal. A primary ethical concern was obtaining informed consent from the participants. Doing so ensured that they understood that they were ‘knowingly’ participating in the research by their own choice (Berg 2007:78). Consent was obtained verbally at the initial discussion meetings and then in written form at the start of the interviews. The process of obtaining consent involved explaining exactly what would be involved in the study and highlighting the possible benefits and risks associated with the research. A benefit of participating in the research was that respondents were providing an important contribution to Sociological knowledge about an ethnic minority group in Britain about whom little is known.

Risks included potential traumas resulting from recalling childhood memories. This was a particular concern for those who had been fostered during their formative years, and for those who had experienced poor parent-child relationships. I made links with relevant counselling services and Ghanaian Associations in the regional city and London. Thus if problems arose, participants could be referred to these organisations. However, while I made the participants aware that these services were available I did not ask them whether they had used them as I felt this was a personal decision.

Respondents were also provided with an information sheet which included a written outline of the research and a consent form for written confirmation. They were also advised verbally, and in writing, that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. None

of the participants took this option. Despite reassurances, however, confidentiality and anonymity were issues for some of the respondents, who were concerned that if the research could be accessed by the public (particularly Ghanaian migrants from their parents' generation), it would be possible to be identified from the experiences that they had spoken of. Participants were given further assurances in the meetings and in the paperwork that any evidence which might give clues to their identities would be removed from the research. Nevertheless, difficulties still often arise in attempting to ensure that participants, who take part in qualitative research such as this, remain completely anonymous (Berg 2007). I therefore sought to overcome this problem by changing the names of the participants, from their English Christian names, to generic Ghanaian Ashanti/Fante names. As an additional precaution, I changed the details of life stories. For example, in relation to the fostered participants, these are discussed in a general way. The term 'large regional city' was also used to protect the identities of those respondents who were not from London. This is because the regional city has a much smaller Ghanaian population than London, thus making identification of respondents from this location much easier. Furthermore once the research is completed, all forms of data, including records, lists of interviewees and tapes will be discarded.

An additional ethical consideration is the researchers' obligation to produce accounts of the respondents' lives which are coherent, and that also reflect the conversation which had taken place during the course of the interview (Scott 1996, Seale 2004). To ensure this, researchers may find themselves needing to 'modify their views of reality' or to 'modify the participants rights to re-construct their reality' (Scott 1996:69), especially given that data from the interviews is likely to become accessible within public arenas. Underpinning this, are additional concerns surrounding power relations during the research process, that is, the levels of power that researchers and participants have over the data that is produced, and how

it is used. These issues are a particular concern for feminist researchers (see for example Harding 1991, Fonow and Cook 1991) who also maintain that transparency within the research process (which includes allowing respondents access to data from their interviews) is an essential element of reducing power imbalances between the researcher and the researched.

In order to address these issues within the current research, checks were made with respondents during the course of interviews and at the end, to ensure that recorded accounts were an accurate reflection of the discussions. Doing this provided the respondents with an opportunity to highlight possible errors and to modify their explanations if necessary. After the interviews some respondents also asked to view their transcripts so as to further reflect upon the discussion. In such situations, the transcripts were emailed to the respondents once transcription was completed. However in all cases respondents were happy with the accounts which had been produced.

In deciding the interview settings, it was necessary to be mindful of the safety of the researcher and of participants, as well as considering how different locations might affect participant responses. Awareness of safety involved ensuring that interviews took place at locations which did not pose any risk to the researcher or participants. At the same time, it must be recognised that the setting in which an interview takes place can have a bearing upon answers given. Researchers must, therefore, select an appropriate location in which both parties are relaxed and participants feel able to express their opinions freely (Seale 2004).

London based participants were invited to be interviewed in my office at the University of Greenwich. Several agreed to meet in this location. Given that many of the remaining participants worked during the week and often spent weekends away from London, it was not always possible to meet at my office. Therefore, I often had no option but to visit their

workplaces. I was mindful of the fact that the use of workplaces as a venue for interviews could potentially restrict responses (Seale 2004). We were, however, able to overcome this to a certain extent, as most of the interviews took place in private areas within their organisations or at public locations nearby.

Those participants based in the large regional city could not be expected to travel to London for an interview which would last an hour or less. Thus I ensured that these interviews coincided with my visits to the city. Again, interviews were conducted at convenient and safe locations.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted epistemological debates between two key epistemological standpoints: Positivism and Interpretivism. It has also described the perspectives and methods which reflect each epistemology. As the current study is based upon the experiences of British-Ghanaians and the meanings given to their encounters an Interpretivist approach and qualitative methods were deemed more suitable for the research.

Life histories were identified as the most suitable method of data collection as they enable respondents to reflect upon their socialisation experiences and on their impact upon their academic and occupational choices and outcomes. Although the research is predominantly based upon the respondents' life histories, autobiographical accounts reflecting my own experiences have also been included so as to provide further insight into the topic. While there were initial difficulties faced in terms of accessing the research sample, these were overcome through the use of snowballing techniques which enabled access to individuals, and groups such as 'Ghana 100' and the Ghana Youth Association. Although it is recognised that snowball samples are not representative, this approach is justified, as the purpose of the current research is to explain the experiences of a small sample, rather than to attempt to

make generalisations. Issues of power relations between respondents, and myself and my status as an insider/outsider during the research process have also been discussed.

The following chapter focuses on the historical background regarding education within Ghanaian societies. It draws mainly on existing literature in this area although this is supplemented with oral histories from my own family in Ghana. The aim of this chapter is to explain how historical attitudes to education continue to influence the expectations of Ghanaian migrants to Britain and their British-born children regarding education.

### Chapter 3: Historical Background to Ghanaian Education

It may be readily deduced that the West African approach to schooling is 'traditional'. There is a great concern with achievement and standards. Education is taken very seriously there.

*June Ellis*

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

*Chinua Achebe*

'Seeking the golden fleece' is how many West Africans describe the deep seated ambition to travel to England for further studies; nourished by so much hope, their actual experiences, if they do succeed in reaching this country, are often so far from their dreams.

*Pat Stapleton*

Growing up as a British-Ghanaian in a large regional city I recall that academic achievement and excellence was continually 'drummed' into our heads by my parents, especially my father, who had a habit of intoning the old West African saying: 'let your book be your friend'. There were also constant reminders of cousins and uncles 'so and so' who had become doctors, lawyers or engineers and were therefore leading 'happy' lives. While my siblings and I saw the necessity of having friends besides our books, we also understood *why* educational achievement and excellence were (over) emphasised. My father was one of the many West African migrants who arrived in Britain during the early 1960s for educational purposes. His plan was to stay in Britain for five years, so as to obtain qualifications to enhance his occupational opportunities 'back home'. A multitude of educational and personal problems prevented him, however, from achieving the academic credentials he had hoped for.

Although my mother was not as vociferous about education as my father, in her quiet way, she also instilled its importance in us. She and her brothers were the first generation in her

family to receive formal education, which was mainly at the insistence of my grandmother who is reported to have said that: ‘I can’t read or write, so you are *all* going to school’. An outcome of my grandmother’s determined stance regarding her children’s education was that my mother continued her education in order to train as a midwife and several of my uncles were educated to tertiary and/or university level. Although my mother was certain that our generation would not be illiterate, she was still keen to ensure that my siblings and I achieved to at least the same level if not beyond that of herself and her brothers.

Both parents’ resoluteness was also reinforced by their belief that since we were born and raised in England, we were ‘privileged by birth’. Amongst the ‘benefits’ of being ‘privileged by birth’ was greater access to educational and professional opportunities than the migrant generation had in Britain and also ‘back home’. Despite the expansion of the education system in Ghana, which took place during the colonial era, it became increasingly evident over time that the educational provision was somewhat inadequate for much of the population. For many, these inadequacies hampered opportunities for personal and socio-economic progression. My parents’ observation and experiences of the situation in colonial Ghana, in conjunction with their encounters in Britain, strengthened their resolve that my siblings and I, as the first generation born in Britain, would utilise all available opportunities to achieve. As a result of these factors, academic and professional achievement became a key family value and was central to our socialisation experiences, just as it was for our parents.

My parents were not alone in their views and approaches, as many other Ghanaians within our vicinity, and beyond, adopted a similar attitude. This chapter, offers further insight regarding *why* and *how* academic and professional attainment has, over the years come, to represent a key social and familial value amongst Ghanaians. In doing so, it revisits the educational situation in pre-colonial Ghana, then, charts the expansion of formal education across the nation from the late 1800s. It also considers the role of missionary and colonial

involvement in the development of the Ghanaian education system. The influence upon the attitudes of Ghanaians in the context of these changes is explored, as is the role of the family and community in transmitting the value of academic and professional achievement to children, and in enhancing success in this area. It also addresses the choice of Ghanaians to further their education in Britain from the 1960s onwards, and their experiences in doing so. While the chapter draws mainly on existing literature in this area, at various junctures in this chapter I incorporate further autobiographical excerpts, which reflect the experiences of my own family.

### **Pre-colonial education in Ghana**

Prior to missionary influence and colonial imposition, few formal educational institutions existed in Ghana and West Africa generally. At this time, West African society in itself was regarded as educative, as children learned basic skills, such as basket weaving and farming within their communities. Pre-colonial education has therefore been described as ‘traditional’ and ‘African-centred’ (Obiakor 2004:40). Further aspects of ‘African-centred education’ have been outlined by Fafunwa (1975 in Obiakor 2004). These included the development of intellectual skills, emphasis on respect for elder generations and authority figures, and the acquisition of vocational skills. This form of education was, however, often gendered in nature. Boys, for example, were trained in economically valuable areas such as goldsmithing, whereas girls were encouraged towards ‘hair dressing, cooking and simple trading’ (Obeng 2002:9). In the predominantly Islamic northern territories of Ghana, pre-colonial education is traceable to the eleventh century. Education in these regions was based upon Quranic teachings, law and ethics. The existence of these traditional forms of education, thus, serves to refute notions held by some in the West that *no* education existed in Africa before the introduction of formal Western education (Antwi 1992).

## **Educational expansion in Ghana 1500-1899**

The introduction of Western influenced formal education in Ghana dates back to the late fifteenth century, and to two towns: Elmina and Cape Coast, both of which are located along the southern coast of Ghana. The first school was established in Elmina Castle, which later played an integral role in determining Ghana's political economy (Yankson 2001). In 1711 and 1745 additional institutions were established at Cape Coast. The latter was founded by Phillip Quaque, who eventually became the first African to be ordained in the Church of England (St Clair 2006).

During the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Africa underwent a 'series of far reaching revolutions' (Adu-Boahen 1987:1). On the eve of colonial imposition, much optimism existed about the future of the continent, particularly for those believing in European notions of progress. This optimism was a result of the emergence of what Adu-Boahen described as a 'new', 'modern' Africa. Underpinning these revolutions were economic developments, such as the abolition of slavery, an institution the Africa's external economy had been heavily dependent upon (Adu-Boahen 1987). Instead, slavery was replaced by the trade in goods.

A further component of Africa's 'modernization' (Adu-Boahen 1987:2) was experimentation in the field of governmental constitution. Such changes were partly a result of the growing number of educated Africans, who insisted upon participating in the development of the administration in their respective countries. Whereas in Eastern and Southern Africa these changes contributed to tensions between the emerging educated elites and the ruling aristocracy, who preferred to maintain their original traditions, in Western Africa these two factions were keen to establish a working partnership (Adu-Boahen 1987). The Fante Confederation of Ghana, for example, which was established in 1871, stipulated that

educated 'elites' would assist the King as treasurers and secretaries and in the formation of ministries. An additional prerequisite was that the educated elite would spearhead education for all. Hence the aim would be:

to erect school-houses and to establish schools for the education of all children within the confederation area and to obtain the service of efficient school masters (Adu-Boahen 1987: 15).

National schools were to be established in each district under the Confederation and these schools aimed to provide children aged between eight and fourteen with a combination of literary education and vocational and practical skills, such as agriculture, masonry and joinery. In turn, these skills would help individuals secure careers in these fields. The Fante King would be responsible for providing children with educational materials and for ensuring that children attended the schools.

The Confederation was considered as 'progressive' by the Fante population, particularly in light of the importance it attached to education, including that of females. The provision of education for girls was considered necessary to ensure that Ghana possessed 'good intelligent mothers to support their offspring' (Casely-Hayford 1970:187). In the early 1900s, the importance of female education was reiterated by other noted educationalists such as Kwegyir Aggrey, who pointed out that:

if you educate a man, you educate a whole person; however, if you educate a woman, you educate the whole family. (in Obeng 2002:21).

Arguably, however, colonial education also shaped, and to an extent restricted, women's futures by limiting curriculums in girls' schools to home economics and domestic sciences. This echoed approaches adopted in Western countries, and challenges the idea that Western

education *could* provide opportunities for *all*, when in reality women faced limitations in terms of what they could achieve professionally (Gardinier 1974, Curtifelli 1983, Fafunwa and Aisiku 1982 all in Obeng 2002).

Attempts were also made during this period, to ensure that Christianity was adopted across Ghana and other parts of Africa. At the start of the nineteenth century, however, it was mainly confined to the coastal regions, and just three missionary educational institutions existed in West Africa. By the late 1800s, a larger number of missionary schools had been instated in inland regions, which corresponded with an increase in the amount of West African converts to Christianity (Adu-Boahen 1987).

The emergence of missionary educated elites also led to changes in the existing social structure, which originally consisted of those who belonged to the royal lineage and peasants. These changes also emphasised the separation between the educated literates and the rest of Ghanaian society, which contributed to what has been described as the ‘production of two worlds’ (Mc Williams and Kwamena-Poh 1975:34).

It appears that Ghana’s educational situation differed to those in other African countries, in that at the start of the nineteenth century, the growth in the number of schools was not solely a result of missionary influence, as The African Company of Merchants and the British Crown played a crucial role in educational development and provision. The Crown Authorities financed a number of Ghanaian government schools, and eventually, these institutions coincided with the development of new missionary schools. Thus in Ghana, a ‘dual’ system of education existed. Interestingly, this preceded a similar system established in Britain in 1870 (Foster 1965).

Amongst certain Ghanaian tribes, notably the Ashantis, the Christian missionaries’ plans for educational expansion initially met with opposition. Although the missionaries, who had

settled in the Ashanti regions during the 1840s, were optimistic about their interactions with the locals, tribal traditionalists mistrusted the missionaries' eagerness to implement Western education and to establish schools in the Ashanti Kingdom. In 1842 for example, requests were made by the Wesleyans to open a school in Kumasi, but as the King was illiterate, tribal elders felt it inappropriate and disrespectful for children to be more educated than the King (Wilks 1975). Given the emphasis on respect for elders and those in authority, and that the notion of a younger person possessing more knowledge than these figures has always been 'alien' to West African culture, the stance of the tribal elders was not surprising. There were additional concerns that the establishment of a school would contribute to political unrest and rebellion (Foster 1965).

Traditional courtly education, which was restricted to those in the King's high office, who would eventually assume positions of authority, was the only form of learning deemed suitable by the traditionalists. This type of education was based on an understanding of 'moral, legal and ethical codes which had been laid down by the King' (Wilks 1975:344) and this further explains why missionaries made limited progress under the Ashanti ruling elite.

This conflict between the missionaries who sought to impose Christianity and a European education and the Ashanti traditionalists who believed that this would 'destroy indigenous education patterns' and 'ignore the local needs and traditions' (Altbach 1971 in Ashcroft *et al.* 1995:453) can be understood in relation to Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony'. Although, like Marx, Gramsci sought to understand reasons behind the continuing existence of capitalism he was somewhat critical of Marx's explanation of power relations, which focused upon the domination of the ruling class over subordinate and lower classes. Instead, Gramsci proposed that it was necessary to consider the way in which ideological control operated. Ideological and political control, he suggested, may take two forms: domination, which includes physical coercion, and hegemony, which filters through society in an inconspicuous

manner and eventually impacts upon the values and attitudes of individuals. Hegemony serves to maintain power relations in an inconspicuous way by influencing individuals' values and attitudes, so that ideas and attitudes of those in a position of power appear to be simply the natural order of things. Gramsci further maintained that aspects of power are evident in the super structure, which can be divided into two sections:

One that can be called civil society, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called private and that of political society, or the state. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of hegemony which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of direct domination or command exercised through the state or juridical government. (Gramsci 1971:12).

In order to remove the hegemony of the ruling group, Gramsci pointed out that a 'counter-hegemony' needed to be established, which would specifically focus upon ideological struggles. The initial rejection of the missionary agenda might be considered as the Ashanti traditionalists' creation of a 'counter-hegemony'. At the same time, it could be argued that the Ashantis traditional systems also represented a form of hegemony, which they sought to protect by rejecting the missionary agenda. Whether or not the traditional systems are viewed as hegemony or counter-hegemony, it is evident that the appearance of missionary education led to an ideological struggle regarding the structure and beliefs of Ashanti society.

Towards the mid-1800s, however, there appeared to be a slight attitudinal shift, as policies around education were being re-thought by the Ashanti King's Council. It was recognised that literate individuals were required for the new administration and, as few Ashantis were educated, greater educational provision would become necessary. Administrative reforms taking place during this period led to the institution of practical and vocational education, the aim of which was to prepare individuals for specific careers, as was the case with the Fante

Constitution. The introduction of vocational and literary education amongst the Ashantis also underlies the growing links between the Ashanti Kingdom and Europe, which was further enhanced by an enthusiasm for European knowledge amongst some Ashantis. This ‘thirst’ for knowledge eventually led to members of the Ashanti royal family being sent to Britain and other parts of Europe for their education, indicating that the presence of Ghanaian students in Britain is a longstanding phenomenon.

Despite the King’s support of a Western education for his children, traditionalists and elders continued to express disapproval. These concerns were reinforced by the fact that it would reduce the number of skilled and educated Ashantis remaining in Ghana. To alleviate this situation, Wesleyan and Basel Missionaries were eventually allowed to develop educational institutions in Kumasi, where children would be taught through a European academic curriculum. Once again, the idea of an academic curriculum met with opposition from the Ashanti traditionalists, since it was perceived to involve the inculcation of cultural values that were far removed from those already established, indicating that the hegemonic struggle between the Ashantis and the Europeans was ongoing and multifaceted.

It appears that the activities of the Christian missionaries greatly (and sometimes negatively) impacted upon the attitudes of Africans, particularly those who had received a missionary education, since some felt ‘contemptuous of their own traditional institutions and their own traditional religion’ (Adu-Boahen 1987:16). Attitudes such as these were reinforced by a system of schooling and a curriculum which inculcated the belief that original traditions were inferior (Ellis 1978). Missionaries also recognised that African traditions, music and social activities, were closely entwined and concerns arose that traditions such as these would interfere with the teaching of the Christian faith. Therefore, these cultural elements were prohibited from school curriculums. Instead, many Ghanaian children were ‘trained to be citizens of *minority Christian* [my emphasis] communities, rather than of the community as a

whole' (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975:34) and this replaced traditional citizenship training, which was considered to be 'bulwark of Satan' (ibid).

In later years, however, a number of elites who had been schooled under the European system became resentful of what they saw as a 'condemnation of everything African' (Adu-Boahen 1987:19). They eventually challenged these notions through 'an intellectual revolution', which emphasised African contributions to science, history and political nationalist movements. The political activism of this generation provided the foundations for future Ghanaian nationalists, including Kwame Nkrumah, who played a lead role in overthrowing colonial rule in Ghana in 1957.

While criticisms levelled at the missionaries for their dismissal of African traditions are justified, it must also be acknowledged that without their involvement the education system may not have been as extensively developed. By the 1930s, for example, primary schools had been established within the majority of African countries, and by the late 1940s, university education was available across many parts of Africa (Akurang-Parry 2007).

From the late-nineteenth century onwards there was a 'growth in enthusiasm for education and educational expansion' (Ellis 1978:11) amongst Ghanaians and West Africans. Individuals gradually recognised the importance of a formal education, mainly because of the opportunities that it enabled. They were also increasingly motivated by the examples of those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, who had been able to achieve. Formalised Western education and schools soon became the 'gateway to new occupational categories' (Foster 1965:79) and a method of obtaining social mobility. This contrasted with previous eras where respect and 'high standing', particularly amongst tribes such as the Ashanti and Fante, was traditionally dependent upon age and ascribed status (Sarbah 1904, Fortes 1950).

Ghanaians also seemed to have internalised the value of drive and achievement and saw it as essential for occupational advancement and social mobility. In many respects, the attitudes of this particular generation resonated with Weber's thesis of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1899). Here, Weber maintained that the evolution of capitalism is attributable to the Protestant, or more specifically Calvinist religious movement. Calvinists believed in the notion of predestination, that is, God's prior determination that some individuals would be granted salvation whereas others would not. Thus, the damnation or salvation of individuals was not dependent upon their actions, rather, it was the result of God's will. As a result, Calvinists became concerned about their salvation, and sought socio-economic success. Although this would not alter their preordained destiny, success was seen as a sign that they were one of the chosen. Since self-indulgence was not considered a favourable attribute, Calvinists also opted to live frugally. Income generated as a result of their socio-economic pursuits and their frugality was therefore invested in business endeavours. For Weber, this formed the basis of the Protestant Work Ethic and the expansion of capitalism across Europe.

While Weber's notion has been widely acclaimed and influential, notably within the social sciences, his theory failed to acknowledge that the Protestant Ethic and Christianity is not the sole prerequisite to economic prosperity, as there is evidence of non-Christian, yet affluent nations, for example, Japan (Kilcullen 1996). Furthermore, while Weber links the notion of the work ethic to Calvinism, a similar work ethic was prevalent amongst other Christian groups, including Catholics, which he failed to recognise. In relation to Ghana and other West African countries, arguably, the spread of Christianity reinforced an already existing work ethic, resulting in an increase in the number of well educated and prosperous individuals. A significant number of educated Africans emerged during that period, the majority of whom came from West African countries (Adu-Boahen 1987). Ghana and

Nigeria produced a considerable number of medical doctors, lawyers, journalists and civil servants and it could be argued that the prestige that West Africans have historically attached to these careers may have originated during this era, and the fact that few individuals were able to enter into these professions due to the high level of education that was required. However, those who were able to achieve in these areas were venerated by others especially since they were part of the small educated 'elite' that emerged (Sarbah 1904).

The number of clerical and vocational occupations also rose, which coincided with the economic development of coastal areas, creating further stratification within occupational structures. Advocates of vocational education saw it as an opportunity to develop a prosperous agricultural economy in a colony which would continue to have 'essentially agricultural communities' (Foster 1965:58). While many Ghanaian parents encouraged their children towards vocational education as it was regarded as enhancing opportunities for social mobility, emphasis on this form of education was also criticised for limiting the aspirations of Africans. It may be argued that if greater importance had been attached to alternative forms of education, for example academic and technical education, the ambitions of both parents and children would have been broadened beyond vocational qualifications and careers. With time, however, there was a move towards 'academic' education, although questions were soon raised about its feasibility as will be discussed in the following section.

### **Educational expansion in Ghana from 1900-1957**

In the decade prior to the First World War the Ghanaian government experienced a period of considerable economic prosperity, which enabled financial independence from Britain. Much of the spare money which became available was invested in education (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975). Educationalists also resumed debates concerning the benefits and shortcomings of a predominantly vocational education in place of more academic or

‘bookish’ education (Foster 1965, Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975) and the overall consensus was that a return to a more balanced, ‘less bookish’, more vocational education was necessary.

A criticism levelled at colonial academic education during this period was that it produced a ‘glut’ of ‘pen and paper pushers’ (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975:49) and fewer individuals skilled in agricultural and other fields. However, the overabundance of ‘pen and paper pushers’ was the result of previous notions that an academic education would lead to white collar careers with higher salaries and long term economic security.

In line with the view that education should take a more technical and vocational direction, new government trade schools were opened during the 1920s, although in later years, it was recognised that the demand for technical workers and craftsmen was extremely limited. Moreover, it appeared that those trained in such areas were often restricted to those specific careers, as they did not possess the skills and training to be able to consider alternatives (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975).

During this period there were few government secondary schools. Even though additional institutions had been opened between 1913 and 1919 the numbers were not commensurate with the student demand, partly because some institutions could accommodate only a limited number of students. Furthermore, many teachers resigned on the grounds of inadequate pay and working conditions. Teachers who continued to work were understandably dissatisfied with their working conditions and thus did the absolute minimum required of their positions, which added to the decline in educational standards.

Towards the end of the war, however, a new leader, Governor Guiggberg was newly instated in Ghana. Guiggberg’s primary aim was to improve the educational system so it would enhance the likelihood of ‘material and moral progress’ (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh

1975:54). Although Guiggsberg focused on the future of the Ghanaian education system he recognised the importance of reviewing the past and analysing strengths and weaknesses of previous educational policies. An outcome of this was the establishment of key educational principles, such as continual, uninterrupted education of a high standard that would increase opportunities for university entrance. Furthermore, given the problems concerning educational standards and retention of teachers, Guiggsberg was also keen to raise their status and income.

Despite Guiggsberg's intentions, the growth in the number of secondary schools between 1920 and 1940 was slow and once again the provision of schools was inadequate compared to the number of students. The need for schools also varied across regions, which created an uneven demand for education. For example, the cocoa boom in central and southern regions increased farmers' disposable incomes that could be used for children's education. This led to a greater demand for education amongst families located in those areas. Contrastingly, amongst the Northerners there was a general lack of support for educational expansion therefore many schools in this region were closed, although this was one of few regions where free schooling was provided (Foster 1965).

Most countries worldwide experienced economic decline during the 1930s and the Ghanaian economy was no exception. The government was therefore forced to retrench on public expenditure, which had long-term implications for most areas including education. As McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975:66) note:

many of the shortcomings of our present school systems can be traced back to these years moreover that although the schools were not the only sufferers, but as education is concerned with the future generation, cuts made there have more far reaching effects than elsewhere.

Nevertheless, despite the spending cuts, education was still in great demand. During the 1940s, a further upsurge in the number of students enrolling in institutions across Ghana was evident. These schools were primarily oriented towards academic education as opposed to vocational learning. However, it appeared that a combination of predominantly academic curriculums, and the 'stagnant' economy, that was a legacy from the 1930s, culminated in higher levels of unemployment than in previous years, which led to questions about whether an academic education actually served to enhance employment opportunities in Ghana (Foster 1965).

In 1951, the government sought to increase facilities for primary, secondary and technical education through what was known as the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951. Under 'The Plan' more money was to be invested in schools, especially at primary level, and children were to receive free education. By 1957, the majority of children from all regions, including the North, which had always been a concern to the government and educationalists, were attending schools (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975). In addition, the number of teachers increased and they were paid higher salaries than previously, although in order to improve standards, salary increments were made to reflect performance. More universities were opened, as the government was keen to ensure that higher education was 'available to all Ghanaians who were capable of benefitting from it' (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 1975:112). A further aspect of 'The Plan' was a renewed interest in technical and vocational education. This was partly an attempt to reject earlier notions that technical education was of little use and offered few opportunities.

Although the economic situation in Ghana improved marginally, due to post-war prosperity, problems still existed. In the late 1950s nearly half of the population was unemployed. Furthermore, those who worked were mainly to be found in subsistence industries. Fewer were employed in administration, or as apprentices (Foster 1965). The level of growth in the

number of clerical or white-collar jobs was extremely slow and opportunities within the occupational sector were limited, which contrasted with other employment areas. Yet, compared with the private sector, opportunities within the public sector were greater, especially as Ghana and other West African countries approached independence (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972).

It was, nevertheless, becoming apparent that private and public sector jobs required a formal and academically oriented education, rather than vocational one. The growing link between work and education explains the predilection of many Ghanaians for an ‘exaggerated concern with pieces of paper’ (Foster 1965:183), which is a preoccupation with numerous certificates demonstrating their qualifications. This also partly explains why Ghanaians and other West Africans pursued qualifications in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s. I will return to a more detailed discussion of Ghanaian educational migration to Britain shortly.

### **The family as a vehicle to Western ideas of educational achievement**

Family attitudes and support are integral to educational success. As Ghanney (2007) showed in her study of the effects of home environments on the educational achievement of primary school pupils in Winneba, Ghana, family support and guidance are often considered more important than the parents’ own educational achievements in influencing the success of children. Although there is a paucity of case studies that have examined familial attitudes to education in Ghana during the colonial era, Foster’s research implies that Ghanaian parents were cognisant of future socio-economic advantages that were associated with a Western education. Therefore, parents were adamant that their children should take up these opportunities.

Research by Foster (1965), Adu-Boahen (1987), Sarbah (1904) and others focused explicitly on the effects of education on social ‘elites’ including royalty and those who had achieved

social mobility through receiving a missionary education. However, less attention has been given to the impacts of educational expansion on ordinary families, that is, those who were not from prestigious backgrounds. There is little knowledge about how these families *internalised* the importance of education as a social value and subsequently socialised their children to achieve academically.

In order to examine this further, I draw upon Functionalist theory, specifically, Durkheim's (1933) analysis of value transmission, and also Parson's (1951) model of socialisation. Functionalism or more specifically Structural-Functionalism was regarded as one of the most influential forms of Sociology in America and Western Europe between 1930 and 1970. Parsons, in particular aimed to provide insight into the establishment of social order despite the chaos resulting from group and individual activity. His works included empirical studies concerning the family which inspired later functionalist studies in this area.

Several shortcomings have been identified with the functionalist approach. The individual is regarded as part of a collectivity which assumed 'obligations of performance in a concrete interaction system normatively regulated in terms of common values and norms sanctioned by these common values' (Parsons 1961:42). Schultz (1972) was critical of this idea, as it suggests that it is the social system, which dictates the individual's action, and negates the individual's subjectivity and autonomy. There is, effectively a failure to acknowledge how individuals' choices are made according to their unique biographies (Lazar 1998) and the power relations which exist in the establishment of consensus and order (Hamilton 1992). Nevertheless, despite the limitations of the Functionalist approach, it is useful in understanding how education has become central in the reproduction of the social order and values in Ghana.

Within his theory, Durkheim emphasised the importance of value transmission for social stability. He maintained that knowledge about culture, values and skills is transmitted through socialisation. These factors, combined, facilitate the 'smooth' functioning of society. Moreover, established institutions, including political, economic, education and the family, underpin a functioning social system and each element is essential to the functioning of society. In his work, *Moral Education* (1962), Durkheim reiterated the importance of the education system in the instilment of social norms and values amongst individuals in society, since it plays an essential role in enabling children to learn the rules of society and to become 'social beings'.

The operation of the social system is likened by Functionalism to that of the human body in which each individual part works in relation to others in order to maintain the individual's health (Ballantyne and Spade 2007). The 'interdependence' between the various elements of the system also ensures that it is integrated and operates effectively. In order to maintain this and to enable social cohesion, shared values or consensus are also necessary. An example of 'interdependency' within the social system and how it operates can be found in Ballantyne and Spade's study of West African societies. They showed that within this context, value transmission and education and children's skills development was a result of 'interdependency' between the education system and the family, most especially elders.

Talcott Parsons (1951) further developed Durkheim's theory by analyzing the interactions between the social system and individual experiences. He maintained that the social system plays an influential role in the behaviour of individuals in the sense that it operates from the 'top down', and shapes social values. These social values are then translated into acts. In applying this to the situation of Ghanaians, it was recognised that with a formal education, socio-economic success was possible, although hard work as an 'act' was an essential part of achieving. Like Durkheim, Parsons acknowledged that it is through socialisation that

‘collective consciousness’ or shared ideas and values are integrated within individuals’ mindsets. Furthermore, the family is central to the socialisation process, since their role is to ensure that the child learns to comply with the expectations of the social system. This idea is exemplified in Ellis’ (1978) observation of the child in West African societies, in which she observes that socialisation was mainly through ‘negative sanctions rather than positive reinforcement’ (Ellis 1978: 48). Such methods were considered necessary in ensuring that children fulfilled key social expectations, such as developing a strong work ethic and conformity. ‘Negative sanctions’ included physical punishment and/or verbal abuse, both of which could take place in the presence of others. Punishment meted out publicly was regarded as a control mechanism, as, in communal societies such as Ghana, individuals ‘felt keenly about being disgraced in front of others’ (Ellis 1978:49).

Findings from a study conducted in Ghanaian schools can be used to illustrate how some children saw the benefits of strict socialisation. Ellis (1968) surveyed 350 adolescents based in Ghana’s capital, Accra, which suggested that the majority saw it as ‘absolutely wrong’ to raise questions about the actions of their parents and other elders (Ellis 1968 cited in Ellis 1978). Moreover, strict socialisation and punishment was considered an essential element of good parenting, and ensured that children were disciplined. In turn, this discipline could be applied in developing a strong work ethic, which was necessary for schooling. As Ellis observed:

Education is taken very seriously there [in West Africa]. This emphasis on earnest application may be illustrated by the comments of a nursery teacher on a four year old child. She said he was not working hard enough and that, if he did not make greater efforts, he would not be successful in the future (Ellis 1978:51).

Similarities can be drawn between this form of socialization, which appeared to be adopted by Ghanaians and other West Africans, and Baumrind's (1966) description of 'authoritarian' parenting styles, which as discussed in chapter 1, represents an element of her 'Typology of Parenting' model. To briefly recap, 'authoritarian' parents emphasise the importance of obedience and respect from their children. As a method of maintaining discipline and respect, punitive measures, which may involve physical punishment and other methods of negative reinforcement, are used. The inculcation of a work ethic which stems from parents' expectation that children undertake household tasks at an early age is also a characteristic of 'authoritarian' parenting. I return to a discussion of links between Baumrind's parenting styles and academic and socio-emotional outcomes for the second generation in the following chapter.

### **Education and the collectivity**

A defining feature of Ghanaian and other West African societies was (and in some parts still is) communal life, in which, 'the individual has counted for little and where the welfare of one is always thought to be subordinate to the general good' (Ellis 1978:6). The concept of autonomy, which emphasises individual choice and happiness and has been considered as essential to the individual's wellbeing within many Western societies, 'has little place and indeed is counter valued' (Ellis 1978:7) by Ghanaians and West Africans. Rather, it was regarded as a 'challenge' to existing traditions and authority and as a threat to the fabric of communal life. Moreover, seniority and kinship was also integral to life amongst West Africans, as it 'ensured loyalty, co-operation, mutual help and mutual tolerance', and 'guarantees obedience to authority' (Fadipe 1970:118). For West Africans 'kin' refers to immediate and distant relations and often includes those from neighbouring home towns who fall within a similar age bracket.

This depiction of communal life in Ghana and other West African countries resonates with Durkheim's (1933) notion of 'Mechanical Solidarity' and with Tonnies' (1923) concept of 'Gemeinschaft', both of which were applied in the description of life in pre-industrial societies. Tonnies' and Durkheim's concepts have been influential within community studies and in urban Sociology, including for example their use by the Chicago School in the 1920s to analyse distinctions between rural and urban life in America. These concepts have been criticised, however, because of their 'idealisation' of communal life, and the failure to acknowledge problems (e.g strained relationships) that may arise from the limited privacy resulting from this lifestyle. Nevertheless, these concepts are useful in describing many facets of communal life in Ghana, for example the collective approach to education and social mobility.

'Mechanical solidarity' as a concept refers to communal societies where emphasis was placed on homogeneity and close relationships. Central to 'Mechanical Solidarity' is what Durkheim described as a 'conscience collective', which consists of shared values, beliefs and goals, common notions about what constitutes suitable behaviour, and conformity. Through socialisation the child learns to conform and religion and the family act as agents of social control. Like 'Mechanical Solidarity', the characteristics of 'Gemeinschaft' include interdependence amongst those within the group and governance by a homogenous culture. Values and morals were also transmitted through religion and the family and, in most cases, members of the community were related by blood or marriage.

In Tonnies' words Gemeinschaft is evident when:

Every such relationship represents unity in plurality and plurality in unity. It consists of assistance, relief, services, which are transmitted back and forth from one party to another and are to be considered as expressions of wills and their forces. The group which is formed through this positive type of relationship is called an association, when conceived of as a being which acts as a unit inwardly and

outwardly. The relationship itself and also the resulting association, is conceived of either as real or organic life this is the essential characteristic of the Gemeinschaft (community). (Tonnie 2002:33)

In contrast, a key characteristic of Gesellschaft, is superficial relationships that are transitory and ever changing. Such relationships are based upon self-interest and what individuals can gain from each other. In a similar vein, 'Organic Solidarity' describes how the transition from close-knit, homogeneous relationships within pre-industrial societies had been replaced by heterogeneity and individualism. Furthermore, social control, which was traditionally situated within the family and the church, became the responsibility of the law and the state. Gesellschaft and 'Organic Solidarity' represent Durkheim and Tonnie's characterisations of industrial societies.

The 'assistance, relief and services' provided by the collectivity is evident in the group oriented approach to education adopted amongst Ghanaians. As Ellis (1978:11) points out: 'education is not a matter of personal success. The success of an individual is a result of others' support'. An example of communal educational support is financial assistance, that is, provision of school fees and/or educational materials for children. Even though attempts were made to ensure that *all* children received the resources necessary for a formal education, in some instances, individuals who were perceived as having the greatest potential to achieve received educational investment and if possible they were sent to study abroad. Although set in Eastern Nigeria, Achebe's (1960) novel *No Longer at Ease*, exemplifies how this process operated. The collectivity, known as the 'Progressive Union of Umuofia' recognized the necessity of being able to navigate the colonial system. Therefore they pooled their financial resources, in order to send Okonkwo, the main protagonist in the novel, to England to study law.

While Ghanaian and West African society may be understood through the frameworks of ‘Mechanical Solidarity’ and ‘Gemeinschaft’, this notion of the collectivity should not be overly idealised. Just as these concepts have been criticised as idealisations of communal life, so too it would be simplistic to ignore the tensions that communalism creates in Ghana. In particular, as I will discuss later in this chapter, while Ghanaians are supported by the society as a whole there is an expectation of returned support, either financial or through assisting later migrants. Those students who travelled abroad were thus under enormous pressure and those who failed often remained in Britain in order to avoid having to face the family. While Tonnies’ and Durkheim’s theories are useful in understanding Ghanaian life, this should not obscure the problems with the theory, nor the problems evident in Ghanaian communal life.

Nevertheless, a further example of ‘assistance relief and services’ is the existence of kinship fostering, which is a traditional and long established practice amongst West Africans. As Bledsoe *et al.* (1988) have pointed out:

One of the most striking features of rural West African families is that the costs of raising families are rarely borne exclusively by the biological parents. Rather, they are shared by many people through the extended family and other social networks. (Bledsoe *et al.* 1988:627 in Hegar and Sciannpieco 1999 :20).

Kinship fostering, as used within the West African context differs from Western notions of fostering. As Biggs (1978) explains, in Britain and other Western countries fostering of children often occurs as a result of intervention from authorities in response to familial crises, especially those in which the child is at risk of danger. Examples of danger include situations where the child may be experiencing physical or sexual abuse within the family. While West Africans have used fostering in similar situations, as Castles (1996:193 in Hegar and Sciannpieco 2004:24) suggested, ‘it was not always perceived to be associated with families

that are in some ways disjointed or dysfunctional'. Rather, kinship fostering was regarded as a 'normal response to a need for help in looking after their children' (Biggs 1978:75) and as a recognised method of enhancing children's life chances. The latter is particularly true for those born into poorer families (Hashim 2005), (I will return to this point shortly). Ester Goody (1982) also acknowledges the differences between the two forms of fostering and labels them accordingly: she distinguishes between fostering that which is adopted in response to familial problems, which she refers to as '*crisis*' fostering, and approaches used in West Africa, which she calls '*purposive fostering*'.

Goody (1972) provides a historical overview of fostering practices in Ghana during the early 1900s. In doing so, she showed that the primary objective of fostering in this context is the provision of schooling and/or entrance into a specific trade and to improve children's educational and professional opportunities, especially since it was recognised that kinship fostering facilitated establishment of vital contacts for children's future careers. Amongst the Muslims in the northern territories of Ghana for example, it was perceived that fostering would enhance the child's likelihood of obtaining a prestigious position within the religious system, and for those situated in other parts of Ghana, a white-collar occupation.

Traditionally, fostering was gendered, as males were often apprenticed to become skilled in vocational areas and a primary aim was to ensure that sons followed the occupations of their fathers. This is not to say that females were not fostered, because, as Goody noted, women were:

always eager to have extra girls in the household to help with the endless chores of carrying water from the stream, collecting firewood from the forest, bringing food from the farm or market, cooking, washing clothes and looking after children (Goody 1972:160).

More recent evidence indicates that Ghanaians and West Africans continue to regard fostering as a method of 'educational investment' (Akresh 2003 in Hashim 2005:22). In Benin and Burkina Faso, for example, large numbers of children from Benin are fostered for these reasons (Pilon 2003, Alber 2004). Hashim (2005) observed that while educational fostering is still prevalent in Ghana, the main purpose was to fill a 'labour deficit within a household' (Hashim 2005:23). Thus the child's contribution to the household was regarded as a form of repayment for the provision of school fees and access to schooling that was an improvement upon what was available in their original localities.

Despite the fact that children were fostered at an early age, it was understood that frequent contact between biological parents and children was vital, since this link represents an essential part of identity formation. Nevertheless, custody issues can arise with fostering arrangements, particularly when foster parents are recognised as the 'real, potent and preferred parents' (Alber 2004:27 in Bowie 2004:122). This may lead to a disregard of the child's biological parents. Nevertheless, as Stapleton (1978) noted, spending time away from biological parents, through fostering, is an 'important and recognised' element of a child's socialisation experience in West Africa.

In the context of fostering practices 'back home', many West African migrants arriving in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s also 'developed a pattern of sending their children to foster homes as a substitute for the care of the extended family' (Stapleton 1978:65) as a way of balancing work, education and childcare. These issues and their ramifications for children are discussed in greater detail shortly and also in chapter 4.

## **Ghanaians and educational migration to Britain**

The 'quest' or 'deep seated ambition' (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972:157) of Ghanaians and other West Africans for a British or Western Education has been referred to as 'seeking the golden fleece' (Stapleton 1978:56). This phrase refers to the challenges individuals encounter in order to achieve their goals, thus, migrants who succeeded in spite of problems were considered to have obtained the 'golden fleece'.

During the 1960s, Ghana was a 'major country of emigration' (Toro and Alicea 2004:199). Ghanaians who opted to migrate to Britain did so in the context of colonial and administrative links. It also appeared that these migrants 'held a conviction that life and training in England held some extra virtue' (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972:158). Indeed, West African respondents from Muir-Groothues and Goody's study reported that they felt that 'in education, the best is thought to be English' (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972: 168). In attempting to explain the origins of this notion, they proposed that it was due to the fact that the majority of those in a position of power during the colonial era were either English or had received an English or Western education, in their countries of origin or abroad. It was also a commonly held belief amongst many Ghanaians and West Africans that those educated in England were more skilled than those who had studied at home. As a result, 'been-tos', which is a term used to refer to those who had studied in England and had returned 'home', were more likely to obtain:

preference in competition for a job, and in promotion, and in any case received added respect from colleagues, friends and kin. (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972:158)

During the 1960s, however, a greater array of courses became available in Ghanaian and West African universities, which were often the equivalent of those offered in British and

American institutions. As a result, the need to travel to the West for education should have been lessened. In addition, those who travelled abroad for training in areas such as medicine and law would often find, on their return home, that it became necessary to re-train or undertake further courses so as to become versed in the medical and legal situations in their respective countries (Muir-Groothues and Goody 1972). Nevertheless, this did not appear to reduce the number of students arriving in Britain.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the Ghanaian population in England was relatively small. Reports suggest that the figure was approximately 11,000 (ONS 2001, Arthur 2008). The 'peak' period of Ghanaian migration to Britain was during the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s partly because of political and economic instability and as a result of the expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria due to socio-economic downturn (Arthur 2008).

Ghanaian migrants predominantly settled in London (Arthur 2008, ONS 2001), although a considerable number also chose other key locations such as Birmingham, Leicester and Manchester. Their decision to reside in these areas was influenced by the fact that they were recognised metropolitan centres, with greater educational and socio-economic opportunities (Arthur 2008). Migrants also generally preferred locations with large Black populations or, better still, areas which contained Ghanaian migrants from similar regions in Ghana. The decision to settle in areas with a notable Black or Ghanaian population is also attributable to the psychological and economic support and security which is provided as a result of living with others from a similar background (Arthur 2008). In order to enhance this support further, and to maintain similar forms of solidarity which was enjoyed in Ghana, migrants established home town associations or unions and maintained contact through other institutions, including work and church. As with many migrants, for example Asian groups (see for example studies by Anwar 1979, Bhatti 1999), the Ghanaian migrants who arrived in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, however, regarded themselves as temporary migrants,

who worked and studied part-time, and intended to return home. The migrants' objective was to spend a maximum of five years obtaining graduate and postgraduate qualifications and, if possible, work experience in their chosen fields, before returning to Ghana. This was referred to as 'the five year plan'. However, as shown in the following section, numerous problems meant that many migrants did not return 'home' as expected.

### **Difficulties faced by Ghanaian student migrants in Britain**

Although a number of Ghanaian and West African students fared well in Britain and achieved their goals, a significant proportion did not as a result of numerous problems. As Stapleton (1978:58) pointed out, the problems were 'so interwoven' that analysing them individually becomes difficult. However, she proposes that they can be summarised under broad headings: education, finance, accommodation, racial discrimination, care of children and marriage. While each issue that Stapleton identifies is central to understanding the migrants' experiences, I will focus upon what appeared to be the most problematic. These include: education, racism and childcare.

#### ***Education in Britain***

The general perception amongst migrants was that a British education would lead to improved socio-economic opportunities in Ghana. During the 1960s and 70s the number of Ghanaian institutions increased, which led to the availability of a greater range of courses. Nevertheless, at the time, Stapleton noted that:

it is far easier to obtain a place at one of our (British) universities than at one of the West African universities which can be seen as the equivalent to Oxbridge. (Stapleton 1978:58)

Therefore, overseas students were being encouraged to take up places in colleges ‘starting new courses and needing to build up numbers’ (ibid). It became apparent, however, that migrant students often received inadequate guidance about which courses would best facilitate their aspirations. Difficulties associated with adapting to new learning styles, which contrasted with approaches used in Ghana, posed an additional problem for migrants. As Stapleton pointed out, the educational background of West African students:

will almost have placed a great deal of emphasis on rote learning and their studies will have been carefully directed so that the more independent approach they will find in Britain can be very confusing (Stapleton 1978:59).

My father was one of the many migrants who struggled to adapt to the English approaches to education and this inevitably undermined his confidence in his academic abilities. These difficulties were compounded by his struggle to balance work with studies. Due to extreme financial hardship which resulted from having inadequate savings, my father was forced to work long hours in a factory which significantly reduced the amount of time for his academic pursuits. The financial difficulties that my father faced, however, continues to be something that is common to many non-British students. Mac an Ghail (1998), for example, in his study of Irish migrants to Birmingham found that a number of Irish students had come to England to study for similar reasons to West Africans and others from non EU countries. However, because there were no grants available from their governments, and they failed to qualify for British government grants, several reported having to work long hours, which, as in my father’s case, proved detrimental to their studies. Yet this is not a problem which is specific to overseas students either. Bowl (2001) and Bhopal (2010) describe how ‘non-traditional’ ‘home’ students (e.g mature women, ethnic minority and those from working-class backgrounds) also often experience financial difficulties at university, which again results in paid work taking precedence over studies or high levels of debt, as a result of

having to obtain student loans. As was the case when my father was a student, such problems, mean that large numbers of 'home' and overseas students are unable to complete their studies.

In her study entitled *Asian Women in Higher Education* Bhopal (2010) describes a number of ways in which the family and local Asian communities provided valuable support for the women's education. This ranged from allowing the respondents time away from familial responsibilities to study, and in many cases financial support. While many of the women appreciated the benefits of this help, they also recognized some of the difficulties, including feeling the pressure to succeed as a way of upholding the family name within the community etc. Similarly, the educational advancement of African students was, as discussed, very much dependent upon the support of the collectivity in Ghana. Therefore, students who had received financial and emotional support from the community often felt an overwhelming amount of pressure to succeed for similar reasons to those highlighted in Bhopal's study and even more so if their families were reliant upon them for financial support in return. Such pressures and expectations experienced by students can be demonstrated through the following excerpt from a West African student, referred to by Ellis:

The letter first brought me the congratulations of my father and all my family on my success. Then my father went on to remind me that I had now started to climb a palm tree which was high and difficult to climb; that many were watching my progress and much ripe fruit was awaiting me on the successful conclusion of my climb. He ended with the warning that if I failed to reach the top, those watching me both living and dead, would curse me for failing them (Ellis 1978:11).

The educational problems outlined above often contributed to the failure of Ghanaian and West African students. Therefore, failure, combined with the pressures exerted by the family, meant that some students resorted to lying about why their return 'home' had been delayed, and/or creating 'false pictures of success' (Stapleton 1978:60). Some migrants came to

believe that, as a result of these problems, remaining in Britain would be preferable to returning to Ghana. In an article entitled *Minimal Selves*, Stuart Hall (1987) explains how, in the late-modern era, individuals arriving in Britain from other countries often discuss their intent to return 'home' to their countries of origin. Muhammad Anwar (1979) has described this as the 'myth of return'. Yet when migrants are asked to provide more detail about their return, no definite answer is forthcoming, which, for Hall, indicates that migration is, for many a 'one way trip'. This is applicable to those Ghanaian migrants who did not return 'home' as it was probably the combination of educational failure and the subliminal knowledge that they were not going home which prevented them from doing so. In addition, Hall suggests that the decision to migrate is not always for education or socio-economic purposes as the migrants maintain. Rather, it may be to escape the pressure of family. As many Ghanaian migrants felt pressure to provide filial support to family members 'back home' as 'repayment' for the help that they received as children, it might also be argued that another reason for leaving their families was to escape this pressure. However, attempting to escape for this reason often proved fruitless, since family 'back home' continued to expect financial support from migrants, particularly as they assumed that the migrants' socio-economic positions had improved as they lived in Britain.

### ***Racism and discrimination***

Prior to the implementation of the Race Relations Acts in 1965 and 1968, which 'outlawed racial discrimination in jobs, housing and sales of goods and services' (Hines 1998: 38), the prevalence of overt racial prejudice in England in the early 1960s meant that it was not uncommon for migrants to encounter restrictions in entering public areas. Finding accommodation, for example, often proved difficult for migrants. A flat which may initially have been available to rent suddenly became occupied once landlords saw that prospective tenants were Black. As a result, migrants often found themselves living in multi-occupancy

tenancies with very little space. It must, however, be acknowledged that this was not an experience that was specific to Blacks, because as Mac an Ghaill (1998, 1999) and others have shown, Irish migrants faced similar issues, even though they constitute one of, if not the largest ethnic group in Britain. Little acknowledgement had been given to their experiences, in view of dominant assumptions that they had integrated unproblematically into English culture.

In a conversation with my father in 2005, about his migration experience, he recalled arriving in 1961, seeking accommodation and finding notices on doors explicitly stating that Blacks and Irish would not be welcome. As a result, he faced no other option but to live for two years in a single room with his uncle in Bayswater. The situation was made more difficult by the fact that my father has always found it difficult to rely upon other people, despite coming from a large extended family. This, in conjunction with living with his uncle under cramped conditions for this length of time, would have undoubtedly impacted upon him emotionally.

When my mother arrived in Britain in June 1962 this appeared to be a welcome respite for my father and the difficult circumstances that he faced. However, they soon recognized that London was not conducive to their needs. The cost of living was extremely high and sharing a single room with another person was not suitable for a young couple. Therefore, they decided to move to the large regional city in the Midlands since it was cheaper and several other members of my father's family lived there. On arriving in the city, my parents settled in a neighbourhood, which was in some respects the equivalent of Bayswater, as it was heavily populated by Black migrants living in multiple occupancy tenancies. Therefore, once again, they found themselves living in a shared house with several others, although they were 'lucky' enough to have a slightly larger room, which they did not have to share with anyone else.

While racial discrimination is generally considered as a 'White on Black' phenomenon (Stapleton 1978, Mac an Ghail 1999), it is also important to recognise the inter-ethnic tensions that existed between Ghanaian/West African migrants and other Black groups, notably West Indians, which often compounded the problems that migrants from both backgrounds experienced. Benson (1981:39) points out that within British society, it is often the case that Blacks are considered as a homogenous group, although, amongst themselves the picture is quite different:

West Indians and West Africans, for example are indistinguishable from each other to many English eyes, and are often to be found living in the same houses and shopping in the same shops, nevertheless felt themselves to be very different people.

Franz Fanon has highlighted the problems associated with failing to recognize differences between Black groups:

to lump all black people together deprives them of all individuality of expression. It puts them under the obligation of matching the idea that people have of them. By doing this, people would assume that all blacks agree on certain things, although there is a source of conflict between groups (Fanon 1952:37).

Benson (1981) considered the problem of tensions between Black groups in a study entitled *Ambiguous Ethnicity*, in some detail. The focus of the research was intermarriage between West African and African-Caribbean males and White-British females living in Brixton during the early 1970s. In the context of the research on interracial marriage, Benson also comments on conflicts between West Africans and West Indians. At the time, many West African and African-Caribbean migrants invested in property and became landlords. In view of overt 'White on Black' discrimination, Black migrants often gravitated towards these tenancies, although this situation appeared to exacerbate tensions between the two groups and

often made living conditions unbearable as the negative stereotypes each believed about the other came to the fore. For example, Benson reports how West Indians perceived West Africans as being 'secretive' and 'funny people', whereas, West Africans regarded West Indians as 'inherently untrustworthy' and 'inferior'. According to a Nigerian respondent in Benson's research, the supposed 'inferiority' of West Indians resulted from their 'lack of cultural heritage' (Benson 1981:98) and cultural displacement through slavery.

Franz Fanon (1952), in *Towards the African Revolution*, also examined the relationship between Africans and West Indians. In doing so, he asserts that the tension between these groups originates from the opinion of West Indians that they were 'culturally superior' to Africans. This notion of 'cultural superiority' was, according to Fanon, attributable to the West Indians' belief that they were culturally closer to Europeans than were the Africans. The fact that they were free and able to vote reinforced their belief in their 'superior' position. Africans were viewed by West Indians, in terms of prevailing stereotypes, for example, as being 'backwards' and as 'fetish makers'. Interestingly, however, Fanon observes that in later years, when West Indians were discriminated against by Whites, they questioned their identities, and attempted to ingratiate themselves with the African culture, that they had previously denigrated. As Fanon (1952:39) put it: 'they came over humbly and suppliant with their hearts full of hope, and wanted to identify themselves as African'. In light of their previous maltreatment at the hands of the West Indians, however, the Africans were understandably resentful, and consequently rejected them.

In revisiting this issue Mwakikgale (2007) maintains that, in the present day context, mutual stereotypes used by West Africans and West Indians to define each other arise from competition for the limited jobs and resources that are available to minority ethnic groups in Britain. As a result, attempts to 'defend their separate identities' and secure resources for

their respective groups serves to reinforce the existing prejudices and hostility between the two groups.

### *Childcare*

As I have already explained, in the Ghanaian and West African context, kinship fostering was a much used method of childcare provision. Due to the absence of extended family networks in England to provide childcare, and the limited number of available nursery places, West African migrants continued this practice in Britain and sent their children to White-British foster homes while they studied and worked (Stapleton 1978, Muir Groothues and Goody 1972). Fostering enabled migrants to avoid the ‘stresses involved in taking the child to a minder every day’ (Stapleton 1978:60) and was considered more economically viable than daily minders. Furthermore, migrants often maintained that sending their children to live with English families would facilitate their social integration and English language skills, both of which are necessary for later academic and social success. It was issues such as these, amongst others, which contributed to my parents’ decision to send my elder siblings to foster homes once they had settled in the large regional city. On their arrival in the city, my mother was to begin her nursing training and my father sought to continue his education, by enrolling on an electronics course in a local college. My father seemed to be progressing, when in late 1963 my mother announced that she was pregnant, which could have been problematic given their plans. Nevertheless, a ‘mere’ pregnancy did not prevent her from continuing with what she had set out to do. Arguably, this attitude was a clear reflection of her upbringing in an environment where pregnancy was not seen as a hindrance to women working. As Muir-Groothues and Goody observed of West African women:

a woman assumes that she will work in addition to looking after the household and the children (Muir-Groothues and Goody1972:167).

Thus, once my mother had given birth it was agreed that she would continue her nursing training and my father would continue with his course. In many ways, my parents felt that there were few options but to foster the baby when it was born. Although my father's relatives were in the large regional city at the time, they were in a similar situation to my parents, as they were also attempting to balance childcare and training. Moreover, unlike in Ghana, there were no other relatives who could care for my brother or our cousins who were also toddlers. Although some parents in this situation sent their children 'back home' to be raised with their grandparents or other members of the extended family, my parents were adamant that their children would remain in Britain with them for several reasons. Firstly, it would have been difficult to visit Ghana on a regular basis, since they were still in training and did not have the time and financial means. At least with foster parents, this would not be an issue, as they could select people who lived in or near the large. Secondly, my parents wanted us to benefit from the free and 'high quality' education that was available to us in England. As a consequence, my brother was given to foster parents in an area nearby, shortly after his birth. My sister who was born three years later, was also fostered to the same family and both remained there for some years.

### ***Fostering and implications for the British-Ghanaian and West African child***

Since fostering is an accepted part of life within West African culture, separation from biological parents was regarded as having few lasting socio-emotional effects upon children, although arguably, this perception may be attributed to the lesser importance attached to Western psychological approaches to children's wellbeing within this context (Ellis 1978). In contrast, in Western Europe and North America, where children's psychological and emotional outcomes are considered important, separation of children from their biological

parents during their formative years is often viewed as detrimental to their future psychological health (see for example Bowlby 1950, Montgomery 2008).

As Biggs (1978) shows, in reference to social work case studies that she was involved in, a number of West African children who had been fostered into English families not only experienced psychological problems as a result of separation from their biological parents but also in terms of their sense of cultural identity. In many cases minority ethnic children living within a Western context may already feel ambivalent about their cultural identities (Parke and Buriel 1998 in Siegler, Deloache and Eisenberg 2006). However, for the generation of Black children who experienced their childhood in 1960s and 70s Britain, when racial tensions were at their peak, and had been further intensified by political and social events such as moral panics that arose from Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech, and the supposedly high prevalence of 'Black muggers' (see for example Hall 1978) this sense of uncertainty about their identity may arguably have been more acute. Writing at the time, Milner (1975:146) commented that 'the inferior image of his race makes for difficulties in identification with a despised and rejected group'.

For many Black children such as those fostered in English families, and in a position where there were few others that they could identify with culturally, this situation was possibly exacerbated. These difficulties may have been reinforced by the fact that they may have attempted to identify culturally with their White foster families, although in reality they could not become a full member of White society. Yet, because children had spent a number of their formative years away from their African families, many felt unable to identify with them either. This represents the situation for the three fostered respondents within my sample, and their recollections of these experiences are highlighted in the next chapter. As a result of her dealings with children in this situation, Biggs (1978:89) observed that several opted 'for denying their Blackness' although 'the stress and anxiety in that course are manifest in the

tension with which they discuss it'. To illustrate this, she refers to a case of a British-Nigerian child in a foster home who rejected his African identity and who clearly would have preferred to have been White-English and 'a natural member of his foster family' (Biggs *ibid*). As Milner (1975) and later Biggs (1978) also pointed out, children in such situations were also more susceptible to long-term socio-emotional problems including anxiety and low self esteem.

It must be acknowledged, however, that while children who have been separated from their biological parents may well face traumas, the likelihood of this happening also depends upon a range of factors including the quality of care that is provided by those looking after them. Biggs (1978), for example, refers to cases, where caregivers had provided fostered children with excellent emotional support. Furthermore, caregivers often sought to ensure that positive relationships between themselves, the children and their biological parents were developed and maintained. For fostered children, frequent contact with biological families is necessary for their sense of identity (Alber 2004) especially within the foster home, and in Britain, generally, as they were part of a minority. As a result of these factors, on returning to the home of their African families, the cultural transition was often less problematic.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the history of education in Ghana and the experience of Ghanaian student migrants in Britain in the 1960s to the 1980s. Formal education in Ghana was regarded by many as a 'manifestation of European power' (Foster 1965:165) and as an attempt to impose a new cultural hegemony over that which already existed, which led to initial resistance against it by Ghanaian cultural groups, notably the Ashantis and those based in northern territories. Nevertheless, it appears that this new hegemony began to 'take hold' as Ghanaians gravitated towards obtaining a formal education

because it promised long-term future benefits such as socio-economic mobility, wealth and prestige. The influence of this new hegemony was also evident in the attitudes of some individuals felt a level of contempt towards their traditional cultures. Yet other Ghanaians and West Africans soon began to recognise shortcomings in the education provided by the Europeans, especially in so far as African cultural traditions were denigrated. Thus, attempts were made to introduce alternative knowledge, which acknowledged the achievements of Africans.

In later years, further widespread problems were identified with the education system, notably, the inadequate preparation of school leavers for the labour market and that in some areas the number of schools was incommensurate with student numbers. However, continued social emphasis was placed upon the importance of formal, Westernised education and the benefits for those who were successful and, in light of this, the family and community sought to ensure that children took their education seriously.

Arguably, these factors, combined, influenced the decision by large numbers of Ghanaians from the 1960s onwards to migrate to Britain and other Western countries in order to further their education. Yet as Stapleton (1978:56) observed, ‘the deep seated ambition to travel to England for further studies nourished by so much hope [and] their actual experiences, if they do succeed in reaching this country are so far from this dream’.

Although many migrants were successful in their educational and professional pursuits, a large number were besieged by problems which prevented them from achieving as hoped. Speaking of adults in France, who had failed to achieve educationally and socio-economically, Bourdieu noted that many were affected by ‘a long term sufferance from the gaps between their accomplishments and their parental expectations that they could no longer satisfy or repudiate’ (Bourdieu 1999:508). This observation may be applied to many

Ghanaian migrants, who opted to remain in Britain, due to their failure to achieve and to meet familial expectations 'back home'. An outcome of the migrants' 'long term sufferances', in conjunction with the emphasis on educational achievement that characterised Ghanaian culture, was the determination to ensure that their British born children succeeded where they had not.

The following chapter presents an analysis of interviews conducted with 25 second generation British-Ghanaians, who reflect and comment on their childhoods in light of this parental emphasis upon academic and professional achievement. Focusing on the parent-child relationships, the next chapter will examine the parenting style in each case and the effects of the style on the respondents.

## Chapter 4 Findings: Parent-child relationships

Black parents of all social classes tend to be more authoritarian than white parents in their disciplinary techniques, including the use of physical punishment. There is a consensus amongst researchers that Black parents use strict, rather harsh techniques in order to socialise obedience to authority in their children.

*Cheetham and Stewart*

In previous chapters, prevailing notions about the academic and professional attainment levels of Black (including African) students have been discussed. Much of the existing research seemed to imply that Black students are generally underachieving. However, a number of shortcomings were identified with the research in this area. Firstly, the achievement of African-Caribbean students was often taken to represent that of *all* other Black students. In addition, when other Black groups, such as Africans, are considered, there is a tendency to ‘lump’ them together. However, when results were analysed according to the specific nation that students originate from the findings began to challenge the dominant notion that *all* Africans or all Blacks are underachievers.

Equally disturbing is the way in which studies aiming to explain the ‘low’ achievement levels of Black students are wont to level criticism at Black families, particularly their use of ‘authoritarian’ parenting methods which are considered detrimental to children’s socio-emotional development and academic outcomes. A considerable proportion of this research, however, fails to recognise that many Black parents are achievement oriented and have high aspirations for their children. Furthermore, not *all* Black parents are ‘authoritarian’ in their approach. While some do adopt ‘authoritarian’ methods in socialising their children, this may partly be due to the influence of their own upbringing in cultures where this approach is prevalent. Although various problems have been associated with ‘authoritarian’ approaches

to parenting, little acknowledgement is given to those elements, notably the emphasis upon discipline and a work ethic, which can be beneficial in relation to academic attainment. As discussed in Chapter 3, the ‘authoritarian’ emphasis on discipline and work was prevalent in the Ghanaian and West African context. As a result, many Ghanaian migrants maintained this approach with their children who were raised in Britain so as to facilitate their achievements.

The following chapter considers the respondents’ depictions of their parent-child relationships, socialisation experiences and the impact that this has had on their academic and professional achievements. Their descriptions of their parent-child relationships are considered in relation to Baumrind’s (1966, 1991) discussion of ‘authoritarian’ and ‘authoritative’ methods. Interestingly, the research respondents’ recollections often echoed Baumrind’s analysis. In addition, the chapter includes a brief summary of the characteristics of the 25 British-Ghanaians respondents that are relevant to the research. I also incorporate parts of my own autobiography, since, in some ways, this corresponds with the experiences of the respondents.

### **Characteristics of research respondents**

The research I undertook involved interviews with 25 high achieving second generation Ghanaians, which focused on their childhood experiences, parent-child relationships educational and vocational achievements and their socio-economic socio-emotional outcomes. The table below describes the characteristics of respondents in terms of age, gender, highest educational qualification, current occupation, socio-economic backgrounds (parents’ occupations) age, and familial situations, that is, whether they were fostered or remained with biological parents and also the nature of their parent-child relationships. For those who were fostered, ‘parent-child’ relationships are based upon those with their

biological parents, since they spent a greater number of years living with them than in their foster homes.

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Sex	Highest educational Qualification	Current Occupation	Familial Situation	Parents' Occupation
Selorm	49	M	MSc- Architectural design	Senior Architect	Fostered  Authoritarian (Biological parents)	<b>Father:</b> Local Government Manager  <b>Mother:</b> Nursing: Ward Sister
Araba	47	F	Midwifery Qualification	Midwife	Fostered  Authoritarian (Biological parents)	<b>Father:</b> Factory Worker  <b>Mother:</b> Factory Worker
Kwamena	47	M	BSc Psychology	Mental Health Clinical Manager	Fostered  Authoritarian (Biological parents)	<b>Father:</b> Factory Worker  <b>Mother:</b> Business Owner
Akosua	46	F	MA Psychology	Freelance writer	Home  Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Educationalist  <b>Mother:</b> Elderly Care Worker
Maa	42	F	BA Hons Performing Arts	Performing Arts/Comedienne	Home  Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Civil Servant  <b>Mother:</b> Administrator
Yaw	41	M	MSc Architecture	Architect	Home  Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Optician <b>Mother:</b> Nurse
Esi	38	F	BA Hons Journalism	Journalist	Home  Authoritative	<b>Father and Mother:</b> Care Home Owners

Effie	38	F	BA Hons Fashion Working towards MA	Fashion designer	Home Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Lecturer <b>Mother:</b> Senior Administrator
Efua	37	F	PhD Sociology and Business	Senior Academic	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Senior Accountant <b>Mother:</b> Housewife
Ama	35	F	MSc Computer Science	Systems Analyst	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Engineer <b>Mother:</b> Business Owner
Pokuua	35	F	MSc Graphic Design	Graphic Designer	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Teacher <b>Mother:</b> Social Worker
Akua	35	F	Masters in Business Administration	Senior Marketing Manager	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Medical Consultant <b>Mother:</b> Financial Auditor
Abena	33	F	6 A-C GCSEs	Unemployed	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Factory worker <b>Mother:</b> Unemployed
Sarpongmaa	34	F	MSc Human Resource Management	Human Resources Manager	Attended Boarding School Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Anaesthetist <b>Mother:</b> Nurse- now housewife
Gyan	34	M	MA LLM Enrolled on PhD	Youth Justice worker	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Accountant <b>Mother:</b> Business Owner

Ekow	33	M	MSc Graphic Design	Graphic Designer	Home Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Senior Community Worker <b>Mother:</b> Legal secretary
Kwasi	32	M	None	Property Developer and Business owner	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Factory Worker <b>Mother:</b> Factory Worker
Kwaku	29	M	BA Hons Business Management	Senior Civil Servant	Boarding school Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Senior Lecturer <b>Mother:</b> Bio Chemist
Koby	27	M	BA Hons Politics and Economics	Enrolled on full time Masters Degree	Home Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Royal Marine Officer <b>Mother:</b> Teacher
Naana	27	F	BSc Economics BSc Architecture BSc Engineering	Seeking employment as an architect	Home Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Business Owner <b>Mother:</b> Unemployed
Gifty	27	F	BSc Nursing	Nurse	Home Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Factory worker <b>Mother:</b> Factory Worker
Frempong	26	M	BSc Physiotherapy	Sports Physiotherapy	Home Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> NHS Manager <b>Mother:</b> Midwife

Afrakoma	24	F	BA Hons European Languages and Business	Training as Ambassador	Home  Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Doctor  <b>Mother:</b> Housewife
Adjoa	22	F	BA Hons Sociology	Administrator for local charity/ Ghanaian media events writer	Home  Authoritative	<b>Father:</b> Bus Driver  <b>Mother:</b> Caterer
Kofi	21	M	BA Hons Media Graphics	Seeking employment in media graphics	Home  Authoritarian	<b>Father:</b> Administrator  <b>Mother:</b> Elderly care worker

The majority (15) of the participants in this study were female and 10 were male. Just over a quarter (6) of the participants were born between 1960 and 1969. Of these, half spent their formative years in White English or Irish foster homes in the large regional city or in greater London between 1963 and 1974. Eleven respondents were born between 1970 and 1978. Each member of the latter cohort spent all of their early years at home with their biological parents, although two attended boarding schools between the ages of 11 and 18. The remaining eight respondents were born between 1980 and 1989 and all grew up at home with their biological parents.

The majority of the interviewees (24) had achieved five or more GCSE's or O'Levels at grade A-C. Similarly, a large number (20) had also passed two or more A'Levels. Just over three quarters (19) had obtained undergraduate degrees, and several of the youngest respondents are in the final year of their degree courses, or have recently completed them. Ten of the respondents hold Masters' degrees, or are in the process of completing them. One interviewee has recently defended a PhD, and another is working towards the completion

stages. Of the respondents who work, a large number (19) are in professional occupations such as architecture, human resource management, physiotherapy, graphic designing, IT, academia, nursing/midwifery and the creative industries (i.e. comedy and theatre) and entrepreneurship. One, however, is unemployed.

The familial class backgrounds of the participants are somewhat varied, despite the fact that all of their parents came to Britain as students. Seventeen of the respondents come from middle-class backgrounds, with parents who work in fields such as accounting, engineering, medicine, optometry, senior management and administration and nursing and health care ownership. Six are from lower middle-class backgrounds, with one parent in a professional career, such as nursing or academia and another in semi-skilled or manual occupations, including care work. The parents of the remaining three participants work in manual/semi skilled professions, including bus driving and catering.

### **Authoritarian parent-child relationships**

Of the 25 respondents, 14 described the relationships with their parents in ways which broadly corresponded with Baumrind's depiction of the 'authoritarian' approach. The respondents indicated that key features of their parent child-relationships included emotional 'distance' between themselves and their parents, as well as limited 'verbal give and take', discipline, negative reinforcement, occasional physical punishment, and strong emphasis upon a work ethic.

### ***Emotional 'distance' between parents and children***

Many respondents recalled some of the difficulties associated with attempting to 'engage' openly with their parents:

Efua: I found it a real struggle to address any issues, and you know to generally talk to my parents about anything, and to be honest, they

never really spoke to me about stuff on a deeper level. I don't think African...well Ghanaian parents do. Yeah, parents would ask how you were doing at school, but never about the general self or wellbeing. The education bit was all that seemed to matter, and even then it seemed like there was an underlying something that if you gave the wrong answer there would be trouble.

Kofi: When I was really young, I used to spend a lot of time with my dad. He taught me how to ride a bike, but as I got older, the communication just ceased. We barely spoke. Back then, we never spoke for more than 10-15 minutes a day. Things I had to learn, I had to learn them on my own. The only communication that took place was when it seemed that I was going against my dad. It was all about correction. I couldn't talk to him about girlfriends. There was just no input whatsoever. But what you did hear is about the people you should not be hanging around with. It'd be like (Kofi adopts a Ghanaian accent) 'Heh Kofi why are you always wid dat Kingsley?' You must know the score. If it wasn't that, it was the chores. Basically it's like I said the manner of the relationship was correction!

As discussed in chapter 2, I attended meetings with the Ghana Youth Association (GYA), so as to obtain participants for the research. I was invited by the group leader to attend a debate which focused specifically upon relationships between the migrants and British-born children during which participants raised similar concerns about being unable to have general conversations and discuss problems with their parents. In response to this, some members of the first generation, who were present at the debate, questioned the need for such open relationships between themselves and their children. In their view, children born and raised in Britain had fewer concerns to contend with than those experiencing their childhoods in Ghana. As one member of the panel explained, many young adults in Ghana experienced difficulties finding resources for mere survival and in obtaining a good education which would ensure their future wellbeing. In contrast, those born and raised in Britain were perceived as having greater access to social, economic and academic and professional opportunities. Therefore, it was perceived that the main priority for the second generation

should be their future plans, especially those relating to professional and educational achievements, rather than discussions with their parents about personal issues.

Arguably, the limited 'open engagement' between British born children and their parents reflects the nature of parent-child relationships in Ghana and West Africa, where there is a 'call for respect and restraint'. (Rabain-Jamain 1994:160). Furthermore, as Ellis explains 'close interaction with children at their level' is not a key feature within the African cultural context, partly because they are not taken as a 'starting point' as is the case in Britain and other Western countries. She adds that 'in a society where age is venerated, and individuality unstressed, this is not likely to occur' (Ellis 1978:51).

In his reflection upon his life experiences within Nigerian and West African culture, Omon (2003) reiterates Ellis and Rabain-Jamain's observations concerning the nature of parent-child relationships. Furthermore, he makes comparisons between Nigerian/West African approaches to parenting and those adopted within many Western countries. Omon concludes that within Western contexts, many parent-child relationships are not too dissimilar to friendships in which there is a far deeper level of conversational and emotional engagement. He observes that Western parents are more likely to facilitate and participate in leisure activities with their children, since doing so is considered to be an integral and necessary aspect of their socio-emotional development.

Another significant issue that emerged in the interviews and group discussions associated with the current research was intergenerational and cultural difference in relation to what constitutes 'needs' and 'wellbeing'. These variations can be understood in reference to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. Maslow identified five 'needs systems' which underpin human behaviour and he maintained that once individuals fulfil the most basic of needs they focus upon achieving the next level until the highest order of needs is met. The categories of

'needs' include the following: *physiological*: food water, rest etc; *safety*: security, stability freedom from fear, anxiety, threats; *belongingness and love*: which includes intimacy, and love from friends, family and partners; *self-esteem*, which refers to achievement, attention and appreciation and *self-actualisation*, which is the fulfilment of one's potential, self acceptance, self-direction, and a 'richness of emotional responses' (Maslow 1954 in Zastrow and Kirst 2009:449). As the GYA panel member explained, for the first generation in Ghana, initially, the main priorities were to ensure that physiological needs were met and then, through educational and professional achievement, they could gradually work towards the next levels of safety, security and stability.

However, as a result of being born and raised in a context where there is an abundance of the 'basics', and greater opportunities for advancement, the second generation already possess the first two levels of needs. Arguably for them, there is greater emphasis upon the highest level of needs, thus, self-esteem (i.e. through positive relationships with their significant others, including parents) and self-actualisation become more important. The second generation have also been raised in a time and location in which there is more focus upon the individual and reflexivity, or *understanding the self*, so that to make appropriate life choices is a key value, which further explains why their focus is more likely to be on self actualisation, development of self esteem and emotional growth (Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000).

### ***Fostered respondents***

During the 1960s and 1970s considerable numbers of British-West African children were fostered to White families across Britain. Ellis (1971 in Olusanya and Hobes 2000), for example indicates that an estimated 5000 British-West African children lived in foster homes, and in 1975-6 this figure had increased to 7,500 (Ellis 1978). In many cases, children were fostered at birth or shortly afterwards, although as Biggs (1978) notes from her case studies

and also from anecdotal evidence from British-Africans, it was not uncommon for children to enter foster homes at much later ages and often without prior warning or consideration of their views. Moreover, in some cases when individuals were becoming acclimatised to their new homes, they were removed, again unexpectedly to live with their biological family, and in some cases 'back home' to West Africa which exacerbated the emotional trauma faced by these children. This situation is illustrated by Adeniran (2007) in her fictional novel entitled *Imagine This*. Adeniran tells the story of Lola and Adebola Ogunwale, two British-Nigerian children who were born and raised in London during the 1970s. After the disappearance of their mother, they are reunited with their father who eventually takes them to live with his family in Nigeria. Lola not only experiences trauma as a result of moving away from London and the foster family that she had loved, and difficulties in adapting to an unfamiliar cultural situation, but in addition she is soon separated from her father and her brother who she saw as the 'constant' in her life. Her tragic situation is soon compounded by the death of her beloved brother.

Brannen *et al.* (2000) in their work entitled *Connecting Children Care and Family Life in Later Childhood* considers children's experiences of 'crisis' fostering and understandings of care and their views of changes in family life. As explained in chapter 3, 'crisis' fostering is used in situations of familial breakdown or when children are considered to be in danger if they remain with their biological parents (Goody 1982).

In Brannen *et al's*. study, children aged between 11-12 years reflected on how they dealt with dramatic changes in which family life, such as when parents divorced or were unable to care for them, which led to their entry into foster families/care. Some respondents who were taken into care or foster home, reported similar experiences to many British-West African children, in that they received no prior indication that this would happen, which was a traumatic

experience for the respondents that often resulted in a sense of powerlessness (Brannen *et al.* 2000:85).

Over the years, however, as Brannen *et al.* point out, legal developments such as the Children's Act of 1989 gave children 'a statutory right to be consulted when decisions are made about them' (Brannen *et al.* 2000:191) and this applies in relation to their care situations. In contrast, British-West African children fostered during the 1960s and 70s had little opportunity to be involved such decisions, partly because there was less legal regulation of these processes. In addition, as discussed, the nature of parent-child relationships within many West African families was such that children did not make decisions about matters pertaining to their wellbeing because parents/elders were perceived as knowing what was best for the child (Ellis 1978).

Given that the respondents in the current study were sent to their foster families at very early ages, this was a further reason why they could not voice their opinions on the matter. Nevertheless, they described how, as they became older, they were given no option to remain with their foster parents despite being happy. Their parents, however, were insistent upon their return to their biological families, and Araba described this experience as being 'a real wrench'. Similarly, Selorm spoke of the trauma of having to leave the only place where he had felt 'truly loved'. On their return home, it appeared that these respondents experienced many problems in re-adapting to their new environment. One the main difficulties was the differing nature of parent-child relationships.

The three respondents who were fostered experienced moving from an environment where open interactions and emotional engagement between themselves and their foster parents existed, to one where such relationships did not appear to be encouraged. Kwamena and Araba recall their experiences of the transition:

Kwamena: I can only describe the relationship with my dad as poor. It just didn't work out at all. I never knew him, and he doesn't really know me. When I came home, it was like...the only time he ever spoke to me was to order me about, or to beat me. I tried to get to know him when I was in my teens, but as usual he was closed off.

Araba: I was not close to my biological parents at all. I just couldn't connect with them probably because I did not live with them in my early years. I can also remember the war with my step mum. The age gap between us was really small. I can't say that I love my parents, and I felt a sense of rejection regarding the fostering, and my father did not encourage me to build a relationship with him, ever.

The 'emotional distance' between the fostered respondents and their biological parents may partly be attributed to cultural differences in parenting as discussed earlier. Theories of attachment also suggest the early years are a vital period for the formation of emotional bonds between mothers/parents and children (Barlow *et al.* 2007). All three respondents, however, were fostered between the ages of seven months and one-and-a half years and returned to their biological parents after a period of six or more years. Moreover, during this period, contact between the respondents and their parents was infrequent, which may also have had implications for establishment of emotional bonds between them.

Araba, Selorm and Kwamena's experiences also correspond with British-West African respondents in a study conducted by Peart *et al.* (2005). Their respondents had been fostered at approximately the same time as Araba, Selorm and Kwamena and they had also spent up to seven years in foster care, while receiving few visits from their biological parents. Thus, in all cases, children and parents were virtual strangers to one another. Peart *et al.*'s respondents also described difficulties in terms of establishing emotional attachments and relationships with their biological parents, partly as a result of being separated from them during their

formative years, and also due to the 'closed' and 'restricted' nature of the relationship. For one respondent, these issues meant that she was unable to consider her biological mother and father as her *real* parents.

### ***Discipline***

All respondents (including those who had experienced 'authoritative' parenting) spoke of how discipline was emphasised in their relationships with their parents. For those experiencing 'authoritarian' parent-child relationships, however, this appeared to be another overriding element of their socialisation. Discipline was administered mainly through verbal castigation, although for two of the older respondents, who were fostered, it also frequently involved physical punishment from their biological parents. I return to a discussion of their experiences shortly.

Yaw recalls his parents' approach to discipline:

Yaw: One thing that I recall, and have talked about with several of my Ghanaian bredds (friends) is the fact that you could get bollocked for the smallest of things. I recall getting shouted at for things like my handwriting, not holding a knife and fork properly and woe betide you if you ever got done for misbehaving at school. The telling off was not a small thing either, it was more like...full scale, and I was sometimes called a buffoon or stupid. I never got hit, but the way that we got told off we may as well have done. You were left feeling like you were nothing. I think it was too much and it happened too often.

Pokuaa remembers her own experiences:

There was quite a lot of focus on the things that you hadn't done well, and they would go on and on about it. You never really heard about the good things that you did. I went through stages when they started. Firstly, I questioned whether I was actually in the wrong, then I got angry because I just thought that they were over reacting to something that was so little in the grand scheme of things, and after a while I tuned out. Tuning out was the only way to cope, really.

LOK: What were the things that you were most likely to 'get told' off about?

Pokuaa: It could be anything, the sort of naughtiness which all kids get up to, like maybe talking or playing too loudly, and just messing about. The big one, though, was, as you will know, education. You might be doing badly in a particular subject, it wasn't your strength, but they didn't see that. And they didn't see that going on about it would not necessarily help you to do better.

Pokuaa and Yaw's comments correspond with Ellis's observation that 'a common approach adopted by West African parents is to 'abuse' them verbally, and they are upbraided and 'insulted' in no uncertain terms' (Ellis 1978:49). Another approach adopted by Ghanaian parents was to make comparisons between the respondents and their peers:

Kofi: I was always compared to others as a kid. There was this Nigerian guy called Richard [not his real name], who I was mates with. I was always compared to him, and it was worse when I got demoted at school. You had these classes 1.1 was the highest and 1.3 was the lowest and I got moved down for some and stayed down for three years. I never heard the end of this! All I ever heard from my dad was [again adopting a Ghanaian accent] 'why can't you be like Reechar?' and it sets up false dichotomies...differences between me and him which could have really ruined my self esteem.

Ama: One thing my dad used to do, which I really hated was to compare me to my friends, and if it wasn't that, sometimes, he'd compare me to himself...especially when it came to grades. He'd go 'you got this...well I used to be in the first position in my class for this same subject'. In his mind, it was his way of trying to make me do more but to me it was like a put down. The funny thing is that all my friends who he used to compare me to all went through the same thing at the same time, so we all just used to talk and sometimes laugh about it together.

Araba provides some insights as to why parents adopted this approach:

Araba: I always felt that there was a lack of encouragement, even when it came to our school stuff, yet my dad had all these high expectations of me and my brothers. I think that the reason why this was, was that in Ghana, there is this idea that if you praise and encourage your kids, they'd become too arrogant or something.

However, they think that if they keep nagging and comparing you, this will make you do better. But I don't think that's true, because all kids need is a bit of praise every now and then. It doesn't do to keep putting them down as it may negatively affect how they see themselves in later life. I know it did my brother.

The issue of parents making comparisons between individuals and peers was also a topic of discussion at the Ghana Youth Association. Although many understood the rationale behind their parents actions and some even recognised that those they were compared to could be considered as benchmarks to aspire to in terms of achievement, others highlighted similar potential impacts to those identified by Ama, Araba and Kofi. These possible outcomes can be further understood through the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1996). When an individual receives negative feedback about his or her abilities or personal attributes they may internalise them, even if they are not necessarily accurate, which Merton suggests can then make these negative ideas become true. For example, if a student is informed that they will not succeed, even if this may be a 'groundless conviction', their academic failure may ensue primarily because of 'devoting more time and energy to worry than to study' (Merton 1996:187). Failure would also reinforce the individual's low self-esteem and sense of alienation from his or her peers. Even though some respondents were resentful of their parents' approach and for some this, in conjunction with other factors, contributed to negative self-perception and self-esteem problems at points in their lives, almost all were able to resolve these issues. Furthermore, this did not appear to have a negative impact upon their academic and professional outcomes.

### ***Fostered respondents and physical punishment***

As highlighted in chapter 3, within Ghanaian and West African culture, physical punishment, as an element of strict parenting, was often considered necessary to facilitate positive

behavioural (and academic) outcomes for children. It was widely believed that ‘to spare the rod is to spoil the child’ (Ellis 1978:49), and punishment was likely to entail ‘smacking or slapping’ (Ellis 1978:49). Nevertheless, it was not regarded as harmful to the child’s socio-emotional development. Interestingly, although *all* of the respondents’ parents experienced their childhood in an environment where such an approach was prevalent, few respondents recalled ever receiving smacks or slaps when they were children. Selorm and Kwamena were the only respondents who received physical punishment, which they indicated was a regular occurrence in their formative years. Despite the difficult relationship with her father, Araba indicated that she never experienced any physical punishment from him.

Selorm and Kwamena both spoke of a ‘deep’ resentment towards their fathers as a result of this treatment, especially given that on some occasions it could occur for minor misdemeanours. In order to deal with his situation, Kwamena learned to establish ‘control’ by keeping silent and not responding to his father. Selorm adopted a similar approach, which was influenced by his observation of peers who had received corporal punishment at school. For him, this method was necessary because ‘I wasn’t going to let my father think that he had power over me’. Some years later, however, Selorm felt unable to continue doing this:

Selorm: I left home in my late teens, but shortly before I left, I don’t know if I was letting rip and thinking that I had nothing more to lose, but I began to fight him back.

Remaining emotionless, as a method of exerting power and control over their situations, may be understood as the respondents’ way of demonstrating their masculinity and toughness in the face of such problems. Although it has been suggested that this approach may have negative ramifications for personal and emotional growth, in the sense that it encourages suppression of feelings and may even lead to violence (Hill 2005), Selorm and Kwamena maintained that, because of these experiences, they have refused to countenance any form of

violence within their families or in other settings. Rather, they sought alternative approaches to dealing with conflict. Although Selorm described emotional problems in later life, and at times was uncertain as to how to express his feelings, he sought counselling as a way of dealing with these issues. I return to a further discussion of this in chapter 6 which examines socio-emotional outcomes.

Interestingly, both respondents attributed their experiences mainly to their fathers' senses of personal inadequacy and low self-esteem, as opposed to socialisation approaches learned within the Ghanaian context. Selorm reported that his father experienced considerable racism at work, which he felt that he had to accept without complaint since challenging the situation could jeopardise his job, especially given that he was one of few Blacks working in a management role in local government. Nevertheless, according to Selorm, the racism served to 'dent' his self esteem, so that he vented his frustration on his children, particularly Selorm as the eldest.

Kwamena speculated that his father's problems were based on in his negative perception of his own socio-economic status, in comparison with that of his wife. Kwamena's parents divorced in the early-1970s, and his mother returned to Ghana soon after. There, she became involved in business and generated substantial wealth, whereas his father attempted to continue with his education. Although it was hoped that his father's education would also bring financial dividends for the family, this took longer than originally anticipated, as was the case for many other Ghanaian and West African students. This appeared to exacerbate his frustration, which had ramifications for Kwamena and his siblings.

The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' may be useful in providing some insight into the situation of Selorm's and Kwamena's fathers. 'Hegemonic masculinity' refers to the 'culturally idealised form of masculine character' (Connell 1995:118). This manifests itself

through various roles such as ‘family protector’, ‘father figure’, ‘breadwinner’, employment and occupational achievement. The latter relates to stereotypical assumptions about men’s ‘entitlement’ to a higher status within the workplace. However, for Black males, who have experienced discrimination and racism, and who are more susceptible to unemployment and/or poorly paid jobs, this notion of masculinity may be undermined, particularly when it becomes difficult to fulfil the role of family provider. This may lead to frustration resulting in tensions within a family (St John and Feagin 1998). Kwamena’s father’s frustration may be related to his failure to achieve as expected, resulting in employment as a low-paid manual labourer, which would inevitably have contributed to difficulties in terms of providing for his family, and may have undermined the esteem in which he was held by his relatives ‘back home’. For Selorm’s father, the potential threat of unemployment and possibility of being unable to support the family may also have caused anguish. Arguably, such factors may have fuelled the difficult situation that existed within their families.

### ***Attitudes and effects of ‘negative reinforcement’ as a socialisation technique***

Many studies have highlighted problems associated with ‘negative reinforcement’ as a key element of ‘authoritarian’ parenting. It has been suggested, for example, that it could impair the child’s socio-emotional development and potentially also their academic outcomes (Cramer 2002, Roopnarine and Gielen 2005, Roopnarine *et al* 2006). Drawing upon his own experiences and observations, Kwasi reiterates these arguments:

Kwasi: They [children] are like sponges, they are impressionable, and they'll pick up on what their elders say and do, and if they aren't careful, chances are that if they always heard negative stuff, this could really and truly screw them up emotionally in the long term. I think our parents got it wrong. They didn't introduce any balance, though I do appreciate where my dad was coming from. They did want the best for us, but they just could not do it in a way that we were able to understand.

It has also been argued that emphasis on negative reinforcement, leads to higher levels of anxiety and decreased autonomy (Carter *et al.* 2001). While this may be true for some, it must be acknowledged that the levels of anxiety that an individual experiences will also depend on how they deal with it. Other studies (see for example Maton-Hrabrowski and Grief 1998) have also shown that such approaches facilitated children's independence and autonomy, as they reduced their dependency upon others.

Interestingly, many of the respondents within the 'authoritarian' category reported experiencing 'deep anxiety', particularly during their late teens and into their twenties that lasted for a number of years. However, they were keen to ensure that these problems would not dominate their lives and so they adopted a range of strategies to overcome them. This is discussed further in chapter 6, which deals specifically with the respondents' socio-emotional outcomes.

Other respondents besides Selorm and Kwamena reported that a further effect of an 'authoritarian' approach was a sense of resentment towards their parents:

Ama: This is a bit controversial....but there were times when I felt like I *hated* my father for the way that he dealt with us, but I found little ways of resisting his authority as a way of dealing with it.

Abena: At first I thought that he was right, especially when I was much younger and didn't know any different. In those days I saw my dad as my hero, but when I look back over things like, you know, being forced into doing and redoing subjects I was failing at, so that I could live their dream of becoming something big in Ghana, I can't help feeling angry and resentful. All that time I have wasted.....

These comments are consistent with observations made by Baumrind (1966, 1991), Hoffman (1960 in Grolnick 2002) who note that over emphasis on negative reinforcement, and restrictions in terms of the child's autonomy, (which in Abena's case applied to her academic

choices) can create and reinforce a child's rage and resentment towards parents. It can also lead to 'resistance of parental influence' (Hoffman 1960 in Grolnick 2002:134), as was the case for Ama.

However, as discussed in chapter 3 and in other research (see for example Nsamenang 1994), negative reinforcement is accepted by both children and parents living within the West African context, as a way of ensuring that the child conforms to social expectations. The discipline acquired through this approach to socialisation can then be applied to other aspects of their lives such as their academic and professional pursuits. Interestingly, a number of respondents reported that although they were not completely in favour of receiving negative reinforcement on a regular basis, they nevertheless recognise that it was useful in terms of adopting a focused and disciplined approach to their work. Akua, for example, made the following comments:

Akua: It was quite annoying, frustrating and of course hurtful, because you might have tried so hard with something and everyone else would say it's good, then you come home and be told otherwise, sometimes it's not acknowledged at all. But one thing is that....you, *did* always feel like you should push yourself more, and when you got to...say for example a certain position in your job, you stayed there for a bit, but there was always your dad or mum's voice in the back of your head telling you that it wasn't good enough...In a funny way it drove you on...you felt you needed to do more, which sort of made you think about how you were going to move upwards to the next position. And whatever you did work wise, you made sure you did it to the best of your ability and you stayed till it was done.

Similar outcomes have been reported in studies of African-American families (see for example Carter *et al.* (2001), Ferari (2002), Maton-Hrabrowski and Grief (1998). As with many West Africans, negative reinforcement and emphasis on obedience were key elements of family life. In addition, these approaches were also considered as 'factors associated with

care' (Carter *et al.* 2001: 560). The researchers found that children recognised that strict discipline exercised by their parents was also a way of ensuring that they achieved personal and professional success. These findings also appear to be consistent with Ellis's research (1978) and also with a study of Chinese families, conducted by Chao (1994). Chao observes that 'authoritarian' approaches to parenting are indicative of concern and caring involvement, and that children understood that it was necessary for maintaining harmony within a family and in facilitating children's academic and professional success.

However 'authoritarian' approaches, which have been associated with Black parents (see for example Roopnarine and Gielen 2005) have been 'frowned upon', not only because of the psychological problems or the lack of autonomy associated with it, but due to the fact that it is considered as conflicting with more authoritative styles adopted within the school and the behavioural issues seen as arising from this. On the other hand as Adger *et al.* explain, culture creates 'lenses or frames' for the interpretation of 'means of interactions' (Adger *et al.* 2007:73) and when students and teachers do not share the same 'frame', reactions to each other's behaviour may veer from perceptions that there is something slightly wrong to a 'complete misjudgement of events and participants intentions' (*ibid*). Moreover, they observe that since schools generally reflect values of the middle-class (Adger *et al.* 2007) there is a tendency for teachers to judge behaviour and 'interactional patterns used by cultures other than their own to be deviant rather than being rooted in a different social or cultural tradition and history.' (Adger *et al.* 2007:73) It is such judgements that can 'place students at risk for failure or make them candidates for referral to special education' (Adger *et al.* 2007:73).

While the current research is not advocating the use of 'authoritarian' parenting, not least because of the emotional traumas that may arise from it, it does investigate whether some parents saw it as necessary because of potentially negative effects of racism in broader social contexts, for example in the education system and workplace. Similarly, as some studies (see

for example L'Abate 1998, Lamborn 1996, Carter *et al.* 2001) have shown, emphasis upon achievement and a strong work ethic, which as shown, are characteristics of 'authoritarian' parenting have been regarded as a useful defence against racism and discrimination when these factors acts as a 'barrier to progress' (Winn-Tutwiler 2005:125).

While respondents understood the reasons behind their parents approach, and acknowledged that it was in their best interests, the overall consensus was that positive reinforcement is necessary for children. Positive reinforcement has many benefits, not least in relation to children's general wellbeing and academic achievement. Towards the end of her interview Araba spoke in more detail about her father's aspirations and her responses to them. She described putting greater effort into being the 'class clown' than into her schoolwork. Yet she felt that with more positive encouragement from her parents, she would have focused more on her studies. Nevertheless, this is not to say that Araba did not achieve well as she later went on to become a midwife. I return to the respondents academic and career trajectories in the following chapter.

### **Authoritative parenting**

The remaining respondents described their relationships with their parents in ways which corresponded, in many respects, with Baumrind's description of the 'authoritative' approach. Key elements of this approach highlighted by the respondents included 'open' discussions, emotional support and parental recognition and encouragement of their autonomy, particularly in relation to educational and professional pursuits. Akosua, Koby and Gifty recounted their relationships with their parents:

Akosua: Me and my dad yeah? Well I had a good relationship with him, like I say; I think it was because I was frail, and because I was the youngest.

Koby: Our parents were always there for us. We always exchanged news, though my dad was always at sea, but every six months he'd come back though. It was nice, yeah, really nice.

Gifty: To be honest, after having six sons, I think my dad wanted another daughter. I only ever got really shouted at once for swearing at my dad. Other than that, I used to spend a lot of my time with my parents, I got hugged a lot, and we always used to love doing things together like putting decorations up at Christmas.

Akosua suffers from a chronic potentially life-threatening illness, as does Koby. Gifty also had a very serious illness in her pre-adolescent years. While most parents are protective of their children, arguably, those with ill children seek to provide extra protection and this may reinforce the close bond between them (Ferrell 1996).

In addition to their illnesses, Gifty, Akosua and Koby are last born children and it is commonly perceived that parents are more 'lenient' towards their youngest children (Dunlap 2004). However, this is not to say that 'last borns' do not have their own issues to contend with. If, for example, older siblings have achieved highly, younger siblings may face pressures to do the same, if not better (Toman 1993).

Araba, who incidentally is the elder half-sister of Gifty, provided an additional perspective on experiential differences between younger and older siblings in families such as theirs. She suggested that as younger siblings were born after the migrants had lived in England for a longer period of time they were treated more leniently than older siblings. As the parents had been in Britain for so many years, they may have been able to establish themselves socio-economically, whereas on their arrival, many faced financial struggles, as discussed in chapter 3. These financial pressures can affect the rest of the family and potentially have a damaging effect on parent-child relationships. Araba's analysis here resonates with

Kwamena's insight into his own experiences, in so far as he partly attributes his problems to his father's difficult financial position.

The majority of respondents recognised that their parents sought the best for them and endeavoured to ensure that they avoided 'mistakes' which might jeopardise their futures. While 'authoritarian' parents adopt stricter approaches, which often correspond with their own socialisation experiences, some recipients of 'authoritative' parenting recalled how their parents saw the necessity of being more flexible and 'open' with their children:

Afrakoma: Actually, I have a very good relationship with my parents, well my mum anyway. I can ask her anything about anything. Her own dad was really strict, and she couldn't ask him much, so she wanted to make sure that we didn't experience this. We have an open relationship, and it was good even through our teenage years. I think that she didn't want us to be foolish or make any silly mistakes, so this is why we had such an open relationship.

Akosua, who herself is a parent of three children, and recently became a grandparent, also provides a further explanation as to why 'open' relationships between parents and their children are necessary:

I'm not of the view that kids should be seen and not heard. I also think that parents shouldn't try to be their children's mates. But what I do think is that if there are problems, they should be able to approach their parents though, because if not, then this is when issues come up. I mean my daughter is 20 in April, and my twins are 16, but in their years at school, there are so many kids who have babies. I saw this as a governor, the amount of teenage parents...kids become parents to kids. It's a lack of education on the parent's part they don't explain anything to their kids and then their kids do the same. I also think it's an intergenerational cycle. Then you get the issue of litigiousness...If kids have a minor problem they'll be calling Childline instead of taking it to their parents, and then parents get into trouble for not responding to them.

Drawing from her experiences as an advisor and informal counsellor/mentor to young Ghanaians within her community, Adjoa echoes Akosua's arguments. Over the past few years, within her neighbourhood and through her community work, Adjoa has observed sharp increases in the number of teenage pregnancies amongst British-Ghanaian girls. She has also recognised the escalating level of involvement of second and third generation British-Ghanaians and Africans in gun and knife gangs in both her local area, and other parts of London. She is also aware that these occurrences coincide with concerns highlighted by the Home Office which reiterates the apparent rise in the number of Black Africans engaged in gang related violence in areas with large Black populations.

Akosua and Adjoa suggest that, in some cases, these problems maybe the result of parental 'over control' and limited opportunities for children to openly discuss the issues and problems they may be experiencing with their parents. Again these observations reflect those made by Baumrind (1966) and more recently, Rohner *et al.* (1996 in Roopnarine and Gielen 2005) and Turner and Finkelhor (1996 in Roopnarine and Gielen 2005) who suggest that the more parents attempt to exert extreme control over their child's behaviour (particularly in the adolescent years) the greater the likelihood of children's engagement in anti-social behaviour and participation in other risky activities when they are 'out on their own'.

Referring back to interactions with their respective Ghanaian communities, Akosua, Adjoa, and also Esi, another respondent, all observed that this form of anti-social behaviour can also result from a lack of parental supervision on a regular basis, which is due to the fact that a significant number of Ghanaian parents are spending more time working than being at home with their families. Although the primary concern of these parents is to provide for their children, they may also be saving for other reasons such as investing in property 'back home' so that they can eventually settle there, though for many, these dreams fail to materialise for a variety of reasons. Esi questioned the rationale behind these parents' elaborate preparations to

return home. In her view it was unlikely that children who had spent the majority of their lives in Britain would be able to settle in Ghana, not least because of their lack of familiarity with the culture. Nevertheless, as the respondents pointed out since these parents appeared to be focused upon their 'plans' to return home, less attention was given to their children and their lives. Thus, children were effectively 'neglected'. More worryingly, as Adjoa in particular observed in her role as mentor of young people, parental 'neglect' has often had detrimental impacts upon children's academic achievement and socio-emotional development.

### ***Encouragement and emphasis on autonomy***

Generally, 'authoritative' respondents emphasised the considerable emotional support they received from their parents in most of their endeavours. Gifty, for example recalled how her parents continually provided her with 'the type of encouragement which allowed you to be yourself'. Effie remembered similar experiences:

Effie: When I speak to people like my mate 'A' and her sister, they always talk about how they didn't have that close bond with their parents and that they were *told*, not supported, to do this, that and the other. But see, I had it different. My dad and mum were a bit.....indulgent with all of us, really. They used to just be there if we needed advice about things, but they'd also encourage us to go ahead with what we wanted to do as long as we didn't do any harm to ourselves or anything. Having said that, it's not like they let us run riot, and the discipline was certainly there.

As education represented a major element of their socialisation experiences, many respondents referred to and focused on the ways in which emotional support from their parents affected their academic and professional pursuits:

Afrakoma: My mum was very influential in that way. She believed that we should do our best, so she'd get us leaflets and encouraged us to look on the internet to seek out opportunities. She'd always support

decisions to go for jobs which interested us. So when it came to careers, she was pretty good like that. All of us knew what we wanted, and she encouraged us to go for that

Sarpongmaa: Though my mum was very strict about education, they did actually support us so we could achieve what we wanted to. I remember this situation once, when I was at primary school, and I had this art project. I couldn't really draw that well, so my dad got one of his friends who was an artist to help me out. They always sat with us and helped us with our work too. My dad always said that we *should* get an education, to degree level, but at the end of the day he wasn't about forcing us to go beyond that if we didn't want to, or into careers that we didn't want to go into. The other thing was that we could talk to our parents about what we were going to do. So in that way we were encouraged.

Ekow: They had such a crap time with their own parents about their education, what with my mum having to quit school to look after her siblings and my dad's family not having the money. The thing is that in spite of everything they made it here though, and I think that even though they were adamant that we were going to make it too, they were constructive about how they made this happen.

LOK: Can you elaborate on what you mean about their constructiveness?

Ekow: Well, there wasn't the expectation that you become certain things, like some of my friends' parents had of their kids. My brother wanted to become a chef and to open his own place and he was never told he couldn't. No...instead, they helped him plan towards it, advised him on things like saving, going to the best places to train. Now he's done it and is doing quite well for himself.

Respondents from both categories recognised and understood their parents' aspirations for their academic and professional success. Several also indicated that their parents' ambitions for them were reinforced by the fact that they were born into low socio-economic backgrounds in Ghana where, at the time, opportunities for advancement were somewhat limited. It is evident, however, that 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' parents adopted different approaches in attempting to ensure their children's success. Abena and several other

respondents within the 'authoritarian' category, for example, spoke of how their parents attempted to 'coerce' them into studying or into careers in specific professions, notably law or science, whereas those within the 'authoritative' category appeared to have been encouraged to make their own choices.

Ekow explained how his parents' decision not to pressurise him and his siblings into following particular careers or life choices arose from their own experiences of the pressures associated with attempting to fulfil familial obligations. As he points out:

Ekow: They want us to enjoy the freedom of not having to do things...yeah, work, that we might not even be capable of, to provide for all those family members, even the ones we don't even know, stressing, and maybe even going without ourselves in the process.

Through conversations with his parents and his own observations during his visits to Ghana, Ekow is aware that children often have greater filial responsibilities for their parents than in Britain. He understands that it therefore becomes necessary for Ghanaian children to 'strive to achieve and achieve to provide for their families' as he aptly described it. Ekow's observations correspond with those made by Aboderin (2006) in her analysis of familial support in Ghana. She notes that traditionally, the majority of financial support was offered by children and other members of the younger generation and it was expected that the more money a child earned from their work, the more they should provide for their parents (Aboderin 2006).

The decision of some 'authoritative' parents' to 'enable the child to find and develop their own unique niche' (Cole 2006:204) in relation to their life choices also appeared to be associated with their feelings about the necessity of maintaining a positive, 'flexible' and open relationship with their children, which is possibly connected to the parents' own

(sometimes negative) childhood experiences. Taking Afrakoma's mother as an example, as Afrakoma described, she experienced a 'difficult' relationship with her own parents. By providing support and not exerting 'extreme' control over her children and their decisions, it could be argued that Afrakoma's mother sought to ensure that her relationship with her own parents was not replicated with Afrakoma and her siblings.

Despite being encouraged to make life choices which best reflected their abilities, most respondents in this category recalled how their parents had high expectations of them and their achievements within their chosen areas. These expectations or 'demands', however, did not appear to have any overall negative effects upon their parent-child relationships. Effie's comments encapsulate the experiences of the respondents:

Effie: Though they were laid back about many things, and we were allowed to do what we were best at, we did have to put our backs into it and do well. And of course there was that old Ghanaian chestnut..good behaviour and discipline! But what they did was they just talked *to* us, and not *at* us. Dad just used to go through things with us, and he'd explain *why* you did or didn't do x,y,z. I always thought that it was better that way, and now we all have a good relationship. I use the same approach with my boys.

What Effie describes resonates with another element of the 'authoritative' approach to parenting. In further developing Baumrind's parenting styles, Maccoby and Martin (1983) suggested an additional element to the model, that is, 'parental demandingness', which refers to the frequency of parental supervision of their children's behaviour. It also includes the extent to which parents advocate goal orientated behaviour. They explain that a connection exists between parental 'demandingness' and the child's behaviour and socio-emotional outcomes. When parents are 'demanding' in their expectations, but also provide warmth, support and guidance for their children, as Effie and others indicate they experienced,

children are more likely to adhere to their parents' behavioural expectations, which apparently makes for a positive relationship (Maccoby and Martin 1983).

### **Autobiographical account**

In many ways, the experiences of some of the respondents parallel my own. As a child, there were two ways that my family, particularly my father, referred to me. One was a 'rocket' and the other was 'because why?' The label 'rocket' reflected the fact that I had far too much energy, which was becoming 'difficult' to tame. I was constantly careering around our house, knocking things down as I was going, with the question 'why can't you sit still?' reverberating in my ears. 'Because why?' referred to my constant questioning about why the world was as it was, and my inability, as my father put it, 'to take no for [an] answer'. In Western contexts, my behaviour connotes an inquisitive, bright child. However, these were not necessarily regarded as positive attributes for a Ghanaian child, due to the greater emphasis upon respect for adults. 'Respect' included being quiet in the presence of elders and not questioning them (Ellis 1978).

As a result, it was decided that my behavior had to be curbed, as it was felt that I was becoming 'too much'. In addition, I was starting school in the following year. So although my garrulous, ever questioning nature did not die entirely, I was far more subdued in my behavior as a result of more 'authoritarian' approaches adopted in dealing with it. However, this 'authoritarian' disciplining never involved any physical punishment.

As I became older the 'control' increased as a result of difficult intergenerational relationships between my elder siblings and my parents. Like most in their late-teens, my siblings were 'searching out' their identities. In doing so, they were not engaging in any particularly problematic activities but to many members of elder generations it seemed that they were not conforming to Ghanaian cultural expectations. After a while, they left home to

further their education and training. What ensued, however, was a concern that I would follow in their footsteps and ‘rebel’, which was an inaccurate perception, as I did not want to face the same issues or reactions from the Ghanaian community that my siblings encountered.

During my childhood, I was always finding work to do, such as my ‘writings’. Moreover, as a result of the work ethic that my father instilled in us and the emphasis on academic achievement, I had always worked hard at school and often received good results. In light of this, and as a way of trying to ‘avoid’ trouble, I redoubled my efforts at school. At one stage, however, a teacher advised me that I was working too hard and pointed out that I had adopted a ‘mechanical’ approach to my work. It was also around this period that I had to consider my GCSE options. In line with expectations that I would try and pursue a medical career, I included sciences in my choice, despite not being particularly interested in them. The upshot was that although I had obtained 5 A-C GCSEs, none of these were in science subjects, thus, like Abena I was ‘urged’ to re-sit them. In my re-sit year, I had however, taken Sociology as an option, and I recognized that this was something that I enjoyed and could pursue as a career. Thankfully, like many of the ‘authoritative’ parents in the sample, my parents welcomed and supported my decision to continue my studies in this area.

On starting my A’ Levels, I experienced initial difficulties common to most students. However, these seemed to continue throughout the year. I partly attributed this to my ‘mechanical’ approach to work, and not truly understanding what was expected of me, and also to a particularly unhelpful teacher. As I discussed in the introduction, on seeing a careers counsellor, I was ‘advised’ to forgo my education in place of a factory job or a nursing career which he felt would be more appropriate for my ethnicity. This advice was based partly on the difficulties I was experiencing, but also partly, I believe, on the counsellors’ racist assumptions about the academic and career outcomes of minority ethnic groups. In spite of my difficulties, I knew that I could pass my A’Levels, but in an environment of such

negativity, this would not be easy. On hearing about what happened, my parents, especially my father was extremely supportive. He asked if I would prefer to study at the college where he worked. When I agreed to this, he set about liaising with tutors and organizing my place at the institution.

My confidence grew substantially at my new college. I made new friends from all walks of life, my grades improved dramatically, and I was always amongst the top four students in my year. However, these changes seemed to coincide with tensions that were mounting at home. After so many years of attempting to conform to expectations, yet, still receiving negative feedback on a frequent basis, I began to question (and often resented) the constant emphasis on negative reinforcement. For example, I recall my extreme annoyance at responses from my father about many of my academic results, even though I was obtaining good grades at college. Despite my attempts to explain I had achieved well, I felt that this was not really understood. Out of sheer frustration, like Ama, I began to adopt little methods of resistance. Sometimes, however, when arguments arose I could not always control my temper, which often intensified the situation.

After receiving my A'Level results, which were in many ways better than expected, I moved away to university. Although the relationship with my parents improved somewhat after this, at times, the 'dissatisfaction' about my results amongst other things was sometimes still evident. This also applied in relation to my degree results (even though I had achieved one of the few upper seconds in my cohort) and also when I undertook my Masters Degree. It took the intervention of my aunt, and at my graduation, a supportive and well known, but particularly pedantic ex-Oxford lecturer to explain that my grades were good.

While I could not always accept the lack of positive reinforcement, as a way of dealing with my situation, I learned to understand things from their viewpoints. This included

acknowledging that this response was partly due to a lack of understanding of the British grading system. Moreover, I also began to recognize that, like the respondents' parents and many other migrants, the overall intention behind this approach was to ensure that we achieved well academically and professionally. Doing so would act as a shield against racism and discrimination that was and is prevalent in the labour market and other areas within British society. Indeed, achieving highly would also help me to avoid being typecast as a 'failure' or a 'social problem' in the way that so many other Black students have been. In light of these experiences and my understanding of my parents' perspectives, like Akua and many others, over the years, I constantly pushed myself in my academic and professional pursuits, and this attitude has contributed to the position that I am currently in.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have analysed respondents' reflections upon their socialisation experiences and relationships with their parents. Respondents' accounts parallel the descriptions of 'authoritative' and 'authoritarian' parenting which form part of Baumrind's *Typology of Parenting*. The majority of respondents reported that they experienced what broadly constituted 'authoritarian' methods of socialisation, although a considerable number had parents who adopted 'authoritative' approaches. None of the respondents appeared to have experienced 'permissive', parenting. All of the respondents indicated that discipline was an integral aspect of their socialisation experiences. Furthermore, the importance of a strong work ethic was instilled in *all* respondents from an early age. Finally, parents also seemed to monitor their children's behaviour closely, though this appeared to be greater for those within the 'authoritarian' category.

Although some research (see for example Mandara 2006, Baumrind 1966) has suggested a link between 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' parenting styles and social backgrounds, amongst my sample, there seemed to be no significant correlations between the two. In some

families, such as Gifty and Adjoa, where socio-economic resources were limited, authoritative methods were adopted, whereas there were a number of respondents within the 'authoritarian' category, who were from middle-class backgrounds.

In line with existing research, respondents within the 'authoritarian' category reported that opportunities for 'democratic exchange between parents and children' (Balter 2001:55, Baumrind 1966) were rare, and that at times negative reinforcement was over-emphasised. Respondents from this group also highlighted potential problematic outcomes associated with this approach to parenting, including negative impacts upon self-esteem, resentment towards parents and general emotional anxiety. Nevertheless, while positive reinforcement is necessary for children's overall well-being, 'strict' parenting does ensure that a disciplined approach to work is adopted. For the majority, this appeared to have positive long term ramifications for their academic and professional outcomes. This is consistent with the observations of Ellis (1978) and Nsamenang (1994) and also with findings in Chao's (1994) study of Chinese families.

Respondents describing their parent-child relationships in ways which corresponded with the 'authoritative' approach indicated that the key features of their relationships with their parents included open engagement, constructive encouragement, emotional support and support in 'developing their own niches' (Cole 2006), particularly in terms of their educational and professional pursuits. Interestingly, specific factors such as life threatening illnesses, and being a 'last born' child also determined parent-child relationships for some within this group. These appeared to strengthen the bond between parents and children. Several respondents also reported that their parents were keen not to re-enact 'negative' relationships they had experienced with their own parents, and also to ensure that the respondents enjoyed the freedom from the pressure to succeed in ways that did not reflect their individualities.

The respondents' narratives indicate recognition that respect and discipline represent a necessary aspect of parent-child relationships. Interestingly, after the interviews, a number of respondents commented on their worry and shock at what they regard as increasingly 'permissive' approaches to parenting which they perceive younger parents to be adopting. This is a further indication that these respondents understand their parents' emphasis upon discipline.

Although many respondents (especially those from the 'authoritarian' category) did not necessarily agree with certain aspects of the 'traditional' approaches to child rearing, used by many Ghanaian parents, it was generally accepted that they were practicing what they *knew*. Furthermore, as a number of respondents and authors have explained (see for example Anwar 1979, Bhatti 1999), migrant parents often use this method of socialisation in response to their worries about their children's behaviour. These worries are partly a consequence of the children being exposed to socialisation in two very different cultures which are regarded as conflicting with one another. Parents worried because they frequently mistook their children's wishes for a greater level of autonomy for a rejection of their cultures of origin. In essence, parents were keen to ensure that children conformed to the cultural values of their country of origin.

Respondents generally recognised the necessity of balancing 'strictness' and discipline with open engagement between parents and positive reinforcement and encouragement. Moreover, the level and quality of communication between parents and children, and methods of reinforcement, have ramifications for the child's long term socio-emotional, educational and professional development, and also for children's feelings towards their parents. All of these are likely to affect a child's willingness to conform to parental expectations (Bulanda and Majmuda 2008). As indicated within this chapter, parents had high expectations of the respondents, particularly in terms of their academic and professional pursuits. Some appeared

to be specific about the careers that they wanted their children to go into, whereas others were less so. In light of this, the following chapter examines the impact of parent-child relationships and parental expectations upon the respondents' academic and professional choices and outcomes.

## **Chapter 5: Academic and Professional Choices and Socio-Economic Outcomes**

Research on Black families and academic achievement needs to redirect its agenda to the significant psychosocial patterns of family life that facilitate and maintain successful achievement.

*Lena Robinson*

The benefits of academic qualifications are recognised by many Black and minority ethnic students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and the role of parental and familial influence in the enhancement of their aspirations and achievements should not be ignored (Connor 2004). Yet, as explained in previous chapters, critiques of Black families have often failed to recognise this. Instead they are frequently portrayed as disorganised and not achievement focused, and unfortunately, it is such notions that have generally shaped explanations of the low academic and professional achievement of Black children (Mac an Ghaill 1988, 1991 Robinson 1995).

There is, however, a need to acknowledge that for the considerable number of Black children who do obtain positive academic outcomes, this is in part due to the high expectations and the supportive practices adopted within their families. For example, many gear their children towards attaining highly by engaging them in ‘deliberate achievement training’ (Robinson 1995:133) from an early age. This may include a range of factors, such as consistent monitoring of children’s school work and seeking ways to develop the child’s intellect, which is also combined with nurturing and emotional support (Robinson 1995). My own experience of ‘deliberate achievement training’ consisted of many different elements such as the inculcation of a work ethic from an early age and emphasis on conscientiousness and presenting work of a high quality at all times. This focus on achievement has its origins in my

parents' own socialisation experiences in Ghana, in conjunction with their 'traditional' West African education in which there was much emphasis on high standards (Ellis 1978).

Moreover, given the collective nature of many Black and minority ethnic groups, the engagement of the wider Black community in children's academic pursuits is not uncommon (Mac an Ghaill 1991, Robinson 1995). Chapter 3 discussed how this applied in relation to Ghanaian and West African societies, and this appears to have continued amongst Ghanaians and West Africans living in Western contexts. In relation to my childhood experiences, the involvement of Ghanaian community members in my education was evident on many levels. This ranged from simple questions about my academic pursuits and advice or commentaries about career options from elders, to attending 'Ghana School' every Saturday morning. As explained in the literature review, Mac an Ghaill (1991) observed that voluntary schools such as this acted as a method of enhancing academic achievement levels and responding to the racism that is prevalent in schools, which often resulted in the needs of Black and minority ethnic children being negated. An additional aim of voluntary schools such as this was to enhance our knowledge and pride in our ethnic origins, in light of parental/community fears that we would lose sight of our cultural heritage, since we were born and raised in Britain.

Clearly, there are numerous benefits associated with the commitment and engagement of parents and community to children's academic and professional outcomes, which cannot be emphasised enough. These include the provision of support and motivation and, potentially, access to people and networks which could facilitate access to children's chosen careers. Yet, it must also be acknowledged that at times conflicts between personal preferences in terms of academic and professional pursuits, and parental and community expectations may arise. This chapter analyses the respondents' academic and professional choices and pursuits in light of their own interests and the expectations of their parents and in some cases their local Ghanaian communities. It also considers parental and community approaches to

facilitating their academic and professional trajectories. Personal experiences which reflect those of the respondents are also incorporated within this chapter.

## **Authoritarian families**

### ***Parental expectations and academic and professional decisions and success***

Respondents who described their socialisation experiences and parent-child relationships as ‘authoritarian’ suggested that their parents held particular views about what constituted academic and professional success. More specifically, they indicated that there was an ‘unmistakable emphasis’ (Dundes *et al.* 2009:144) upon subjects which would lead to careers in medicine, engineering, law or accountancy, or to other highly paid occupations. Respondents recalled their parents’ attempts to ‘steer’ them towards prescribed career pathways:

Kwasi: My parents, especially my mum was a bit wary about what I said I wanted to do. Simple fact was that they were always telling me to go for the usuals, you know be a doctor, a lawyer....My dad always said that if you worked hard then you could do it. What he didn’t really see that sometimes no matter how hard you worked, if it isn’t you, then, you couldn’t force yourself.

Kofi: When I was about 3, there was talk of putting me in for MENSA, and of course there was the expectation that I would be a doctor a lawyer or an engineer, or perhaps an economist or something like that. It was that you just had to be educated and everything else would follow....

Abena: My dad made me do sciences, in the hope that I’d open up a pharmacy back in Ghana.

The respondents’ comments are consistent with findings from Dundes *et al.’s* study (2009) which analysed links between parental influence and university and career choices of East Asian Americans. These parents viewed their children’s academic and professional success in

terms of attending university and undertaking medical, engineering, legal and business programmes because of the status that has been attached to these career areas. In a similar vein, the respondents' parents often emphasised the status associated with these careers:

Maa: They [parents] could not see us entering any other professions beyond the African three (science, engineering or law), you know, because of the status and all that.....

As discussed in chapter 3, the prestige attached to legal, medical and engineering professions amongst Ghanaians is traceable to the colonial era, when these careers had begun to be considered as epitomising the highest point of Western achievement. Furthermore, the socio-economic benefits of such professions were recognised, particularly for those working in the colonial administration. The opportunities for training in these fields was, however, extremely limited. Moreover, these were professions which entailed a number of years in study and required a high level of academic application. Therefore, the few who were able to achieve success in these areas were regarded as representing the educated and social elite, hence the status and accolades accorded to them.

It is often also the view of Ghanaians and many migrants from other countries that the educational and professional opportunities available in Britain and in other Western countries, and entry into 'high status' occupations, has become, in many respects, far less restricted than for previous generations and this should help guarantee children's success in these pursuits. Commenting upon the situation for Nigerian immigrants to the United States, Ogbaa explains these notions:

Nigerian immigrants have wonderful opportunities for educating their children to the highest level they are capable of reaching. Such opportunities include free education from pre (primary) school to high school, tutorial services, adequate college and university accommodation for qualified applicants, diversified degree and non-degree programmes, as well as modern facilities and well trained

instructors, all of which make it easy for committed and hard-working students to succeed in their academic pursuits. (Ogbaa 2003:63)

These views are understandable, especially in light of the educational experiences of many migrants 'back home'. Despite the educational expansion in Ghana and West Africa that took place, during the colonial era several problems emerged in terms of the nature and quality of education provided. These contributed to limitations in terms of career prospects and progression for many, hence the decision of large numbers of migrants to take up the 'plethora' of educational opportunities in Britain and other parts of the West and also to educate their children there. As Kofi noted:

Kofi: They came here with that premise that their children would have the best education because it was English. After struggling in Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, they believed that here, there'd be more resources, better resources for our education.

Respondents seemed to acknowledge that their parents' emphasis on the lucrative nature of legal, medical and engineering careers was often traceable to their educational experiences but also to encounters with poverty in Ghana during their childhoods and also in England. Even though the socio-economic situations of the migrants improved somewhat in Britain, at some points many still experienced relative poverty as a result of the difficulties they suffered upon their arrival. As explained in chapter 3, the educational failure of some migrants, caused by a multitude of problems, significantly reduced their chances of success, which in turn increased their susceptibility to poverty. Araba and Kwasi discussed how this applied in the cases of their fathers. Their fathers had initially intended to train in accountancy and chemical engineering respectively. However, due to their problems, both found themselves

working in factories and earning low wages. Kwasi's recollections of how relative poverty affected his family are particularly poignant:

Kwasi: I went to school year in year out with the same uniform and blazer, and I can remember going to church with a hole in my shoes.

Poverty, such as that which Kwasi and Araba encountered, can have a negative impact on the life chances of individuals, since it means limited access to socio-economic resources and good schools and also because it potentially narrows the occupational choices that are available to them. Nevertheless, these respondents and several others have achieved upwards socio-economic mobility in spite of this adversity. Some, however, recognised that their childhood experiences of poverty have, in some ways, had long term effects upon their mindsets. For example, as Kwasi explained, 'there's always that worry that you'll go back to how it was [as a child]'. At the same time, these encounters and concerns seemed to reinforce the respondents' drive and determination for socio-economic mobility and academic and professional success.

Overall, respondents accepted that they fared better than their parents, in terms of academic and professional opportunities. However, several also pointed out that, for their generation, educational and employment situations are far more complex than their parents appeared to acknowledge. For example, as Yaw suggested, despite the passage of time, minorities are *still* vulnerable to racial discrimination, and this applies in recruitment onto medical and legal courses, which also concurs with arguments by Carter *et al.* (2000), as discussed in chapter 1. Both Kwasi and Gyan also remarked that there was often a failure on the part of some first generation members to recognise costs in terms of time and money for a university education and also the training which is necessary for these careers. Their comments echo those made by Blackwell (1987) in a study which examined various issues faced by Black professionals.

He also suggested that it is a combination of these factors, which contribute to the decision of many Blacks to seek alternative career options.

Moreover, although the late modern era affords more choice in terms of academic and professional pursuits (Cieslisk 2002), the changes within the labour market impacts upon groups in a multitude of ways (Mac an Ghaill 1998). Speaking of the situation for school leavers and the younger generation in general, Mac an Ghaill observes that they are 'particularly vulnerable in the re-structured and de-regulated labour markets in which they are experiencing a major transition from school to work' (Mac an Ghaill 1998:43) and this situation is especially difficult for those with few or no qualifications. While the respondents are in a more advantageous position, since most have achieved qualifications and are in 'high status' careers, most recognise the impact of these changes and acknowledge that the situation has also brought about a reduced likelihood of long term career security (Bauman 2000). This issue is discussed further shortly.

All respondents also acknowledged that, in essence, their parents sought the best for them, in the sense that they did not wish to see their children replicate the problems that they had experienced. Nevertheless, several respondents, including Abena, who had experienced a number of problems in education, argued that by 'urging' them towards careers that they felt ill equipped or qualified to engage in, some parents were attempting to live vicariously through their children. Comments such as these reflect those made by respondents in the research conducted by Dundes *et al.* (2009) and also Falconer and Hays (2006). Respondents in both studies also acknowledged that their opportunities for access into such careers were better than those of their parents' generation. However, some parents resorted to 'coercion' and constant reminders of the lack of opportunity for their own generations, as a method of ensuring that their children followed prescribed careers. It was these factors which

contributed to the belief of some respondents that their parents were attempting to live unfulfilled educational and occupational dreams through them.

‘Direction’ or ‘coercion’ of children towards academic and career trajectories may also be considered indicative of ‘authoritarian’ approaches to parenting. This is due to the unequivocal expectation that children must ‘honour parental expectations of narrowly defined acceptable academic and career achievements’ (Dundes *et al.* 2009:143), which can effectively restrict children’s choices. As explained in Chapter 1, an additional feature of ‘authoritarian’ parenting is the use of ‘power assertion’ to ensure that children obey their parents’ commands without question (Baumrind 1966). Abena, Ama, and several others spoke of similar approaches adopted by their parents to ensure that they fulfilled career and other familial expectations without question. Ultimately, however, use of this approach made less impact upon the respondents’ academic and career outcomes than was intended by their parents. Their decisions and outcomes are discussed later in the chapter.

### ***Saving face: The pressure to achieve and attitudes of the Ghanaian community***

Family and the wider community can often act as a valuable support mechanism in terms of academic and professional attainment (Mac an Ghail 1991, Robinson 1995, Mirza 2009 Bhopal 2010). As shown in chapter 3, many of the respondents in Bhopal’s study of Asian women in higher education (2010), valued the support given by their families and cultural networks and welcomed the security that this provided, but at times it was also regarded it as a ‘double edged sword’ in that there was considerable pressure to succeed. This pressure resulted from the fact that the respondents’ parents had provided for them emotionally and financially, and also because they were keen to maintain their family name and status within their communities. Thus academic failure could potentially result in difficult repercussions

for the respondents. British-Ghanaian respondents in the current study also discussed their experiences of similar pressures concerning academic and professional achievement:

Gyan: *What* and of course *how* you did was not just about you, it reflected on your parents, and coming from where I come from [large regional city], the Ghanaian community, too. It was small, but people *always* talked. You really felt the pressure to do well. Though this type of pressure was not always a good thing, because when the ‘jungle drums’ started talking about how ‘so so so so and so’ as the old folks say, failed their exams, it became a nightmare which you had to do your best to ignore. Yet inside, you were praying that you didn’t end up in that situation, ‘cos you didn’t want to hear people talking about you or your family like that. Sometimes, the things that certain people would say...people didn’t always look at the *real* situation whatever that was. No, at times, it was a case of people making unfair judgments.

As shown in chapter 3, communal emphasis upon academic and professional achievement is traceable to the collectivism inherent in Ghanaian and West African culture, which emphasises a high level of interdependence between the community, the family and the individual. Therefore, all concerned, especially parents, assumed responsibility for their children’s performance and outcomes and these accomplishments, in turn, reflected upon the family and the community. During the debate at the Ghana Youth Association, a first generation member also raised this point and commented that children were regarded as ‘investments’ for the family and the future. Her description of children as ‘investments’, however, met with criticism from members of the second generation, who perceived that parents attached greater value to children’s academic and professional pursuits, especially those which would ensure excellent financial outcomes, rather than to children’s general wellbeing. However, the panel member clarified her argument by stating that children’s behaviour and academic achievements had a bearing upon the family, hence high standards in these areas are emphasised during childhood.

Community responses to the achievement of an individual and also to their family also appeared to act as a form of social control within the Ghanaian context. The fact that ‘people *always* talked’, as Gyan described it, and that an individual’s failure to achieve could lead to ‘loss of face’ within the community, ensured that children took their educational and professional achievements seriously and maintained a disciplined approach to them. Interestingly, this seemed to continue amongst Ghanaians in Britain and applied in the experiences of many of the respondents, even if they did not follow the career paths prescribed by their parents and elders.

While such pressure to achieve may have been a form of motivation for some respondents, it contributed to psychological and socio-emotional problems for others. Abena, for example described how she suffers with bouts of extreme depression and low self-esteem, which she partly attributes to her perceived academic and professional ‘failures’ and the ‘negative’ attitudes and comments from Ghanaians in her local community.

Similar outcomes are highlighted in a cross-cultural analysis of academic stress levels experienced by Chinese and Canadian students, undertaken by Ang *et al.* (2009). Of all their respondents, those from Chinese backgrounds felt the most pressure to succeed academically and professionally due to the fact that this value represented an aspect of filial obligation that is an inherent part of that culture. Yet, in a number of cases, there appeared to be a mismatch between the respondents’ expectations concerning their academic achievements and their perceptions of their ability. Generally, respondents lacked confidence in their ability to achieve, which reinforced academic stress. These difficulties were further compounded by the fact that they sought to avoid ‘loss of face’ within their communities as this could potentially result in the loss of community support. What this implies is that support from the community is conditional, in that it will be provided only on the basis that the individual succeeds as expected.

### *Parental Support for academic and professional pursuits*

In the previous chapter, many respondents in the ‘authoritarian’ category spoke of the limited emotional engagement between themselves and their parents, which was supplemented by the emphasis on negative reinforcement, as opposed to encouragement. This also affected educational experiences, as despite the pressure to achieve academically and professionally, parents offered little support:

Ama: They did not really offer much help and encouragement with the educational stuff. You often had to figure it out for yourself, but you *had* to do it, though.

Araba: Oh yeah, there were all these high expectations, but there was a real gap between these and the type of help and support you got in trying to achieve them. You didn’t really get any help at all.

Much research (see for example Pellegrini and Smith 2000; Reay 2000) has emphasised the importance of positive emotional encouragement and practical support from parents as prerequisites for academic and professional success. Practical support may include financial assistance, guidance in terms of course selection and frequent monitoring of children’s academic progress (Bhopal 2010). Respondents across the ‘authoritarian’ and ‘authoritative’ categories reported that their progress was monitored through their yearly school reports and visits to their schools on parents’ evenings. Throughout the rest of the year, however, some respondents of ‘authoritarian’ parents indicated that they were just ‘left to get on with it [their education]’ as Efua put it. Some claimed that this was because parents did not always understand that other elements of practical support such as guidance in terms of academic goals were necessary for their children’s academic success. Similar observations were made by Rosario Ceballo (2004) in her study entitled *From Barrios to Yale*, which examined the link between parents’ roles and academic success for American-Latino students. As with the parents in the current study, the Latino parents were ‘zealously committed’ (Ceballo

2004:177) to their child's education. Yet they appeared to 'understand little about the details of their education'. In particular parents 'did not know about specific educational goals or requirements' (ibid) and it was for this reason that they were unable to provide the necessary assistance with their children's academic work.

The limited amount of academic and professional support that many respondents' received from their parents might be understood on a number of different levels. Firstly, as explained in the previous chapter, use of negative reinforcement, emphasis on discipline and the limited amount of open verbal interaction between parents and children formed part of the 'traditional' upbringing that their parents had experienced and, from the respondents' narratives, it appeared that the migrants continued this approach with them. These factors seemed to prevent the respondents from discussing issues, including educational and career development, despite the fact that their parents regarded these issues as important.

Moreover, it was acknowledged by respondents that since their parents had received the majority of their education outside Britain they often experienced problems in understanding the nature of the British system and some of the goals that children were expected to achieve within it. As Gyan explained, for those migrants, such as his father, who had received some education in Britain but had 'grappled with the new way of learning,' confidence in their abilities to provide academic support and careers guidance for their children may have been undermined. As a consequence of this, they placed absolute trust in the education system, and therefore 'passed' the responsibility of educating and directing their children on to teachers. Nevertheless, parents' aspirations for the respondents, was in no way diminished and they still achieved highly. Commenting on her observation of Sikh parents' involvement in their children's education, Bhachu (1985 in Singh-Ghuman 1994) noted a similar response and outcomes. While there were parents who were keenly involved in helping their children to achieve, and had a direct knowledge of the education system, who were referred to as

‘interventionists’, the motivation and aspirations of parents who were less involved, or ‘non-interventionist’ were equally high. Subsequently, as with the respondents in the current study, the children from *all* families in Bhachu’s study achieved highly. As Gibson (1988 in Singh-Ghuman 1994) correctly advises, however, middle-class White ‘notions of involvement’ are often considered as a model that should be adopted by *all*, thus negating alternative, but often equally valuable approaches utilised by minority and working class parents. Yet, as Mac an Ghaill (1988) also explains, teachers often have little engagement with Black and minority ethnic communities, which arguably manifests itself in a lack of understanding of Black parents’ approaches to their children’s education. This also does little to challenge or alleviate the dominant and negative notions about Black parents and their supposed lack of interest in their children’s education.

At the same time, it is also frequently the case that when Black parents do attempt to become engaged in their children’s education they are discouraged from doing so by teachers. Mac an Ghaill (1988), in *Young Gifted and Black* observed how on occasion teachers obstructed and stereotyped Black and minority ethnic parents as a way of preventing their participation. This is illustrated in an incident where an Asian parent asked a teacher for his child’s progress report, but was refused this information. When relaying this incident to his colleague, the teacher depicted the parent as having over-inflated expectations of his son’s abilities and achievements, and also implied that the parent expected the report to be written in an Asian language!

In her study entitled *There’s a War Against our Children: Black Educational Underachievement Revisited* Crozier (2005) also demonstrates how Black parents are, at times, not encouraged to engage with teachers in facilitating their children’s progress at school. She interviewed 22 Black parents on their perspectives of their children’s educational experiences, and several of her respondents reported that ‘they perceived an unwillingness of

teachers to engage them in a frank discussion about their children, in terms of their progress or their behaviour' (Crozier 2005: 590), which 'did little to further the partnership between parents and the school' (ibid).

It is evident that Black and minority parents are also often placed in a difficult situation in regards to their engagement with their children's schools. On the one hand, some feel unable to become involved for reasons outlined by the respondents, and others who wish to participate are not always encouraged to do so. Yet, clearly, as Demie and Mc Clean (2007) show in their study of British-African students in Lambeth, effective partnerships between Black parents and the school *can* work, and are clearly beneficial in terms of the child's achievement.

#### ***Academic and professional outcomes for respondents in 'authoritarian' families***

Making career choices is not always a straightforward, linear process since various factors must be taken into consideration. For example, individuals must ascertain whether their abilities, qualifications, etc, fit the requirements for the professions they may be interested in. As discussed previously, for those belonging to cultures in which collectivism is emphasized, there is the additional pressure of parental and community obligations and expectations, which also plays a key role in their decision making (Dundes *et al.* 2009, Swanson and Fouad 2009). Yet, arguably, the 'hidden curriculum' within British schools, in which there is an 'implicit transmission of values and social skills' (Mac an Ghail 1988:58), also encourages children towards following individual values and choices. This, as Mac an Ghail suggests, might also be considered as a method employed by the education system to incorporate Black youth into White identities.

Negotiation between familial and communal expectations and individual choices appeared to be a greater issue for those within the 'authoritarian' category, than for the 'authoritative'

group, perhaps because of the autonomy which 'authoritative' parents allowed in terms of the respondents' choices. In spite of this, the majority of the 'authoritarian' respondents did *not* pursue the academic and career trajectories anticipated by their parents. Instead, the large majority (ten) of the respondents with authoritarian parents 'compromised' by balancing their parents' academic and career aspirations with their own and three 'rebelled/resisted' and opted to follow their own academic and or career paths. Only one respondent attempted to fully 'conform' to her father's expectations.

### ***Conformity***

Abena was the only respondent who attempted to fully conform to parental expectations. As indicated in her vignette earlier in the chapter, her father was keen for her to undertake science based subjects, anticipating that she would establish medical facilities in his hometown in Ghana. The expectation that she fulfil this ambition may have been the consequence of her father's failure to obtain his own qualifications in science. Abena describes her experiences:

Abena: I took sciences at GCSE biology chemistry and physics. I wasn't much good at them, and I flunked them the first time. To cut a long story short I took them three times, and by the time I eventually passed them, I was in my late teens. Then I started my A'levels, at college, again in science. Louise I was so exhausted, or more likely fed up, that I just kept stopping and starting over and over again for all them years, and now I have given up my education altogether. I feel quite depressed that at my age [she was 30 at the time of the interview] that I've not done anything careerwise, or educationally, especially in comparison to my cousins and other people my age. I just wish that I hadn't listened and gone on and done what I wanted to do originally, as I said something in the arts, like painting. Now, I can't do anything, and its getting late. I'm getting older.

Abena was asked about her decision to continue re-sitting subjects which she had no particular talent or interest in. She explained that her father was insistent that she continued

until she passed and could move on to the next level. This view may be attributed to the attitudes held in Ghana, particularly at the time Abena's father was at school, when the desire for academic achievement and socio-economic success was such that, regardless of how long it took, individuals would continue to pursue their educational goals, even if it meant re-sitting examinations several times. Abena's father's may also have been reinforced by his perception that that in Britain education was 'free', whereas in Ghana, it often had to be paid for.

However, it would seem that there was little understanding of Abena's needs and interests, in view of the greater emphasis on the requirements of her family in Ghana and because her father believed that a career in the arts would not be conducive to supporting them as it was not considered to be lucrative. If Abena *had* pursued a career in this area, admittedly, she may not have been able to provide support for her family in the ways expected. Yet, following her interests may have been more beneficial to her emotional wellbeing. Moreover, it is not guaranteed that a career in science would have been lucrative enough to have brought the financial rewards that her father had hoped and also to have fulfilled the needs of her family.

Although like all respondents in the current study, Abena also has strong cultural connections 'back home' (Bhopal 2010, Song 2003) and she is also able to converse in her heritage language fluently, Britain is, however, her 'place of origin' (Bhopal 2010), and moving 'back home' may not be straightforward as her father had anticipated for a number of reasons. Firstly, attitudes and values of migrants and their children are often moulded a result of living abroad (Leyendecker *et al.* 2006), regardless of how strong their attachment to the 'homeland' is perceived to be. Furthermore, as Bhatti (1999) noted in her ethnographic study entitled *Asian Children at Home and School. An Ethnographic Study*, first-generation respondents and their families found that on their return to their home countries, the socio-economic

situations were poor, which placed them in a worse financial position than they would have experienced on remaining in Britain. Had this been the case for Abena, arguably, a combination of these pressures may have pose further problems in terms of her emotional wellbeing.

### ***'Compromise'***

'Compromises' were reached in a range of different ways by the respondents. One option was to undertake a mixture of arts and sciences courses and then eventually move into careers that combined the two. Four respondents adopted this approach. At the time of the interview, Kofi was at the completion stage of his degree in media graphics and was seeking employment in this area. Yaw and Selorm trained in architecture, and Pokuaa currently works as a graphic designer.

Some respondents undertook courses in areas approved by parents, and although they followed careers in these areas, their choices also reflected their own preferences. Ama, for example enjoyed science and technology, and it was expected that she or one of her siblings would pursue a career in engineering. She, however, had no interest in engineering and instead undertook computing courses and her interest in this field developed to such an extent that she decided to undertake undergraduate and Masters' degrees in computer sciences. She now works as a systems analyst.

Others, including Araba and Kwamena, had a broad interest in the medical field, although they did not wish to become doctors. Araba's decision not to follow a career in medicine was partly due to her perception that her O'level and CSE grades were not adequate to do so. Moreover, she was not prepared to spend seven years in medical training. In light of this Araba decided on nursing, and later midwifery. Kwamena, who works as a mental health nurse and was recently promoted to clinical manager, traces his career choice to his interest in

psychology, more especially in relation to those who like himself had been fostered and had experienced psychological traumas as a result.

Efua and Gyan, achieved their ‘compromises’ by undertaking academic careers. Efua, for example, had just defended her PhD in Sociology and business at the time of our meeting. She is currently working in a university where she is developing her specialised area of research. She explains how she reached her ‘compromise’:

Efua: Though they [her parents] wanted me to do something in science, I thought that social science was more my thing, so then it was, well ‘why don’t you do Law then?’ which wasn’t helped by the fact that, that Boakye guy I told you about before had just made it into one of the big law firms. Anyway, I went ahead and did business and social sciences as my degree. I came out with a 1<sup>st</sup>. My dissertation supervisor advised me to go on and do my doctorate, and helped me to get funding, so I did, and here we are now.

Gyan initially considered embarking on a career in Law. After taking Sociology and Law at A’level and finding that he enjoyed both, however, he combined the two areas, by studying criminology at undergraduate and Masters’ levels. He currently works within the Criminal Justice system, specifically dealing with young people. In addition to his work Gyan is completing his PhD and plans on becoming an academic in this area.

### ***Rebellion and resistance***

Kwasi, Akua and Maa pursued their own interests, and each did so in different ways. Kwasi perceived that he did not have the aptitude or interest in obtaining qualifications for careers which required a strong academic background. However, he recognised during his teens that he possessed strong business acumen and has since become a successful entrepreneur. Yet he remembers how his choices were met with resistance:

Kwasi: They or she, my mum, couldn't appreciate me going into business, because they didn't know anyone else who was doing it. I

mean, the main objective when our parents came to Britain, seemed to be for them to work for others, but me, well mine was to work for myself. It's their conditioning they grew up around people who had a set opinion. Once as well, my dad told me that I was only fit to work in a factory and brought me a form from the place that he worked at [bike company]. And you know what Louise? That was the best piece of advice he ever gave me, because I could just show that I was better than that. It's all about turning a negative into a positive.

Akua, who undertook a degree in marketing, and an MBA, and currently works in a senior management position within her company, also explains how her subject choice was vetoed by her parents:

Akua: My parents, especially mum didn't really want me to study or go into marketing, and to be honest I think it's because they didn't really understand what it was about. So as a way of dealing with that, there was a lot of negativity and questions like 'where can it lead you anyway?' Anyway, after my degree, I got onto a graduate training scheme, in marketing of course! But when I did, though I loved every second of it, there was a little part of me which still felt like I had to just work my arse off and prove myself and show them [her parents] that I could make it.

Maa describes her responses to criticisms concerning her career choice:

Maa: I was a good all rounder, and this continually came up in my end of year reports. But I didn't try because quite honestly, I found it quite boring. The only thing that grabbed my attention was drama and performing arts this was the one area which I got to do what I do best taking the p\*\*\* out of people in a funny way and creating my own characters. I passed my GCSEs ok, and so there was pressure to go on to college to do my A'levels, but I totally disregarded this and went to do a drama course. What a palaver that caused! They [her parents] got people [her father's friends in the Ghanaian community] in to try and talk what they thought was sense into me. These guys always went on about how I was wasting my abilities and my time, which is not really the way I saw it. So I just nodded my head, and went and did what I was going to do anyway! I haven't looked back since. I have an agent and quite a few things in the pipeline. Watch this space!

In attempting to ensure that these respondents conformed to academic and career expectations, it appears that parents used negative reinforcement and, in Kwasi and Akua's cases, 'reverse psychology' by attempting to make them believe that they would be unsuccessful in their chosen areas. For Kwasi it might be argued that there was an additional element to the rationale behind his father's approach. Firstly, his father was concerned about his own academic attainment, since he struggled at school and subsequently displayed disinterest. Having said this, Kwasi's father perhaps harboured some hope that, in spite of the difficulties he experienced, he would persevere with his education and eventually achieve success. This belief is linked to the view held by many first generation migrants that hard work and continual study would ensure success and that poor achievement is due to laziness. Attitudes such as these correspond with those espoused by the East Asian parents in Dundes *et al's*. (2009) study. However, like most other respondents, Kwasi had clearly internalised the work ethic which represented a key aspect of his socialisation, which is evident in the fact that he is amongst the highest achievers in terms of socio-economic outcomes within the sample.

Akua's acknowledgement of the fact that initially there was a need to prove her strengths and capabilities to those, such as her parents, who were critical of her choices, corresponds with issues faced by individuals working within the medical field in Gerber's study (1983). He notes that it is possible to 'become driven to continue proving oneself, with no achievement "good enough" to allay the doubts about his/her ability to measure up to a particular status' (Gerber 1983:32).

In chapter 3, reference was made to the way in which 'hegemony' operated in relation to Ghanaian education. More specifically, hegemony was evident in the imposition of a new

system, and in the resistance raised by Ghanaian tribal groups who sought to retain the existing hegemonic ideals. Arguably, 'hegemony' is also evident in a number of other ways, for example, the maintenance of a communal life amongst Ghanaians and also in the retention of attitudes concerning educational and career expectations and that are evident amongst some migrant parents in Britain. However, the respondents have spent their lives in an era and context in which things are no longer as static and unchanging as for their parents' generation, and this has been influential in their decisions *not* to fully adhere to the 'hegemonic' ideas of their parents (and sometimes the Ghanaian community) regarding their academic careers.

Their actions, in many ways, also correspond with approaches adopted by some respondents in Mac an Ghail's respondents in *Young Gifted and Black* (1988). These female ethnic minority respondents used a form of 'resistance through accommodation' to negotiate their ways through British education system. This involved a combination of an 'anti-school' attitude, more specifically, the rejection of racist curriculums, and being 'pro-education', that is appreciating the necessity of academic qualifications for future success. All respondents in the current study also valued the importance of education and achievement and a strong work ethic, thus they 'accommodated' their parents' views in this way. 'Resistance', however, was particularly evident amongst those in the latter categories (compromisers and particularly rebels).

In their work Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2000) both describe the continual changes that are a key feature of current times. Both observe that presently, individuals have access to a broader range of life choices, and that actions are no longer dictated by the group. Instead, there has been a move towards a more 'individualised' way of acting, and it is partly due to these changes that Bauman coined the term 'Liquid Modernity' to describe the current era. Arguably, the wide variety of career choices that have become available, especially to the

respondents' generation, has also been influential in their decision making processes. Such changes have enabled them to seek and achieve success in areas which incorporated their own interests, instead of restricting themselves to achieving in areas prescribed by their parents or the Ghanaian community.

As Bauman and Giddens explain, however, a disadvantage of access to such a vast range of choices, that younger generations have, is that individuals face difficulties in terms of making the most suitable decisions to best reflect their needs. Constant change also means that everything is in the 'short-term'. Taking careers as an example, as pointed out earlier, in previous generations, individuals could potentially retain their careers until they retired, whereas this is now gradually changing. Those belonging to later generations will need to be more flexible and seek opportunities as they become available. Moreover, it is often the case that they will have to engage in continual training to develop their skills further, to make themselves marketable, and to reduce the likelihood of unemployment. Thus, although there are advantages to the increased level of choice, arguably, in some respects, later generations face as many pressures as previous generations, albeit in different ways

### **Authoritative respondents**

#### ***Autonomy in academic and career decision making***

Respondents from 'authoritative' families were, on the whole, more likely to pursue academic outcomes and careers based upon their preferences and/or specific talents or interests. As highlighted previously, this was encouraged by parents on the proviso that respondents applied themselves fully in their chosen fields.

Career choices made by respondents varied widely. Ekow, for example, described his flair for technical drawing, hence the fact that he undertook A'Levels and degrees in this area. He has since found employment in graphic design. At the time of the interview, Afrakoma was

undertaking a combined degree in European languages and business in preparation for a career as an ambassador, a choice which corresponded with her aptitude for languages. Naana spoke of how she undertook civil engineering as her first degree, which she acknowledges was heavily advocated by her father, but also because she saw her interests as ‘being based on mathematical intelligence and reasoning’. After a while, however, her interest in this area waned, because, as she explained, ‘ I always wanted to go into something which involved technical drawing, which also came from a love of tasks, and wanting to do something with sorting rules and sequence’. Subsequently, Naana developed an interest in architecture, and after working for some years, she eventually returned to higher education to undertake a degree in this area, and was, at the time of discussion, nearing the end of her final year.

Esi’s lifelong interest in writing and involvement in several publications for school and college magazines were determining factors in her decision to pursue a degree and career in journalism. Adjoa, who was completing a degree in Sociology when I interviewed her, spoke of her ‘passion’ for the subject, and her interest in expanding her knowledge through further study so as to be able to find employment in this field. Effie explains the origins of her interest in fashion design as a career:

Effie: In the 1980s, we used to watch the Clothes Show on a Sunday, and I’d sort of look at designs and start drawing my own versions in this scrap book that I had, then I’d show them to my parents. I think then they really began to take me seriously.

In order to specialize further in her specific area of fashion Effie is currently pursuing a Masters degree and will complete within the next year.

Koby was the only respondent who regarded his academic and career choices as being somewhat restricted:

Koby: In my own case as you know, I have this illness, and my parents knew that I couldn't do any physical work, so I had to study.

During his teens, Koby discovered a talent for 'reading' subjects (a term commonly used by West Africans to denote Humanities and Social Sciences). He was encouraged to develop his interest in this area and he is currently nearing the completion of a combined degree.

Others have drawn upon specific life experiences to inform their career pathways. Akosua, for example, who completed a BA in Sociology and an MA in Psychology, has since written a book which combines these areas to provide guidance and counselling for young Black people. The decision to do this was based upon her experiences as a mother, teaching assistant and school governor. Gifty also spoke of her love for working with children. This in conjunction with her experience of a serious and potentially life threatening illness contributed to her decision to specialize in caring for children with similar conditions.

For some respondents, career choices were not necessarily based upon personal experience, or particular talents or interests. Kwaku, for instance, described his initial uncertainty about his career. However, after completing a degree in business management, the opportunity arose for him to work in the Civil Service and subsequently on their fast-track graduate training scheme, which has led to his current position as a senior civil servant.

### ***Support and guidance in academic and professional achievement***

As a way of facilitating educational and professional achievement, respondents spoke of how their parents adopted an 'interventionist' (Bhachu 1985 in Singh-Ghuman 1994) approach to their education, and in doing so they offered significant levels of support and guidance. This spanned from their formative years through to their late teens when decisions needed to be made in relation to further and higher education and careers. Support fell into two broad

categories; material support (e.g through resources and private education) and practical support (guidance in terms of academic work and careers support). With regards to career decision-making, for many, support came in the form of parental advice and use of social capital through family contacts.

### ***Material support***

As shown in the table at the start of chapter 4 that outlines the respondents' backgrounds, a number are from affluent families, which for some facilitated their access to considerable material support. Sarpongmaa, Afrakoma and Kwaku, for example, attended schools which occupied top positions in national league tables and they explain that, in conjunction with emotional and 'practical' support from their parents, this has contributed to their current positions. These experiences echo observations made by a number of sociologists in this area (see for example Devine 2004, Bhachu 1985 in Singh-Ghuman 1994) who note that the socio-economic position of more affluent families ensures that members are provided with the material support which enhances their chances of academic and professional achievement and that material support might include appropriate books and technology (e.g computers etc) and access to excellent private and state schools (Devine 2004).

### ***Practical support: provision of advice and skills in the enhancement of academic achievement***

Although some of the respondents originated from less affluent backgrounds, and therefore had less access to the type of material resources that others enjoyed, this did not necessarily detract from the *level* of academic support provided by parents. These respondents were more likely to be recipients of 'practical' guidance. Akosua recounts the 'practical' support given by her father:

Akosua: In terms of their approach to education, well, my dad set up what we can call a private school. He taught us at home and this

supplemented what we learned at school. If we didn't have homework from school, he'd suddenly produce some! He'd also try to get us to do secondary school work, even though we were at primary school! Sometimes we kids hated it, but it benefitted us in the long run.

Adjoa and others, including Ekow and Effie, remembered how their parents offered similar types of support to that received by Akosua. Their parents established a routine in which their school work and progress would be discussed at several points during the week. It also presented opportunities for advice on how the respondents' work could be further improved as well as support in terms of career direction. Their parents' approach might be considered as an example of 'intensive' parenting, which entails 'warm' relationships between parents and children (which the respondents reported they had experienced) and incorporates emphasis on educational skills which facilitate the child's progress at school and beyond. These factors represent a key element of 'caring' parent-child relationships (Evans 2006).

### ***Social capital, family contacts and career support***

Calling upon friends, family and other contacts to provide assistance in order to facilitate respondents' careers opportunities was an approach adopted by some parents. Ekow and Effie described the help they received:

Ekow: Mum and dad were always open to discussion about our futures. Though I knew my thing was CDT [craft design and technology], and technical drawing, for a while it was a bit hard to define exactly what my career was going to be. But they linked me up with my Uncle R who was an architect, so he gave me more advice on what to do.

Effie: The summer after I finished my A' levels, my mum spoke with my aunt who sorted it so that I could go to the local college of fashion and do a sort of paid placement there before I started my degree. Back then, the pay was awful at £2.20 per hour, but the experience was something...It was definitely a way in.

Gifty also spoke of how family contacts and advice from those who had undertaken nursing careers were valuable when she was applying for her courses. More specifically, she recalls how this enabled her to seek out the best hospitals for training, and also enabled her to prepare for her interviews. Similarly, Kwaku remembered how his father called upon friends who worked in the civil service to assist him through his applications for the fast-track programme and also to help him acquire the necessary skills to facilitate his opportunities for promotion.

Drawing upon contacts to enhance career prospects is not uncommon, as several studies have shown. For example, in a study conducted by Granovetter (1995), a considerable number of his respondents and their parents adopted a similar approach. Heath (1992) also observes that minority ethnic groups, who are perceived as being in a less advantageous position in terms of employment opportunities, are more likely to draw upon available social capital and informal networks as a way of ensuring that their employment reflects their qualifications. Heath's findings, which are reinforced by similar observations in the current research, may begin to provide an alternative view to those held by some researchers (see for example Modood 2004) that minority ethnic groups are unable to enhance their job opportunities as a result of a lack of networks. Devine (2004) also acknowledges the use of informal contacts as a way of improving job opportunities and she adds that this approach can enable the 'reproduction of advantage and opportunity' (Devine 2004: 120).

This also strongly resonates with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'social capital', which suggests that networks and relationships between those within a specific area of interest are utilized in order to obtain employment. While it is argued that those from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to have larger reserves of social capital at their disposal as a

result of their engagements with influential social networks, it is also true that most individuals have access to *some* social capital and their success will often depend on whether they utilize it and how they do so. Regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, however, it is apparent that these respondents and their parents have resourcefully drawn upon social capital and networks that were available to them so as to enhance their career opportunities.

### **Autobiographical account**

Growing up, I would often hear stories about relatives or ‘Big Uncles’ who had achieved academic and professional success and were therefore ‘rich’. Amongst the ‘Big Uncles’ was the owner of a pineapple exportation company, a high ranking civil servant in the Ghanaian government, as well as the inevitable doctors, lawyers and engineers. In hindsight, these stories were perhaps another subtler element of my father’s approach to ‘achievement training’ in that he was highlighting the importance of obtaining socio-economic mobility and status. It was also another way of steering me towards a career in one of these three professions, although preferably one in medicine. Because of my young age and impressionable nature at the time, I was overawed by what I had heard about these ‘Big Uncles’. I also began to believe that following their example would make my parents and the extended family proud and ensure that I was spoken of with the same ‘hallowed’ tones as the ‘Big Uncles’ were. So, I began to internalize and nurture the idea of becoming a medical doctor, although in reality, this was not where my talents lay.

I began primary school (or what I termed ‘proper’ school) in September 1980. In this environment, children were encouraged in all aspects of their academic work, but if they showed a particular strength in a specific area then they were supported accordingly. Although I had indicated to my parents that I would become a doctor, my inclination toward writing subjects and humanities was becoming more and more evident throughout my

primary school years. There were also many factors which inspired me to write. For example, my headmaster had a way of telling Biblical stories in a hilarious, but innovative way that strongly echoed Roald Dahl. Furthermore, my reception teacher was aware of my interest in writing and during the course of that year she encouraged me to develop this skill. Whenever I informed her of children's writing competitions in local papers she was adamant that I should enter. Thus, as a result I won a competition and my story was published.

At secondary school my interest in writing subjects did not wane. However, as explained in chapter 4, as the time for me to take my GCSE options approached, there was unspoken pressure from family and at times members of the community, to undertake science in preparation for a medical or science based career. This situation was similar to that of some of the respondents from 'authoritarian' families.

A good career was important to me, but I was becoming increasingly aware that working as a doctor was not what I truly wanted. Again, like many of the respondents who had experienced 'authoritarian' parenting, I was caught between trying to fulfil parental and community expectations and acknowledging that my own needs and preferences were also very important. In some respects, I initially adopted a similar approach to Abena, as I attempted to continue studying sciences (and re-took them), although my heart really was not in it.

Some years later, and shortly before I left for university, a relative and 'elder' within the Ghanaian community, who in his own way was attempting to take an interest in my academic and career trajectories, questioned my decision to embark on a Sociology degree. He strongly believed that I 'couldn't do anything with it', the assumption being that I would not achieve status or monetary rewards. When I attempted to explain that I wanted to work with minority ethnic groups in education, I was advised to 'drop it and take three years to do sciences

instead'. As with many of the respondents, and those in Falconer and Hays' study (2006), I was also reminded of the opportunities that we had in Britain, which they did not have in Ghana. Obviously, I did not listen to his 'advice'!

In many ways I appreciated the interest in my education from the local Ghanaian community. Like many of the respondents, I recognized that the elders were concerned and had our best interests at heart. I also accepted that as a result of my cultural background, my achievements were not considered as being just about me. They reflected upon my family and at times the community as a whole. Gyan and the first generation member of the Ghanaian Youth Association panel also expressed similar experiences and perceptions. I also understood that, as my uncle pointed out, since we were born and raised in Britain, we had more opportunities than previous generations that we should utilize.

However, at the same time, situations such as that which I faced with the community elder brought some of the more difficult aspects of community involvement in our education to light. I, like many others of a similar age, felt that there needed to be more understanding of our particular academic and professional strengths, and that we could be successful in other ways besides those prescribed by the community.

In the end, I achieved a Bachelors degree in Sociology and a Masters degree in Social Policy, and I have worked in areas related to raising the achievement of minority groups in education, as I had originally intended. My interest in this area did not die, hence the decision to undertake Doctoral studies in this area. Arguably, my academic and professional decisions, in many ways reflected those taken by *all* of the respondents within the 'authoritarian' category. Initially, like Abena, I attempted to conform by undertaking and retaking science GCSE. This shifted to a form of 'accommodation through resistance' and compromise. Like Akua and others, however, I later deviated from the academic and professional expectations

of the community and initially my parents, but also like Efua and Gyan, however, I ‘compromised’ in later life by following an academic career, rather than pursuing the medical career my parents had initially wished for me.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been on the academic and professional trajectories of respondents and the role of their parents in creating their outcomes. Respondents from ‘authoritarian’ families indicated that their parents had ‘narrowly focused’ perceptions of academic and career success. More specifically, the expectation for many was that they pursue studies which would lead to medical, legal or engineering careers, although little support and assistance was offered by parents.

Two main reasons were offered for the limited guidance provided by parents. The first of these was the nature of the parent-child relationships, in which respondents and their parents discussed few issues including academic and professional pursuits, although these were considered important to both respondents and their parents. The second concerned the problematic experiences of respondents’ parents within the education system which may have impeded their confidence in their ability to help their children so parents were more likely to place their trust in teachers.

Career decision-making processes appeared to be more complex for those within the ‘authoritarian’ category than for others, since they faced making academic choices that reflected their individual strengths while also acknowledging the expectations of their parents, and in some cases their local Ghanaian communities. Most respondents identified a variety of methods that enabled them to reach a ‘compromise’. These included combining academic subject areas (e.g. science and art) and pursuing careers which reflected these combinations, including opting for academic careers, or working within fields advocated by

their parents but in professions of their own choice. A minority of respondents ‘rebelled or resisted’ against what was expected of them and pursued academic and career trajectories of their own choice. Just one respondent attempted to conform to familial expectation so as to be able to support family ‘back home’, which led to negative repercussions for her socio-emotional wellbeing and her academic and professional achievement.

Respondents from ‘authoritative’ families, however, seemed to enjoy more autonomy in their academic and career decision making. They also experienced greater assistance from their parents who provided ‘material’ and ‘practical’ support so as to foster their academic and professional development. Moreover, prior to their entry into higher education or at the start of their careers, some spoke of how their parents drew on social capital, more specifically informal contacts, in order to provide them with further assistance.

A common theme in the experiences of both groups was their parents’ emphasis on a strong work ethic and high expectations in terms of their academic and professional achievement, although parents appeared to have different approaches in conveying these ideals. Nevertheless, *all* respondents appeared to understand their importance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, this was applied to their academic and professional achievements, resulting in positive outcomes in socio-economic mobility.

Since the current research has relied upon a small snowball sample, which consists of an ‘elite’ group of predominantly high achieving British-Ghanaians, it cannot be used to draw conclusions about the academic and socio-economic achievement levels of *all* Ghanaians, Africans or Blacks. However, it does begin to provide an alternative view to some of the disconcerting assertions and generalisations regarding the nature of parenting within Black families, their attitudes to education and the implications for children’s academic and professional outcomes.

In all cases, families appeared to be extremely achievement oriented, despite the variations in approaches to the respondents' academic achievements. Moreover, not all parents adopted 'authoritarian' styles, although some research has suggested that this is a defining feature of Black families (see for example Roopnarine and Gielen 2005). Even when this approach was used for the majority of respondents, it did not have negative ramifications for academic and occupational outcomes. Interestingly, Efua, Gyan and Selorm, who are respondents within the 'authoritarian' category, achieved the highest academic outcomes across both groups, which may well be attributed to the emphasis on discipline and concern with high standards which are a key feature of this approach. As explained, these factors are primary concerns within the Ghanaian context and are considered representative of parental care for children. This indicates that cultural variations in methods of parenting must be acknowledged.

It has been suggested that of *all* minority ethnic groups across *all* educational levels, Blacks, that is African and African-Caribbean students, are amongst the lowest achieving groups (if not the lowest achieving group), and that much the same can be said about their socio-economic outcomes (see for example Berthoud 1999, Modood 2004 Dustman and Theodoropoulos 2006). However, my research begins to challenge these assumptions as there are clearly Blacks and Africans, such as those included within the current sample, who have attained well. Many of these have drawn on the social capital available to them. This research suggests that highly achieving Black students *must* begin to be acknowledged by teachers and researchers. Moreover, the main factors which contribute to their success should also be considered, because as Bagley, Bart and Wong point out:

such a research strategy offers much insight into why some, but not all Blacks may underachieve. It offers too practical avenues of educational and social policy for enhancing Black achievement (Bagley, Bart and Wong 1979: 84 in Robinson 1995:120).

Chapters 4 and 5 have shown that the emphasis on academic achievement represented one of, if not, *the* main feature of the respondents' socialisation experiences. This raises questions about the impact of this achievement orientation upon other aspects of their personal development. This issue is the main focus of the following chapter.

## Chapter 6: Socio-emotional outcomes

The way that parents interact with and discipline children influences emotional health and academic achievement.

*Lambourn et al.*

In our house, education was to the exclusion of all else.

*Araba, research respondent*

The day that Tony Blair made that ‘Education, Education, Education!’ speech was a bad day for all West African kids!

*Kofi, research respondent*

As I sat in a large Catholic Church hall in Broadwater Farm, North London, one Sunday afternoon in February 2008, listening to the debate concerning parent-child relationships at the Ghana Youth Association, I was amazed at the feistiness and the level of anger expressed by many members of the second generation. Voices were constantly raised as they refused to hide their dissatisfaction about certain aspects of the way they were raised. During the discussion about careers, one young woman was ‘criticised’ by a member of the first generation for ‘settling’ for a career in nursing as opposed to ‘moving up’ into medicine. When the young woman defended her choice by explaining that she had always harboured the dream of becoming a nurse, and this was ‘rebuked’ by the first generation panel members, she lost her temper completely. She shot up from her chair nearly knocking over the person seated next to her and shouted some expletives at the panel. Although I quite understood her frustration, having had a similar discussion and response to my career choice from a community member some years earlier, I was nevertheless shocked to the core, partly because even in moments of extreme anger with members of the first generation, I had always retained a modicum of respect and would never have dreamt of speaking to them in

this way. After several more outbursts of this nature, it was becoming increasingly difficult to remain the quiet observer and to hold my tongue and refrain from reminding them to respect their elders.

Back at home in Greenwich, as I was painstakingly transcribing the debate and then looking at it in relation to the other interviews that I had conducted, I thought more about what had been said. In doing so, I realised that several of my research participants had aired similar frustrations. Questions began to form in my mind about whether the first generation regarded education as more important than their children's socio-emotional and overall wellbeing. In considering these issues I also began to reflect on my own childhood during which, like the research respondents, education was (over) emphasised. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that the first generation did not disregard their children's wellbeing, but because education was an omnipresent feature of our socialisation, it was understandable that many members of the second generation had reached the conclusion that they had.

This discussion/debate also accentuated the ways in which variations in life experiences in different societies appeared to have shaped the attitudes of each generation. As discussed in chapter 3, the first generation had grown up in Ghanaian society where, it could be argued 'hegemonic' views existed regarding communalism and educational achievement. As discussed in chapters 3 and 5, migrants often had specific ideas of academic and career trajectories. These were sometimes a result of limited opportunities for social mobility, and belief that success in specific areas would be beneficial to the collectivity, particularly in terms of alleviating familial poverty. In contrast, the second generation, born in Britain, have experienced life in an environment in which there is more emphasis on the individual, and at a time in which many more choices were available in a number of areas, including academic and career trajectories (Bauman 2000, Cieslisk 2002). Arguably, as a result of these differential experiences, the young woman referred to above, respondents in the current study

and many other children of migrants, may have sought ways of pursuing their individual interests and to some extent resisting the hegemonic ideals of their parents.

I reflected on a discussion I had with my father in 2005 some months before he left for Ghana and I started my PhD, and on numerous conversations that he, my mother and my uncle (sadly deceased) would have on Sunday afternoons over copious cups of tea, about their experiences of life in Ghana and then in Britain. I came to understand that the factors which constituted 'wellbeing' and formed the basis of personal development differed for each generation. I also realised that each generation and the cultures in which they had experienced their formative years played a central role in their attitude to emotional wellbeing. As highlighted in chapter 4, for the first generation, educational and socio-economic success and status represented the main aspect of 'wellbeing', partly because of the poverty they had experienced 'back home'. These factors were also important for the second generation, but so was socio-emotional health and personal development. For them, this could be obtained by 'open' parent-child relationships and participation in a range of activities outside of education, which would help them to become 'well-rounded individuals' as Gyan put it. However, as Araba remembered, 'education was to the exclusion of all else', which implied that personal development in other areas besides education was not encouraged. Therefore this chapter addresses these issues in some detail. It considers respondents' reflections upon the extent to which education was balanced with other aspects of personal and socio-emotional development during their childhoods and the impact of these factors in conjunction with parent-child relationships upon their long term socio-emotional wellbeing.

## **Authoritarian families**

### ***Parent child relationships, limited engagement in activities besides education and impacts on socio-emotional development***

As indicated in previous chapters, *all* respondents appeared to understand and accept the reasons behind their parents' emphasis on education and occupational achievement and why this formed an important part of their socialisation experiences. Respondents acknowledged that their parents were keen to ensure that they utilised academic and professional opportunities available in Britain, so as to achieve social mobility and avoid financial problems in later life. At the same time the respondents saw the importance of engaging in activities and hobbies *besides* their education, as this was also integral to their personal development, confidence building and emotional wellbeing. For some, however, this was not always encouraged by their parents during their childhoods for the fear that it would impact negatively upon their education:

Frempong: I remember being quite good at basketball as a kid. It helped that I was pretty tall! They put up a basketball hoop in our playground, so we used to play during our breaks. Anyways I was spotted by the games teacher, and he wanted me to come to after school lessons. They had this once-famous American player JS come to teach kids at my school and they wanted me to be taught by him. When I asked my dad and mum, they just said no, straight, like that. I was really angry, but their reason was simply that it would ruin my studies and that if I wanted to play, then it could wait until I had done everything, by which time I would be too old.

Efua: Me? I was a frustrated musician! I taught myself how to play several instruments at school, and during some assemblies or masses they even asked me to play the piano. Even if I say so myself I was really talented in music and a natural, but this wasn't nurtured because of [adopts a Ghanaian accent] flaming 'edickation' [education]. Do you remember when you used to go round people's houses and you'd be shunted off to play with the kids so your parents could have a good old gossip? Well my dad's cousin had a baby-grand piano, and when we were sent out, my cousins and I used to try and out play each other. I was better because I often played without

having to read music. Once my uncle heard me, and he asked where I'd learned to play. I told him I taught myself during school lunchtimes. After this Uncle M tried to get them [her parents] to let me have lessons and take my grade exams as his kids were doing, but it didn't work.....

Other respondents remembered not being able to participate in activities such as school excursions despite their educational importance:

Maa: all the other kids in my class would be out on a trip, but me, I was on my 'Jack Jones' [by herself] doing work, or if it was a Friday, they let me draw pictures or read the books of my choice!

Maa also humorously recalled how on some occasions her parents used 'scare tactics' as a deterrent against further questions about why she could not attend the trips. These included warnings of possible bus and train accidents and reference to news stories in which such events took place. Such an approach replicates behavioural control techniques commonly used in traditional West African contexts (Ellis 1978). As Uka (1966 in Ellis 1978) commented, this method was effective particularly with younger children, perhaps because they were perceived as being more gullible and less likely to argue. However, Maa was obviously aware that the likelihood of any train or bus crash was small and, presumably, her decision to discontinue questioning was less a result of the fear that her parents had attempted to inculcate than the knowledge that their decision regarding school excursions was final.

It could be argued that parental views concerning relationships between engagement in extra-curricular activities and poor educational achievement are traceable to societal attitudes about the amount of time which should be allocated to such pursuits. This in itself is 'primarily attributable to the priorities and culture of that particular society' (Hofferth and Curtin 2005:96). Given the importance attached to education within the Ghanaian context,

inevitably, greater priority has been given to academic pursuits than to other aspects of personal and social development, since education is perceived as one of the few ways in which socio-economic mobility can be achieved. It would seem that these attitudes remained amongst the Ghanaian migrants, and in some cases, that they were even more resolute about curtailing their children's engagement in leisure pursuits as a way of ensuring that they did not waste opportunities for academic and professional development that are available in Britain.

Respondents from poorer socio-economic backgrounds also acknowledged their parents' difficult financial situations as a factor contributing to their refusal to support extra curricular activities. Due to low incomes, parents were forced to prioritise their spending, and invariably food and clothing for the family took precedence over their children's hobbies, which may have been costly. In spite of these issues, a few respondents were, however, critical of their parents' attitudes concerning money. Kwasi was one such example:

Kwasi: If you asked for pocket money to do something, whatever it was, all you ever saw was the bills. My dad always blamed us for the bills even the phone though we were never allowed to use it! He kept a bloody lock on it! He used to have this pink folder and show us how much the bills had increased, and I just used to ask myself why they bothered having us. But if my own kids asked for pocket money I'd never show them the bills, because for one they'd never understand! Once I needed 50p. Before I asked, I had to count to 10, and guess what happened? I heard about the bills again! Sometimes, I think they were deliberately tight. They were too negative about money, and being like this does not help. You *can* make choices, because it's about how much energy you put behind things.

In a study of intergenerational relationships between Chinese-Americans and their migrant parents, Zhou highlights how thrift on the part of parents in poorer families, who were more concerned with 'saving as a way of deploying family's resources' (Zhou 2009:139), contributed to disagreements between parents and children. Interestingly, however, despite

their socio-economic difficulties, these parents did not hesitate to allocate money for children's extra-curricular activities, especially those which enhanced their children's education.

The parents of respondents in this study were, however, primarily concerned with attempting to make ends meet with very limited resources. This, coupled with worries about being unable to provide for their children adequately, would presumably have contributed to a sense of frustration and inadequacy amongst the migrants that may have manifested itself in Kwasi's words, as 'negativity about money'.

Nevertheless, a number of benefits have been associated with participation in hobbies outside education. For example, some studies have indicated a link between participation in extra-curricular activities and the enhancement of academic learning and attachment to education (see for example Hofferth and Curtin 2005, Meyers and Perez 2004, Barber and Eccles 1999, Lamborn *et al.* 1992). It has also been suggested that engagement in hobbies can reduce the likelihood of involvement in anti-social behaviours (Barber and Eccles 1999) and could potentially contribute to the development of skills in specific areas. As a result of the enjoyment gained from engaging in specific hobbies and crafts, individuals may maintain these interests throughout their lives. Drawing upon a combination of personal experience, and his work with young offenders in the probation service, Gyan verified this observation:

Gyan: When you're a kid there are things which have to happen to make you a confident, balanced, well rounded individual. One is being allowed to be who you are, and a big part of this is doing things that you like. Now I'm not saying that 'what you like' means going round 'shanking' [stabbing] people or jacking [robbing] people for their trainers, like some of the kids I have had to deal with. No, I mean more constructive, and creative things, like judo, art, music, for example DJing, rapping, whatever. Some of these kids that are in trouble now [shakes his head], it's like, they've got a talent, but they haven't been given the opportunity by anyone, like their parents or

their schools, to develop it. They are just written off instead. If they got help, then it is very likely that their confidence would be much higher because they are doing something they are good at and even love.....

Involvement in extra-curricular activities has also been considered beneficial to personal and socio-emotional development, particularly since it allows individuals to express their identities and passions and to promote their individual strengths. These factors, combined, are integral to improving self-concept (Lamborn *et al.* 1992, Eccles and Barber 1999). Selorm reiterates this view and discussed approaches adopted with his children:

Selorm: I do not want my kids to go through what me and my sisters did, where everything was hinged upon our education, and getting beaten for messing up. They need to have a bit of an outlet and to do other things. My son plays football, and my daughter swims for our region. That said me and my wife are not pushy parents who forced them into doing these things. We left it so they could find out about what they really enjoyed and we just tried to encourage them when they did.

In contrast, overwhelming focus on academic pursuits and allocating limited amounts of time to other activities, such as hobbies, has been associated with a number of problematic outcomes. It may, for example, incur pressure on the individual to succeed at all times, which can lead to poor academic performance. Moreover, since individuals are multi-dimensional, other aspects of their lives require nurturing. Yet emphasising a specific area such as academic achievement to the detriment of other areas can contribute to imbalances in overall social development (Leary and Tangney 2005). Respondents highlighted how some of these issues applied in their own situations:

Ama: You focused so much on the work aspect, that everything else was ignored, which makes you a bit one-sided like those kids who were raised in Ghana!

Akua: Too much time was spent trying to be what elders expected you to be, and on your education. You did not have time to find out who you were, your likes and dislikes, and then you get to a certain age where you start questioning who you are, what you like, what you're good at. It mashes up your head. You then start to try and sort yourself out...you do little bits of something you *think* you might like, and then you can't always stick at it, because you let your work take priority but you also get bored. This is not a good way to be because then there is no balance.

### **Socio-emotional outcomes**

In chapter 4, respondents from 'authoritarian' families highlighted what they saw as the 'difficult' aspects of their parent-child relationships. To briefly recap, they described their relationships as being very much based on (over) emphasis upon discipline, work ethic (especially in terms of educational attainment) and limited amounts of positive reinforcement and few opportunities for 'democratic', open engagement between themselves and their parents. It was suggested by some that in some ways, these relationships in conjunction with few opportunities to participate in activities (aside from education) which they regarded as facilitating social and personal development, partly contributed to problematic socio-emotional outcomes: low self-esteem, depression and in some cases emotional crises in their later lives, although these were generally not enduring. The perceptions of these respondents correspond with other research findings (see for example Baumrind 1966, Carr 2001, Barker *et al.* 2006) which also indicate a link between emotional problems in later life and similar parent-child relationships as the respondents described. Suggested outcomes also include nervousness, low self-esteem, hostility and other personality problems. Carr (2001:96) further explains that such relationships may also contribute to the 'internalisation of problems, and subsequently depression'.

It is important to recognise, however, that other factors, such as illness, death, divorce, loss of employment, etc, may contribute to similar emotional issues. Moreover, these problems may occur in individuals who have experienced what might be considered as more 'open' parent-child relationships. Koby for example, as will be discussed shortly, experienced depression despite the fact that his parent-child relationships differed from those of many respondents from 'authoritarian' families. Therefore while 'authoritarian' parent-child relationships, which are based primarily upon negative reinforcement and discipline, *may* contribute to socio-emotional problems, there are also other factors that must also be taken into account.

Respondents' descriptions of their experiences of low confidence suggested that it was manifested in two key ways: submissiveness to authority figures and a continual need for reassurance from friends and colleagues, which also had ramifications for the respondents' professional and personal relationships.

### ***Submissiveness to authority figures***

Pokuaa described how submissiveness impacted upon her relationships with others:

Pokuaa: I was brought up to fear authority, so I would never challenge those who were in a position above me, or those who I saw as being stronger than me. When I got to about 19 or 20 at Uni, I really started to change. If anything, I became aggressive in a way that put people off me. In my heart, I did care that I hurt people, but I thought that my attitude meant that people couldn't mess about with me, and it did.

It took a good friend of mine to tell me point blank that this was not the way to act, so by the time I got to work, I had gone back to how I used to be. In fact I was more submissive, because I was scared that I would go back to being the bitch I was at Uni. It was to the extent that I always tried to please, and over exerted myself to do things, even if I didn't want to, or simply just couldn't. But after a while, this did not sit right with me, although I didn't know what to do to find that balance. Do you know what it's like when you're just stuck in transition, and you know you have to do something, but not what to

do? In the end, I happened to come across assertiveness training on a website at work, so I did that.

Pokuaa went on to explain how assertiveness courses helped her to establish a balance between ‘direct expression and standing up for [her] rights’ (Wilson and Galloise 1993:67). Selorm, Kwamena, Akua, and several others also described themselves as initially being submissive at work and acting in similar ways to Pokuaa. To an extent, seeking to please work colleagues and those in a position of authority is inevitable, particularly when commencing new employment, because of wanting to demonstrate capability within the job. In addition, socially, there is great emphasis on polite behaviour, and arguably, in some cases, submissiveness engenders positive social responses (Epstein 1980 in Wilson and Galloise 1993). Yet, although it is generally perceived that those who always aim to please, or are submissive and accept issues without question, are less likely to create challenges in relationships or working environments, in the long term this approach may present a number of problems. Firstly, submissive people may not communicate their displeasure about issues, although their unhappiness may be evident. This, in itself, may create a strain on relationships. Secondly, and unfortunately, submissiveness/acceptance may also increase the individual’s susceptibility to bullying (Geffner *et al.* 2001), hence the necessity of adopting an assertive, but non aggressive approach, as Pokuaa learned to do.

### ***The need for continual emotional reassurance in relationships***

Two respondents spoke of a need for continual emotional reassurance. Ama, for example, recalled how in most situations she ‘never felt sure of anything [she] did’. Moreover, she explains that at work, ‘[she] always needed to be assured by my colleagues that things were OK’. Selorm described the difficulties he experienced in his personal relationships, specifically with his previous partners before marrying his wife:

Selorm: I veered from being cold and unemotional and creating a distance between myself and my girlfriends, to being very clingy and needing them to show that they felt something for me. I hated myself for what I was putting them through, but I just couldn't seem to stop it.

The need for constant reassurance may possibly be attributed to the limited praise and assurance received from parents during childhood and to uncertainty about abilities and qualities. An outcome of this behaviour however, is that the individual becomes focused upon seeking and enhancing their self-esteem through others. This in turn can create a strain on relationships, as both Selorm and Ama recognised. Selorm's attempt to establish a distance between himself and his partners can also be understood as a method of reacting to his self doubts, arising from the belief that he was not worthy of loving relationships (Leary and Tangney 2005). If this is so, then these beliefs may have been based on his childhood experiences with his father, which were discussed in chapter 4. Those in this situation may also 'lose sight of their goal to maintain close and mutually caring relationships' (Leary and Tangney 2005:305). Therefore the main issue may not be whether one's self-esteem is high or low. Rather 'it is that they feel that their self-esteem is under assault, and they wish to restore it' (ibid). Nevertheless, Selorm sought ways of overcoming these problems, and these are discussed shortly.

### ***Depression and emotional crises***

Several respondents described their experiences of depression and emotional crises during their late teens and twenties, which for some continued into their thirties. Araba referred to this period as 'a horrible time in my life' and Ama described her situation as being 'a long time in which I felt bad about myself, my life and where it was going'.

During the process that might be understood as their ‘emotional recovery,’ many respondents commented that they frequently experienced moments of frustration because they felt that these issues were not being resolved quickly enough. Pokuaa, for example likened her experience of the emotional crisis to being a ‘set of booms and busts, like the economy!’ There would be periods during which all seemed fine and anxieties would subside for a short while, but these would soon be replaced by long periods of extreme tension. Their accounts echo Atwood and Scholtz’s (2008) description of emotional crisis. As they note, it is marked by a range of symptoms including a sense of anxiety, confusion at some moments and calmness the next and existential questions concerning the purpose of life, identity and so on. As a result ‘unpredictability is the only stable factor in their lives’ (Atwood and Scholtz 2008:241). Some also recalled suffering physical pains as part of their ‘crises’. Gyan, for example, remembered how he would ‘wake up in the middle of the night and break into a sweat’, which exacerbated his asthma. Similarly, Selorm and Kofi spoke of ‘palms which would sweat for no apparent reason’ and Pokuaa also described experiencing ‘intense migraines’ and chest pains. Like Pokuaa, Abena also endured strong headaches, which she believed partly resulted from her recurring thought that ‘everyone was talking about me, because I had failed in my education’.

After a while, most respondents came to realise and accept that dealing with these problems was not a straightforward process and that it required a considerable investment in terms of emotional work and time. This realisation seemed to help them in coping with their situation. All were proactive in seeking ways to deal with their emotional problems. Approaches included participation in self-help programmes and groups, religious guidance, work and ‘thrill seeking’ activities and engagement in of hobbies, some of which were not possible in their formative years.

The respondents' accounts and experiences echo Giddens' (1991) observations regarding the process of self/identity development, in late modernity. Part of this is the tendency for individuals to reflect upon past life experiences as a way of understanding their actions and their outcomes, as an essential element of 'mobilising' self-identity (Giddens 1991: 78). Anxiety, emotional crises and/or what Giddens refers to as 'emotional disorientation', may also result from a close examination of 'existential' questions, such as who the individual is and the trajectory that their life is taking. This, he explains is caused by a sense of chaos which affects the roots of the individuals' sense of being in the world and is also part of the process of 'mobilising' identity.

As discussed in chapter 5, Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2000), also explain that in late modernity, a multitude of information and resources are available to assist individuals in terms of helping them become who and what they wish to be. It is evident that respondents from 'authoritarian' families have understood that early childhood experiences, which as described included (over) emphasis upon discipline and academic achievement, have been influential in their 'drive' to developing their sense of 'self' in ways that they have chosen, as opposed to those based primarily upon the preferences and 'hegemonic' ideals of their parents and/or their local Ghanaian community. As is discussed shortly, respondents have 'tapped into' some of the numerous resources available to assist them in establishing their own sense of identity.

Yet despite the broadening of opportunities for dealing with emotional crises and establishing self identity, as Giddens and latterly Bauman (2000) point out, the 'down side', is the potential for experiencing additional anxiety and emotional trauma. More specifically, this is the stress associated with selecting the most suitable resources to best support the individual in helping them become what they wish. For some respondents, the root causes of their traumas were partly related to this. For example Akua, as described above, remembered the

frustration of trying a range of different activities as part of the process of ‘finding herself’, yet she was unable to identify which was most appropriate for her. Once the respondents established an understanding of their needs, they were proactive in seeking ways to deal with their emotional problems. Approaches included participation in self-help programmes and groups, religious guidance, work and ‘thrill seeking’ activities and engagement in hobbies, some of which were not possible in their formative years.

### *Self-help programmes*

Self-help was obtained through a number of different channels. Pokuaa, for example, continued with her assertiveness training and also regularly consulted self-help books and attended seminars, which were specifically tailored for young Black women facing similar issues. Selorm, Abena and Ama sought professional guidance, such as therapy, to analyse the ‘relationships between themselves and significant others’ (Atwood and Scholtz 2008:243), in particular their families, and also to explore aspects of their identity. Notably, the majority of the respondents who sought self-help were female and this might be explained by the perception of women as being more emotionally aware and also more discursive about their life experiences. Interestingly, however, previous research (see for example Lieberman and Snowden 1994 in Kaye 1997) has suggested that men are more likely than women to participate in self-help programmes and also that the type of ‘self-help’ groups attended vary according to sex. This research indicates that men appear to attend self-help groups that deal with alcoholism and physical illnesses, whereas women tend to frequent those that focus on emotional issues. However, in my research, males attended organisations which dealt specifically with emotional issues.

In the long term, respondents appeared to benefit from the support received from these sources. Indeed, self-help programmes, such as those the respondents attended, have been recognised to be effective approaches to dealing with ‘problems which may contribute to low

self esteem' (Kaye 1997: 292). Furthermore, self-help groups are regarded as offering empowerment to those in this situation and as an effective method of identifying problems and promoting emotional wellbeing (Llewellyn and Osborn 1990).

### ***Religious Guidance***

For some, drawing upon religion as a method of reducing anxiety and as a way to deal with the reality of their situations also helped them to 'make sense of existential experiences of the more profound nature of suffering' (Loveheim 2004: 60). Araba and Ama discussed their use of religious and spiritual guidance in coping with their emotional difficulties:

Araba: I would say that religion has helped me to be less judgmental about things. My judgmental nature came from my childhood experiences. Though I struggled with religion initially, it became more important as I got older, especially because of the problems I was going through in my late 20s. I got religious counselling. It really helped me and I became a strong Christian.

Ama: My parents were not particularly religious, though my mum took me to church as a child. My dad was an atheist. However, when I reached the age of 25 and started having these emotional problems, I went to a Christian Pentecostal church. I always prayed, but now I have a strong relationship with God.

At various junctures during their respective interviews, Araba and Ama also explained that Christianity formed an important part of their identities. For Araba, her religious identity seems to take precedence over her Ghanaian cultural identity. In explaining this, she described herself as 'not really conscious of being Ghanaian', which she maintained was partly a result of not spending her formative years in a Ghanaian home and thus possessing a 'limited' understanding of the Ghanaian culture. Other factors that influenced her perceived 'lack of consciousness' in terms of her Ghanaian identity included her father's continual complaints that she was not a 'Ghanaian child, and was *too* English' and also visits to Ghana,

during which she felt ‘culturally excluded’ due to being unable to understand the language and other aspects of the culture.

However, Araba also indicated that although she still regards herself as being ‘more anglicised’, of late, she has become increasingly aware of her Ghanaian identity. These comments indicate that ethnic identity is ‘fluid’ and ‘hybrid’ (Jacobson 1998). It is constantly shifting, and how an individual perceives his or her identity will depend on the experiences, time and situation they are in. Yet at the same time it would seem that Araba regards her religious identity as being ‘fixed’ and unchangeable, because she was more closely engaged with her religion than her ethnic identity. Similarities appear to exist between Araba’s views and experiences and those of the British Muslim respondents in Jacobson’s (1998) study. Although unlike Araba, their Asian ethnicities formed an important part of their identities, their lives were also ‘tightly interwoven’ with their religion, so that, in a similar vein to Araba, they viewed their Muslim identities as static.

### ***Work and job satisfaction***

Work was regarded by a number of respondents as a positive way to deal with their socio-emotional problems. Kwasi, who as indicated in the previous chapter established several successful businesses, is one such example. For him, identifying his particular specialisation played a key role in the enhancement of his self-confidence. Moreover, establishing a business meant that he was forced to become self-reliant and independent, to set personal goals on a regular basis and to deal with issues as they arose.

Kwasi also spoke of the stimulation and enjoyment derived from this autonomy and from expanding his business further. Yet, he acknowledged that initially, when first starting his business, the primary focus was upon his work, which meant that he was often uncertain about how to deal with other aspects of life including his emotions. As Atwood and Scholtz

(2008:44) point out, this is a common outcome of focusing exclusively or predominantly upon the pursuit of ‘external accomplishments’, such as careers and academic credentials. Interestingly, however, Kwasi indicated that he was able to apply skills such as approaches to problem solving and attitudes that he had obtained through his work to his personal and familial activities. This, he maintains, has helped him to gain a sense of control of his life. He further explains that he also learned to worry less about inconsequential things, to prioritise and not to dwell on issues that he could not control. Lessons such as these, he felt, were valuable in enhancing his self-confidence.

Kwamena also explained how he gained intrinsic satisfaction through his work, although for different reasons than those put forward by Kwasi. As Kwamena noted:

Kwamena: Having been through what I went through with no support, there is nothing better than to see young people who come in here with a lot of problems and then going out and making something of their lives. I don’t want to sound boastful, but it makes me feel good to know that I was a part of their improvement.

Interestingly, in the last year Kwamena had been promoted to a more senior position, which entails a management element. Although he indicated that on some levels he preferred to be working directly with the patient, this new position enables him a greater level of autonomy. In a similar vein to Kwasi, Kwamena maintains that his work ‘has made him stronger because of dealing with difficult cases’ and also due to ‘the responsibility of making key decisions’. Kwamena also explained that, despite his difficult childhood, much of what he experienced within it has made him more insightful and sensitive to the experiences of his clients, which is a useful and necessary skill in his work.

### *Thrill-seeking activities*

Frempong and Maa discussed how they engaged in ‘thrill-seeking’ activities in their later years:

Frempong: I liked basketball, but I also always harboured this thing about cars and speed. I don’t know what it is or why, but I just love watching high speed car racing, the grand prix etc. I used to have some friends at school, and they’d go ‘go-carting’ or small buggy racing. They’d ask if I wanted to go, but of course, I wasn’t allowed to do it for reasons you don’t need me to explain, but I always promised myself that one day, when I got older, I’d have a go at something like this. A friend at work got me into banger racing and there’s a track not far from me, so we go there a few weekends a month. I’m getting pretty good now.

Maa: What are some of my hobbies? Ummm, well, I like acting as you know, and so I turned this hobby into a career. I’ve travelled a lot...I still do, but not as much as I did a few years ago. But I do a few extreme things as well. I’ve been doing bunjee jumping. Sometimes I do a bit for this sickle cell charity. I’m not a sickler, but some of my close cousins have the condition, so I like to do my bit to raise money. Anyway, I did a bunjee jump off a bridge and raised £500. People were betting silly money that I wouldn’t do it. So because the guys lost their bets, I made all this money! I also like to do water skiing, white water rafting, surfing and things like that. Some of my friends think that I am ‘off key’ doing these things, and yeah, they are probably right, but these things give me such a rush. I love it.

It might be argued that as well as compensating for ‘missing out’ on extra-curricular activities in his childhood years, by participating in ‘extreme’ sports Frempong in particular was also learning to take risks, to overcome fears and to further develop his confidence, all of which he regarded as necessary aspects in the process of ‘self-development’.

Maa’s acknowledgement of her hobbies as ‘mad’ and ‘off key’, are also particularly noteworthy. Although many people might not necessarily express an interest in engaging in activities such as bunjee jumping, motorcycling, skydiving or even banger racing, they are

not regarded as being particularly abnormal. However, as explained earlier, her upbringing did not encourage many hobbies. Thus ‘extreme sports’ such as those that she participates in may have been considered by her family, her friends, and initially herself as being ‘out of the ordinary’. She also explains that these notions were compounded by the fact that her mother regarded her interests as ‘un-ladylike’ and not ‘seen as the done thing for Black people’. These views may have emerged from observations that women and minority groups have been virtually absent from extreme sports, and this exclusion can be partly attributed to hegemonic (and often White) masculinity. Presumably, males especially White and middle-class males, control access to these sports so that women and ethnic minorities might be generally less likely to be accepted within this arena of extreme sports (Delaney and Madigan 2009, Garnelts 2006).

### ***Re engagement in areas of childhood interest***

The remaining respondents also took up activities that they had expressed interest in during their childhoods. Efua explained how she re-established her interest in music and took piano lessons so as to improve on what she already knew and also as a form of stress relief, particularly when undertaking further studies. Abena, as discussed earlier had a number of problems, and of all the respondents, she seems to have experienced the most emotional issues. Although she explains that it has taken a while to deal with the issues she faced, she is making some progress and is re-establishing her childhood interest in art in a number of different ways. For example, whenever possible she visits museums and reads books in order to further her knowledge in this area. She also spoke of her intentions to attend art seminars and eventually to start painting again. Gyan and Akua indicated that they had re-developed their interest in sports. Akua enjoyed netball and long distance running, now participates in her local netball team and also attends her local running club where she competes in local races. Gyan took up martial arts, which he regards as having several benefits, such as

improving his ability to meditate and aiding his concentration. Ama, who had always been interested in dance, spoke of participating in African dance classes.

### **Authoritative families**

In contrast to many respondents with authoritarian parents, many those from ‘authoritative’ families were encouraged to take up leisure pursuits and extra-curricular activities of their choice from an early age. This appears to have been motivated by their parents’ belief in the importance of establishing a balance between non-academic activities and education. Sarpongmaa, for example, described how she displayed a particular talent for sporting activities, including swimming and athletics, from an early age. This was continually encouraged by her parents throughout her childhood. Although for a few years after leaving school her participation in sports was intermittent, she has recently re-engaged in netball practice and now attends on a weekly basis. Adjoa’s work within her local Ghanaian community as an advisor and her involvement in writing articles for Ghanaian websites represents her main interests. Her advisory work means that she frequently acts as a ‘bridge’ between older and younger generations, which also enables her to enhance her ability to negotiate. She acknowledges that this is also a valuable transferable skill which can be applied in other areas, such as her future career.

While it is commendable that Adjoa is supported by her parents and the community, questions might be raised as to whether the level of support received is affected by the fact that she is working for and within the Ghanaian community and whether this would have been the same had she undertaken other pursuits.

Effie’s main hobby, as discussed in chapter 5, was fashion design, which she later turned into a career. She spoke of the support that she received from her parents in the process of developing her flair for designing clothes. In a similar vein, Ekow described how his interest

and flair for technical drawing, which initially begun as a hobby was supported by his parents and soon became an academic and career pursuit.

In addition to her writing, Esi has been a musician specialising in soul and gospel music for a number of years. Since she was a child she has taken singing lessons, which were provided by the church that her family attended. Her parents were influential in encouraging her talent and frequently transported her to concerts countrywide and in some cases to the United States and parts of Europe.

Kwaku was one of few respondents who spoke of not having any particular talents or interests as a child. As he reached his 20s, however, he began to reflect upon his life and in doing so he recognised a need to broaden his horizons. After a year of considering his options and discussing them with his parents, Kwaku took two months of unpaid leave from work and travelled around Europe, parts of Eastern Asia and South America. This experience helped him to develop an interest in travelling as a hobby and has enabled him to establish ‘a broader perspective on life and living’, which he also regards as a form of personal enrichment. Kwaku’s feelings concerning his outcomes replicate Gmelch’s findings (1997) from a study of students who had travelled during the course of their studies. Gmelch observed that as a result of their experiences ‘individuals acquire new understandings about life, culture and self when they deal with changes’ (Gmelch 1997:133). Through travelling and learning about other cultures, it appears that Kwaku, like Gmelch’s respondents, gained in terms of personal growth and experiential learning.

Respondents suggested various reasons regarding why their parents encouraged their participation in a range of leisure activities. These included the belief in the idea that an ‘outlet’ was necessary, since academic work could be intense, particularly in the period before external examinations. Moreover, as Esi pointed out, her parents were of the view that

engaging in such activities would enable herself and her sisters to be more productive in their schoolwork and this would yield better results in the long term. This corresponds with findings from the studies referred to above (e.g Hofferth and Curtin 2005, Meyers and Perez 2004, Barber and Eccles 1999, Lamborn *et al.* 1992), which suggest a linkage between participation in extra-curricular activities and enrichment in terms of academic learning and positive attitudes towards education.

Ekow's explanations included reference to his parents' childhood experiences. More specifically, he spoke of his father's interest in becoming a professional footballer, but due to socio-economic hardship this was not possible. As a consequence, he sought to ensure that his children did not go through any similar encounters. Moreover he tried to ensure that they would have the resources to follow their particular interests. Ekow suggests that it is largely due to this type of parental encouragement that he and his brother were able to develop their hobbies of technical drawing and cooking into lucrative careers.

***Koby: illness and the impact on participation in extra-curricular activities and socio-emotional outcomes***

For some of the respondents serious, life threatening illnesses prevented them from partaking in more active extra-curricular activities. Koby, for example, describes his experiences:

Koby: I loved playing footy, but any time I played too hard, I got ill, though I played secretly when I was a teenager!

Koby described how a combination of being unable to engage fully in athletic activities, for which he felt he had an aptitude, in conjunction with personal and familial fears about his health, had a negative impact on his self confidence on occasion. His own concerns about his health were compounded by the fact that many of his peers with the same condition did not live as long as he has. In addition, he experienced continual acute pain and physiological

crises which often resulted in lengthy stays in hospital. Koby also expressed some frustration at being referred to as ‘disabled’ as he felt that this further undermined his confidence. Koby does not regard his illness as warranting the label ‘disabled’ and explains that his frustration stems from the fact that those who are perceived as having any form of disability or serious illness are treated differently, or in his words ‘like they can’t do stuff’. Given the impact of these issues upon Koby’s socio-emotional state, support from the family was vital, so as to ensure that he did not ‘downgrade’ his overall perceptions of his abilities. Within their own research, which partly explored the impact of chronic diseases on children’s socio-emotional outcomes, Viera and Hurtig (1986) referred to examples where parents encouraged their children to participate in a range of different activities so as to facilitate their general wellbeing and eventually restore their self confidence. Koby’s parents sought to adopt a similar approach by attempting to engage him in pursuits which were not physically strenuous and potentially damaging to his health, but at the same time would enable him to develop an ‘interesting’ skill:

Koby: I sort of gained a hobby, because my dad encouraged me to play a musical instrument, the piano. But when the teacher used to hit my fingers with a ruler, I stopped. My parents weren’t happy about this! I did like reading though, so they were OK with that!

LOK: Why were you ‘encouraged’ to play the piano?

Koby: Well, my dad was interested in it, but he never got around to playing it, though he bought one so he was keen that someone had to use it! Because I was the last born, I had no chance to say no! I later regretted not carrying on though, but I suppose it’s not too late to go back to doing it [laughs].

While Koby’s parents appeared to be proactive in their attempts to enhance his self confidence and socio-emotional wellbeing, it was worth noting that Koby’s father wanted him play the piano because he did not have the opportunity to do so himself. Arguably, in this instance, there are some echoes of the experiences of some of the respondents in the

‘authoritarian’ category, whose parents attempted to fulfil their own wishes through their children, although in their cases it was purely in relation to academic pursuits. In contrast to those within the authoritarian category, however, Koby’s parents seemed to accept that music was not his area of interest and thus allowed him to develop his reading, which formed the basis of his academic trajectory and helped to enhance his self esteem. It might also be argued that his parents encouraged his interest in reading because it is closely associated with academic pursuits, which as this thesis shows is valued highly amongst Ghanaians.

### **Autobiographical account**

At an earlier stage in my life, I would have described myself in a similar way to Efua - that is, as a ‘frustrated musician’. I was also a ‘natural’ in this area, having taught myself to play the acoustic and bass guitars and also the keyboard, even though I have never been able to read music. Unlike Efua, however, my parents initially did not mind if I developed this flair further, as long as it did not interfere with my school work. Moreover, my cousin, who had achieved well academically and was regarded as a model for our generation to aspire to, was also an accomplished pianist. This, in a sense made the pursuit more acceptable.

I frequently received musical instruments as birthday and Christmas presents, and my earliest recollection is of a small wooden guitar I was given shortly after I turned five. However, my frustration sprang from the fact that although I received the instruments, this is where it ended. Much as I would have liked to have had lessons they never seemed to materialise. My mother went so far as to locate a teacher for me, and a neighbour had also offered to provide lessons. However, in the end, I could not take them. Financial difficulties were a major factor preventing me from undertaking lessons, although these difficulties were not of the same order as some of the respondents had described. For a while I continued to teach myself, and at school there were odd lessons here and there, from which I learned new things. As I got older, and due to the pressures I faced during my teens, which meant that my school work

was ‘to the exclusion of all else’ as Araba described it, the time available to practice dwindled and as a result so did my interest. As the years passed, my instruments gathered dust in my bedroom.

Unlike some of the other respondents, however, it was not the lack of engagement in extra-curricular activities that contributed to the depression I experienced, although like the research respondents this did occur in my 20s. During the time I was undertaking my undergraduate degree and for about a year after, I was relatively happy and generally enjoyed life. In 1999, at the age of 24, I began my Masters Degree at Oxford Brookes University and, while the academic experience was excellent, I was beginning to ask myself a number of ‘existential’ questions about who I was and about my life in general. As Araba, Pokuaa and the others found, this was a difficult and painful process. Reflecting on being steered towards specific forms of behaviour that were ‘culturally’ acceptable, and on the considerable emphasis upon my supposedly ‘negative’ attributes, as opposed to the positives during my childhood, contributed to the difficulties I was experiencing.

In addition, I had begun to re-consider the educational trajectory that I had taken. While I was inclined towards academia and did enjoy learning, once again, I looked back at my earlier years and the expectations of me. All of this made me question whether any of what I had done was for myself or whether I was just conforming to expectation. After much soul searching I came to understand that in all honesty I could not see myself doing anything else other than what I had done. Moreover, studying Sociology was *my* choice, and it enabled me to highlight (and theorise) the experiences of British-Ghanaians, a group that has been neglected in much social science research and theory. Yet I was also forced to acknowledge that earlier on, I could have also followed my own pathways and choices, rather than spending time on areas which were of no use to me in the long term. To further compound my misery, I realised that I had spent a great deal of my life trying to please others (especially

my elders and other authority figures) without taking my own needs into consideration. Like Pokuaa, Selorm and others I began to feel that I had been ‘subservient’ and that people regarded me in that way. All of these depressing thoughts and questions began to take their toll on me to such an extent that this affected my physical appearance, I became less sociable and more withdrawn, and I also began to alienate myself from my family. Thanks to my ‘die-hard’ work ethic, however, I still focused on achieving my Masters’ Degree, which I believe prevented me from a complete meltdown.

My ‘emotional recovery’, which began at the end of 2000, took different forms. Firstly, once I had completed my Masters’ degree, I went back to my old habit of writing and began to document all of my experiences. I was also taking more ‘quality’ time for myself and Starbucks became my haven! Like Ama and others I also obtained self-help and in time established an informal self-help and social network with other second generation minority friends in Oxford who were experiencing similar problems. Some years later, I felt that as a further part of my emotional development, I needed to be away from everything and everyone I knew. Therefore, I moved abroad to Madrid for two years. To begin with, I experienced numerous difficulties, not having much knowledge of the culture or the language. However, dealing with these problems was useful in terms of personal growth and improving my confidence. Like Kwaku, the overall experience of living abroad was extremely beneficial in that it enabled me to develop new understanding of myself, my needs and the direction I wanted my life to take. While the overall experience was difficult, on reflection I regard it as something that was inevitable and necessary, in the sense that it was the start of establishing my sense of self and tending to my personal needs.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the respondents’ perceptions of the effects of their socialisation experiences and their socio-emotional outcomes in the long term. Despite the fact that *all*

respondents reported that educational and occupational achievement formed a large part of their socialisation experiences, for some respondents, notably those from ‘authoritarian’ families, the focus on these areas seemed to override other aspects of their personal development. These respondents explained that during their childhoods, there were limited opportunities to engage in activities which they believed would be beneficial to their socio-emotional development and in enhancing their self esteem.

While respondents recognised that financial constraints were an issue which prevented them from participating in extra-curricular activities, most suggested that their parents were concerned that it would detract from their educational pursuits, which corresponds with Ghanaian cultural beliefs that education should be prioritised. However, in the respondents’ view, the focus on ‘education to the exclusion of all else’ in conjunction with parent-child relationships that involved little ‘open’ emotional engagement or positive reinforcement had ‘problematic’ ramifications for their social and emotional development in the long term.

It was suggested, however, that although respondents’ experiences correspond with the socio-emotional outcomes that theorists (e.g Baumrind 1966, Carr 2001) have suggested are linked with ‘authoritarian’ parenting, it cannot always be assumed that there is a direct cause and effect relationship, or that the socio-emotional problems described will be long term. Rather, the extent to which this is likely is dependent upon the way in which the individual deals with his or her situation.

Many of the respondents’ sought a number of interesting approaches to dealing with these problems and improving their self-esteem. These included seeking self-help through seminars and counselling. Others sought religious support, gained satisfaction through work, undertook what might be perceived as ‘extreme leisure pursuits’ and re-engaged in activities that had interested them as children.

The parents of the remaining respondents took a different view concerning their engagement in pursuits outside education. Rather than regarding such activities as an impediment to academic pursuits, some saw it as enhancing productivity and improving overall wellbeing, which corresponds with the findings of number of studies in this area. This is not to say that some respondents in 'authoritative' families did not experience socio-emotional problems. However, these were attributable to 'external' factors, more specifically serious illness which raised awareness of issues about mortality.

It is clear that educational achievement took centre stage in the lives of many Ghanaians and West Africans and this is understandable, given that for many, especially those living 'back home', it was the main way in which upwards socio-economic mobility and social status could be achieved. In view of this, it is important to understand that, for them, it is likely that academic pursuits will take precedence over leisure activities. However, at the same time the implications of this approach cannot be ignored particularly for those, such as the second generation, who are acculturated within a context where engagement in a mixture of academic and non-curricular activities is deemed necessary for the child's overall well being and academic and personal development.

Throughout this thesis it has continually been recommended that it is important for research in this area to recognise the active interest that Black and minority ethnic families take in their children's educational and occupational outcomes, and understand the actions they undertake to enhance the likelihood of success. However, the effects of over-emphasis on education and its ramifications for socio-emotional health need to be taken into consideration as this may also have a bearing upon educational and professional achievement. Examining these issues, however, should be not be taken as an opportunity to further pathologise Black families, nor to make negative generalisations about their attitudes to education, especially since it is evident that not all will adopt the same approach.



## **Thesis conclusion**

Over dinner with my cousin and our friend at a Brazilian restaurant in North Greenwich, my cousin was regaling us with funny stories about a Nollywood film that she had been watching earlier that day. She commented on the ‘over-done’ makeup, terrible hairstyles, and incongruous ‘designer’ clothes worn by many of the actors in these films. Somehow, the discussion moved to her observations about later generations of British West Africans in general. The general perception was that they seemed to be adopting a similar style of dress to the Nollywood actors, in that they had a preference for designer clothes and were often seeking to live the ‘flashy’ lifestyles of Hollywood and Nollywood actors or footballers and musicians, but without actually having to do any work for it! As we sat bemoaning the fate of ‘the children of today’ I joked that we were starting to sound like older generations and that our elders perhaps had the same ideas about us as we were growing up! Moreover, as my friend pointed out, these changes were not specific to Ghanaians.

Nevertheless, some of the points made in the discussion during dinner replicated concerns expressed by several respondents during interviews. Ama, for example also expressed how she was ‘frightened’ about the future of third generation British-Ghanaians. From her observations of those she had interacted with and others in general, she believed that many ‘had lost their sense of direction’, which for her indicated a lack of knowledge and understanding about their cultural identity and associated values, such as academic and professional success and a general work ethic. Gyan made similar comments toward the end of his interview. He shook his head sadly as he commented that:

Gyan: Everything has gone down the pan for these kids now because it’s like when we were growing up, our parents always taught us that we should work hard. No matter how much we hated it when they were going on, I think we came to appreciate how hard work pays off in the end, and that there was always a sense of achievement once we

were done. But I know from working with some of these kids, they are no longer interested in trying to get an education, or even just grafting at an apprenticeship to try and make something of themselves. They see education as what one kid called it 'some 'long ting' (long thing) which will 'blaze' [cost] money and time'. So instead, they want things quickly, and unfortunately in the job that I do, I see people turning to crime as a way of getting that pair of trainers that they could have worked for.

These observations also appear to correspond with views that younger generations have become increasingly 'lifestyle centred' (Bahr and Pendergrast 2007). Associated with this is the need for instant gratification, that is, to have the newest consumer goods immediately, regardless of how they are obtained. As my cousin later pointed out, celebrity lifestyles have influenced these attitudes, and she added that British-Ghanaians who want to achieve something with their lives seek to emulate celebrities such as record producers, musicians and sports stars. Of late, there has been a growth in the number of Ghanaian celebrities within these fields, which include Sway Da Safo, Dizzee Rascal, Tinchy Stryder, and Michael Essien, the renowned Chelsea footballer, who have become role models for young Ghanaians and other Black youth.

However, as my cousin pointed out, many fail to acknowledge that a strong work ethic and education is necessary in order to reach the positions of these celebrities. In light of these observations, it might be suggested that future research could consider the situation for future generations, more specifically their motivations for success and their attitudes concerning educational achievement as a method of acquiring an affluent consumer lifestyle. Their attitudes may also be compared to those of previous generations to establish attitudinal changes.

As the current research has shown, there were different motivations for success for the previous generations. In revisiting pre-colonial and colonial Ghana in chapter 3, it was argued that elevation out of poverty was the ‘driving force’ behind educational and professional attainment and the expansion of the colonial education system was seen as facilitating this. While many achieved social mobility as a result of these changes, there were a considerable number who did not benefit. This was partly attributable to the disproportionate relation between schools and students and also the nature and quality of the education provided, which often meant that skills that school leavers emerged with could not always be translated to the labour market.

Central to the thesis, however, was the role of the family in the educational and professional achievement. The collective nature of Ghanaian and West African societies ensured that family and in some cases the whole local community, was heavily involved in children’s educational achievement. This was recognized as an invaluable form of support, especially for those who faced socio-economic difficulties, as this meant the provision of educational materials. Moreover, in situations of extreme socio-economic disadvantage kinship fostering was an alternative method of ensuring that children obtained an education and also childcare provision.

In many ways, there appeared to be a continuation of these approaches in Britain. For example, fostering was maintained as a method of childcare and as a way of facilitating academic achievement, in that children’s grasp of the English language could be improved. However, for the respondents fostered in Britain this often had negative implications. In particular, respondents discussed the difficulties associated with making the transition to life with their African families, which was partly a result of the differences in approaches to parenting. Sadly, the problems between fostered respondents and their biological parents often meant that it was difficult to fully reconcile with them.

All second generation respondents also commented upon family and community engagement in their academic pursuits. While in some ways this was valuable, not least due to the provision of support and because it enhanced their drive to succeed, some respondents reported how it created pressure, which contributed to psychological problems. The first generation also faced similar issues, although in some respects, what they experienced was more intense, particularly if they had come to Britain to be educated. Given the emphasis upon filial obligations in Ghana, it would be they who would be responsible for providing for other family members. However, many faced a multitude of problems, including difficulties in adapting to the British education system and limited finances, all of which prevented them from obtaining their qualifications, fulfilling their filial responsibilities and eventually returning 'home'.

Approaches to parenting and their effect upon academic achievement were also examined. In considering parenting styles reference was made to Diana Baumrind's typology of parenting, which consists of three main styles: 'authoritative', 'authoritarian' and 'permissive'. It was shown that, within the Ghanaian and West African context, parents were more likely to adopt 'authoritarian' approaches. These parent-child relationships emphasized respect and discipline (which at times included physical punishment) as this approach was seen to promote discipline and a strong work ethic, which could be applied in academic pursuits.

It was noted that a number of studies focusing specifically upon British and Western contexts associated 'authoritarian' styles with Black families and that in contrast to Ghanaian and many other non-Western views, 'authoritarian' parenting has been considered by theorists (e.g Baumrind 1966), educationalists and psychologists as detrimental to academic outcomes and socio-emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, authoritarian approaches adopted within Black

(and working class) families were viewed as conflicting with ‘authoritative’ approaches favoured within the context of the school and by middle class White teachers. These ‘conflicting’ methods of created were regarded as underlying behavioural problems for Black and working class children. However, I have suggested that these attitudes fail to acknowledge the cultural variations regarding what constitutes good parenting and socialisation practices.

The majority of respondents within this study described their parent-child relationships in ways that were akin to ‘authoritarian’ approaches. It was suggested that parents who utilized this style were often drawing upon their own socialization experiences in Ghana as a way of ensuring that the respondents conformed to behavioural expectations and achieved highly in terms of their education and work. With regards to academic and professional achievement, ‘authoritarian’ parents tended to have specific expectations (such as careers in medicine, law and engineering). Although it was acknowledged that ‘direction’ or ‘coercion’ of children towards prescribed academic and career trajectories may also be considered to represent another facet of the authoritarian approach, since it appeared that restrictions were being placed upon children’s choices, it was also argued that parents were also concerned with ensuring that their children used the educational and professional opportunities available in Britain as much as possible.

The current research did not set out to support the use of ‘authoritarian’ parenting, it did, however, explore the extent to which some Ghanaian parents regarded it as necessary for preparing their children to deal with racial discrimination in society. It appeared that the ‘authoritarian’ approach was adopted because these parents did not want their children to experience the limited opportunities that they had experienced due to racism and discrimination. These authoritarian believed that strong educational qualifications would help to reduce the likelihood of this happening. As shown in chapter 4, studies undertaken

amongst African-American communities (for example L'Abate 1998, Lamborn 1996, Carter *et al* 2001) also showed that the use of similar approaches to parenting has been regarded as a mechanism for dealing with racial prejudice in society.

While respondents recognized and understood their parents' aspirations, and acknowledged the difficulties that the first generation faced, the majority did not fully adhere to parental expectations, since their parents' choices did not necessarily incorporate or reflect their personal interests. Instead, the majority reached a 'compromise' between their parents' expectations and their own aspirations. Some rejected their parents' aspirations altogether in favour of pursuing courses that reflected their own interests. For the one research participant who conformed, this had ramifications for her emotional wellbeing.

It has been argued that overall, contrary to dominant beliefs, 'authoritarian' approaches did *not* have a detrimental effect upon the respondents' academic achievements. Interestingly, in some cases, those from 'authoritarian' families were amongst some of the highest achievers academically and professionally. In accordance with findings from research conducted by Baumrind (1966) and others (see for example Carr 2001), however, it appeared that some respondents experienced considerable socio-emotional problems, which they viewed as partly resulting from their socialization experiences. Some specifically commented upon how (over) emphasis on academic achievement, and limited opportunities for 'open engagement', contributed to a lack of confidence and difficulties in their dealings with others, and later to other socio-emotional problems such as depression. Nevertheless it was argued that although these parent-child relationships may have this effect, there may be other causes such as negative life events, including bereavement or illness. Moreover, drawing on the example of Koby, it was argued that those who have had a more 'positive' experience of parent-child relationships can be equally susceptible to similar emotional difficulties. The emotional problems experienced by respondents were not long term, especially as they found a range of

‘creative’ methods of dealing with them and re-building their confidence, some of which entailed self help, religion, taking up pursuits omitted in their childhoods, work, and ‘thrill seeking’ activities.

The remaining respondents reported parent-child relationships which correspond with ‘authoritative’ styles. Respondents spoke of open relationships with their parents where they were able to discuss a range of issues, and of how they were granted autonomy in all aspects of their life choices, including their academic and career trajectories. In relation to career choices, respondents described the different types of help that parents offered. For those from more affluent backgrounds, this was mainly through material support (such as through private education), whereas for others this help involved ‘practical’ methods including assistance with their school work. It was suggested that this approach could be interpreted as a form of ‘intensive’ parenting in which educational development, such as that which the respondents experienced, is viewed as associated with loving and nurturing relationships.

Parents also often drew upon their personal contacts so as to facilitate their children’s entry into their chosen careers. Respondents in this category also reported that, although education was emphasized during their formative years, extra curricular activities were also encouraged for three main reasons: they were seen to enhance academic productivity; parents wanted the respondents to participate in activities that they were unable to undertake ‘back home’ because of their filial responsibilities; or they were regarded as a necessary aspect of personal and socio-emotional development. In relation to socio-emotional outcomes, the findings of this research are broadly consistent with Baumrind’s in that none of the respondents in authoritative families appeared to face any major socio-emotional problems linked to their parent-child relationships. Koby was the only respondent who faced emotional difficulties but these were mainly a result of his chronic illness.

As explained at various points in the thesis, the research sample for the current research is not large or representative enough to draw conclusions about the academic and professional achievement of *all* Ghanaian, African or Black groups. Nevertheless, the overall findings of the thesis do begin to contribute to a different picture concerning the achievement of Black students within the British education system. As discussed earlier, much of the research in this area reveals that Blacks are amongst the lowest achieving groups in secondary and tertiary education. This earlier research fails to disaggregate Black students in order to discern differences by country, and identify those who are actually achieving highly. As a result, there is little or no acknowledgement that some Black students are very successful. Recognition of this would put a different complexion on the situation. Thus one of the major arguments arising from my research is that generalizations cannot be made concerning Black academic and professional achievements and that variations such as those mentioned must be taken into account in assessing their outcomes.

Furthermore, in relation to 'parenting' practices and education, again, my research suggests that many Black parents are very much concerned about their children's academic outcomes and have high aspirations for them. Not all Black parents adopt 'authoritarian' practices, as earlier research has implied, but even in cases where this is the parenting model adopted, this does not always negatively affect academic achievement, although children may feel pressure to achieve.

My research acknowledges that some parents do not always adopt a 'hands on' approach in facilitating their children's education, yet this does not indicate a lack of concern. Rather, in many cases, this may be a result of a lack of confidence in their ability to support their children, or perhaps a lack of understanding about the 'details' of their children's education

(Ceballo 2004). This, however, does not necessarily reduce their motivation to ensure that children succeed. It has also been pointed out in a number of studies that Black parents are not always encouraged by the school to engage with them so as to help improve their children's attainment levels (see for example Crozier 2002). Therefore, educational institutions need to take these issues into account and consider new ways of building and developing relationships between themselves and Black parents. There is also a need to acknowledge some of the problems faced by ethnic minority parents which may prevent them from fully understanding their children's educational pursuits. As Demie and Mc Clean (2007) reported, approaches such as these appear to have been adopted in the schools they examined in the London borough of Lambeth, which contributed to positive academic outcomes for children of African heritage in that borough.

As explained briefly in the introduction and in greater depth in chapter 1, the thesis has drawn on a combination of Sociological and Psychological perspectives and studies in analysing the above issues. Bringing the two approaches together has, in many ways, contributed to a richer understanding of the experiences of the British-Ghanaian respondents. Psychological perspectives (notably Baumrind's *Typology of Parenting*) have best reflected the parent-child relationships described by the respondents, and also the socio-emotional outcomes that resulted from their socialisation experiences. Sociological research, on the other hand, has provided insights into the educational experiences of Black students in British schools. Moreover, Sociological studies (for example Song 2003, Ballard and Ballard 1974, Hays and Falconer 2006 Dundes *et al.* 2009) have been particularly useful in understanding the pressures faced by respondents in navigating between the academic/professional (and cultural) expectations of their migrant parents and personal aspirations. At the same time, linking Sociological concepts (for example Bourdieu's *Concept of Capitals*, and Reay's discussion of emotional capital) with Psychological theories of parenting (for example

Baumrind, Mandara and Murray 2002) also contributed to an enhanced understanding of how some parents (notably those within the ‘authoritative’ category) provided educational and professional assistance for the respondents, through a combination of socio-emotional, financial/cultural and practical support.

Additional research is required to fully understand educational and career outcomes of Black students. Such studies might continue to draw on a mixture of Sociology and Psychology. An example might include social and psychological factors contributing to Black and minority ethnic students’ choice of further/higher educational institutions and qualifications, or perhaps an examination of the social and psychological experiences of Black and minority ethnic students who attend red-brick institutions.

A further development of the analysis already undertaken in the current study, in conjunction with a similar approach taken by Demie and Mc Clean (2007), indicates alternative areas for further research. This would involve generation of statistical data about the achievement levels of particular Black groups, alongside a variety of qualitative research methods (such as in depth interviews, ethnographies, participant observations and so on), which considers the home experiences of high achieving students from these backgrounds. For example, parents’ academic and professional aspirations for their children and their approaches to enhancing their childrens’ achievement levels might be considered. In addition, it could also analyse the experiences of the respondents in given educational institutions and consider the extent to which their educational success is facilitated. This might include examining factors such as the extent to which parents are encouraged to engage with the school to establish a ‘culture of achievement’ (Demie and Mc Clean 2007:427). In addition, the support that students are offered in relation to careers guidance might also be investigated, given that much existing research (see for example Mirza 1992, 2009) indicates that Black students are often (though

not always) discouraged from 'high achieving' occupations by careers advisors which may negatively affect upon their aspirations.

It was also suggested in chapter 1 that although much research points to the low achievement levels of African students, not only does this fail to distinguish between African nations of origin but also fails to acknowledge the variations in achievements between British-African students and those born on the continent. While some researchers (see for example Theodoropoulos and Dustman 2006) have taken these differences into account in relation to employment outcomes, most research continues to over-generalise and this obscures significant differences and serves to create a misleading and completely negative picture. Clearly, then further research is required that investigates these distinctions when generating statistics pertaining to academic outcomes.

Earlier research (see for example Ellis 1978) has highlighted some of the difficulties faced by overseas students who arrived in Britain during the 1960s, which contributed either to low achievement or to a failure to obtain the qualifications initially aimed at. Nworah (2006), Kanu and Marr (2007) and Bailey (2007) have more recently examined the experiences of West African overseas students within their research and it appears that, although the situation has improved somewhat, many still face issues in terms of making the transition to the more independent learning approaches adopted in Britain and difficulties in relation to finance, since many are self-funded. Given that the fees for overseas students are far greater than for home students, this may mean that they spend more hours in employment than on their education. These factors, in addition to pressure from 'back home' to achieve, can contribute to poor achievement. There remains a dearth of studies examining these issues and additional research needs to be carried out, so that institutions can ensure that students' needs are understood and appropriate support provided, so as to enhance achievement levels.

Much research has focused on the low attainment levels of Black British students and some has implied that poor parenting practices within Black families are at least partly responsible. While the low attainment levels of Black students is a serious and ongoing problem, I suggest that the exclusive focus on the low attainment levels has created a negative stereotype of the Black student that ignores the many high achievers. This negative stereotype means that many in the education sector will immediately assume that all Black students will underachieve and will be problematic. In an attempt to challenge these assumptions and stereotypes, my research focuses on high achievers hoping to contribute to a more nuanced and complex picture of Black students' achievement levels. Ghanaians have been the focus of this study partly because there is a need to recognise, I suggest, the differences between cultures and countries of origin within the artificial 'Black' category which conflates different groups and negates educational and experiential differences and outcomes.

Moreover, my research challenges the assumption that poor achievement is a result of inadequate parenting. It indicates that a variety of parenting styles are adopted by Ghanaian parents, but that in all cases there is considerable emphasis on education and on inculcating useful skills and attitudes. Although my research is limited, as it focuses on a small number of high achieving students, I hope that it contributes to the creation of a more 'open' approach to research on the achievement of Black and minority ethnic students, that acknowledges the diversity and difference within this homogenized category. While ongoing research on low attainment is, of course, essential I argue that this can be supplemented by research that acknowledges Black students who succeed and investigates the reasons for their success.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **Information for Research Participants**

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. Your time and insights are much appreciated. Before we start, I would like to briefly recap on a few issues such as the aim of the research, withdrawal and confidentiality.

#### **Aims of the research**

*Between Two Lives* examines relationships between first-generation Ghanaian student migrants, who arrived and settled in Britain between the 1960s-1980s, and their children born within this time frame.

It explores the links between these relationships and the academic and professional choices and outcomes for second generation British Ghanaians. In addition, it also considers how these factors combined impacted upon their self perception. So during the interview some of the areas which will be covered are as follows:

- General background Information about you (e.g your name, place of birth, age, where raised and studied, where you currently live, etc)
- Your family background (e.g your parents, when they arrived from Ghana, their aspirations information about your siblings, etc)
- Your reflections upon your childhood experiences, especially those relating to the family and education, engagement in extra-curricular activities and how all of these have shaped you in the longer term.
- Perspectives on the futures for later generations of British Ghanaian/African children.

#### **Discomfort with questions and withdrawal**

If during the course of the discussion, I ask any questions that you are unclear about, please stop me at any point and I will go through them again. Also, if there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable discussing, please don't feel obliged to do so. You can just indicate that you feel uncomfortable with whatever it may be, and we can move onto another area.

As explained at initial discussion meetings regarding the research, if at any point you feel unable to continue with the interview, please do not feel obliged to do so. You don't have to give any explanation and we can just stop whenever necessary.

#### **Confidentiality**

I would like to reassure you that all data will be kept confidential, and that your identity will be protected. Your personal information will also remain anonymous.

Please feel free to ask me any questions at this point or throughout the interview.

## APPENDIX II

<b>Title of Research: Between Two Lives</b>	
<b>Investigator's name: Louise Owusu-Kwarteng</b>	
<b>To be completed by the participant</b>	
1. Have you read the information sheet about this study?	YES/NO
2. Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	
3. Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	YES/NO
4. Have you received enough information about this study?	YES/NO
5. Which researcher/investigator have you spoken to about this study?	YES/NO
.....	
6. Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study:	
• at any time	
• without giving a reason for withdrawing?	
	YES/NO
7. Do you agree to take part in this study?	
<b>Signed</b>	Date
<b>Name in block letters</b>	
<b>Signature of investigator</b>	Date

**Please note:**

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.

**This project is supervised by: Professor Patrick Ainley; Dr Doug Stuart (lead supervisor), Dr Linnell Secomb**

**Contact Details (including telephone number):**

**Lead Supervisor: Dr Doug Stuart,**

**Humanities and Social Sciences, KW326, Greenwich Maritime Campus, Park Row,  
Greenwich. SE10 9LS**

**Telephone 0208 3319619.**

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **General Background information**

Name of respondent

Age of respondent

City in which respondent was born and spent childhood

Current city in which respondent lives

#### **Family background**

When did your parents' arrive in Britain from Ghana?

What were your parents' aims and objectives for coming to Britain (e.g. work/education)? How successful were they in terms of achieving these objectives?

What fields are your parents currently working in? Are these areas reflective of their aspirations? Why/why not?

Do you have siblings? If so, how many? What are their current academic/professional pursuits?

#### **Childhood experiences**

What are your main recollections of your childhood/socialisation experiences and parent child relationships?

To what extent was there involvement of Ghanaian/African community in your childhood/socialisation experiences?

What were some key values/morals instilled by your family and community?

#### **Education**

What were your family's attitudes towards educational and professional achievement?

Did your parents and (if they were influential in your upbringing) the Ghanaian community have any specific academic/professional aspirations for you?

How were these values/aspirations conveyed by your parents/Ghanaian community?

#### **Academic/Professional Choices and Pursuits**

What were your personal academic/professional aspirations? To what extent did these correspond with those of your parents/the community?

What subjects did you do for your GCSEs and what were your results/grades?

Did you go into further education after GCSEs? Which qualifications did you pursue (e.g. A'Levels/BTec Nationals) and what were your grades and outcomes?

Did you attend any form of higher education? If so, which university did you attend, and what courses did you undertake (e.g. Degree/HND etc) and what qualifications did you obtain?

What were your reasons for continuing into higher education?

Did you proceed onto post graduate level qualifications (e.g. MA/MSc, MPhil/PhD)? What were your reasons for doing this and what were your outcomes?

To what extent did your qualifications reflect your career choices and overall trajectories?

How did your parents/the Ghanaian community respond to your academic/career aspirations and outcomes? What were your responses and attitudes towards what they said?

### **Extra Curricular Pursuits**

When you were a child, were you encouraged to pursue any hobbies or extra-curricular activities, outside of your education? What hobbies did you participate in and how did you become involved in them?

Did engagement in these hobbies have any impact on your overall self development? If so what was this?

### **Reflections on childhood experiences and perspectives for future generations**

Can you reflect upon your overall socialisation experiences and the extent to which they have shaped your personal trajectories (e.g. self perception/socio emotional outcomes, life choices, etc)?

How do you see the future for later generations of Ghanaian children? Will they have similar experiences to you? Will they have more/less freedom in terms of life choices (e.g. education, careers etc) than previous generations?

## APPENDIX IV

### INTERVIEW WITH KOFI 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2009

*[General Characteristics of Kofi: Kofi is 21 years old, was born and raised in South East London, and has lived in different areas of the same borough all of his life. He has two siblings, and has just completed an undergraduate degree at a local university, and was at the time of interview, awaiting his results and looking for a job in his area, which is media graphics and design.]*

#### **Interview starts at 3.30**

**LOK:** Kofi, once again, thank you for taking the time to participate in this research, especially as I know how busy you are at the moment. Before we start, though, I just want to briefly re-cap on the aims and objectives of this research and explain why I'm doing it. This research is called *Between Two Lives*, and what it examines is the relationships between first-generation Ghanaian student migrants, who arrived and settled in Britain between the 1960s to the 1980s, and their children born within this same time frame. I'm also looking at the connections between these relationships and the academic and professional choices and outcomes for second generation British Ghanaians like yourself and the others I have interviewed so far.

The research also addresses issues such as how all of these factors impacted upon my respondents' self-perception. So during this the interview, we will be discussing your reflections of your childhood experiences, especially those relating to the family and attitudes towards educational and professional achievement.

If during the course of the discussion, I ask any questions that you are unclear about, please stop me at any point and I will go through them again. Also, if there are any

issues that you feel uncomfortable discussing, please don't feel obliged to do so. You can just indicate that you feel uncomfortable with whatever it may be, and we can move onto something else. I also just want to reiterate something else before we start. As I also explained at the first meeting we had a few months ago [November 2008] to talk about the research, if at any point you feel you can't continue with the interview, please do not feel obliged to do so. You don't have to give any explanation and we can just stop whenever you feel like it. Please feel free to ask me any questions at this point or throughout the interview.

*[Kofi acknowledges and accepts what has been discussed. The interview commences with a discussion about Kofi's familial and educational background]*

**LOK:** Kofi, let's start with a little bit of information about you and your family background. So this would be things like where you were born and raised, how many siblings you have, where you guys went to school... and something about your parents' backgrounds.

**Kofi:** Of course...sure. My two sisters and I were born in South East London. I myself was born in [names a part of South East London] to be precise. We were Catholics, though I'm now a Born Again.

**LOK:** Born Again? Do you mean that you are a Born Again Christian?

**Kofi:** Yes, that's right. I am a Born Again Christian. But we all went to Catholic primary and secondary schools in the area we lived in. It was nothing to write home about. Prayers, mass, giving up stuff for forty days at Lent though I found it so hard to give up my Haribo sweets!

*[LOK and Kofi both laugh]*

**Kofi:** Anyway, my parents came and settled in South East London after living in Germany for a few months. That's where they went when they came from Ghana.....Anyway, we lived in *[names a part of South East London]* for a bit then we moved to *[names another part of South East London]*, which can only be described as the back end of London. Yeah....it really was the pits!

**LOK:** *[Laughs]*

**Kofi:** It was a proper dump....a real dump, but anyway, we survived living there, and how we did is another story. About my family, then. My parents came from Kumasi. Do you know it? You must do?

**LOK:** Yes, I know it. My dad is from quite near Kumasi, and he went to school and military training academy there. We visited last year- 2008 at Christmas. It was quite a nice place, which I will visit again once I am done.

**Kofi:** It has really changed over the years, and it changes quickly.

**LOK:** Has it? I can't really say too much about that, because I don't go that often.

**Kofi:** When was the last time you went there before this time?

**LOK:** In 1991. So a long while back. It has changed since then, but I can't say how quickly it changes, although I think it has changed a lot since the first time I went. Did your parents live all of their lives in Kumasi, until they came to Europe then? Germany?

**Kofi:** Yes, they did, they went to school there and everything. They came to Germany in 1987, a year before they had me, then they came on to the UK.

**LOK:** That's quite interesting that they opted to go to Germany because usually when you talk to older Ghanaian migrants, they either said they wanted to come to the UK or to go to America, though some did go to places like Italy or in some cases the Netherlands. But generally they come here or to the States because of the connections with Ghana, and because of the English language and of course the opportunities. So, just out of interest, what made your parents opt to go to Germany?

**Kofi:** Well, they never really said too much about all of that, but from the little I picked up, I think they would have eventually wound up in London, but I think they just went to Germany partly because they had family there. My Mum's sister and brother are living there. They haven't said much more than this, but they are here now, anyway.

**LOK:** Yes they are, and they would have had their reasons for doing what they did. But can you tell me a little bit about what they had planned to do when they reached Britain?

**Kofi:** Do you mean in terms of their education, jobs and that?

**LOK:** Yes. That is what I mean.

**Kofi:** Well, in most cases education is what they usually come for isn't it? My Dad wanted to do a degree in social sciences, or Law and my Mum who was really good at maths, and was actually a maths teacher back home, wanted to further her education so she could teach here, but this didn't happen for reasons they didn't explain. They don't ever seem to say much about certain things! I suppose it was a bit of a shame for them really, but you know, they are doing OK now. One thing is, though, for my parents and other West Africans from that generation and I suppose

the older ones before them, coming here wasn't always just about them. I think they also wanted the best for us kids too. I mean, they came here with that premise that their children would have the best education because it was English. After struggling in Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, they believed that here, there would be more resources, better resources for our education. Do you see what I mean?

**LOK:** Yes, I agree with that, because my own parents thought along the same lines. They had some difficult experiences when they came in the 60s, which meant that they stayed here longer than they had anticipated. But I think that in some ways, even though they had a hard time, they didn't see everything negatively, or see staying here as a bad thing, even if they didn't go into the things that they'd hoped to themselves. Like your parents and the others you describe, mine saw the benefits that we'd get by being educated here. But going back to your parents' careers, what sorts of areas do they work in?

**Kofi:** Well my Mum works as a carer for the elderly in an old people's home, and my Dad works as an administrator in a charity [*names a charity*]. It isn't bad. They earn quite good money. Things could have been a lot worse, because some of the people that came around the same time as my Mum and Dad are doing shit work like working in factories, or even sweeping supermarket floors. Some aren't even working at all. You see them hanging around the estate and you start feeling kind of sorry for them, especially when you start thinking about what they gave up to come here and hear all their stories about the grand plans that they had.

**LOK:** I agree with you there, Kofi. It is sad, because as you say they do sacrifice a lot to come here and face so many hurdles, and then not to achieve what they had hoped and to end up in those jobs must have been quite disappointing. It's even

worse for them if they had had good jobs 'back home' in Ghana. So in many respects your parents have done well, I think.

**Kofi:** Yes they have... *[Kofi asks for a quick break to receive an important phone call and he comes back approximately 10 minutes later]*

**LOK:** Kofi, you said that you had two sisters, can you tell me a little bit about them. How old they are, and what they're doing now?

**Kofi:** My younger sister who lives with me *[Kofi has his own flat in another South East London borough]* just turned sixteen a few months ago and she's just finishing her GCSEs now. She's into her sciences, so I suppose she'll do something like that at A'level. My Dad wanted her to become a doctor, but we'll see because she's quite stubborn! My sister who is a year older than me works over in West London, I could never remember exactly what she was doing, I think it was something around sales. I'm never sure, even though she's explained it a few times *[LOK and Kofi laugh]*. She's doing OK for herself though.

**LOK:** What about yourself? I remember that you told me when we first met that you were doing a degree? What is your area?

**Kofi:** Well, I just finished it last month *[May 2009]* and so I am waiting for my results now, but I did a degree in Media Graphics. I am also really looking hard for a job in this area now, but it is so competitive. They want skills and experience. But when I look back, I can't believe how stressful my degree got towards the end, so I just hope that after all that, I come out with a good grade and get a good job. Mind you, you know how stressful it gets don't you, because you're working and doing yours?

**LOK:** It does get tough sometimes, but I think it's all about finding a way to balance it all and it all comes out OK, I'm sure. But while it's been tough, it seems that you and your siblings have all been quite successful academically, and your older sister seems to be in a good job....Was doing well something that was emphasised by your parents when you were kids then?

**Kofi:** Yeah, well, on that score, let's put it this way, shall we? When Tony Blair made that education, education, education speech, it was a bad day for *all* West African kids!

**LOK** [*Laughs*]

**Kofi:** And we were no exception! As soon my Dad heard that one, he took it literally and that was it for us! No, seriously, though, he and my Mum were serious about our education and did want us to do well, and I think that's because they didn't do what they wanted to do in terms of their own education, you know how it is?

**LOK:** [*Nods in agreement*]. Yes, definitely. My brothers, sister and me had a similar experience. My Dad and everyone else always said it was always important to do well and use up the advantages that they lost out on. So we all tried to do it and it has paid off in many ways. I'd just like to ask you a bit more about this issue, though. What sort of things did your parents do in helping you to achieve, and how effective do you think their strategies were?

**Kofi:** It's a funny one, really, because though they were always going on about how we should do well and get high grades, they were a bit hands off and didn't really help that much. I don't know why. I suppose they were a bit too busy with their work and probably because they did not know what to do to help us. But you always,

ALWAYS had to do your homework though, and they'd show up at all your parents' evenings without fail. If you didn't do that well, you were asking for trouble [*Kofi shakes his head*]. There were a couple of other Ghanaian and West African kids on the estate, and we all went through the same thing though. It was tough and really frustrating sometimes.

**LOK:** Though you're doing media graphics as a degree, and potentially you will follow a career in this area, was this something you were always interested in doing?

**Kofi:** In all honesty, I do like this area, and generally enjoyed the degree, because it's got a mixture of arts and sort of science and technology. What I really wanted was to be a P.E. teacher, because I was pretty good at sports especially football, but that idea was washed clean out of my head by my parents. I was good at it but they discouraged it. They would ask why I needed to spend time doing that when I should be studying. Even if I got to play in matches, they never came to see me.

**LOK:** Did your parents have any specific expectations, in terms of what you'd study, and do career wise?

**Kofi:** Well they had high expectations of all of us. For me, that started at an early age. When I was about 3, there was talk about putting me in for MENSA, and of course there was an expectation that I would be a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer. Or perhaps an economist or something like that. It was just that you had to be educated and everything else would follow.....But anyway, I haven't done exactly what they wanted. I've done a media graphics degree like I said, and I want to work in that area.

**LOK:** You just made an interesting comment, which was that your parents believed that you had to be educated and everything else would fall into place. Can you elaborate on what you think that they meant by that?

**Kofi:** I think that they meant that if you were educated, you would get a good job. If you did further education after that you could also exploit your qualifications career wise. Then after this, you can settle down and this is all what you need to be happy. But I think for our generation, we don't limit ourselves to these things. It goes deeper than that because other things matter like finding happiness outside of work. I mean with other people, relationships doing the things you like doing and all that.

**LOK:** What you say is similar to something that I heard from a group of Ghanaians a while back, during a debate between the two generations. The older generation had similar views to your parents and the younger kids, who were in their late teens and early twenties, basically saw things the same way that you did - that happiness goes beyond education and a good job. But there's something else I'd like to ask in relation to the points you made a few moments before.

**Kofi:** OK, go ahead, Louise.

**LOK:** Actually, I have two questions. Given that your parents were quite determined and adamant about your achievement levels, how did this affect your qualifications? In essence, how did you get on with your GCSEs? What qualifications did you do after this, and before you started your degree. What results did you obtain?

And the second question is about their response to the academic choices that you made from GCSE level upwards?

**Kofi:** Well, in answer to your first question, I managed to get 11 GCSEs with grades A-C. GCSE choices included the usual: Maths, English, triple Science, Design and Technology, Business, Computing, graphics, and a couple more. I did similar subjects at A'Level and passed three, then I started the media graphics and digital design course three years ago [2006]. I'm on a 2.1 at the moment for my degree, but if I can get a good mark for my dissertation, there's a possibility that I could get a first. So I'm hoping to achieve this.

**LOK:** I also really hope that you can get your first, Kofi. That would be a great achievement.

**Kofi:** Yes, thank you for that Louise. But though my parents had the expectations that I talked about before, they did not have much understanding of the area that I was doing, so there were some disputes. But with time they approved of it, maybe because of the science in it and the money! Anyway, they can't really say much about what I've chosen now, because I've gone and finished it! *[Kofi pauses]*

**Kofi:** Louise you know something? Going back to what you asked about the ways they tried to make us do well, I just want to tell you something I remembered. There was one thing that used to seriously wind me up in their approach, and which I think didn't help the relationship I had with my Dad when I was growing up. I was always compared to others as a kid. There was this Nigerian guy called Richard, who I was mates with. I was always compared to him, and it was worse when I got demoted at school. You had these classes. 1.1 was the highest and 1.3 was the lowest and I got moved down for some and stayed down for three years. I never heard the end of this! All I ever heard from my Dad was *[adopts a Ghanaian accent]* 'why can't you be

like Reechard?’ and it sets up false dichotomies...differences between him and me which could have really ruined my self-esteem.

**LOK:** You’ve raised a few interesting points in what you’ve just said, especially the last bit, and I’d like to ask you a bit more about that in a minute. But I just want to ask first, why did you get moved down in your sets at school?

**Kofi:** You know, just when you’re a teen, and you mess about a bit. That’s what I did and this was the outcome, but I passed my exams in the end though.

**LOK:** Yes, and this is how it sometimes is. Most kids go through those sorts of phases and it passes with time though and once they’ve gotten whatever it is out from their system, then they move forwards and many come out really well. But we were just discussing how the comparisons, which your Dad made between you and your friend, might have had negative outcomes in terms of your self-perception, or self-esteem. Was this the case? I mean *did* experiences like this have an effect on you in this way?

**Kofi:** Comparisons happened a lot, not just in relation to my school stuff. It was behaviour as well. And for a while, it did kind of affect me a bit. It was like I started questioning myself and my abilities not so long ago. It was a few years back. I basically lost sight of who I was, and where I was going in my life. At times I do still get nervous and feel a bit under confident, and then my palms will start to sweat for no apparent reason [*Kofi holds his palms up to show LOK*]. But now I’m looking for a job, and am moving onto bigger and better things, I have to keep all of these feelings under control. I’m just trying to be positive, and trust in God.

**LOK:** *[Nods and pauses]* Do you mind if we talk some more about your relationship with your parents, and how you viewed it?

**Kofi:** It's not a problem Louise. We can talk about this. What else would you like to know?

**LOK:** Well you could start from how things were when you were younger.

**Kofi:** Things were OK at first, but then everything just changed so much. When I was really young, I used to spend a lot of time with my Dad. He taught me how to ride a bike, but as I got older, the communication just ceased. We barely spoke. Back then we never spoke for more than 10 to 15 minutes a day. Things I had to learn, I had to learn them on my own. The only communication that I had was when it seemed like I was going against my Dad. It was all about correction. I couldn't talk to him about girlfriends. There was just no input whatsoever. But what you did hear about was the people you should not be hanging about with. It'd be like *[Kofi adopts a Ghanaian accent]* 'Heh Kofi, why are you always wid dat Kingsley?' You must know the score. If it wasn't that, it was the chores. Basically, it's like I said. The manner of the relationship was correction!

**LOK:** *[Nods and laughs]* Was it like that for your sisters as well?

**Kofi:** It was like that for all of us. It was interesting though because my Dad was different with people outside of the house, and on the estate generally. He got on really well with them, and everyone liked him, but inside the house it was a different kettle of fish. We knew differently and we always wondered why this was, but never figured it out. Oh well.... Another thing about him, I mean my Dad and my Mum as well, they never ever socialised with anyone that was not Ghanaian. At my Dad's

work, people would go to the pub or do something on a Friday night, but they would never go even though they were invited by their colleagues. They don't drink so that's probably part of the reason why they didn't go out. But it was only ever the funerals or the christenings they went to. There always seemed to be loads of them where we lived, but they never went anywhere else. I think it's something they should have done, mixing with people outside of the family as well as the Ghanaian community. It might have helped them relax a bit more and things might have been a bit better in the house.

**Kofi:** The other thing which I think impacted on the relationship between us lot and our parents, was that although family was important, I think in some ways we were never a proper family.

**LOK:** In what sense do you mean?

**Kofi:** When I say this, it's true that we lived together in the flat, but we never really did things together as a family. I can only ever remember once going to a theme park, Drayton Manor Park and Zoo, with my parents and my sisters, when I was really young. But we didn't do anything else, like to have a family photograph or anything like that, not like other families seemed to do. It was so weird. But one thing is that in spite of this, I was never deprived of material things. My parents did not give me what I wanted all the time because they did not want me to become spoiled, but I never went without though, so it was all right on that score.

**LOK:** That's a quite poignant reflection, and interesting overall observation you have made there. What do you think was the reason for your family not engaging in the leisure activities?

**Kofi:** Well, I suppose for the kids it was the education thing, because they didn't want us to be side tracked away from learning, but I also think that they didn't have much time because of their work situations. They were working a lot, and especially my Mum who had all these odd shifts. I suppose it was that, really. I don't think it would be anything else. Well actually, no. Like I said before, the relationship between us and our parents was a bit distant, so I think that probably didn't help. But on the flip side, not doing these kinds of things, what I see as team or relationship building activities, doesn't help either, it just makes that distance wider.

**LOK:** Do you think that they were aware of the things you had observed?

**Kofi:** No, not really. I think, like I say they were too busy, and the way things were with the relationship it wasn't easy to raise these issues without there being an argument anyway, so we just left it.

**LOK:** You talked about your interest in sports as a child, which almost led you into becoming a P.E. teacher. Do you still take part in sports as a hobby?

**Kofi:** Not as often as I would like, because I've been so busy at the moment with Uni, my dissertation, and other things like church. But yeah, I did enjoy it though- gym, football and basketball- but it wasn't really encouraged because as I was telling you, we had other priorities like education! But I think in reality, sports was perhaps the only real hobby I enjoyed, that and the graphics, which I was able to do a degree in anyway.

**LOK:** When did you become interested in media graphics?

**Kofi:** It was when I started to do similar stuff at GCSE Level as I said, and I just took it from there, really. If I can get a job in this area, then that would be so cool especially if it pays very well!

*[Kofi indicates that he will have to leave in the next 10-15 minutes to go and collect his sister]*

**LOK:** Kofi, you have really talked about some interesting experiences. You have also raised a number of important and thoughtful points throughout this discussion. I want to just to reflect back on everything that you've told me about your experiences. What do you see as the main overall outcomes of the life experiences that you have described to me? To put it more simply, how do you think these life experiences have shaped the way you are today?

**Kofi:** Obviously what you go through in your life makes you who you are. There's no doubt about it. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad. I've talked about a few difficulties I had, here and there, in terms of the relationships with my parents, my demotion at school, but I am OK. I think it could have been worse and I have got over them. You know, things are happening now, I have just finished my degree, I'm working towards my future and I hope to settle down one day, maybe with my girlfriend.

One thing I would say, is that our parents are right in that they gave us a good attitude about work and education is very important but I think that maybe our lives were narrowed down to education quite a bit and they did not always take into account the other things that we wanted or needed. All the Ghanaian and Nigerian parents that I know from my estate and in other areas were really strict about their children's education and I think that's right in some ways. But they also need to see that times have changed as well. Things are different here to how they are 'back

home' and things have changed. Also going to university is not a must for everyone. Loads of African kids are going to college now and they do go on to university, but it's not always the best way for them. There are other options which they don't always get the chance to consider. But if they are going to go to university, then they need to first off find out what they like doing, and tailor what they do at college to what they do at university. Basically, they should do what is right for them, and they should be supported in doing this. I hope to have children one day, and although I want them to be well educated, because like I say this is important, if they find something they like doing and they are good at, and it does not involve going to university, I'm going to try and encourage them to do the best they can.

**LOK:** Some very insightful reflections there. Times and attitudes have changed as you say, and I think as you also explain, some traditions are important like working hard to succeed, alternative ways of doing it is something that has to be accepted and embraced by all of us. But this links on to another point, which I'd just quickly like to address before you leave. The point is, how do you see the future for later generations of Ghanaian/West African children in terms of attitudes towards education?

**Kofi:** I'm not so sure that it will be as it was for us. They seem to have a different attitude about these things. Maybe the material things are more important to them than they were for us, and from what I see especially where my Mum lives, I think they're less focused on getting things through education and work like we've had to do. Their ambitions aren't quite the same. But I don't like to speculate about their future too much, because I can't say what will happen.

*[Kofi asks to draw the interview to a close, as he now has to leave. LOK thanks him for his insights and time spent. The interview ends at approximately 4.15pm.]*

