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**Article:**

**'I think I'm more free with them' - Conflict, Negotiation and Change in Intergenerational Relations in African Families Living in Britain**

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**Abstract**
While the family is increasingly being recognised as pivotal to migration, there remain too few studies examining how migration impacts on intergenerational relationships. Although traditional intergenerational gaps are intensified by migration, arguably there has been an over-emphasis on the divisions between 'traditional' parents and 'modern' children at the expense of examining the ways in which both generations adapt. As Foner and Dreby stress (2011), the reality of post-migration intergenerational relations is inevitably more complex, requiring the examination of both conflict and cooperation. This article contributes to this growing literature by discussing British data from comparative projects on intergenerational relations in African families (in Britain, France and South Africa). It argues that particular understandings can be gained from examining the adaptation of parents and parenting strategies post migration and how the reconfiguration of family relations can contribute to settlement. By focusing on how both parent and child generations engage in conflict and negotiation to redefine their relationships and expectations, it offers insight into how families navigate and integrate the values of two cultures. In doing so it argues that the reconfiguration of gender roles as a result of migration offers families the space to renegotiate their relationships and make choices about what they transmit to the next generation.

**Key Words –** African migration, migrant families, intergenerational relations, gender and transmission.

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**Abstract**

While the family is increasingly being recognised as pivotal to migration, there remain too few studies examining how migration impacts on intergenerational relationships. Although traditional intergenerational gaps are intensified by migration, there has been an over-emphasis on the divisions between 'traditional' parents and 'modern' children at the expense of nuancing these binary constructions and examining how both generations adapt. As Foner and Dreby stress (2011), the reality of post-migration intergenerational relations is inevitably more complex, requiring the examination of both conflict and cooperation. This article contributes to this growing literature by discussing British data from comparative projects on intergenerational relations in African families (in Britain, France and South Africa). It argues that particular understandings can be gained from examining the adaptation of parents and parenting strategies post migration and how the reconfiguration of family relations can contribute to settlement. By focusing on how both generations engage in conflict and negotiation to redefine their relationships and expectations, it offers insight into how families navigate and integrate the values of two cultures. In doing so it argues that the reconfiguration of gender roles as a result of migration offers families the space to renegotiate their relationships and make choices about what they transmit to the next generation.

**Introduction**

Transnational migration brings with it important dilemmas for families who find themselves inhabiting a terrain that includes cultural practices from countries of origin – articulated in transnational spheres – alongside exposure to the new socio-cultural milieu of the host country. While some transnational cultural practices are compatible with family life in Britain, there are inevitable disjunctures and challenges that shape the very fabric of intergenerational relations post-migration. Although migration research has traditionally under-examined families (Bailey and Boyle 2004; Kofman 2002, 2004), research is increasingly recognising the family as pivotal to migration; since families are central to migration decisions and fundamental to shaping transitions to settlement (Nauck and Settles 2001). In more recent years studies have emerged that examine intergenerational relations in migrant families (Foner and Dreby 2011; Foner 2009). This article contributes to this growing literature by discussing British data from comparative projects on 'Citizenship, Belonging and Intergenerational Relations in African Migration in Britain, France and South Africa' (2009-10)[1]. It examines how the move to a new country has shaped intergenerational relationships and parenting approaches of 20 African families.

The consequences of migration for intergenerational relationships are doubtless significant in manifold ways, yet, arguably there has been too much emphasis on the divisions between 'traditional' parents and 'modern' children at the expense of examining the ways in which both generations change and adapt. The reality of post-migration intergenerational relations is inevitably complex, requiring the examination of both conflict and cooperation. As Foner and Dreby argue,

> The common image of children of immigrants engaged in pitched battles against tradition-bound parents from the old country is a partial, and often misleading, view. A more nuanced approach requires analyzing the sources of strife and strain, as well as cooperation, caring, and accommodation (2011; 547).

To contribute to this emerging literature this article examines how migration impacts on intergenerational relations in African families living in Britain. It argues that particular insights can be gained from examining the adaptation of parents and parenting strategies post migration and how the reconfiguration of family relations can contribute to settlement transitions within migrant families.

By focusing on how both parent and child generations engage in conflict and negotiation to redefine their relationships and expectations, this article examines how families navigate and integrate the values of sending and receiving societies, and the ways in which these are articulated in new transnational family spaces. In doing so it also investigates gendered experiences, exploring how these shape the renegotiation of intergenerational relations. As Grillo and Mazzucato (2008) argue, gender roles and power are reconstructed as a result of migration and this gets passed down the generations through transmission. In this respect the article contributes to an emerging literature on the reconfiguration of gender roles in migrant families which has typically focused on partner relations (married and 'move-in' couples) but which is equally pertinent to the transmission of values and expectations across generations (Pasura 2008; Espiritu 2009; Kleist 2010). Thus it argues that intergenerational relations are shaped by gendered roles in the country of origin (CoO) while simultaneously migration offers families the chance to renegotiate their relationships and make choices about what they

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transmit to the next generation. In examining these processes of change, the article draws upon perspectives on migrant families that analyse the family as a site of contestation and renegotiation (Foner 1997, 2009; Creese Dyck and McLaren 1999; Creese 2011); examining the agency of individuals in different generations in their attempts to settle into life in Britain. In doing so, it contributes to debates that critique the problematising of migrant families as traditional and resistant to the integration of their children (Kofman 2004; authors 2012)[2].

**Conceptualising Migrant Families**

Theories of modernisation and acculturation have been used to understand transitions in migrant families, with some approaches pointing to the emergence of generation gaps between 'old world parents' and 'new world children' (Lansford, Deater-Deckard and Bornstein 2009). These theories assume that migrant families adapt to the new country in linear ways with the child generation engaging in peer relationships that lead them to adopt 'new world' values, social behaviour, educational and career patterns at a much faster rate than their parents - resulting in cultural gaps or fractures between the generations (Creese, Dyck and McLaren 1999; Portes and Rumbaut 2005; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2009). From a modernisation perspective, as part of their acculturation migrant families shift from collectivist to more individualistic relations of independence and individual autonomy; experiencing changes in gender roles and authority structures and engaging in more distant relations to extended family (Aboderin 2004). While these processes do indeed impact on intergenerational relations post-migration, to understand them as simple linear transitions from 'traditional' home societies to 'modern' host ones is problematic and takes no account of the heterogeneity of paths towards modernisation, nor the inappropriately fixed and oppositional nature of constructed binaries such as 'traditional' and 'modern' (Portes Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2009; Chacko 2003).

In contrast to modernisation theory, the migrant families literature has analysed intergenerational relationships as '…fluid and as constantly being reconstituted and negotiated, adapting acros*s spaces and through time'* (Kofman 2004: 249). These 'fluid' conceptualisations of families focus on examining the qualitative details of family transitions; situating migrant families as heterogeneous and evolving (Creese, Dyck and McLaren 1999; Saraceno, 2008; Foner and Dreby 2011). Rather than engaging in linear paths from imagined landscapes of 'traditional' to 'modern', migrant families are conceptualised as sites of contestation where roles and values are under negotiation around a range of positions (Zontini 2007). Foner's research is particularly useful in that she conceptualises the family,

> *'...as a place where there is a dynamic interplay between structure, culture, and* agency - where creative culture- building takes place in the context of external social and economic forces as well as immigrants' premigra*tion cultural frameworks' (1997*, 961).

Migration can reconstitute family dynamics and can give rise to new forms of independence, dependence and identities (Creese, Dyck and McLaren 1999). In this sense migrant families are not situated in the 'host' or 'home' country - they are more usefully understood as transnational; blending what they perceive to be the best aspects of both cultures (Baldessar 2007; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002)[3]. Importantly, this literature illuminates that neither parents nor their children are fixed in their paths to settlement, in most cases both generations

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[2] See for example, CLG 2008; Home Office 2005, 2008; Cameron 2011.

[3] Broadly research has defined transnationalism as being simultaneously embedded in more than one society (Levitt 2009), a process 'by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Pasura 2008; 87).

make adaptations shaped by conflict and negotiation; albeit not always with amicable outcomes.

Despite conceptualisations of migrant families as fluid there remains a more extensive examination of familial tensions and conflicts with less exploration of how both generations adapt and renegotiate home-country values (Foner 2009; Zhou 2009; Waters and Sykes 2009). Here Creese's (2011) work on the African Diaspora is insightful[4]. In her research with parent generation Africans in Vancouver, she identities a strong presence of *'..strategies for 'flexible' adaptation'* in families (2011; 149). Because these adaptations will be mediated by local contexts, power and migration experiences, 'parallel narratives' will exist rather than one single view or approach to intergenerational relations - before or after migration. The dilemmas facing parents around the balancing of home-country values and adaptation in their parenting involved conflicts but these were positioned as trade-offs to equip their children for life in Canadian culture and the opportunities this brings. In this sense Creese explains that;

> *'...adopting new styles of parenting is not an abrogation of African traditions; it is a* recognition of the different condi*tions they now live' (2011; 184).*

While many parents struggled with these adaptations, Creese found that women were more willing and able to adjust their parenting. These gender dynamics in adaptation illuminate the need to examine how the reconfiguration of intergenerational relations interacts with the renegotiation of gender roles post-migration.

Research has shown how migration can disrupt gender relations due to differences in gender dynamics and ideologies between countries and the structuring of migration status, employment and welfare post-migration (Lewis et al, 2014). In particular, studies on the African diasporas have revealed the reconfiguration of gender relations, producing both greater freedoms for women but also an associated decline in men's status and economic power contributing to an equalization of gender roles in some families; while in others it has invoked resistance and marital breakdown (Chacko 2003; Pasura 2008; Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). These studies also highlight how the relative empowerment of women is set against 'cultural ideal' notions of women's domestic roles in the homeland (Kleist 2010). Overwhelmingly, African gender relations have traditionally been characterised as patrilineal and patriarchal with men's status constructed as being higher than women's, alongside associated age-based hierarchies within a strong public-private divide. However, Kleist reminds us that these are 'cultural ideals' and vary in practice extensively across countries, regions, tribes and families[5]. Crucially idealised notions of the Sub-Saharan 'traditional' African family are prevalent in research and policy reflecting a pan-African identity around the relative strengths of African familial culture against more individualistic western familial forms. However, Creese (2011) highlights the dangers of idealised versions of the African family in the counter posing of the 'progressive west' verses the 'backward Africa'. Indeed idealised versions of the pan-African family remain poorly defined and under-scrutinized and while they encompass values evident among African diasporas they also risk homogenising what are diverse and contested family forms; themselves undergoing rapid change in the face of outward migration, poverty and HIV/AIDS (Aboderin and Hoffman, forthcoming 2015).

The challenges migration poses to gender roles and norms in families is pertinent to understanding the gender dynamics present in intergenerational relations and parenting

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[4] Three core features of diaspora are; a history of dispersal, connections with the original or imagined homeland and a collective identity or boundary-maintenance (Brubaker 2005 cited in Pasura 2008; 87).

[5] The reality of gender relations are far more complex and have more in common with gender in the west than these 'cultural ideals' would give credit (Lewis 2004 cited in Kleist 2010; 189).

strategies. The restructuring of gender roles post migration may not automatically extend to daughters. In fact, research shows that gendered expectations are a core source of conflict in migrant families. Espiritu (2009) found in her research with Filipina families that daughters are subject to additional restrictions associated with preserving the family name and fulfilling the 'ideal' ethnic subject. The resistance of daughters was met with a branding of them as 'untraditional', 'selfish' and 'betraying' their families and culture. Indeed, African diaspora research found these same accusations made against parent generation women when they pushed for gender equality (Kleist 2010; Creese 2011). However, considering that migrant families experience both conflict and renegotiation, the reconfiguring of gender relations is just as likely to offer opportunities for both generations to exercise agency and change opportunities. The space afforded by migration may therefore create two core processes; first, the parent generation may make choices about what they transmit to their children, second, daughters and some sons may engage in resistance and renegotiation of gender practices as a result of what they experience inside and outside the family. While research with migrant families reveals restrictions applied to daughters compared with sons and the tensions that result, other studies are emerging that show how some parents successfully adapt their strategies to combine both home and host cultures (Creese 2011; authors 2012). By drawing upon insights from migrant families and African Diaspora research this article examines the reconfiguration of intergenerational relations and sees emergent gendered dynamics as fluid rather than fixed. It focuses specifically on adaptations in parenting and how these are experienced across the generations in families. In doing so it throws light on the agency of individuals in transnational families to redefine cultural practices and select the values that they transmit to the next generation, as well as understanding that these transitions may be fraught with conflict and the risks of familial breakdown.

**Research Approach**

The data discussed in this article is drawn from a British Academy funded project on African familial migration and intergenerational relations[6]. The project investigated experiences of settlement and intergenerational relations; as part of a wider partnership of projects which conducted the same study in Britain, France and South Africa (authors 2012). This article is drawn from the data in the British study only, however, the challenge of adapting intergenerational and gender relations post-migration were found across the studies despite differences in host-country regimes.

The research approach was embedded in biography as a way of capturing lived experiences and personal accounts of human agency (Chamberline et al. 2000; Bornat 2001; Wengraf et al. 2002). By adopting a biographical life story approach, participants defined their own needs and experiences (Kohli 1981; Gearing and Dant 1990; Bornat 2001), additionally the intergenerational lens revealed changes in familial relationships including continuity, conflict and the reconstitution of intergenerational relations and parenting strategies (Vanderbeck 2007; Attais-Donfut and Wolffe 2009; Vanderbeck and Worth 2014). The 20 families in the study had all migrated from four African countries; Zimbabwe, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan; some of the children had been born in the UK while others moved in early childhood. All families were resident in the UK for five years or more, some for over 40 years (and spanning three or four generations). These four communities were selected for their historical presence and relative prominence in the region of study, together with their CoO's post-colonial history as a former British colony or protectorate. This has shaped our participants' paths to

migration and their shared experiences of settling in Britain. The families represent a range of migration paths; workers, students, family joiners, forced migrants, and EU citizens. While these migratory routes structure status and opportunities in the host-country, the shared pan-African identities articulated by participants provide a strong basis for comparing their experiences.

The project used mixed qualitative methods running seven focus groups as well as 40 one-to-one interviews with two generations in each family (5 families in each community). The parent generation were aged between 40-68 years, the majority of which migrated as young adults, and the children were aged 16-30s. The data presented here is drawn primarily from the intergenerational interviews as it was in this more private setting where the parent generation in particular more openly discussed their parenting strategies and their struggles to redefine and negotiate roles, freedoms and gendered expectations. Purposive non-random sampling techniques were used to recruit families (Mason 2002; Ritchie and Spencer 2003); a broadly representative spread of generations, genders, faiths, migration paths, class backgrounds and family sizes were included. There were 20 family pairs in total; more female parents than male (13 compared with 7), and slightly more interviews with sons than daughters (11 sons and 9 daughters)[7]. The prominence of female parents in the sample is both a reflection of their willingness to discuss familial and gender relations and reflects the limitations of an all female research team. Consequently, we have been cautious in how we interpret differences around parental data, considering the relative lower numbers of male parents in our sample. Additionally, six were single parent families, only one of these was male, and three female parents were divorced and now married to British partners. The interviews were analysed using both thematic coding of emerging themes (Ritchie and Spencer 2003, Mason 2002) and intergenerational familial synopses of practices, experiences and preferences (Attias-Donfut and Segalen 1998). Interpreters were used in only two interviews as most families chose to be interviewed in English.

The project was conducted across three northern cities in the Yorkshire Humber Region, which although experiencing lower numbers compared with London, are longstanding destinations of choice for African migrants. There are shortfalls in official statistics on African migration in the UK, with actual numbers being higher than official figures (Pasura; authors 2012). The history of Zimbabwean migration to the UK is long standing and accelerated in early 2000 due to socio-economic conditions under the Mugabe regime. Families who migrated prior to 2000 moved for employment and education whereas the later arriving families came via the asylum route; many families in our sample then found themselves unable to return due to the changed political and economic situation in their CoO. The Sudanese who migrated in the late 1980s were mostly professionals or students, however, following the 'coup d'état of General Omer Al-Bashir in June 1989, both the nature and magnitude of Sudanese migration to the UK changed; with many arriving under asylum status and those who moved pre-1989 were unable to return (until the recent peace accord in 2009 and the peace agreement in 2012). While a comparably small population, Sudanese migrants have a long embedded history in Yorkshire and the population contains both Muslim and Christian faith denominations. Kenyan migration also has a long standing history; originally this population contained mostly students but more recently, due to unrest in Kenya post-1980, families have moved for employment and settled in the UK (IOM 2006, 2012). In contrast to the other communities, no Kenyan participants came via the asylum

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[7] The sample comprised of six mother and daughter, seven mother and son, three father daughter and four father son pairs.

route and they chose to migrate for education and employment. The history of Somali migration goes back over 50 years (there were Somali seamen in the British Merchant Navy from the early 20th century) with a high occurrence of three and four generation families. Migration routes were varied with the earlier waves originally moving for employment (industrial work in 1950s/60s), followed by increasing numbers coming as refugees from the 1990s onwards (due to civil war). More recent waves of secondary migration from other EU countries have swelled numbers over the last 10 years (Kleist 2010; authors 2012). Somali participants constitute the majority of Muslim families in this sample (along with one Sudanese family).

Before going onto discuss the findings of the study it is important to summarise key similarities and differences that shape the migration experience of the families. To some extent the data points to shared African diasporas experiences namely, the high rate of education of the parent generation with the majority being educated to secondary and degree levels, combined with underemployment and downward occupational mobility post-migration, especially among males. While shared experiences predominate there are also important differences relating to migration status, nationality, religion and tribal backgrounds. For example, forced migration as a result of civil wars characterised some of the Somali and Sudanese families' struggles and to some extent also the Zimbabwean families, which inevitably structured their relationship to the welfare state and employment (Warnes and Williams 2006; authors 2010; Creese 2011). No Kenyans arrived via the asylum route nor did they discuss the barriers to return, however, these families shared much in common with others in the sample who migrated for education and/or employment. Faith (Muslim and Christian) also had a strong influence on behaviour and interpretations of changing gender relations. Importantly, there is a shared narrative around physical separation from extended kinship networks and the resulting pressure of raising children in a more solitary fashion in the new society, rather than co-practices of parenting and transmission that are common in home-countries (Pasura 2008; Creese 2011; Kuslow 2006). As will become clear in our subsequent analysis, the existence of this and other shared narratives shouldn't be seen as a homogenising impulse that essentialises 'African-ness' – rather, important differences will be seen to exist amongst the families in this research. As expressed by Creese, our approach to understanding African diasporic experiences does not, '… imply an essential sameness linked to racialization, it relates to the construction of new belongings in the context of displacement' (2011;22).

**Examining the Impact of Migration on Intergenerational Relationships**

Research on intergenerational relations in migrant families has illuminated the tensions and cultural challenges facing families. Creese (2011) highlights four key areas of challenge; first, the loss of extended family support and socialisation, second, perceived dangers in the new culture around safety and supervision, third, changes in children's behaviour around independence and boundaries, and fourth, unfamiliar institutional structures and practices that require different types of parenting. Other writers have emphasised conflicts around sexuality, marriage and pregnancy, language and interpretation strains placed on some children; and pressures on children to succeed in education and achieve upward mobility (Zhou 2009; Foner and Dreby 2011; authors 2013). Gendered roles and expectations weave through all these areas of intergenerational change. Participants in the study discussed all these issues to varying degrees and talked of how they navigated a path to hold onto the aspects of home culture while also embracing aspects of the new culture that enabled them to

live successfully in Britain. Many adaptations were harder for the parent generation but we found evidence of renegotiated expectations across both generations. It is not possible to cover all these aspects in a single article, so the focus here is on three areas of intergenerational change emphasised by the families themselves, which cut across many of the areas highlighted by other studies. First, practices of discipline and adjustment of parenting strategies, second, reconfiguring gender roles and expectations, and third, the exercising of agency in transmitting values to the next generation.

**Disjunctures in parenting practices and values between the generations**
In many respects generational differences in expectations and values are an inevitable result of raising children in a new country whereby naturally occurring generational differences are enhanced by the influx of new cultural practices. All the parents in our study discussed how they had experienced problems with some aspects of British culture, especially the stark differences in respect and discipline, the isolation of parenting in nuclear family households and the new freedoms accorded to sons and especially daughters around sexuality and dating.

Of particular concern was the erosion of respect as a result of migration. While we found some gender differences in the prominence of respect in parents' narratives, with fathers more often emphasising this than mothers, both male and female parents discussed this issue. The centrality of respect and discipline in parenting and schooling in their countries of origin was a core theme. Two of the biggest disjunctures were in the role of the broader family and community in disciplining and bringing up children and the unacceptability of physical punishment in Britain, which some parents felt weakened their ability to control their children. Male parents tended to refer more to the threat their families felt around the impact of this aspect of British culture on their children's behaviour.

> *...discipline it is different, really different.* ..The yob culture here, you know, its impacting on our children. So they take up certain values that are not African as it were. So there is tension (Kenyan male parent, aged 50s).

> *...because my kids came to England when they were young they're now completely* changed. They are more of the culture in this, this side, this is how they understand life not the way I understand life. ..my kids they wanted to live their own life whereas back home your children ... particularly daughters they only get their independence when they get married. So this was my fears, yeah. I was afraid my two daughters had kids when they were 17... At times I look back and say if only I had known I would not have brought them here (Zimbabwean male parent, aged 60s).

By contrast while female parents also discussed some of these challenges, they more often talked of how they had come to accept compromises in how they treated their children - to relieve their strain of living in transnational space as well as enabling themselves to embrace some of the British parenting practices they preferred. These processes have involved a series of conflicts and renegotiations in families, as this Kenyan mother explains;

> Well I think I was so more open-minded. I had to learn very quickly how the English families do their children, so that I can cope in my own way. Because I *mean in Africa I must say a child does things that you don't understand or don't* approve of you can get a belt, bat or a cane. Those are the things that I broke *up, I left it at the airport when I came here. This is not done in England. So I've* learned possible ways of dealing with the children in discussing issues (Kenyan female parent, aged 40s).

While male parents were keen to emphasise the lack of discipline as a threat to their parental power, it is important to stress that some fathers talked of combining CoO and British parenting styles. We also had two female parents who had experienced temporary breakdown in relations with their daughters because they cohabited and had children outside of marriage. How we understand these gender differences is by no means straight forward, for example, women were more willing to discuss conflicts and adaptations in intergenerational relations than men but we had a higher representation of mothers than fathers. Overwhelmingly though our findings confirm some of the struggles facing African fathers in Britain around loss of status and authority in their families (Pasura 2008), and the greater capacity of parent generation women to adapt their parenting strategies (Creese 2011).

Shifts in parenting upon migration

While conflicts over parenting practices featured in our interviews, more often the majority of mothers and a minority of fathers talked of how they had embraced new parenting approaches in Britain, often expressed as a recognition of the need to be 'more relaxed' with their children to enable them to live transnationally across two cultures. Generally, these new approaches reflected their own personal values and the context their families were living in. One Kenyan mother talked of how she decided to *reduce the confusion of her children'* by adopting 'British' parenting practices. While this is an extreme example, the majority of parents tried to integrate mixed practices negotiating a compromise between and across cultures and reflecting the risks to intergenerational relations if they did not adapt. One male parent talked of the need to adjust;

> We have to treat them properly; children are like a tree, if you water and take care of it, it will grow up. A lot of Somali children they left family ... because they have got argument. Sometimes parents ... just treat the children as the way back home so you have to make compromise. Meet in the middle, some they cannot compromise (Somali male parent, aged 40s).

The challenges created by the need to adjust parenting are summarised by this Sudanese mother;

> I can do a lot of it that is acceptable. They respect a lot of things you know. They have their own intelligence. They expect a lot of things, way of living. ..*We've lost a lot of things... Even if like, if we go back to Sudan they would not fit in that culture. ...* Maybe we are punishing them. So I think there is a little bit of between to try to give a little bit of culture and everything to teach them. But we need to be a little bit more flexible (Sudanese female parent, aged 50s).

The experiences of this Sudanese mother reflect many of the dilemmas and compromises parents were grappling with. She feels there is a cultural gap between herself and her son which places a tension on their relationship. Her narrative also reveals the sense of disappointment or failure that some parents experienced around letting go of some of their family's traditions (explored more in the final section). What is interesting though is that her narrative also demonstrates the willingness of the many parents to make adjustments for the sake of their children.

Her son also reflected on her acceptance of more 'relaxed' parenting;

> *When I was younger ... They were a bit strict. I was in* trouble and my parents would tell me. ... But now I have a really good relationship with my mum. I can talk to my mum any time I want. Like some of my friends feel like they lie to their parents sometimes, keep things from them. There are some things I wou*ldn't really tell my* mum. I can tell her a lot of things and she understands. But I do know the limit like.

He explained that rules had not always been flexible and felt that his sisters had paved the way for these adjustments, interpreting his parent's relaxation of rules as not down to gender restrictions but a result of getting used to living in Britain.

> My older sister, she is four years older than me, ... She used to want to go out clubbing. My parents were not too keen on that. I thought it would be the same for me. But sometimes I used to come home, have a shower, *...and say, mum I'm going out. Sometimes it was easy. ... my dad is in Sudan, my mum is here.* My mum knows that *I'm an adult now. She might think something but she won't say it. She doesn't want conflict....my parents* have had a long time here now. Living somewhere will change you a little bit. I think they have kind of changed, relaxed a little bit (Sudanese male child generation, aged 19).

Interestingly he feels these changes were to keep the peace, but his mother's narrative indicates she relaxed the rules for the deeper reason of reducing her children's difficulty of living across two cultures.

The importance of time as an enabler for parents to adjust parenting styles was reflected in other child generation interviews. The below quote reflects shared experiences of a 'lightening' of the rules and hierarchies;

> I can see the difference. There are differences. Some are good and some not so good. But I think the way of living here is a lot lighter than back home. Socially [in the UK] *they were probably a bit more relaxed and everything... , like back home its like a* parent, parent, parent relationship (Zimbabwean, Male child generation, aged 18).

These adjustments in parenting were also discussed by daughters for some though these changes took some time and their siblings benefited from the battles they had with their parents over relaxing rules and allowing greater freedom.

> *...mum totally changed...* she was much more relaxed by the time my little brother and sister came around. My little brother she pursued him to do the cooking and cleaning. I think that was all right (Somali, female child generation aged 30s).

These narratives do not tell a story of broken bonds or cultural gaps, rather they reflect the ways in which both generations renegotiate their positions to take account of the need to live transnationally across two cultures. Both generations reflected on the need to adjust and relax boundaries, and time seems key to understanding how parents adjust to the challenges of parenting across cultures. The children's narratives also indicate an awareness of not pushing too far too fast; of keeping some aspects of their lives in Britain private but of developing more open relationships as their parents 'relax' the boundaries. Inevitably there are exceptions where failed negotiations lead to conflict, but notably this affected only 2 out of 20 families. While it does not negate the significant challenges experienced by migrant families in renegotiating acceptable behaviours and boundaries, evidence of adaption demonstrates that the parent generation does not stand still; female parents in particular openly adopted new parenting practices to enable their families to live successfully in Britain. These findings problematise assumptions in research and policy that posit transnational families as a block to integration/cohesion.

**Examining disjunctures in gender roles and expectations**

Although most societies are experiencing a restructuring of gender relations alongside women's growing labour market participation, these shifts do not take a unified form or pace from one society to another (Kleist 2010; Creese 2011; Attias-Donfut and Cook 2014). If gender norms and expectations differ considerably from sending to receiving country contexts; conflict can arise. Differences in the opportunities and roles ascribed to women can

be one of the key sources of tension with migration, resulting in daughters receiving restricted freedoms compared with sons (Todd 1994; Espiritu 2009; Zhou 2009). While much has been written about conflicts in gender relations in migrant families, significantly less has been written about how some families successfully renegotiate gendered expectations (Pasura 2008; Creese 2011). How families negotiate these tensions can be fundamental to shaping transitions of living in a new society and can result in a reconfiguration in the gender roles and expectations transmitted to the next generation.

While important variations exist in gender relations between their CoOs, the majority of families discussed how gender roles and expectations undergo both conflict and renegotiation post-migration. Conflicts inevitably varied between families, responsive to factors such as how gender roles and religiosity are practiced, and how pressures from extended kin and the wider migrant community played out in families (Passura 2008; Kleist 2010). Despite cultural differences, shared experiences arose around the freedoms afforded to women in Britain, the resistance of daughters (and sometimes sons) and the agency of parents to integrate what they perceive to be the best of both cultures and these were key to shaping outcomes.

Different expectations of sons and daughters
Both parent and child generations discussed the gendering of roles and boundaries in their families. Daughters addressed these issues directly, with sons more often interpreting their relative freedoms compared to their sisters as being a result of delayed changes rather than explicitly gendered restrictions. Differences around expectations of sons and daughters were less frequently discussed by fathers, outside of the need to protect their daughters from risks like teenage pregnancy. Some fathers discussed how they treated their sons and daughters equally. Mothers less often talked of holding equal expectations of their children but explicitly gave examples of how they had adjusted the rules and expectations they held for their daughters. Rarely did we find no adjustments in gender relations. The two examples discussed here illustrate how many families renegotiate gendered expectations over time. Mother-daughter pairs have been chosen to reflect the important relationship between the empowerment of parent generation women and the influence this has on the roles they ascribe to their daughters.

One core area that came up repeatedly was the traditional separation of genders in the domestic sphere. These quotes come from interviews with one of the Zimbabwean families where the mother was the head of household, she had remarried and her new husband was British. Gender roles in the nuclear family household were more equal (domestic tasks and economic responsibility was shared). This extract relates to the gendered impact on family practices when relatives visited from home;

> **Mother:** Boys and girls in Zimbabwe are brought up differently. *Boys don't go in the* kitchen or anything like that. But *I think I'm more free with them. They've go*t more, they get away with more (Zimbabwean parental generation, female aged 45).

> **Daughter:** I know that when my relatives come over, recently my granddad came over from Zimbabwe... and then the whole cult thing was more like make tea in the morning. Because mum would like do most of the things like serve the men and I would like have to do that... *All the women are in the kitchen and all the men like in the lounge. I didn't agree with that. I know when I'm back home and gone to my granddad's house I have* to serve someone. *I don't mind serving an adult.* But not a boy my age ... *I'm known as*

the one that my mum has been too soft on (Zimbabwean child generation female aged 17).

The daughter explains how she compromised for her mother's sake to shield her from pressure and comments from extended family members but she also explained there were some very definite boundaries beyond which she would not compromise - such as serving a boy her own age. What's interesting about these narratives is they reflect the fluidity of gender practices within this family; how there is slippage between the different traditions for both mother and daughter, according to translocal space and who is present, and an implicit negotiation / understanding between them as to how to respond to the challenges in ways that support each other (within personally defined boundaries).

The second extract is drawn from one of the Somali families, where the gender roles embedded both in Somali culture and Islam can result in more restrictions being placed on daughters as 'visible' bearers of tradition (Kleist 2010; Zhou 2009). The daughter, in her early 30s, spoke with some frustration about her parent's expectation of her when she was growing up and the injustice she felt;

> **Daughter:** My brothers pretty much did whatever they wanted. I just used to cook and clean and everything... Even when I got to about 11 years old my mum was like, oh you *can't play outside anymore Whereas they would go off and do what they wanted. ..I wasn't even allowed to pl*ay outside. It was very frustrating (Somali Child generation, female aged 30s).

Her mother reflects on the same period and how she came to the realisation that she needed to adjust her expectations to enable her daughters to live in a new culture.

> **Mother:** So I realise you can't just tell them you have to just be a wife so okay if you wanna succeed you have to do your homework so I let them do their homework, I let *them to go to university, ...Yeah, the beginning I thought girl have to be belong to the house you know inside the house...Yeah but then I was wrong. ...Sometime because* [eldest daughter above] she got 3 brothers and she was only one and any time they go playing with the bicycle or outside I said are you going to play with the boys, come on insi*de...Then I realise myself why you stopping*? Because they are brothers, they is playing outside why should we stopping her inside. *So I let her go ... (Somali parent* generation aged 60s).

While their Muslim faith differentiates the Somali families from some of the others in our study, reconfigurations in gender expectations were perceived equally as challenging and caused tensions across all the families. These shared negotiations and conflicts are illustrated by similarities in negotiations and compromises between these two mother-daughter pairs. The Somali family narrative shows how time enabled both mother and daughter to renegotiate the gender boundaries in their family and how the mother had made a conscious decision to adapt her expectations of her daughters based on a desire to enable them to succeed and as a result of her own empowerment. The father's voice is silent here because he is deceased but the daughter's narrative illustrates how he was freer with her than her mother had felt she could be. The childhood restrictions were based on the mother's experiences of growing up in rural Somalia, as well as concerns around bringing up Muslim daughters in a non-Muslim country. After migrating to Britain some 40 years previous she had become more involved with groups both within and outside of the Somali community, giving her a self-confidence and aspirations for her daughters. These waves of gender reconfiguration enabled this family to reconcile conflict and renegotiate the roles of daughters enabling them to live more freely and go to university.

The reconfiguration of gender roles again demonstrates how time is an important dynamic in adapting to new gender freedoms. The adaptation of gender expectations related to two core factors shaping gender post migration; first, many of the female parents were key earners in their households and had experienced a greater say over decision-making as a result of distance from extended kin and increased economic power (Pasura 2008; Kliest 2010). Second, daughters' expectations were being shaped by growing up in Britain but also influenced by how gender roles were shifting for their mother's generation. Equivalent examples of these kinds of negotiations were not found in the narratives of fathers, although educational equality was often emphasised. Discussion of the reconfiguration of gender roles are found in the majority of interviews with women, therefore revealing clear evidence of a renegotiation and a joint reshaping of gendered expectations and boundaries. These findings indicate that female parents find it easier to adapt (Creese 2011) and that new found gender freedoms of mothers may be fundamental in enabling these changes (Pasura 2008).

**Social agency and transmitting values to the next generations**
Transmission of culture, values and practices to the next generation is central to creating familial intergenerational bonds (Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2009). Arguably the pressure around transmission becomes more acute as families move countries. It is therefore important to examine how changes in intergenerational relations shape cultural transmission across the generations and the extent to which migration affords parents and subsequent generations the agency to select what they pass onto their children.

The narratives of many of the parents reflect how first generation migrants experience significant personal and familial conflicts over what they transmit to their children. Across the families, approaches to transmitting cultural values varied but they shared common struggles with getting their children to understand and relate to the cultural practices of their 'homelands' that were often distant from their children's lives. Visits to CoO played a fundamental part in bridging cultures but gaps still remained (Levitt 2009; King, Christou and Teerling 2011). For example, some parents spoke of having a cultural distance between themselves and their children. The majority approached these dilemmas by selecting the aspects of their culture they valued, and attempting to transmit these alongside what they interpreted as British values. One female parent, of Masai decent, explained how she consciously made choices about which aspects of her culture to pass onto her children; at the same time she had to mediate pressure from family members about these choices. This quote demonstrates both the agency that migration can afford parents but also the complexities of maintaining aspects of their CoO culture alongside their struggles to mediate a compromise they can live with;

> There are things in my culture which they could be dictated to practice, but for me *that's what I think, that is something in my culture I don't like, for example female* genita*l mutilation. I wouldn't like my children to undergo. I get personal {pressure}* from my family that they should have that. But I think no, they are not from your culture. They live in two cultures. So what do these cultures say? So it's for me as a parent *to decide and say, that's what I disagree with my culture and I'm not going to* practice that. So I kind of like live in the middle somehow. .. I tend to look at the positives in both cultures and fit it together (Kenyan parental generation female 40s).

While we found evidence of adaption, especially among female parents, a minority spoke of the burden that transmission placed upon them and their families. Some discussed the guilt they felt around failing to transmit their culture to their children. The below quote demonstrates the sense of failure in 'letting their culture go';

*I didn't change. And that's why it is too hard for me and my son. ..but it's not like we* are too close. When he came we were here and he already adapt life of this country. *But for me I am still the same. I found it difficult... I don't accept it because the way he is different. And the way I am I'm different for him. ... I feel like I fail to bring my* children up as Sudanese. Because the package I am giving my son is different from the culture he is getting in this society. When I try to correct him. Because what I say *doesn't exist in this country. Even they don't accept it, the way it is. So when I'm not around I'm sure my children will really* lose their identity... (Sudanese female parent, aged 50s).

This parent's narrative reflects the struggles they had to work through and the fear that the process of 'unchaining generations' can bring. Other writers talk about this in terms of the ambivalence that parents can feel about the success of the child generation;

*At the same time many parents' desire for their children's integration was double-* edged, simultaneously wanting it and fearing the loss of cultural identity that might result (Creese, Dyck and McLaren 1999; 15).

However, as authors (2012) argue - ambivalence does not necessarily result in serious conflicts; it can have positive effects on relationships in the shape of the negotiations it generates.

Rather than processes of cultural gaps between 'old world' parents and 'new world' children, we found that parents were active in redefining the transnational values they transmitted to their children. If we understand that transnational families construct 'new versions of tradition' to live across cultures then it is likely that these processes gather pace as generations pass (Foner 1997; Levitt 2009). Attias-Donfut and Wolfe (2009) argue that as successive generations renegotiate what gets transmitted to the next, they are not simply reproducing generations as much as they are unchaining them (Attias-Donfut and Wolffe 2009; Attias-Donfut et al 2012). We found some evidence to support this. The child generation discussed how growing up in Britain had shaped their own views on parenting. Some of the child generation were parents themselves and had made conscious choices about what aspects of their culture to transmit;

*I don't think it would be suitable to just like drop the whole different culture in a* differ*ent place because they more than likely not going to understand it. I'd probably* have one or two things that I think this is supposed to be. Not necessarily completely ignoring the fact that we are living here... There is discontinuance. I appreciate the v*alues. I don't necessarily pass them on and practice them* (Zimbabwean child generation, male aged 20).

Inevitably as generations pass and memories of the 'homeland' fade consecutive generations find it easier to combine what they feel is the best of worlds. But this does not equate with the letting go of CoO culture, Elizabeth Chacko (2003) found that while the Ethiopian child generation in her study appeared at first glance not to maintain cultural practices; as they grew older a need to engage with their ethnic community surfaced. Similarly, the child generation in our study discussed the CoO values they would pass onto their children. Consequently, the child generation narratives indicate that parenting practices and the meaning of being African-British is being fluidly renegotiated and reshaped as generations pass.

**Summary**

This article contributes to how we understand the impact of migration on intergenerational relations and transmission in families from four African countries. The research reveals that adaptations in expectations and transmission are not simply a linear process of acculturation from CoO culture to the new country culture, and that conflict, adaption and negotiation is present in both parent and child generations. Of fundamental importance is the pivotal role of family members in reshaping and renegotiating their intergenerational relations and in defining a new generational contract that draws from what they feel are the best of both cultures. By turning the spotlight on the ways in which both generations adjust this article illuminates under researched aspects of migrant families; namely the motivations and strategies underlying changes in parenting strategies, and the ways in which both generations understand and experience these shifts.

What therefore does this research tell us about the how intergenerational relations get reconfigured as a result of migration? First, by revealing that parents do not stand still with the majority adapting over time, this article helps us understand how both generations adjust to living in a new land. These intergenerational shifts reduce the risks of family breakdown and cultural rifts, although there is a key time lag between the generations with parents needing longer to 'let go' or moderate aspects of their CoO and familial and parenting practices. Second, the study adds to existing knowledge on the reconfiguration of gender relations post-migration. In line with Creese's (2011) findings, female parents appear more able to successfully navigate a path to parenting across two cultures. These are complex dilemmas which undoubtedly place strains on the parent generation but our data reveals the motivation of female parents (and some fathers) to ensure the success of their children and to retain close bonds. Consequently, both parent and child generations in the study engaged in processes of adaptation, conflict and negotiation around gender roles and generational expectations. In this respect, the findings also extend those of other studies, such as Pasura (2008), by revealing how the empowerment of parent generation women as a result of migration can shape the freedoms and opportunities transmitted to the next generation. Therefore, not only are gender roles and freedoms being transformed by the resistance of daughters, and to some extent sons, the new gender freedoms of mothers are key to extending these transformations across the generations.

While not wishing to reduce the importance of examining conflict in intergenerational relations, this article calls for a greater focus on negotiation so that research can better reflect the ways in which families adapt to living transnationally. More research is needed in this field; in particular studies that compare across migrant communities, countries and families to gather greater volume and depth on the ways in which gender and generation play out post-migration.

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