

Parenting and ethnicity



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Parenting and ethnicity

Ann Phoenix and Fatima Husain



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1 Background

It is increasingly acknowledged that the 'rethinking of families', needed to keep pace with changing demographic trends (Barrett, 2004), should include parenting and ethnicity. This is partly because there have been demographic shifts in the British population (as there have been in the US population) so that it is more ethnically diverse in ways that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions. Moreover, policymakers, practitioners and academics have long viewed 'race' as an important factor affecting the parenting that children receive (e.g. Department of Education and Science, 1985). In Britain, black and Asian parents have been subjected to particular scrutiny because there have been consistent (but different) concerns about their parenting, educational and behavioural outcomes. At the same time, differences of 'race' have been treated simplistically (Lawrence, 1982) and it is increasingly evident that, while the categories black and Asian continue to be important, they are far too blunt to provide insights useful to policymakers and practitioners (Modood *et al.*, 1997). Such 'fictive unities' (Werbner, 1990) often hide linguistic, ethnic and religious differences. In addition, there has been a tendency to make assumptions about parenting in minority ethnic groups on the basis of few studies consisting of very little, or inadequate, data (Kotchick and Forehand, 2002). Researchers who are themselves from minority ethnic groups often produce different interpretations from those by researchers from majority ethnic groups (McLoyd *et al.*, 2000). Such differences result partly from the diverse experiences that researchers bring to the area. However, theory in this area can be poorly delineated and current understandings of ethnicity are sometimes not represented within the area of parenting and ethnicity.

The paper is divided into the following chapters.

- Chapter 2 provides a brief consideration of theoretical developments in thinking about 'race' and ethnicity that can help to provide an analytic frame for a consideration of parenting and ethnicity.
- Chapter 3 provides a short discussion of the demography of ethnicity in Britain.
- Chapter 4 provides a review of the publications available on parenting and ethnicity. This constitutes the main part of the paper and aims to analyse what is currently known in a range of areas (although, since ethnicity covers all possible areas of parenting, it is not possible to be comprehensive). It highlights consistencies and inconsistencies in the literature, as these constitute the work on which policymakers and practitioners have to build. The review omits work on

parenting programmes, as Barlow *et al.* (2004) published a Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) review focusing on this theme, and Becher and Husain (2003) published a review of developments in family support for Asian families for the Family and Parenting Institute. Although this review highlights British research it has, of necessity, to include US research, as far more research on these areas has been done in the USA. While this is not ideal, the US population is composed of some similar ethnic groups to the British population and the literature points to some of the same processes.

- Chapter 5 considers omissions from the literature that require further research.

2 Concepts and theories of ethnicity

One of the issues faced by those thinking about 'race' and 'ethnicity' is that there are many ways in which the terms are used and disagreements about how they should be used. Definitions have shifted over time as the boundaries between people constructed as being from different 'races' or ethnic groups have moved. Changes in the meaning and usage of the term 'black' – from a term of contempt to the one claimed by black people themselves – is a case in point. In Britain, the term 'black' has changed from excluding to including, and then excluding again, people of Asian descent (although some people do still make that inclusion). Whether or not people of mixed parentage are considered black and what terminology to apply to them is also a point of contention. Arguments that people of 'mixed parentage' have to identify as black are often based on awareness that they are likely to experience racism. Yet, such arguments construct black people and white people as cultural and visual opposites rather than as defined in relation to each other and/or differentiated by features other than 'race'. Other shifts that have occurred in terminology include the change from 'West Indian', to 'Afro-Caribbean', to 'African Caribbean' (although 'West Indian' continues to be used in some contexts) and the move from the use of the adjective Bangladeshi (based on nation) to Bengali (based on language) that young Bengalis called for (Ahmed, 1997). Definitions are an area of disagreement, not only over what groups should be called, but also over who has the right to define them, how they are positioned within society and who should be included within particular terms.

Since the 1960s, there has been research evidence of links between 'race', ethnicity and outcomes (e.g. Daniel, 1968). For example, the nature and extent of unfair discrimination in employment, housing and education faced by British-born Asian and 'West Indian' young people was identified in four Political and Economic Planning reports published between 1974 and 1976. Work of this kind documented that black and Asian people were over-represented in any unfavourable social statistics and similar patterns have been found in more recent surveys (e.g. Modood *et al.*, 1997).

It has also become apparent that analyses relying on black, white and Asian distinctions are not sufficient to the task of providing good understandings of current social trends. It is necessary to recognise the effects of 'race', ethnicity, class and gender, and to see them as operating simultaneously and as intersecting rather than isolated. There are, for example, different outcomes for African Caribbean and Bengali girls and boys in terms of educational attainment, likelihood of arrests and being subjected to violence (e.g. Modood *et al.*, 1997; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Social class also makes a difference to the parenting provided as

well as experiences and outcomes for young people from all ethnic groups. In a study of black, white and mixed-parentage young people, middle-class black and mixed-parentage 14–18 year olds living with their parents were more likely to live in neighbourhoods that were predominantly white and to attend predominantly white schools than their working-class peers (Phoenix and Tizard, 1996; Tizard and Phoenix, 2002). The notion of *intersectionality* is gaining ground as a way of conceptualising and analysing multiple positioning (see, for example, Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006).

A further reason that hard and fast white/black/Asian divisions are unsatisfactory concerns the way that various white groups are disadvantaged. Concerns have been expressed about parenting in some white working-class families (Reay, 1998) and there is increasing recognition that certain white working-class children and young people feel themselves discriminated against (Nayak, 2002), and that a number (particularly boys) experience educational disadvantage (Younger *et al.*, 2004). In some multicultural schools in Denmark, white girls are racialised by their peers as having the lowest status (Staunaes, 2005). As more work has been done on people of Irish origin in Britain, so it has become clear that they are subject to racism and that those whose origins lie in the North of Ireland fare differently from those in the South (NEMDA, 1995; Hickman and Walter, 1997). There is also confusion, in some research reports, about when it is appropriate to conduct black–white analyses. The fourth major survey of ethnic minorities in Britain (Modood *et al.*, 1997) found no justification for lumping together all minority ethnic groups, because differences *within* minority ethnic groups are now as important as differences *between* black, white and Asian groups. While all minority ethnic groups are subject to racial discrimination, some (e.g. those of Indian origin) are not economically disadvantaged as a group. Unlike previous surveys, the Modood *et al.* (1997) study took on board theoretical developments in the field of ‘race’ and ethnicity by including detailed interviews with white people as well as those of Caribbean, Chinese and South Asian origin.

Defining ‘race’, ethnicity, racialisation and essentialism

‘Race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are often used interchangeably. However, ‘ethnicity’ generally refers to a collectivity or community that is assumed to share common cultural practices and history. Thus religion, language and territory are all included in the term. It is, to a large extent, insider defined. Goulbourne and Solomos (2003) suggest that, while ethnic identity is subject to change, it has a capacity for auto-maintenance as well as incorporating a high degree of change.

Ethnic group is sometimes used as if it referred only to people who are in less powerful positions within society and who are subjected to racism. For that reason, 'majority ethnic group' is sometimes used to refer to ethnic groups who have relatively more power because their cultural practices and presence are taken for granted. The counterpart term 'minority ethnic group' refers to those groups whose cultural practices and history make it likely that they will be less powerful within a society. In Britain and the USA, majority ethnic groups are white, but there are also white (as well as black) 'minority ethnic groups'. In apartheid South Africa, however, the minority ethnic group was the group in the numerical majority. This potential contradiction between numerical status and power in minority and majority has proved confusing. For this reason, and because the word 'minority' can have pejorative overtones, the majority/minority ethnic group distinction has been much criticised. For example, Brah (1996) suggests that we should refer to 'minoritised' ethnic groups, rather than 'minority' ethnic groups.

In popular usage, many people consider that 'race' groups together people who belong to the same human stock. It is often treated as if it was inherited and visible in biological or physical difference or culture. Skin colour, physiognomy, culture and territory have all been used as markers of the boundaries between 'races' (Anthias, 1996). However, even in the 1930s, geneticists were arguing that these are not clear markers of biological difference. For this reason, some people have argued that the term 'race' should not be used (e.g. Banton, 1977; Miles, 1989). Others put the term 'race' into quotation marks to signify that it is socially constructed, rather than about 'natural', biological or cultural difference. They argue that, although 'race' is a social construct, it has real effects because it continues to be treated as socially significant and because profound and pervasive inequalities are produced (and reproduced) through practices of racism. In other words, 'race' and racism are important to identity because they have real effects (Donald and Rattansi, 1992). However, it is now generally accepted that racisms have to be conceptualised in the plural, since there are different forms of racism to different groups of people (Brah, 1996). Similarly, social class, gender, religion, sexuality and bodiedness differentiate experiences of racism.

Rather than attempting to refine the definitions of these categories, many academics have begun to use terms that refer to processes rather than to fixed social groups. In the 1960s, the psychiatrist Franz Fanon used the term 'racialisation', which has since been developed by a number of academics (e.g. Banton, 1977; Omi and Winant, 1986; Miles, 1989). This does similar work to the use of quote marks around 'race' in emphasising that the concept is not naturally occurring. It also indicates that 'race' is dynamic and that it becomes socially significant through various social, economic, cultural or psychological processes. The concept 'ethnicisation' builds on the ideas

that led to the development of the term 'racialisation', to indicate similarly dynamic processes for ethnicity. Both these terms fit with suggestions by anthropologists that ethnicity is best seen in processes of boundary maintenance (Barth, 1969; Wallman, 1984) and with ideas that identities (including ethnic identities) are resources that are used in everyday practices and interactions (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998).

In keeping with use of terms such as 'racialisation' and 'ethnicisation', Ali *et al.* (2006) coined the term 'BrAsian' to refer to British Asians, while ironically drawing attention to the inadequacy of the nomenclature of ethnicity. Also to refuse the assumption that there is a binary opposition between Western and non-Western people, and to draw attention to the power relations associated with postcolonial relations. Such debates alert us to the fact that researchers often make unintended contributions to the politics of race through the language they use (Jones, 2006).

The choice of terms referring to processes (as in racialisation and ethnicisation) or the ironic coining of neologisms (as in 'BrAsian') avoids the problem that has come to be referred to as 'essentialism'. Essentialism involves treating an ethnic group or 'race' as if it had unchanging characteristics and as if all members of the group had to be the same on all those characteristics. This exaggerates differences and understates similarities between groups. Such assumptions can prevent people from seeing that there are shared characteristics and cultural practices across ethnic groups (Essed, 1996; Lewis, 2000). Essentialism can, nevertheless, also apply to 'insiders' in a group who sometimes insist that all members of a group should behave in the same ways and identify in the same ways. Amina Mama (1995) found that such ideas caused some of the professional black women she interviewed anxiety that other black people would not accept them on the grounds that they were not 'black enough'.

If an essentialist focus is taken on parenting and ethnicity, it is easy to produce 'cultural tourism' where the assumed essence of the parenting of a group is briefly described and internal differences are not recognised. This can lead to contradictions in the treatment of families by ethnicity. For example, Asian parents have been both blamed for being insular and overly traditional, and praised as exemplary, concerned parents. White Englishness is rarely recognised as an ethnicity and differences between ethnic groups are treated as explanatory rather than, for example, resulting from socio-economic differences.

3 Normalised absence/pathologised presence and demographic change

In both Britain and the USA, there has long been concern about outcomes for black children (African Caribbean and African American) and the effects of parenting on these. In an early British study, a GP, Margaret Pollak (1972), carried out research into the three year olds in her South London practice. She concluded that the poor verbal and cognitive skills she found in the 'West Indian' sample were due to their lack of close mother–infant relationships and play and learning experiences. This study generated much debate and furore for what was felt by black researchers and community groups to be culturally biased analysis. The same children were followed up at age nine years, with similar results. This, Pollak explained was due to high rates of stepfathers and stepsiblings, unsatisfactory childminding arrangements, lack of parental interaction, together with children having many household responsibilities and being subjected to harsh punishments, as well as a lack of stimulation from toys, books, games and family (Pollack, 1979). Michael Rutter and his colleagues (1975) conducted a study of children of West Indian immigrants that included a focus on their home circumstances and family patterns, and also found unsatisfactory childminding arrangements. A decade later, the Swann Report into the educational underperformance of 'West Indian' children (Department of Education and Science, 1985) attributed poor educational outcomes to the greater tendency for West Indian households to be single parents in comparison with Asian families. In making his case, Swann omitted to mention the poor educational attainment of Bangladeshi children – which was already generating concern at that time. Had he addressed this, it would not have been tenable to offer household composition as a major explanatory factor since Bangladeshi-origin children tend to live in two-parent households. These early reports address themes that have become common as the focus of later studies in Britain and the USA – whether the poor outcomes for black children (and in the US Hispanic) can be accounted for by differences from white majority ethnic families in terms of family structure and household organisation, parenting styles (with a particular focus on maternal sensitivity and stimulation) and disciplinary practices.

It might appear that a subject that has generated more than 30 years of interest would have produced clear and indisputable findings. But not so.

In an American review of 'marital processes and family socialisation in families of color', McLoyd *et al.* (2000) found that:

... social science research on marital processes and familial socialisation has considerable distance to go before it adequately reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of the United States ... For real progress to occur, we not only need more studies, but higher quality ones.
(McLoyd *et al.*, 2000, p. 1087)

Similarly, Demo and Cox (2000, p. 889) suggest that 'we also need to redouble our efforts to understand childrearing in its ethnic and cultural context'.

McLoyd *et al.* (2000) also note that:

In the last decade, our research, especially that in the quantitative domain, continues to largely reflect what Collins (1990) called biracial or dichotomous thinking, where the normative work is conducted using European American families and the 'minority' perspective is represented via an examination of African American families.
(McLoyd *et al.*, 2000, p. 2)

This raises points relevant to both sides of the Atlantic where much research on families and ethnicity is characterised by a 'normalised absence/pathologised presence' approach (Phoenix, 1987). Minority ethnic families are ignored when normalised, unproblematic issues are being studied, but are focused on when issues seen as problematic are being examined. In addition, differences are frequently interpreted as deficiencies or deviations from the norm by minority ethnic parents and children. In very few pieces of work are white children and families acknowledged to be ethnicised and racialised, and to be composed of both minoritised and majority ethnic groups. This raises the issue that 'race' and 'ethnicity' are theorised in very different ways in different studies, and that they are frequently not treated as relational, and so affecting everybody.

The review by McLoyd *et al.* (2000) points out that African American parents and children have frequently been the only group focused on when minority ethnic families are researched – a focus that lags behind changes in US demography since, for example, there are now more Hispanic/Latino than African Caribbean people in the USA (Grieco and Cassidy, 2001). In Britain, the 2001 Census indicates that children of mixed parentage are the fastest-growing group of children. There are now more children aged under 15 years who have one white and one black Caribbean parent in the UK than who have two black Caribbean parents (Owen, 2005). There are also now more people of directly African descent than there are of African Caribbean

descent at every age group up to the mid-30s. Similarly, for each of the south Asian groups (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) there are more children under five years of age than there are African Caribbean origin children of the same age. There are, however, more African Caribbeans than Bangladeshis at all other ages, and more Africans than Bangladeshis at every age. Among South Asian groups, there are more Indians overall; but, in terms of children, Pakistanis constitute the largest group, followed by Indians, then Bangladeshis. The Chinese are the smallest minority ethnic group in the UK. They have relatively few children, with a peak in their numbers in the early 20s. Not surprisingly, white people continue to be the largest racialised grouping in the UK, accounting for 92 per cent of the population. But this includes people amalgamated into an 'Other White' category who are mostly from other EU countries and constituted 2.5 per cent of the population in 2001— larger than any single minority ethnic group. In Britain, the 2001 Census shows that there are more white Irish people than there are Caribbeans, but they are mostly an older population with few children (Owen, 2005). The recording of white Irishness is both important in itself and demonstrates that whiteness is an internally differentiated category.

The demographic picture that emerges from Owen's (2005) analyses is one of increasing diversity in population and age profile. It indicates that policymakers and practitioners are necessarily going to have to attend to groups about whom little research has yet been done. Clearly, analyses that compare only black, Asian and white people will not be sufficient to this task. Those groups with a distribution currently skewed to the younger ages (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and people of mixed parentage) will need to be taken into account in policy and practice on parenting. Given debates about the terminology of 'race' and 'ethnicity', it should not be assumed that the categories in which demographic data are generated are uncontroversial (Owen, 2001). However, they are undoubtedly useful.

The 2001 England and Wales Census was also the first to ask the population to record their faith. Analysis of the answers indicates that 72 per cent of the population record themselves as Christian. Muslims were the largest non-Christian religious group (3 per cent) and tended to be young, clustered into relatively few geographical areas and economically disadvantaged. Each of the other religions was recorded by less than 1 per cent of the population. In fact, 15 per cent of those who filled in the 2001 Census said they had no religious affiliation (ONS, 2003). However, religion has advanced higher on the national agenda since the 2001 Census because of concerns that fundamentalist Muslims are linked to terrorist attacks in Western countries. There is, therefore, increasing interest in researching faith groups. Prior to the 2001 Census, the 1997 Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (Modood *et al.*, 1997) found that most South Asians reported that their faith identity was stronger than their ethnic identity and that class identification among South Asians intersects with their faith and ethnic identifications.

The 2011 UK Census is likely to show further demographic changes in that more people than anticipated have come to Britain from newer EU countries. This has implications for the understanding of parenting and ethnicity in the UK in that these groups are white, but constitute minority ethnic groups.

4 What we know from existing research on ethnicity and parenting

While there has been a recent outpouring of research and writing on children, families and young people in general, there are comparatively few relevant pieces of work concerned with minority ethnic groups. Those available are often reports of small-scale studies or a small part of larger studies. This means they tend not to be generalisable – even where they are of high quality. Some studies compare minority and majority ethnic groups with an implicit assumption that the majority ethnic group constitutes the norm against which other families are (often unfavourably) compared. There is a dearth of observational research and of large-scale studies using standardised measures in this area (McLoyd *et al.*, 2000). However, a few studies now give detailed attention to families from minority ethnic groups, and others include minority ethnic groups as part of a normalised presence in funded research.

The studies reviewed below were found through searches on various databases from 1990 onwards. They are divided between:

- parenting styles and practices, including disciplinary practices
- contextual factors (including transnational families and kinship networks, processes of acculturation and racial and ethnic socialisation).

For some issues, there is very little British research and American studies are the main sources cited. Where, however, there is relevant British work, this is given prominence. It is important to note that there remains in the literature a tendency to focus on mothers when ‘parenting’ is being studied and fathers when father absence is being discussed. While some researchers have focused on fathering and fatherhood over the last 30 years (e.g. Lamb, 1981), we still know much less about fathers than about mothers.

Parenting style, parenting practices and ethnicity

Over the past 40 years, parenting style has become one of the most robust approaches used in developmental psychology to study how parents influence the development of children’s social and instrumental competence (Darling, 1999). The US researcher Diana Baumrind (1967) developed an influential typology that divides normative parenting styles into four categories: authoritative, authoritarian,

permissive (sometimes called indulgent) and withdrawn (or uninvolved). These types result from categorising parents on whether they are high or low on parental responsiveness and behavioural control. In general, parental responsiveness has been found to predict social competence and psychosocial functioning, while parental behavioural control ('demandingness') is associated with instrumental competence and children's behavioural self-control – and so with academic performance and behaviour (Darling, 1999; O'Connor and Scott, 2007). Numerous studies have found correlations between parenting style and child outcomes, and have reported that authoritative parenting is the ideal and most successful style. Children and adolescents whose parents are rated as authoritative rate themselves, and are rated by researchers, as more socially and instrumentally competent than those whose parents are not (Baumrind, 1991). Children and adolescents from authoritarian families (which are high in control – demandingness – but low in responsiveness) tend to perform moderately well at school and not to show problem behaviour, but are rated as having poorer social skills, lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression. Children and adolescents from permissive (indulgent) homes (high in responsiveness, low in demandingness) are more likely to show problem behaviour and do less well in school, but have higher self-esteem, better social skills and lower levels of depression. Experiencing withdrawn (uninvolved) parenting is consistently found to be the worst parenting style in relation to outcomes for children and adolescents since it is linked with all-round poor social and educational performance (McLoyd and Smith, 2002).

The universal applicability of these findings has, however, been called into question in recent years. Correlations have consistently been found for white North American middle-class families and sometimes for minority ethnic North Americans (e.g. Steinberg *et al.*, 1992). However, social class, gender and ethnicity have all been found to produce outcomes that run counter to these patterns. Garcia Coll *et al.* (1995) suggest that the parenting beliefs and practices of middle-class European American parents are incorporated into the 'norms' of parenting behaviour. In the USA, authoritative parenting is most common among white, two-parent, middle-class families of European descent. However, behavioural control appears to be less significant for girls' than for boys' well-being (Weiss and Schwarz, 1996), and authoritative parenting is not associated with good academic performance for African and Asian American children (and only to a limited extent for Latino Americans) whose parents are more likely to be rated as authoritarian (Darling, 1999). When Brody and Flor (1998, 2002) studied parenting challenges and successes in rural African American families, they found that a 'no-nonsense' style of supportive, involved parenting with monitoring of children's activities and consistent discipline was related to positive emotional, behavioural, educational and social outcomes.

Although authoritarian parenting is not associated with good educational outcomes for African American children, it does have some benefits and is apparently beneficial for Asian Americans (Lamborn *et al.*, 1996). Steinberg and colleagues (1992) explain this contradictory finding in terms of the achievement orientation of Asian American children, whose motivation to do well in education moderates the effects of authoritarian parenting. It is important to ask, however, whether the parenting style explanation is adequate to explain child outcomes if it needs to be supplemented by alternative explanations for some groups and not others.

McLoyd *et al.* (2000) suggest that researchers from different ethnic groups may interpret these issues differently and note a study by Gonzales and colleagues (1996), which suggested that the 'stricter' parenting styles of African Americans may be more in the eye of the (European American) beholder than in African American parenting. When both African American (in-group) and non-African American (out-group) observers watched and coded mother–daughter interactions, out-group observers rated the mothers' parenting styles as more restrictive in their use of control. They also noted more conflict in the interactions than did in-group observers. Such findings challenge notions that there is a universal relationship between parenting style and child outcomes. In a study conducted in Bangladesh, Stewart and Bond (2002) found intersections between gender, culture and class. For girls, there was an association between parental knowledge of adolescent children's activities and parental warmth, but not dominating control. For boys, parental knowledge was associated with parental dominating control, but not with warmth. In a study in Pakistan, they found that, if parents granted autonomy to their children, it was associated with warmth for both boys and girls, but played an important positive role for outcomes in boys, but not in girls. Stewart and Bond (2002) explain these findings in terms of culture-specific societal values that affect parental practices. These, they argue, relate to the degree to which boys and girls are protected by their parents (in Bangladesh) and a contradiction (in Pakistan) between public recognition of the need to empower women in middle-class circles and the fact that the central life domain for women and girls remains the home and family, which it is not for men and boys. This suggests that contextual factors and parenting styles are mutually constitutive in that both ethnicity and other aspects of the context have an impact on parenting style.

Chao (1994) argues that the constructs of authoritative and authoritarian parenting are, likewise, not relevant to Chinese Americans. She asked Chinese American and European American parents to rate statements known to indicate authoritarian parenting and statements supporting childrearing practices related to the Chinese concept of 'training' – which could be viewed as authoritarian. Chinese American parents were much more likely than European American parents to rate 'training' highly, regardless of how they were rated on levels of parental control

and authoritarian parenting. Chao consequently argued that it is inaccurate and ethnocentric to typify Chinese parents as controlling and authoritarian just because they consider it important to provide clear, concrete guidelines for their children's behaviour. To avoid ethnocentricity, she argued that a typology reflecting optimal Confucian parenting would be necessary.

One suggestion for avoiding such pitfalls is to separate typologies out into component parts such as warmth, responsiveness, regulation and non-coercive, democratic discipline. However, while there is general agreement about the concepts that should be included in measures, there is no consensus on how these concepts should be organised into dimensions and scales (Stewart and Bond, 2002). This is problematic since scales can have similar names, but can be used in different ways with different meanings. Whiteside-Mansell and colleagues (2001) sum up why this matters for a consideration of parenting and ethnicity:

Unless instrument comparability has been established, what appears to be group differences could also be a result of assessment tools that do not capture the same construct across cultural, racial, or ethnic groups ... Observed differences in means or variances may reflect the fact that the instrument is measuring different constructs in the various groups rather than indicating that the groups vary on the constructs.
(Whiteside-Mansell *et al.*, 2001, p. 768)

Over the last decade, some researchers have drawn a distinction between parenting 'style' and parenting 'practice'. Styles describe behaviours that are consistent across a range of situations and create the ethos within which parents and children interact. Some researchers argue that they are consistent across cultures although the meanings and outcomes vary. Practices are, however, situation specific rather than consistent and have different meanings to different cultural groups. For example, Dworetzky (1995, p. 209) cites a study by Rohner and Pettengill (1985) to argue that:

... a Korean child treated with too much permissiveness is, unlike his or her Western counterpart, quite likely to feel rejected.

Stewart and Bond (2002) recommend that, if 'style' and 'practice' items in parenting scales are separated, they are more likely to be suitable for research in understudied cultures. It is, nevertheless, arguable that, since the cultures of minority ethnic groups are understudied in Western/majority countries, there is a need further to understand their parental practices before considering their parental styles or developing parenting scales. The importance of this is signalled in a small-scale study in which Singh and colleagues (2000) asked four focus groups of parents of children with

emotional and behavioural disorders to provide feedback on a checklist widely used with multicultural populations (the Youth Adjustment Indicator). Two groups were of African American parents and two of white ('Caucasian') parents. The researchers found cultural differences in the way the two sets of parents interpreted the items. For example, African American parents equated self-confidence in their children with being happy, while 'Caucasian' parents viewed it as the ability to do something.

Also in the United States, Lindahl and Malik (1999) have drawn a distinction between 'hierarchical' and 'authoritarian' parenting – with the former not necessarily implying unresponsiveness in the way that the latter does. They suggest that hierarchical parenting is a more useful concept when studying Latino families where there are traditions of strong collectivist values and of respecting parents and other authority figures, as well as strong intrafamilial boundaries. Hierarchical parenting was found to predict higher levels of aggressive behaviour among European Americans and families of mixed ethnicity than among Latino families. This distinction has not been widely picked up by other researchers and reviewers, although it signals the possibility that, for different ethnic groups, different meanings and outcomes may attach to the same parenting behaviour.

In addition, there is consistent evidence that contextual factors affect parenting. From their review of the literature, Kotchick and Forehand (2002) conclude that residence in dangerous or impoverished neighbourhoods is associated with restrictive parenting practices and with lower levels of displayed maternal warmth towards children. This is hypothesised to be because children living in dangerous neighbourhoods have both to be protected from dangers and to learn to take care of themselves.

Research from the USA thus suggests that African American, Asian American and Latino parents have parenting styles that differ from those observed and standardised among white, European American, middle-class parents. There is, however, no clear consensus on exactly how they differ or how they relate to child and adolescent outcomes or within group differences. This is partly because research on this issue is sparse and often not as methodologically rigorous as the best studies of parenting for white European Americans (McLoyd *et al.*, 2000). Not only is more sophisticated research needed, but also work that can establish the variety of parenting practices engaged in, within, and between minority ethnic groups in the UK, as well as in the USA; and that contextualises them in relation to gender, social class and culture, as well as 'race' and ethnicity (e.g. Stewart and Bond, 2002).

There is no comparable work on parenting style and ethnicity in the UK context. Some studies throw light on parenting practices within different ethnic groups,

but, while research on parenting style is largely quantitative, research on parenting practices is generally qualitative. Thus, the two sets of literature are not commensurate. A central finding from British work is that cultural practices are not transferred simply from parents' countries of origin to Britain, or from parents to children, but are specific to the socio-economic context in which they arise (Kotchick and Forehand, 2002). For example, in a study of South Asian young people and their families, Atkin and Ahmad *et al.* (2002) found an intersection of the families' cultural practices with their views of deaf culture. In particular, parents were suspicious of what they saw as the individualism and permissiveness common in deaf clubs (which they considered particularly threatened their daughters' moral identity). They also complained of racism within the deaf community. Atkin and Ahmad *et al.* (2002) conclude that the young people had to negotiate their independence against a backdrop of religion, gender, racism and deafness – i.e. contextual factors.

Thus, what may seem to be pure 'traditionalism' in family practices may result from complex accommodation to specific circumstances. For example, the well-established tendency for black British mothers to be more likely to be employed when they have children results from both historical and cultural factors, and from current structural and economic factors such as high rates of unemployment for black men and low rates of pay for both black men and black women (Reynolds, 2001). Socio-economic and political factors have led to an increase in employment among mothers from all ethnic groups (Barrett, 2004; Williams, 2004). Even so, there is the possibility that, for different ethnic groups, different meanings and outcomes may attach to the same parenting behaviour.

Disciplinary practices

Researchers and practitioners have disagreed intensely about the place of 'race' in parents' use of physical discipline and its impact on children's development. The debate has largely been about whether black parents are culturally predisposed to use harsh physical punishment, and whether or not it constitutes child abuse. There is surprisingly little demographic data on the frequency and nature of disciplinary practices. Nobes and Smith (1997, 2002) did a UK study designed to establish a baseline of normative punishment in the population and found that some white English parents took for granted punishments that others would define as abusive. But there is evidence from the USA that African American parents are more likely than European American parents to use physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy and that this holds true even after controlling for socio-economic status and gender (Hill and Sprague, 1999).

Work in this area has been much influenced by Deater-Deckard *et al.*'s (1996) longitudinal study. This found that white European American parents' use of physical discipline was predictive of higher levels of externalising (aggressive) behaviour among their children, but not among African American children. Deater-Deckard and his colleagues argued that, within African American culture, physical discipline short of abuse is more acceptable than in European American culture. Thus, white European Americans who use such practices may be more erratic in their use of discipline, or do so because they lose control. From his review of the literature, Whaley (2000) also concludes that physical discipline has differential impacts on white European Americans and African Americans. Although physical discipline is linked to disruptive disorders in European American families, no such linkage has been found for African American families. He suggests that, in white families, negative behaviours both result in spanking and result from it, whereas, for black families, spanking follows negative behaviour rather than vice versa.

Deater-Deckard and Dodge (1997) hypothesised that physical coercion and punishment, common in the days of slavery, together with current racial oppression and threats of societal punishment, may account for African Americans' use of physical discipline. Some African American theorists have advanced similar explanations (e.g. Hill, 1977; Reynolds, 2001). Nonetheless, this is an area riven with as many assumptions as evidence. In a commentary on Deater-Deckard and Dodge's paper, Jackson (1997) uses the findings of various studies to take issue with their assumption that physical punishment is the preferred disciplinary technique of African Caribbean mothers and argues that child maltreatment data do not support the view that African Americans' tolerance of physical discipline fosters physical abuse.

Unwarranted assumptions are certainly evident in the literature. For example, US researchers Smith and Mosby (2003), in a review of physical punishment in the Caribbean, have suggested that:

While societies like the United States, Japan and Sweden have taken a hard line on physical punishment and shifted to a gentler approach to discipline, harsh disciplining of children persists elsewhere. In the Caribbean, and Jamaica in particular, child-rearing and disciplinary practices that would warrant child abuse charges in other Western societies are rampant.

(Smith and Mosby, 2003, p. 369)

Since they provide no evidence for this starting point, or for how they know such practices are widespread, the authors can be said to have 'essentialised'

the whole Caribbean region at a stroke. For example, they make no attempt to consider diversity in a region that is itself diverse in terms of countries, ethnicity and social class. They also treat Caribbean culture (demonstrated through physical punishment), but not first-world cultures, as timeless, rather than as everyday practices that are subject to change.

Such assumptions can have unfortunate consequences. For example, the understanding that it is 'culturally appropriate' to punish children severely has been a contributory factor in health and social workers' failure in Britain fully to recognise child abuse in cases such as that of Victoria Climbié. To quote Neil Garnham QC at the opening of Lord Laming's (2003) Inquiry:

Assumptions based on race can be just as corrosive in its effect as blatant racism ... racism can affect the way people conduct themselves in other ways. Fear of being accused of racism can stop people acting when otherwise they would. Assumptions that people of the same colour, but from different backgrounds, behave in similar ways can distort judgments. (Laming, 2003, p. 15)

Ethnicity and socio-economic status are often confounded in studies of African Americans and African Caribbeans. Hill and Bush (2001) used a sample of African and European mothers and their kindergarten children who were comparable in socio-economic status and found no average ethnic differences in children and parents' reports of parenting strategy. To advance understanding of the issues concerning disciplinary practices and ethnicity, there is a need for further studies to test hypotheses about the meaning of physical punishment, and to investigate the characteristics of black parents and children, both where physical abuse is used and where it is not.

Fathering

A preoccupation in the literature with the effect of 'father absence' on children (with particular reference to African American and African Caribbean fathers) has resulted in little attention being given to fatherhood in general. However, as lone motherhood and divorce has increased in the USA and in Britain (Eggebeen, 2002; Barrett, 2004), more attention is being paid to studying both resident and non-resident fathers, including African American, Hispanic/Latino and African Caribbean fathers. Where disadvantage arises from fathers being non-resident, it is suggested this is because non-resident fathers invest less time and money in their children than resident fathers (King *et al.*, 2004). However, the notion that fathers are simply

'absent' from their children's lives if they are non-resident is no longer assumed as readily as it was in the past. For example, Tracey Reynolds (2005) has argued strongly that lone motherhood should not be regarded simplistically as entailing 'father absence'. In the British black families she studied, there was a range of ways in which non-resident fathers contributed to their children's lives, so that some were not considered 'absent'.

In the USA, King and colleagues (2004) analysed data from over 5,000 adolescents participating in the US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. They found that white adolescents had higher levels of contact with their non-resident fathers than African American or Hispanic young people, but that there were no significant differences in whether they had any contact at all (although Hispanic adolescents were least likely to have any contact). There were slight differences in what children reported that they did with their non-resident fathers during contact time. White fathers were more likely to do sports, black fathers to attend religious services and Hispanic fathers to have worked on a school project. Moreover, after controlling for socio-economic status, King *et al.* found that differences between ethnic groups reduced still further. In general, the higher the level of fathers' education and income, the more likely they were to be involved with their non-resident children.

Using a life-course, historical perspective to study the period of the depression in the USA, Elder *et al.* (1984, 1985) showed a link between stressful socio-economic circumstances, fathering and child outcomes. They found that economic hardship was associated with fathers' increased irritability, depression, and explosive, inconsistent, behaviour. Fathers experiencing hardship were harsher and more arbitrary in their disciplinary practices and their children showed increased behavioural and socio-emotional problems. In a survey of 175 young African American men and their mothers, Paschall *et al.* (2003) found that socio-economic disadvantage was most strongly associated with delinquent behaviour in father-absent families. This appears to fit with the findings referred to above concerning non-resident fathers' involvement with children and socio-economic status (King *et al.*, 2004), and with other findings that young people are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour if they are closely monitored and supervised by their parents (Kotchick and Forehand, 2002).

King and colleagues (2004) also found that older adolescents and those with fathers born outside the USA reported lower levels of father involvement than younger children and those with US-born fathers. Gender also made a difference in that white, Hispanic and Asian boys reported more contact and greater likelihood of talking through personal issues than girls. However, black girls reported themselves to be as close to their fathers as white, Hispanic and Asian boys did. These findings support

the idea that it is important to take an intersectional approach to the understanding of non-resident father involvement with their children.

One of the benefits of the shift away from the earlier focus on father absence is a focus on 'social fathering'. In a study of 749 African American, low-income mothers of three- to five-year-old children living in a single county in the US, Jayakody and Kalil (2002) found that, although most were divorced, separated or never married, almost all had a 'social father' for their children. Those children who had male relatives for their social fathers tended to have higher levels of school readiness, whereas those with social fathers who were romantic partners of their mothers tended to have lower levels of emotional maturity. More research of this kind is needed to augment the work that already exists on stepfathers (e.g. Robinson and Smith, 1993).

Factors other than ethnicity have been shown to affect non-resident fathers' involvement with their children. In their review, Demo and Cox (2000) found that more than a quarter of USA divorced fathers had not seen their children at all in the previous year, only 27 per cent saw them at least weekly and less than a third of children had the opportunity to spend extended periods of time with fathers. More than half of the fathers were not involved in their children's lives and just under half had paid any child maintenance in the previous year. Fathers who were more involved with their children post-divorce tended to have been closer to them prior to divorce, to live near their children and to have joint custody. It is, therefore, important to learn more about how resident fathers interact with their children and whether this differs by ethnic group.

When fathers are present in a family, there are suggestions from national USA data that Hispanic and African American fathers are more likely to monitor and supervise children's activities than white fathers (Toth and Xu, 1999). The same study found no ethnic differences in fathers' expressions of affection for children. This fits with suggestions that Hispanic and African American parents use higher levels of behavioural control than white parents (Steinberg *et al.*, 1992). However, these findings run counter to Jain and Belsky's (1997) finding that Indian fathers who were more culturally adapted to US life were more engaged with their 18- to 44-month-old children than those who were less 'acculturated'. Once again, however, social class intersects with ethnicity. The review by McLoyd and colleagues (2000) suggested that African American fathers in middle-income, dual-earner families were as involved with their pre-school children (or more so) than fathers from other ethnic groups. Their level of involvement increased in relation to the number of hours the mothers worked, but this did not necessarily include increased caregiving activities with infants. African American fathers in marital couples tended to spend equal amounts of time with daughters and sons.

Compared with the USA, there is much less research on fathering and ethnicity done in the UK. Deborah Ghate's JRF-funded research on 'Understanding fatherhood: masculinity, diversity and change', which is due to report in 2008, is one of the few current extended pieces of research. This situation is, however, likely to change for two reasons: first, concerns about fatherhood in 'faith' families, which have been fuelled by concerns about fatherhood in Islamic families following '9/11' and '7/7'; second, concerns about black young men and 'gang culture' following a series of shootings associating these events with poor fathering and 'father absence'. The challenge for any research that emerges from these concerns will be to contextualise the meanings of fatherhood and fathering for different families, and in terms of socio-economic status and social exclusion, in order to avoid simplistic research and analyses.

Contextual factors

In order to have an ecologically valid understanding of parenting and ethnicity, it is important – as Stewart and Bond (2002) indicate – to understand the context in which parenting of children or adolescents occurs and to consider how gender and social class intersect with ethnicity. A plethora of other contextual factors have to be considered. These include:

- transnational families
- diversity in family forms
- kinship networks
- cultural philosophies of family
- sibling relationships (and hence non-standard environments within families)
- mixed parentage
- 'racial and ethnic socialisation'
- religion.

All of these issues have produced studies (however few) and all serve to deepen the complexity involved in addressing parenting and ethnicity, since they differentiate

people within the same ethnic groups and produce commonalities across ethnic groups. This review can address only some of these issues. It will focus on transnational families and kinship networks; processes of acculturation; racialisation, ethnicisation and racism; and families of mixed ethnicity. Neighbourhood factors and religion are also touched on in the discussion below.

Transnational families and kinship networks

An increasing percentage of both British and US populations have transnational links, whether or not they themselves are migrants. From her research on Caribbean migrant families, Mary Chamberlain (1999) suggests that relationships can have different meanings for different groups. She argues that 'lateral relationships' of siblings, uncles and aunts are of crucial importance in Caribbean 'transnational families' – often, more so than conjugal relationships. She has also found (Chamberlain, 2003) that grandparents (particularly grandmothers) and older aunts are important in Caribbean family life across class and geographic boundaries. This, she suggests, is a reflection of both cultural beliefs in the centrality of family and cultural practices of sharing responsibility for childrearing. Using data from the same study, Dwaine Plaza (2000) indicates that such patterns are changing. He found that, where they were involved, grandmothers helped to maintain transnational links between kin and assisted with short-term childcare if they were close to their families. However, grandmothers of 'third-generation' Caribbeans were less frequently involved in childrearing than were previous generations and less well known to their grandchildren.

Chamberlain (2003) suggests, however, that, even though there may be transgenerational change, these broader relationships are becoming a focus of cultural identity for some Caribbean origin families and are likely to survive.

Chamberlain (2006, p. 221) concludes that:

For all the problems that some African-Caribbean families face, particularly in Britain ... for all their historical and contemporary hybridity, African-Caribbean families are, for the most part, loving, functioning and vibrant units that have developed and survived against remarkable odds, and which continue to do so. Their differences with European and Western-model families may point also to their strengths ... It may be that those same families – African-Caribbean families – indicate the directions in which contemporary European and Western families are now heading.

While Chamberlain's research is on Caribbean families, kin networks have always been important for white British people (Finch and Mason, 1993) and demographic changes may make relations of care, including lateral relationships and friendships, increasingly important to white UK families, including those that are 'divorce-extended' (Williams, 2004). Mitchell and Green (2002) found that the mostly white, teenage mothers they interviewed considered their own mothers essential to their successful motherhood (cf. Phoenix, 1991).

The anthropologists Stack and Burton (1993) take a family life-course perspective and have coined the term 'kingscripts'. This concept includes the idea that families have timetables for when members are expected to do particular things. For example, a particular family's timetable for when young women should ideally become pregnant may fit with society's normative timetable, or may conflict with it. The point is that family members have interdependent goals and family scripts prescribe particular patterns of family interaction. Stack and Burton's notion of kingscripts helps to complicate understandings of the factors that affect parenting in minority (and majority) ethnic families and to explain family parenting patterns that otherwise seem inexplicable. For example, they explain childbearing in the early teenage years among lone African American women who are living in poverty and have few educational qualifications as an alternative life-course strategy. Early childbearing fits with the grandmothers' family timetables (because they want to be able to contribute to childrearing while they are still young enough to do so) as well as fitting with the mothers' family timetables. Thus, while early childbearing is considered to be 'normatively off schedule' for the wider society, one reason that it continues for families such as those studied by Stack and Burton is that it fits with their family life-course timetable (i.e. their 'kingscripts').

Such 'kingscripts' are predicated on particular notions of intergenerational responsibilities that fit the socio-economic circumstances in which families live. Some minority ethnic families in Britain and the US have 'kingscripts' that differ from those of families of other ethnicities. For example, Song (1997, 1999) used a study of Chinese children's labour participation in their families' ethnic businesses (Chinese takeaway restaurants) to examine the assumption that Chinese families are paragons of patriarchal family structure and family unity. She interviewed young people who ranged in age from 17 to the mid-20s from 25 families. Most of the young people agreed that children should 'help out' and this was part of the 'family work contract' – an implicit understanding that all family members benefited from the successful running of the business. This was seen, not just as a family matter, but also as part of upholding a collective Chinese norm in Britain and a source of cultural identity. Nonetheless, many young people were ambivalent about helping out in a context where they did not like the work and felt their British peers did not have to – although

many white children and young people are, in fact, employed (Mizen *et al.*, 2001). Their labour commitment had to be negotiated with their parents and siblings over time, and different siblings had 'good' or 'bad' reputations depending on how much work they did in the family business. Those who worked hard were considered the most culturally Chinese and collectivist. However, while the everyday practices that arose from this situation involved Chinese cultural norms and practices, Song (1999) points out that they developed in the context of the families' situations and experiences as immigrants and minority ethnic groups in Britain. They were not intrinsically Chinese. In that context, we can see the family as a social and economic resource in the British context, and culture not as static but as locally situated.

Minority ethnic groups are often reported to have kinship networks that are more extended than those of white European ethnic groups. For example, Khanum (2001) conducted an anthropological ethnography of households in what she called a 'Bangladeshi village' in Manchester. She found that migration played an important part in the households established, not least because many of the men who came from Bangladesh had two wives and were prevented by immigration laws from bringing both to Britain. They therefore maintained close financial, cultural and sometimes political relationships with relatives in Bangladesh. Khanum suggests that these links affected their household organisation in Britain, and placed some women in impoverished and insecure positions.

Marshall and colleagues (1998) and Bhopal (1998) found that grandmothers and other female kin provided practical and other support for South Asian mothers living in East London. It is important, however, to recognise ways in which the available support can vary, especially since such extended family networks appear to be less common than they were three decades ago (Roschelle, 1997 on US findings). The consequence of simplistic assumptions that other family members will provide support may be to leave some mothers unsupported (Phoenix, 1996). A study of 'Asian' and white British mothers by Marshall and colleagues (1998) also found that Asian mothers had clear notions that there are cultural differences in childbearing and childrearing ideologies between Asian and white families. They reported that this sometimes made the experience of childbirth in hospital difficult and that midwives treated them in stereotypic ways that ignored their needs. Simplistic, essentialist assumptions are sometimes also held by members of minority ethnic groups. For example, Beishon *et al.* (1998) found that most Asian, black and white parents considered that they had few practices or values in common with white families or with each other. Many of the Asian and black parents believed that white parents lacked a commitment to parenting, with the result that white children were undisciplined and lacking in respect for their parents and elders. This belief mirrors what has frequently been asserted about parents of African Caribbean origin – that they cannot control their children and make inadequate parents (e.g. Phoenix,

1996; Small, 2002) – and indicates how easily evoked and powerful are racialised constructions, and how informal segregation can mean that people living in a multicultural society lack interethnic knowledge.

Unintended ‘essentialism’ can lead to poor professional practices in other ways. A particularly tragic case is that of Toni-Ann Byfield, a Jamaican-born seven year old who, in September 2003, was shot dead in London alongside her putative father. She had been placed in his care by Birmingham Area Child Protection Committee, which had assumed that his new girlfriend was her aunt. The assumption that care by family and friends is routine among Caribbean people led overstretched social workers to make an erroneous decision. The case underlines the importance of being sensitive to cultural differences while also being sensitive to kinscripts and individual circumstances.

In recent years, researchers have begun to pay attention to the ways in which the migration process (and not just settlement) might impact on parent–child relationships. Arnold (2004) conducted a retrospective qualitative study of 31 women who joined their mothers in Britain after being left behind in the Caribbean during serial migration that was common between the 1950s and the 1970s. She conceptualises her findings as those of painful broken attachments and poor subsequent relationships. Some daughters felt that their mothers preferred younger children born in Britain (cf. Dunn and Plomin’s [1990] demonstration that siblings grow up in ‘non-standard environments’). They were angry with their carers in the Caribbean (generally grandmothers, but also siblings or other members of their extended families) who had allowed them to join mothers they did not know. The psychological distress experienced by these women continued into adulthood. These findings echo those from a study of Canadian women and men who experienced this pattern of serial migration from the Caribbean (Smith *et al.*, 2004). The feelings that some children experienced when their parents left them in the Caribbean are eloquently, retrospectively expressed by the writer and television producer Floella Benjamin (1995, p. 38), who, aged nine years, was left with some of her siblings in Trinidad by her mother before joining both parents in England 15 months later:

I couldn’t understand why she wanted to leave us. If she loved us why couldn’t we all stay together, especially as no one wanted to take care of us?

But she kept telling us that she did love us and that is why she was going to England to try to make a better life for us. We couldn’t all go together because she and Dardie didn’t have enough money, but one day they would.

... This was a day when a veil of unhappiness came down on my life. To be separated from Dardie was bad enough, he had now been gone for a year. But to be separated from my beloved Marmie and my younger brothers and sister was like the end of the world to me. My happy little world was beginning to crack and break into pieces, drifting away from me like flower petals scattered on a pond ... Life was going to be sad and lonely and that soon proved to be true.

This alerts us to the important fact that practices that are common within a culture may be adaptive, but need not be psychologically advantageous. For a variety of historical and socio-economic reasons, the practice referred to as 'child-shifting' (Gordon, 1987) is common in the Caribbean (Smith, 1962; Roberts and Sinclair, 1978; Olwig, 1999). Likewise, children in many African countries are often left with relatives who are able to give them a better chance in life, or who are childless. It is, however, clear that the children involved are sometimes left in unsatisfactory circumstances. Research on African children privately fostered in Britain has found that many have painful experiences (Owen *et al.*, 2006). While migration from the Caribbean to Britain is now negligible, these issues are of relevance to the children who arrive in Britain and other countries as unaccompanied asylum seekers who already have traumatic experiences as well as separations from caregivers (Candappa, 2000).

Research on serial migration also provides some insights into the experiences of children whose mothers move to European societies and the USA from Latin America, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, etc. to be employed as domestic workers, leaving their children behind. In the 'care chain' thus created, motherhood becomes 'commodified' in that the rearing of the children is paid for, the children get sent more money and goods than their peers have access to, and the absent mother is symbolised by material objects (Parrenas, 2005). At the same time, Parrenas (2000), from her study of mothers migrating from the Philippines to the USA and their children left in the Philippines, suggests that:

When you question their [*the mothers'*] relationship with their children, they tend to get defensive: 'I send them 500 dollars a month. How can there be a problem? There is no problem, see my phone bill? 170 dollars!' So, children are sacrificed for the greater material benefits for the whole family.

It is not surprising that some mothers positioned in this way would be defensive, particularly since some encounter opposition to their decision to leave their children (Bauer and Thompson, 2006). However, some express sorrow and pain at leaving

their children. For example, in a study of Jamaicans who migrated to Canada, the UK and the USA, Bauer and Thomson (2006, p. 76) quote a mother who left her children to go to USA and said 'Oh my God! That nearly killed me.'

When interviewed, the children left in the Philippines in the Parrenas (2005) study reported that they experienced similar pain of separation to that reported by Caribbean adults who had the experience in childhood. But children in this situation differ from Caribbeans in two important ways. First, immigration laws and their mothers' economic circumstances mean that there is no expectation that they will join their mothers (i.e. it does not become serial migration, although some of their mothers will eventually return to them). This is despite the fact that the mothers who are able to leave are middle class and have sufficient resources to do so. Second, they are often able to speak to their mothers on cell phones and/or Skype, or to have videoconferencing exchanges (Parrenas, 2005; Lutz, 2007). The fact that this group has grown enormously over the last decade demonstrates the fluidity of ethnicised parenting relationships and that culture is dynamic. The mothers, fathers and children involved have to forge new everyday practices to fit with their changing socio-economic circumstances. Their circumstances mean that considerations of parenting and ethnicity need to recognise different kinds of migration-extended families.

Processes of acculturation

A related issue is that of 'acculturation' – namely, the ways in which migrants and minority ethnic groups adopt (or not) the behaviour patterns, norms and values of the dominant culture. In a study of South Asian adolescents and their parents in Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA, Ghuman (2003) recognised that acculturation involves members of the society of which migrants become part, that it is not simply the opposite of 'traditionalism' and that it has different meanings according to religion and gender.

Ghuman found that South Asian young people born or educated in the four 'Western' countries were keen to maintain familial and religious values, but also to engage in leisure activities with their white peers. Girls were generally keener than boys on an 'integration' mode, which synthesised the values and attitudes of their background culture with those of the surrounding society. In general, Hindus were keen to acculturate, while Muslims were more likely to want to maintain their home culture. Sikhs were in between. Class and place were also important in that young people from professional backgrounds were keener to acculturate, and those in Canada were more likely to want to acculturate than their British peers.

Most parents subscribed to a version of biculturalism. Ghuman (2003) found some tensions and conflicts between the young people and their parents – particularly in terms of dating and marriage. Sikh and Muslim parents were more concerned about this than Hindu parents. Hindu and Sikh parents in particular were prepared to accommodate to their children's desires to 'date' and to choose spouses. Ghuman found that they were increasingly using a modified form of arranged marriage and that difficulties were generally resolved through the mediation of relatives. This finding accords with earlier research by Brah (1996). Social class also made a difference in that professional parents expressed more confidence about dealing with their children's social and educational problems than those from manual backgrounds. Social class may, however, have been confounded with religious grouping in these studies, since Indian people in Britain are more likely to be better educated and more middle class than Pakistani and Bengali people.

Ghuman's findings on Muslim parents and young people accord with those of Shaw (2000) who did an ethnographic study of British Pakistani Muslims in Oxford, which found that young people were internalising Islamic values and family traditions. Where there were intergenerational problems, they were resolved mostly through reconciliation and compromise. However, young women faced particular problems since they were treated in more traditional ways than their brothers – as also found in a study of the parenting of young people from different ethnic groups by Brannen and colleagues (1994) and a study of Sikh girls by Drury (1991). The findings by Ghuman (2003) and by Shaw (2000) suggest that, while clashes between Asian parents and young people do occur (and forced marriages give particular cause for concern), conflicts are usually resolved. Differences between different groups of Asian families and the ways they deal with cultural and gender differences require further research attention. Furthermore, any study necessarily provides a snapshot of existing circumstances when all cultures and groups are dynamic and so in the process of change. For example, from her research with mainly working-class Pakistanis and Bangladeshi children, parents and teachers, Bhatti (1999) points out that all the parents she studied were migrants with strong links to the Indian Subcontinent, while the children had mostly been brought up in Britain and were 'British Asians', 'not completely like their parents, nor completely like their white peers' (Bhatti, 1999, p. 238). Parenting and ethnicity are, therefore, in process, and those processes differ by ethnic group, by social class and by geographical location.

Ghuman's (2003) findings highlight some of the ways in which religion differentiates parenting. Asian parents who are Muslim appear to be at one end of a continuum in relation to acculturation, dating and marriage, while Hindu parents are at the other, with Sikhs somewhere in between. Increasing research attention is currently being devoted to Muslim young people because it is apparent that, among young men especially, Islam is increasingly viewed as a worldwide identity of universal

brotherhood in which family and traditional gender relations are highly valued (Glynn, 2002; Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002; Nagel, 2002; Archer, 2003). Relatively little work has paid attention to children, parenting and religion more generally. Notable exceptions are the work on children and religion (Smith, 2005) and the JRF-funded research on religious beliefs and parenting practices by Jan Howarth and her colleagues, which is due to be completed in 2008. Yet, 'black Christian churches' and Judaism, as well as Hinduism and Sikhism, impact on parenting practices. USA literature finds that religious retention (in any religion) is linked to a range of different factors such as: parents' religiosity; similarity of the two parents' religions; parents' intention to pass on their religion, as well as good parental relationships with their children; traditional family structure; experience of religious education and of stable life circumstances; status; and ideological similarities between the religious adherents (i.e. parents) and their religious groups (Gunnoe and Moore, 2002).

Higher levels of education have been linked to greater retention in evangelical traditions, but less so in fundamentalist traditions. However, different social factors influence people in different religions in disparate ways (Smith and Sikkink, 2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, greater religiosity appears to decrease the incidence of divorce and slightly increases the likelihood that physical punishments will be endorsed and used – at least in Christian denominations. It is also associated with more positive mother–child relationships (Mahoney and Pargament *et al.*, 2001). Brody and colleagues, (1994, 1996) found that African American parents' religiosity may be linked to less maternal conflict, more supportive parenting and fewer child behaviour problems.

In clinical assessments, religion and parental religiosity have been associated with protective factors that strengthen families (Shor, 1998). However, very little information is currently available on the beneficial or harmful roles that religion plays in the home (Mahoney and Pargament *et al.*, 2001). While greater Christian conservatism is moderately associated with greater use of corporal punishment, Mahoney *et al.* state that research is needed to examine how the general importance of religion to parents is tied to disciplinary attitudes and behaviour. In a study of disciplinary practices used by Gujarati and white families in Manchester, Hackett and Hackett (1994) found that a stricter and more punitive approach to toilet training may be due to the importance of cleanliness in the Hindu tradition. Religion, thus, seems to be an important contextual factor in parenting. But it is not well established how it relates to ethnicity or how differences between religions impact on parenting. Over all, very little research has been conducted examining the relationship between religion, its influence on parenting attitudes and its impact on parenting practices. Religion remains an understudied component of family life – the 'forgotten factor' (Larson and Larson, 1994).

In their review paper, McLoyd and colleagues (2000) examined the relatively sparse literature on acculturation in the USA and found that patterns were more complex than often thought. Social class, neighbourhood and future vision all influenced the strategies that parents used and the opportunities available, so that parents from the same ethnic group could employ different strategies. For example, Vietnamese parents could:

... become marginal to their own ethnic community, abandon their ethnic identity, and adapt an identity common to inner cities that had few options for upward mobility. Or they could choose to adhere to Vietnamese community values and follow Vietnamese authority figures, which might eventually lead to more opportunities for upward mobility.

(McLoyd *et al.*, 2000, p. 1084)

They also found suggestions in some research that acculturation can lead to the erosion of some cultural differences, while others are maintained. As in the Ghuman (2003) study, they found evidence of intergenerational differences and that some minority ethnic young people (e.g. Latino, Mexican, Filipino and Asian American) 'display influences of both their culture-of-origin and American culture' in terms of maintaining collectivist values of not disagreeing with their fathers.

Other evidence supports the view that acculturation is a multifaceted process that is specific to particular cultural (and religious groups). Bornstein and Cote (2004) compared the parenting cognitions of middle-class Japanese and Argentinian mothers who had migrated to the USA with those of mothers in Japan and Argentina. They found that the Argentinian migrant mothers answered questionnaires in ways that were more like US mothers than mothers in Argentina, in contrast to Japanese mothers who responded in similar ways to mothers in Japan. The mothers also showed different patterns of answers for different issues (e.g. self-perceptions as parents compared with attributions in successful parenting situations and unsuccessful ones).

There are few studies of acculturative processes in African Caribbeans. However, there are indications that many families from minority ethnic groups are concerned to maintain values and identities they hold dear. Hylton and Grant (1997) studied 230 Africans, African Caribbeans and South Asians, including group interviews with young people aged eight to 18 years and eight individual case studies. Many of these suggested that an important mode of coping was to develop practices that allowed them to co-exist with different world-views while keeping their alternative identity and spirituality intact. Some of the black parents felt threatened by societal values that, for example, equated smacking with child abuse. Some also considered that family

discussion was central to the transmission of group values and the creation of mutual bonds that strengthened feelings of love, commitment and respect between family and sub-group members. As one young woman said: 'I want my family to grow in the sense of knowing who they are, although they've been born in this system'. However, many of the things they considered culturally distinctive, such as engaged family discussion, were found to be common to many ethnic groups.

The Policy Studies Institute's Fourth Survey of Ethnic Minorities (Modood *et al.*, 1997) was followed up by interviewing a sample from the survey of 68 people in three groups: African Caribbeans; Indians and African Asians; and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. A few white people were also interviewed (Beishon *et al.*, 1998). The researchers found mixed patterns of commonalities and differences between groups in terms of household organisation; paid employment of married women outside the home; individualistic ideologies and views on divorce and the importance of marriage. Indeed, a range of studies indicate that minority ethnic families are dynamic – partly in response to living and being raised in Britain – and prepared to negotiate and sometimes change practices that they have previously taken for granted. This may explain the findings of a JRF-funded study (Dench, 1996) that African Caribbean men who were British born were more likely to support 'alternative' rather than traditional family culture than other minority ethnic men, Caribbean-born men and white British men. Dench suggests that this results from their experiences in Britain, rather than their cultural backgrounds.

In a review of an edited USA book on 'children of immigrants' (Rumbaut and Portes, 2001), Plaza (2002) discussed the diversity evident in acculturation processes between ethnic groups, and how this results from the intersection between cultural and socio-economic factors such as educational credentials, entrepreneurial skills and whether their reception has been favourable or not. It was suggested that Cubans, Vietnamese and Filipino Americans had benefited from this intersection, while Mexicans, Nicaraguans and Haitians had tended to experience downward mobility. West Indian immigrants to the US, although subject to discrimination, had partially benefited from the educational credentials of their parents and accents that distinguish them from black Americans – something that Bauer and Thompson (2006) also found for Jamaican migrants to the USA, whose experiences and identities differed from those who had migrated to Canada or the UK.

Racialisation, ethnicisation and dealing with racism (racial and ethnic socialisation)

Research in the USA and the UK demonstrates that racialisation and ethnicisation impact on everyday practices of parenting, not least because parents try to protect their children from racism. An NSPCC research review (Barter, 1999) suggests that racism has direct and indirect effects on children, and that many children from all ethnic groups are implicated, whether as victims, perpetrators or witnesses. Knowledge of the specific ways in which racism affects children and parenting is limited by a dearth of research evidence. However, O'Brien *et al.* (2000) found that 'race' and gender both have an impact on how much children explore their local neighbourhoods, with Asian girls being allowed out on their own less than other children. Brannen and colleagues (1994) reported a similar finding. They found that parents from all ethnic groups were more likely to restrict 15- to 17-year-old daughters than sons of the same age. But parents born outside Britain (predominantly from 'Asian' and Middle Eastern countries) were most likely to say they restricted their daughters. Archer (2003), likewise, found that Asian Muslim young people reported these gender differences in parenting.

While such restrictions are partly for gendered cultural reasons, the issue of safety from racist attack is a feature for some parents. A qualitative study in the UK by Chahal and Julienne (1999) found that parents whose children had suffered racist harassment or attacks did not allow them the freedom to move about the neighbourhood by themselves.

Racism can also be a feature of school life, leading parents from minority ethnic groups to distrust schools. In a study of the out-of-school lives of ten 13-year-old children, Petrie *et al.* (2000) found that:

Many mothers from ethnic minority groups reported either that their children had tutors, went to supplementary schools and/or that they themselves supervised homework and indeed set it when they thought the school's part was inadequate.
(Petrie *et al.*, 2000, p. 48)

Many parents in the study also considered that schools did not promote key values of discipline and respect for adults, as, for example, in this quote from a Sikh father:

The schools don't teach the children how to behave, so one cannot expect the play centre to teach the children how to behave properly. If they did then parents wouldn't be so upset. The children know how to

respect their elders, to respect their parents. These people don't know about these things, these things the schools don't teach.

(Petrie *et al.*, 2000, p. 49)

Given the potential gulf between teachers' and parents' constructions concerning the role of schools, it is perhaps not surprising that parents may distrust what teachers say about their children. In a longitudinal study of children from nursery class to the end of infant school, Tizard *et al.* (1988) found that many black boys came to be viewed by teachers as boisterous or on the verge of behavioural problems at school. However, their parents did not experience them in this way.

Little work has been done on racialisation and ethnicisation in relation to white majority ethnic groups. However, two pieces of research demonstrate how differentiated are white parents' responses to racialisation and ethnicisation – varying between seeing cultural diversity as an impediment and as a resource. Holden (2006) conducted research with young people and teachers in two northern cities with a focus on interfaith dialogue. The teachers reported that efforts to promote the benefits of cultural diversity 'have been met by the resistance of parents who object to "multi-cultural education" on the grounds that it undermines Britishness'. In contrast, Reay and her colleagues (2006) are currently conducting a qualitative study with over 100 white middle-class families in three English locations who have chosen to send their children to ethnically mixed secondary schools. These parents have actively chosen such mixed schools because they consider mixing with children from a diverse range of cultures an educative opportunity that will provide their children with cultural capital to improve their prospects in a globalised world.

Families of mixed ethnicity

Analyses of the 2001 UK Census indicate that families of mixed ethnicity are becoming increasingly common in British society and children of mixed black Caribbean and white UK parentage now outnumber those with two Caribbean parents (Owen, 2005). It is, therefore, more important than ever to augment the scant knowledge that currently exists concerning such families. On the basis of his analyses of the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (Modood *et al.*, 1997) and the Labour Force Survey, Berthoud (1999) has suggested that the majority of Caribbean men beginning cohabitations or marriage in the twenty-first century may have white women partners. The rate of mixed partnership is also increasing for people of Asian origin, but is lower than for African Caribbeans.

Although the numbers are increasing, some people of mixed parentage in Britain and their families are still subjected to verbal or physical assault (Alibhai Brown, 2001; Tizard and Phoenix, 2002). White mothers can face a variety of difficulties in rearing their mixed-parentage children. These range from being called racist names and/or being physically attacked by white people on the street, to being excluded by black family members and treated badly by white family members (Alibhai Brown and Montague, 1992; Twine, 2001; Tizard and Phoenix, 2002). Leicestershire Police became one of the first police forces to recognise that 'racial incidents' can involve white 'victims' who are targeted because they live in 'mixed-race' families. Interracial relationships were identified as a factor in almost half of all 'racial incidents' reported by white 'victims' and as a factor in 'racial incidents' for 15 per cent of all victims (Webb, 1998).

Twine (a 'biracial' American researcher) conducted a study of white birth mothers of mixed-parentage children in the British Midlands (Twine, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). She found that the women often reported that they were viewed by the black relatives of their children as having access to 'white privilege'. They said they often faced negative racialisation, and sometimes exclusion, by black family members who believed that they could not properly empathise with their children because they had never experienced racism. Their fear that black people might reject their children led some to use intricate strategies to counter racism and diminish the perceived 'racial' gap between themselves and their children. Lone white mothers of mixed-parentage children could sometimes be resentful of black people in general (Twine, 1999a). From the children's point of view, Phoenix and Tizard (2002) found that many young people of mixed black and white parentage reported themselves to be comfortable with both black and white people. However, in some mixed families, children become familiar with cultural practices from only one of their parents – even if both were in the household (Ali, 2003). Since it is only relatively recently that mixed parentage has received any research attention, it is perhaps not surprising that people of mixed parentage have generally been treated as if they constitute a group. However, it is becoming evident that children from different mixed backgrounds fare differently. For example, it has become clear that young people of mixed African Caribbean and white parentage attain poorly at school while those of mixed Asian and white parentage do not (Tikly *et al.*, 2004).

5 Possible areas for future research

Notwithstanding the number of studies referred to in this review, there is relatively little literature available on parenting and ethnicity – and most of what there is comes from the USA. Analyses from the UK Millennium Cohort study are beginning to contribute to understanding in this area (e.g. Dex and Joshi, 2005). However, more British studies that are methodologically sophisticated and span a full range of ethnic groups in Britain are needed – whether or not more than one ethnic group is included in any one study. Families of Irish origin, Jewish families and those from Eastern Europe need to be included as minoritised ethnic groups, building on the work of the University of North London Irish Studies Centre (Hickman, 1995; Walter, 2001) and Adrienne Baker's (1993) study of Jewish mothers.

Further research including 'insider' accounts from children as well as parents is also required, with fathers being included as well as mothers. Differences within black families, Asian families and other minority ethnic groups as well as commonalities across ethnic groups all need more attention, as does work on white families as ethnicised, racialised groupings. Gender differences in the parenting of boys and of girls also deserve more attention in every area of parenting and ethnicity. Contextual factors in racialised parenting are, likewise, insufficiently well understood (Kotchick and Forehand, 2002). As Williams (2004) has argued, there is a need for a new framework and thinking about families in a wider context of relationships and care.

In taking difference seriously, new research will need to avoid 'over-racialisation' and 'over-ethnicisation' by not simply assuming that differences between ethnic groups are culturally generated without considering social positioning related to, for example, poverty and racism. This normalised absence/pathologised presence approach has been common in work on parenting styles that has often ignored the ethnicity of white people. Such approaches can make the inclusion of cultural factors seem ritualistic and included only to deflect criticism. There is a need, therefore, for work that acknowledges the complexity of parenting and ethnicity by contextualising the research that has been done, and by recognising that all ethnic groups change over time and differ according to context.

Priorities for future research

A list of UK research priorities, based on this review, would include the following.

- Baseline data to document the range of parenting practices (rather than styles). This requires insider accounts on what parents from various ethnic groups (including those with children of mixed ethnicity) consider 'good parenting' for children of different ages and genders, and how they go about the task of parenting. Observational studies would make a useful contribution to this area. Such a baseline would normalise diversity, rather than treating it as different from the white majority ethnic group and would include white minority ethnic groups (e.g. those of Irish background and from the newer accession countries of the European Union).
- Children and young people's perspectives on parenting in families of different ethnicities.
- Investigations of the effects on parenting of neighbourhoods where minority ethnic parents live. This would build on research on transnational families and their kinship networks (e.g. Knowles and Sixsmith, 1996; Olwig, 1996; Chamberlain, 1997) and on neighbourhood as a contextual factor (Pinderhughes *et al.*, 2001; Kotchick and Forehand, 2002).
- Historical work – equivalent to that done in the US by Glen Elder *et al.* (1985) – on the legacy of slavery, the Holocaust, colonialism and wars that have contributed to making Britain the multicultural society it is. Much is speculated about the legacy of slavery for parenting practices (e.g. Deater-Deckard *et al.*, 1996), but little is known.
- Work on how gender, social class, 'race', ethnicity and age of children affect parenting practices would be helpful to practitioners in illuminating which groups of parents and children need help. 'Whiteness' should also be included.
- Masculinities and femininities in minority ethnic groups. Work on parenting of boys, girls, young men and young women could help to address this issue.
- The intersection of family, nation and economic involvement (including employment/work) in specific localities and relevant 'kingscripts'. Song's work (1999) also alerts us to the importance of including the differential impact of siblings on ethnic identities and parenting practices.
- The ways in which the family has an impact on the process of developing racialised and ethnicised identities.

- Work that moves beyond black, white and Asian categorisations to reflect changing demographic patterns in Britain. This work could build on research such as Ghuman's (2003) on different Asian groups and should recognise that everyday practices change over time and differ by place.
- The importance of religion to everyday parenting practices.
- The long-lasting effects of different kinds of separations from caregivers that have arisen for socio-economic and possibly cultural reasons among particular ethnic groups. This suggests a need to know more about how parenting history intersects with ethnicity and whether or not it produces group effects.
- Research on family support, extending work done by Qureshi *et al.* (2000) on family support for South Asian communities.
- More complex understandings of fatherhood in different ethnic groups that analyses similarities and differences and reasons for variance.
- Further studies to test hypotheses about the meaning of physical punishment in different ethnic groups and to investigate the characteristics of parents and children both where physical abuse is used and where it is not.

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