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'Child trafficking': Experiences of separated children on the move

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'Child Trafficking':

Experiences of separated children on the move

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Abstract

'Child trafficking' as a phenomenon requiring a policy and practice response has, in recent years gathered considerable pace. 'Child trafficking' is a crosscutting social issue, relevant to policy areas of child protection, child migration, criminal justice, immigration, social policy and human rights. This thesis explores children's own accounts and lived experiences of 'child trafficking', addressing a notable gap in hearing from children directly. The thesis critically engages with the social construction of the 'trafficked child' examining how contemporary concepts of childhood shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy and practice. How 'child trafficking' policy has been constructed politically is examined, in shaping how 'child trafficking' is defined in practice. The implications for children experiencing trafficking of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking' are considered.

The study explores how children's experiences of their childhood and 'child trafficking' challenge many assumptions underpinning policy and practice. The findings reveal a disjuncture between immigration-driven and prosecution focused 'child trafficking' practice and children requiring a welfare and individualised response to their needs. Children needed practitioners to listen to them, believe them and take action upon child protection concerns. A conclusion is drawn that the way in which 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England is presently constructed, and experienced, appears not to reflect the lived 'realties' of young people in this study. A new approach to 'child trafficking' policy and practice is recommended underpinned by a conceptual shift in how we perceive childhood and adolescence. Intended audiences of this study include policy-makers and front-line practitioners including social workers, the police, immigration officers and other services. This qualitative study contributes in developing methods with a hard to access population addressing a difficult subject area, promoting children and young people's participation in research.

List of abbreviations

ATMG   Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group
BASW   British Association of Social Workers
CEOP   Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre
COE   Council of Europe
CPS   Crown Prosecution Service
DCSF   Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE   Department for Education
DfES   Department for Education and Skills
DoH   Department of Health
ECPAT   End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of
        Children for Sexual Purposes
ESRC   Economic and Social Research Council
EU   European Union
GRETA   Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HCPC   Health and Care Professions Council
IDMG   Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group
ILO   International Labour Organisation
ILPA   Immigration Law Practitioners Association
INGO   International Non-Government Organisation
IRIN   Integrated Regional Information Networks
LSCB   Local Safeguarding Children Boards
NCA   National Crime Agency
NGO   Non Government Organisation
NHS   National Health Service
NRM   National Referral Mechanism
NSPCC   National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
SCCYP   Scotland's Commissioner for Children And Young People
SCEP   Separated Children in Europe Programme
SOCA   Serious and Organised Crime Agency
UASC   Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children
UK   United Kingdom
UKBA   United Kingdom Border Agency
UKHTC   United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre
UKVI   United Kingdom Visas and Immigration
UN   United Nations
UNCRC   United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter 1. Introduction

The growing awareness of child trafficking as a phenomenon requiring a policy and practice response has, in recent years gathered considerable pace. 'Anti-trafficking' strategies, legislation, and a range of policies and practice guidance for agencies have been introduced in a relatively short period of time. 'Child trafficking' is a crosscutting social issue, relevant to several policy areas and disciplines, child protection, child migration, criminal justice, immigration, social policy and human rights. 'Child trafficking' as a recent and new area of social policy development highlights the importance and topicality of research in this field. This study intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on 'child trafficking' whilst addressing some key gaps of previous research undertaken. Most notably children's experiences of trafficking have hitherto been unrepresented which this study aims to address. Intended audiences of the study include policy-makers, particularly within the existing 'child trafficking' framework, Children Services, support organisations assisting children defined as 'trafficked', front-line practitioners including social work, the police, immigration officers and other practitioners in the field.

Despite the increased interest in human trafficking, the body of academic research on or with children and young people defined as 'trafficked' is particularly limited. Listening to the voices of children since the formulation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has become a *"powerful and pervasive mantra for activists and policy makers worldwide"* (James, 2007, cited by Gearon, 2015*a*). Despite this, many social science researchers have omitted children as active participants informing knowledge and theory about issues affecting children directly (Gearon, 2015*a*). This is particularly evident in 'child trafficking' research; there is a distinct gap in understanding the subjective experiences of children and young people who have been trafficked. This study therefore aims to advance UK 'child trafficking' research through listening to young people's experiences of separation, migration and trafficking. This qualitative study aims to give voice to children and young people, to gain a perspective of children's own accounts of their personal journeys, their experiences of being trafficked and encountering services within the 'child

trafficking' framework. 'Child trafficking' policy and practice in England is critically analysed through the experiences of children and young people to explore if the current system meets their needs. There is also a significant gap in deconstructing theoretical frameworks underpinning the construction of 'child trafficking'. This study addresses how contemporary concepts of childhood shape and construct the 'child trafficking' framework in England and explores to what extent does the system reflect the lived 'realties' of being trafficked. The findings of listening to children and young people's experiences are considered in terms of implications for 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

Personal background

As this study is qualitative and interpretive by nature, I acknowledge that my personal biography constructs and situates a particular perspective and approach. For this reason, I offer the reader, from the onset of this thesis, a personal 'positioning', to be open and transparent about my background, orientation and motivations for this study, and to acknowledge that this study is shaped by biases, values and personal interests.

My background and experience as a social work practitioner within child protection has shaped my interest in social issues affecting children's lives, social policy, social work practice and research. Social work practice has enabled me to actively engage with marginalised groups and work directly with children and families. When speaking to children alone in child protection practice contexts, often a different perception is offered from the child's viewpoint, distinct from adult interpretations of their world. This has shaped my belief in children as having capacity to participate in their own representation about matters that affect them directly.

My front-line child protection social work practice has included working with separated migrant children and young people, children exposed to exploitation and children experiencing trafficking. A catalyst for my research interest in 'child trafficking' was a young Vietnamese boy I worked with who was discovered in a cannabis factory in a suburban home. This boy was trafficked and exploited as a 'human sprinkler' tending the crops for an organised criminal gang. Facing 14

years in prison due to the 'grave crime' committed, I was party to his remand to local authority care, recognising he was a vulnerable young person. He subsequently went missing, suspected of having been re-trafficked. From his experience, and mine, I gained an interest in child trafficking research, policy and practice, realising there were serious implications for children due to gaps in knowledge in understanding the child trafficking experience.

My personal and professional values of libertarianism, social justice and belief in children's rights to protection construct my identity as a social work researcher and teleological orientation of my research practice. This non-neutral personal positioning is an acknowledgement of influences and preconceptions that I bring to this study. I view my role as a social work researcher to critically to engage with the contexts of social work through adopting a radical and anti-oppressive approach. This approach seeks to expose oppressive social structures, and examines how political and economic power can underpin exploitative practices (Humphries, 2005).

Research Question and Objectives

To what extent does 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of trafficking?

Objectives

1. How do contemporary constructions of childhood shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy, practice and research?
2. How has 'child trafficking' become defined and interpreted within the policy and practice framework in England?
3. To explore existing and new methods that enable successful engagement of children and young people who have experienced trafficking to participate in research about their experiences.
4. To explore young people's own accounts and lived experiences of trafficking as children.
5. To explore how young people experience services within the 'child

trafficking' framework in England, along with their perspectives on how existing services could be improved to reflect their needs.

6. To explore the 'fit' between children's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England, in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs.

7. To consider the implications for children and young people experiencing trafficking, of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking'.

Contribution

A key intended outcome of this study is that it benefits children and young people by providing an opportunity to tell their story on matters or aspects important to them, share experiences to inform and improve policy and practice and promote learning about their situation to others, including other children and young people. An inclusive research process, which is 'child'-centred, offers children and young people a sensitive approach in facilitating a space for young people to be heard. This study aims to privilege the voice of young people and reciprocally offers potential personal therapeutic value in terms of young people having their story heard and disseminated to a wider audience.

The severity of cruelty and extreme nature of abuse children experienced was difficult to hear and to write about, and deliberately not avoided, nor sensationalised. Young people wanted to be listened to, to convey to others what being trafficked was like for them, in the hope of helping to achieve a better understanding of 'child trafficking'. In listening to, and presenting children's experiences, a sober reflection is offered of young people's openness and willingness to voice how they experienced being trafficked.

It is also intended that the study will contribute to policy-making in 'child trafficking' by providing views of how children experience 'child trafficking' support within the existing framework. Policy-makers can utilise this information for the development of preventative and protective services, to inform and improve 'anti-trafficking' strategies. The study may also have relevance for

front-line practice with trafficked children and young people to enable practitioners to hear children's views on the services they receive and learn about their experiences of being trafficked. Exploring young people's perceptions of how they experience different agencies such as Children Services, the Home Office, law enforcement and others within the 'child trafficking' framework also can provide valuable information for potential practice recommendations.

The study aims to make a theoretical and epistemological contribution towards social science research through a social constructivist paradigm, enabling an examination of the present construction of 'child trafficking'. The study aims to examine how contemporary constructions of childhood underpin 'child trafficking' measures and examines to what degree does the construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice reflect children's own accounts of their situation. The study has theoretical relevance to the sociology of childhood, the social construction of childhood in theory, policy and practice, and contributes to the discourses on children's rights to protection.

This study is exploratory in the choice of research methods to enable to hear children and young people's voices from a hard to access population, addressing a sensitive subject area. The research process undertaken in this study explores creative methods alongside more traditional qualitative methods that enabled the successful engagement of young people in this study. This aims to contribute methodologically, to promote children and young people's active participation in research, on social issues that directly affect them and may be of interest to other researchers.

Overview of chapters

Chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework of 'child trafficking' and examines how contemporary constructions of childhood have shaped and influenced discourses informing child trafficking policy, practice and research. In exploring the social construction of 'child trafficking', discourses are analysed in how they constitute 'childhood' and shape 'child trafficking' narratives in the UK.

A review of 'child trafficking' research considers what the findings tell us about the social construction of 'child trafficking' in the UK.

Chapter three situates this study in the context of the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework in England. The chapter critically engages with the political construction of 'child trafficking' in shaping how 'child trafficking' is defined and interpreted in practice. Critical analysis of the practice framework deconstructs the concepts of 'consent' and 'coercion' as key determinants in identification of 'child trafficking'.

Chapter four sets out the qualitative research design of this study, the research questions and methodology. Specific ethical considerations are detailed in researching a particularly sensitive subject area with children and young people who have been trafficked. The research process undertaken provides the reader detail of the challenges encountered given the exploratory nature of this type of research, with a difficult to access population. Intersubjectivity is addressed and acknowledgement made of the limitations of this study. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the methods chosen that enabled successful engagement of young people to participate in research about their experiences.

Chapter five presents the findings from in-depth interviews with young people. Young people's lived experiences of life at home, becoming separated from families and being trafficked are presented, under key thematic headings. An unexpected, yet significant theme is detailed in this chapter, the critical role other children and young people played in assisting children to escape their exploitative situations. The discussion explores children's perceptions of their childhood, of child abuse and trafficking, in relation to present constructions constituting 'child trafficking'.

Chapter six is the second findings chapter presenting how young people experienced services within the 'child trafficking' framework in England. The findings are drawn from in-depth interviews and focus groups, a total of 20 young people's experiences of services were incorporated into the data set for

analysis. Part two of this chapter presents young people's views on improvements to existing services, with advice from young people to professionals, agencies and other young people. The chapter concludes with a discussion on 'culturalism', an emergent aspect of the findings relating to how services respond inter-culturally and intra-culturally to children and young people experiencing trafficking.

Drawing together the findings of young people's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' services, chapter seven explores the 'fit' between children's own accounts of their situation and the current construction of UK 'child trafficking' policy and practice. Young people's views on a different approach to 'child trafficking' practice addresses key limitations of the present system. The chapter concludes with the key findings of the study.

Chapter eight, synthesises the analysis of the 'children trafficking' policy and practice framework with what the findings reveal about children and young people's lived experiences. The discussion considers the implications for children experiencing trafficking of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking'. The chapter answers the main research question and proceeds to consider the implications of the findings of this study for 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

The final chapter, nine, summaries the key arguments and findings drawn from this study. The chapter presents how the thesis contributes to policy and practice, theoretically through a social constructivist approach and methodologically in successfully engaging young people. The chapter includes reflections on the research process and integrity of this study and concludes with future directions, as areas for further research.

Definition of terms

Child - I use the term 'child' in this study to refer to a person below the age of 18 in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 and the Children Act 1989. However, I acknowledge that children are not a homogenous age group and the term 'child' does not account for varying differences within the life course from birth to 18 years old.

Young person - I refer to young people in this study as people aged between 15 and 21 years old, with the acknowledgement that there are varying age categories used by others and 'youth' is a concept which is not universally agreed upon or fixed by a specific age boundary.

Trafficking (in persons) - I refer to trafficking as the criminal <u>act</u> (recruitment, receipt, transportation) by <u>means</u> (such as threats, coercion, deception, abuse of position of vulnerability) for the purpose of <u>exploitation</u> (such as sexual exploitation, forced labour or slavery) (Liempt, 2006; ATMG, 2010).

Child trafficking - refers to the act of trafficking when applicable to children who are subjected to trafficking. Trafficking is defined in the UN Trafficking Protocol (see Appendix 1 for full definition). However, as this thesis explores, 'child trafficking' as a construct in policy and practice is problematic, the term is contested legally and politically, and critiqued for adequately defining the phenomenon. For this reason, I use 'child trafficking' to refer to the category of policy and practice with a specific group of children but use the '' convention. I adopt the term, but do so critically, acknowledging the definitional and conceptual limitations of the present construct, particularly in excluding some groups of children who have been trafficked but are not formally recognised as such by state actors.

Smuggling - smuggling and trafficking are different concepts. Smuggling refers to the criminal act of facilitation of illegal crossing of an international border.

Separated migrant children - is a term defining children outside their country of origin, separated from parents *or* customary primary caregiver (SCEP, 2010).

Abuse - deceit, hurt or maltreatment, undue advantage (Chambers dictionary, 2003).

Exploitation - the act of using someone for the purpose of gain.

Chapter 2. The social construction of childhood in 'child trafficking'

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of 'child trafficking' and examines how childhood is constructed in 'child trafficking' discourses. The chapter addresses the first research objective:

> 1. *How do contemporary constructions of childhood shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy, practice and research?*

The development of the concept of childhood from 'innocence' towards deficit 'becomings' of adult life, and from developmental stage theory towards normative concepts of childhood are traced to provide the context of present contemporary constructions of childhood. The social construction of 'child trafficking' is deconstructed by locating major discourses within 'child trafficking' narratives and literature in the UK. Underpinning theoretical perspectives of childhood within these discourses are explored in how they construct the 'trafficked child'. Discourses are also examined in how they are utilised in 'child trafficking' policy and practice, by whom and in whose interests. The chapter proceeds by reviewing 'child trafficking' research, empirical studies are critically explored in terms of their contribution to conceptualising childhood and 'child trafficking' as socially constructed. Alternative constructs in this perspective are highlighted, which challenge the way 'the trafficked child' is presently conceived.

Development of childhood

The trajectory of the development of different constructions of childhood outlined in this opening chapter, in the social constructionist view, is important in understanding not only the historical and situated context, but also how and which theoretical models, ideologies and epistemologies shape our understanding of childhood today. Ariès' (1996) critique of contemporary accounts of childhood, which provided a substantial contribution that the concept modern childhood in medieval society did not exist and was not

'launched' in Europe until the mid eighteenth century, gave rise to thinking about childhood sociologically (Butler, 1996; Ryan, 2008). Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries viewed the earlier 'presociological' child (James *et al.*, 1998) as innately evil, needing to 'shape' children by exercising restraint in the form of discipline and punishment. Thomas Hobbes established in *De Cive* (1642) the powers and rights of parents over their children as absolute, analogous to sovereign power over the populace. Without parental control and restraint, the life of children was viewed as anarchistic, still relevant today in contemporary concerns of family 'breakdown', loss of family values and control of anti-social behaviour (James *et al.,* 1998). The English philosopher John Locke advanced the notion of children's minds as *tabula rasa,* a blank white paper inscribed by experience. Although Locke viewed children as not possessing abilities to reason (Hendrick, 2005), Locke did see children as *"potential, as citizens of the future and as imperfect but latent reasoners"* (James *et al.*, 1998, p. 16) and was significant in recognising that not all children are the same (Hendrick, 2005).

Set in opposition to Puritanical views of children, a new construction of childhood emerged, *"Rousseauian Naturalism"* (Hendrick, 2005, p. 35) with Rousseau stressing *"the natural goodness of children"* (Hendrick, 2005, p. 36). Rousseau (2009), however, did not just express childhood as a time of innocence as taken up by the Romantics in the mid to late 18th century. In *Émile*, published in 1762, Rousseau (2009) promoted the child to the status of person thus opening up the question of the child's particularity, paving the way for contemporary concern about children as individuals (James *et al.*, 1998). Rousseau's (2009) *"philosophical emphasis on the child as <u>child</u>"* (Hendrick, 2005, p. 37), and *"not merely as adults in the making"* (*ibid*.), was therefore a significant contribution to thinking about childhood as a distinct and separate period from adulthood.

The rise of cultural anthropology in the 20th century provided rich descriptions of children's lives in different cultural settings, such as Mead's work in Papua New Guinea attending to the role of context and culture in the development of children. Cultural anthropology was significant in advancing the view of children

as competent interpreters of the social world (James, 2001). Functionalist theories of childhood proceeded to shape the concept of childhood as developmental and normative through socialization theory (Adler and Adler, 1998). Darwinian evolutionism influenced developmental models of childhood, led principally by Jean Piaget's model of defined stages of cognitive and biological child development. These ideas of normative stages of development are still influential today in the US (Ryan, 2008) and in the UK, as seen in child development charts, health visitors plotting a child's development and reassuring parents of 'normal' developmental milestones. However, the study of children and childhood in Piaget's time was *"tempered by a voracious empiricism"* (James *et al.* 1998, p. 17). Children were objectified, as rational objects of study, as laboratory specimens that could be measured, ranked and graded (see for example Gesell's observation dome, Ryan, 2008, p. 560). James *et al.* (1998) observe that this objectification of children *"instilled a deep-seated positivism"* (p. 19) into contemporary constructions of childhood and Ryan (2008) concurs that this *"positive-scientific developmental"* (p. 558) approach to childhood has maintained *"coherence over several centuries"* (Ryan, 2011, p. 11) but also, continues to the present day.

Childhood was at this stage perceived as 'deficit' of adult status, children regarded as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' (Morss, 1996). Freud's model of psychosexual development, Piaget's developmental stage model and Kohlberg's model of moral development all posit universal, chronological stages of childhood, *"from a primal and egocentric child to an autonomous, principled, and subjectively reflective adult"* (Ryan, 2008, p. 561). Despite its critics, developmental models of childhood have come to dominate western thought in conceptualising childhood (Prout and James, 1997). Socialization theories shaped by behaviourism and social learning theory through influential works by Watson and Skinner informed normative concepts of childhood. As Ryan (2008) comments the *"prize for objectifying children in modern research goes…to the outright rejection of human subjectivity in behaviorism, and to Skinner in particular"* (p. 562). Orientated by positivist and objective epistemologies, children were seen as passive recipients of external stimuli as 'asocial', irrational and incompetent, becoming 'social' in adulthood (Prout and James,

1997). As with the developmental models of childhood, socialization theories focused on developing universal theories to influence the behaviours of children rather than understanding children themselves (Freeman and Mathison, 2009).

Traditional assumptions about the universality of childhood were challenged by Ariès' (1996) thesis by significantly questioning functionalist socialization theories at their peak of influence in the 1940's and 50's, by suggesting childhood was not a static concept historically. At the time of Ariès' publication, the growth in interest in phenomenology and interactionism in the interpretivist tradition sought meaning of social events and processes, also challenging the premises of functionalism (Butler, 1996). The radical political movements in the proceeding decades in the 1960's and 70's provided a backdrop of cultural change, as seen in civil rights and women's movements (Prout and James, 1997). An interest in children's rights was emerging, culminating in The UN General Assembly's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 (UN, 1989). This signified the growing importance attached internationally to promoting children's civil and political rights. The introduction of the UNCRC attempted to create for the first time an international vision of childhood and by articulating rights associated with childhood, as a collective status, provided an important step in recognition that childhood itself has value, distinct from the adult world. Despite attempts of the UNCRC to *"eschew any particular philosophy of children's rights"* (James and James, 2004, p. 82), the implementation of universal principles were not going to be easily reconciled with cultural politics of childhood in different societies. Whilst the 'best interests' principle' in all actions concerning children (Article 3.1) offers a generalised need for children's protection, this is determined in the cultural context in which individual children live (James and James, 2004). The relevance of the universalism - cultural relativism debate to social work has continued with increased globalization, with not only increased multiculturalism and diverse communities within practice contexts, but also more specifically the cross-national contexts of separated children, migrating across borders.

As a theoretical and conceptual framework, the construction of the UNCRC has been historically shaped and formulated by northern and Christian thinking

(Boyden, 2004). Northern or western constructions of childhood and norms are based historically on what Ariès (1996) observed as the moral ascendency of the family, a middle-class phenomenon, with dominant features that should be respected, formulating into a conventional model, an ideal type (p. 399). Concepts of childhood as an ideal type define 'normal' or 'proper' childhood as inside society, inside a family and in a house (Engebrigsten, 2003). Exporting an ideal construction of childhood from the industrialised North to the South historically under colonial rule and recently through the UNCRC has led to critique of a lack of addressing cultural diversity and economic realities of developing countries (Boyden, 2004).

Childhood as socially constructed

Aligned with developments in children's rights, social scientists began to recognise the existence of children as people (Hendrick, 2005), to see the 'child' in child abuse and examine the impact of power relations in children's lives (Parton, 1990, cited by Hendrick, 2005). Looking beyond existing theories of childhood, attention was being paid to understanding children's social world and adult-child relationships (Qvortrup, 1994) and a new way of thinking about childhood sociologically emerged. The social constructionist view that has since evolved asserts children as active social actors within socialization processes that are interactive, whereby children simultaneously act on and are shaped by their environment. Childhood in this contemporary view is understood as,

> *"the complex interweaving of social structures, political and economic institutions, beliefs, cultural mores, laws, policies and the everyday actions of both adults and children, in the home and on the street"* (James and James, 2004, p. 13).

New social studies of childhood have advanced the constructionist view of childhood and conceive the child *"as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences – in sum, as a social actor"* (James *et al.*, 1998, p. 207). This approach necessitates a child-centred perspective through recognition that childhood is a distinct phase in human experience, valued for its own unique qualities (Freeman and Mathison, 2009, cited by Gearon, 2012*a*).

The new discourses of childhood proposed by James *et al.* (1998) aim at understanding the child as 'being' and as complete individuals with a perspective of their own, departing from previous concepts as epiphenomenal, childhood perceived as incomplete, as a state of incompetence relative to adulthood (Butler, 1996). Four conceptions proposed by James and James (2004); *the tribal child, the minority group child, the socially constructed child* and *the social structural child* are ways in which the child is constituted sociologically through four different subject positions, which are offered from which to theorise childhood.

The models of tribal child and minority group child both position children as *"people with an informed and informing view of the social world"* (James and James, 2004, p. 59). The model of tribal child focuses on the particularism of childhood and diversities in children's experiences are highlighted through children's everyday relationships with each other and others. The minority child model focuses on the commonalities of children's experiences as a minority group and seeks to challenge power relations between adults and children, which oppress the status of children (James *et al.*, 1998). The socially constructed child approach is a relativistic one, which explores the diverse ways in which childhood is constituted in society through addressing how concepts of 'child' and 'childhood' are understood locally (James *et al.*, 1998). The social structural child model focuses on how macrostructures such as age, gender and race interact with social categories such as culture, location or economy (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). The status and subject position of the child is taken as read in this approach, as a structural feature, allowing for national and global comparisons of childhood as a social space to be made (James and James, 2004).

Conceptually, the new social studies of childhood viewed through a social constructionist perspective, provides a more holistic understanding of children and childhood than previous theories. The new way of approaching the study of childhood could be considered as having theoretical endurance and potential longevity, due to its key strength in encapsulating a range of evaluative dimensions relative to children's social worlds. The dilemma of addressing

diversity *and* commonality in children's experiences, from both the particular to the universal perspective and between agency and studying childhood within social structures is acknowledged (James and James, 2004). Attempting to manage these dualisms, through offering a theory which, in sum, reflects 'the totality' (James and James, 2004) of childhoods is certainly ambitious. However, its proponents are clear elsewhere that the 'total mosaic' is not represented (James *et al.*, 1998, p. 26) and the project is not a *"completed approach to the study of childhood"* (Prout and James, 1997, p. 7). That said, the expansive, all-encompassing dimensions could conversely be viewed as a major weakness - in terms of attempting to 'cover all bases', with a potential theoretical dilution across too many domains without higher specificity. Ryan (2008) supports this argument noting that whilst the classic problem in sociology of individual agency and structural form, and between childhood and adulthood are acknowledged, theorising childhood in this approach does not transcend modern dualisms (p. 556).

Challenging the claim that new social studies of childhood have, in fact, signified a 'paradigm shift', Ryan (2008) argues that competing theories of childhood, developed over time across the objective/subjective philosophical dimension, are still current today and are not represented by James *et al.* (1998). Ryan (2008) identifies competing theories as the authentic child (romantic developmentalism), the developing child (positive-scientific), the conditioned child (socialization theory) and the political child (social actor theory) (p. 558). Ryan (2011) developed his argument slightly, but importantly, to suggest that the theories in his four quadrants *"continue to mutually constitute each other"* (p. 12). As a historian, Ryan's (2008) analysis is effective in mapping childhood concepts historically and providing examples of earlier application of 'social actor theory' than the 'new' social studies of childhood suggest. However, the key strength in Ryan's (2008) persuasive argument is the hegemony of positivistic approaches to childhood studies and their continuing influence in children's worlds. Essentially, both Ryan (2008; 2011) and James *et al.* (1998) have plotted their theories across similar dimensions, subject/object, culture/nature (Ryan, 2008), particularism/universalism and difference/determinism (James *et al.*, 1998). Both, I suggest, are valid and

useful in theorising childhood, Ryan (2008) recognises multiple constructions and theories continue to inform the studies of childhood, James *et al.* (1998) offer different dimensions *within* the theory of childhood as socially constructed to view childhoods from. James *et al.* (1998) theories of four different subject positions can thus be situated within Ryan's (2008; 2011) model, in the quadrant termed *"the political child of competent agency"* (2011, p. 12).

Developments of various constructions of childhood over time, underpinned by different ideologies have constituently shaped our perspectives towards understanding contemporary childhood today. Although new social studies of childhood have gained prominence, Ryan (2008) argues, that preceding constructions have not only foregrounded and informed modern conceptualisations but also continue to the present day. The chapter next turns to consider how these varying theoretical perspectives of childhood inform current discourses in 'child trafficking' narratives and literature, and shape the way in which childhood is constructed in 'child trafficking'.

Childhood in UK 'child trafficking' discourses

Social-constructionist theory argues that concepts of childhood are generated by successive generations out of a mix of tradition, social inter-course, ideologies and theory development. The key generating force in reinforcing ideas and shaping new constructions is discourse as, *"the mediation of an interrelated set of ideas which are communicated through predominantly cultural outlets that generate and consolidate a particular worldview"* (Burke, 2008). Drawing on critical discourse analysis, the relations between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality are important dimensions in examining *"the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance"* (van Dijk, 1993, p. 283). Major discourses within 'child trafficking' narratives and literature in the UK, as identified in Westwood's (2010) deconstruction of risk and Gearon's (2012*a*) analysis of UK 'child trafficking' theory are taken up here and expanded upon, to explore how they produce and communicate ideas about 'child trafficking'. The discourse of *victimhood*, trafficking constructed as

child abuse, the concept of *criminality*, *risk* and *agency* discourse are examined in how they shape the construction of 'child trafficking' and the 'trafficked child'.

Victimhood

Victimhood discourse appears to be a central feature in the social and political construction of 'child trafficking' (Westwood, 2010). In 'child trafficking' policy, the process of being recognized as a 'victim' is critical in accessing support and assistance (Gearon, 2015*a*). The basis of labelling and categorizing a child as a 'trafficked child' within the 'child trafficking' framework is the dependence on a legalistic interpretation of the UN Trafficking Protocol (UN, 2000). As a legal instrument, the UN Protocol establishes a legal category of 'victim', and in doing so, a child's consent is nullified *"constituting trafficked children as victims per se"* (Bovarnick, 2010, p. 84). Another legal process that labels and categorises children, closely related to 'child trafficking', is defining a separated migrant child as a 'smuggled child', under section 24 Immigration Act 1971. When a child is deemed to have knowingly entered the UK without leave (usually by irregular means), a child is categorised as a transgressor of state borders, as an 'illegal immigrant'. Bourdieu (1987) suggests that legal instruments include labelling and universalizing processes, which contribute to the legal system as independent and are separated from general social processes, particularly from the relations of power that the legal system supports. A child labelled as a 'trafficked child' by the legal instrument of the UN Protocol, or as a 'smuggled child' based on immigration law, according to Bourdieu (1987), masks the power contest between the state and individual citizen. The social world is categorised in certain ways through legal and bureaucratic practices and these categorizing processes transform individuals into certain legal classes tailored for bureaucratic or legal treatment (Engebrigsten, 2003).

Legal classifications such as the 'trafficked child' or 'smuggled child' position children into categories and construct them as either 'victims' or 'illegal immigrants'. These legal and bureaucratic practices in 'child trafficking' policy can be viewed as masking the powerlessness of children as citizens. Muncie (2009) refers to victimisation as the interactional social, economic, political and

personal processes associated with being recognized as a 'victim'. Labelling children as either 'victim' or 'illegal' can be seen as a form of victimisation as the labelling processes constructs a moral hierarchy of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006). Passive 'victims' are constructed as 'deserving', complicit criminals are 'undeserving'. In this way, both legal and bureaucratic practices within 'child trafficking' can be seen as victimising children - legal victimisation occurs with labelling children as 'illegal immigrants', criminalising children with the premise that irregular migration is synonymous with abusing the state and its' resources. These children can be further victimised, as they are less likely to be granted refugee status than adults (Crawley, 2010*a*). Children identified by state actors as suspected of having been trafficked can also be victimised by bureaucratic treatment, as only 31% to date (ATMG, 2014*a*) have been accepted formally as having been trafficked by state systems and accorded the label 'trafficked child'. Being rejected by state apparatus as a 'trafficked child', as not 'fitting' into the legal demarcations or bureaucratic practices can mean that children then fall into the other category of 'illegal immigrant'. Children that *do* get categorised as a 'trafficked child' by the state become defined by a legal and social category, which reduces and pathologises their experience into a label of 'victim', by according them a special victim status. A 'trafficked child' constructed as a 'victim' can therefore be victimised, as too can a 'smuggled child'.

The legalistic interpretation of the UN Protocol and adoption into domestic 'child trafficking' policy was determined at central government level, with the Home Office assigned the lead for 'child trafficking'. As the Home Office is also responsible for crime prevention and securing national borders, constructing 'child trafficking' through victim discourses and defining the 'smuggled child' as illegal, could be seen as serving the state's interest in control and tightening of state borders against illegal immigration. The political backdrop at the time of increasing awareness of 'child trafficking', requiring a policy response, was Blair's New Labour government which wanted to be perceived as being *"tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime"* (Blair, 1995). The state's interest in constructing 'child trafficking' as a criminal justice issue could be seen as a legitimate response to concerns raised of the serious, organised and trans-

national nature of trafficking. However, during New Labour's term in office, Britain had seen a substantial increase in legal immigration. Establishing 'child trafficking' as both a criminal justice issue *and* immigration concern could be seen as the government demonstrating to the public that action was being taken to curb forms of *illegal* immigration. Bourdieu (1987) claims that the power to name, or to define a social category, is also the power to set conditions for how the social world is to be understood. The construction of a 'trafficked child' as a social and legal category of 'victim' within criminal and immigration discourses therefore sets conditions for how 'child trafficking' is understood, shaping both policy and practice.

In 'child trafficking' literature, NGO's also have the tendency to construct the 'trafficked child' within victimhood discourses (see for example Harris and Robertson, 2007; Brownlees and Finch, 2010). The vulnerability of migrant or 'displaced' children is often emphasized through a *"prism of victimhood"* (Boyden and Hart, 2007, p. 243), children are perceived as susceptible to abuse and trauma. 'Anti-trafficking' campaigns and the media stress the plight of 'trafficked children' as defenceless, innocent, and forcibly abused by adult authority (Westwood, 2010; O'Connell Davidson, 2011). As Hendrick (2005) notes children's *"sufferings have often been hijacked by special interest groups in order to spread their own and primarily adult influences"* (p. 57). Constructing 'child trafficking' within the discourse of victimhood attracts the public, media, and donors for project funding. Child's rights campaigners and social activists commonly highlight victimisation as a central feature in 'new crimes' (Best, 1999, cited by O'Connell Davidson, 2011, p.458), evident in 'child trafficking'. Childhood in this construction is an amalgamation of the innocent romantic child, with no innate capacities or strengths, and as passive subjects of abuse. The 'trafficked child', constructed thorough victimhood discourses not only denies children any power but also simultaneously maintains and reinforces notions of vulnerability and passivity of childhood.

Child abuse

In England, the Department for Education (tasked with responsibility for children and child protection) issued their first policy to address 'child trafficking' recognising the phenomenon as form of child abuse (DCSF, 2007). 'Child trafficking' policy provides guidance for Children Services departments to assist 'trafficked victims' through existing child protective services. The construction of 'child trafficking' as child abuse is also supported by NGO's (ATMG, 2010; Brownlees and Finch, 2010). However, child abuse as a concept is not straightforward, there is no universally agreed upon definition of child abuse. As Munro (2008) suggests, defining child abuse requires acknowledgement of moral and cultural variables of social forces shaping the construction of abuse. In deconstructing child abuse, there are those that propose child abuse is a continuum of acceptable and inacceptable behaviour and another school of thought, which looks at structural power in shaping perceptions of abuse (Munro, 2008). Both however, still rely on a social consensus of what *is* abuse, which questions whose values are adopted in child protection systems. In the UK, white middle-class values shape beliefs about child abuse, which discriminates *"not only against the poor but also against ethnic minorities and new forms of family life"* (Munro, 2008, p. 54).

Framed by middle-class values, child abuse is often presented as a 'violation of childhood' or 'lost childhood', which reinforces an assertion of what childhood should be, as a time of innocence, *"an asexual and peaceful existence"* (Kitzinger, 2004, p.166, cited by Gearon, 2015*a*). Recent 'child trafficking' headlines have presented the *"Scandal of the 1,400 lost girls"* (Norfolk, 2014) and *"The awful abuse of girls in Oxford is just the latest consequence of… **The Great Innocence Robbery**"* [original emphasis] (Hitchens, 2013). Kitzinger (2004) problematises the concept of childhood innocence in the construction of child abuse as stigmatizing the 'knowing child', *"the romanticization of childhood innocence excludes those who do not conform to the ideal"* (p. 168). The girls trafficked over a number of years in Rochdale are an acute example of not conforming to the ideal of innocence. Girl A recalled not being believed or listened to by professionals, treated as *"some kind of child prostitute wasting their time with made-up stories"* (Girl A and Bunyan, 2013, p. 257). The concept

of innocence can deny children access to knowledge and power, in turn actually increasing their vulnerability to abuse (Kitzinger, 2004, cited by Gearon, 2015*a*). Both victimhood and child abuse narratives draw upon the romanticized child concept, coupled with children viewed as innately passive, thus requiring adult 'protection'.

In 'child trafficking' narratives, the discourse of child abuse is also layered with the concept of 'exploitation'. Exploitation as defined in the UN Protocol as sexual exploitation, forced labour or slavery (UN, 2000, Art. 3a), distinguishes exploitation from abuse in terms of the abuser deriving some gain from the act of exploiting someone. However, there is no definition of exploitation in 'child trafficking' policy or the legal framework in England. Similar to the construction of child abuse, there is no consensus on what constitutes exploitation and as a concept it is culturally and socially variable. The theoretical concepts underpinning the discourses of child abuse and exploitation can be contested as being capable of dealing with the complexities of children's experiences. Westwood (2010) rejects the 'exploitation thesis' dominating the 'anti-trafficking' rhetoric as *"littered with assumptions about children's experiences and situations"* (p. 246). Child abuse and exploitation discourses situate the 'trafficked child' as vulnerable and easy to exploit, reinforcing the perception of children's naivety and dependency (Westwood, 2010).

Children and young people experiencing trafficking, subject to child protection systems, informed by both victimhood and child abuse discourses, can be subjected to increased surveillance under the guise of protection (Montgomery, 1998, cited by Westwood, 2010). According to Mai (2011) migrant minors face social exclusion and 'protectionist' social interventions rarely meet their priorities, as underpinning concepts *"fail to understand the mix of vulnerability and resilience of each migrant minor and young adult in its full complexity and end up by further exacerbating their aspects of vulnerability"* (p. 1238). Recognizing a mix of vulnerability *and* resilience, Kitzinger (2004) observes that little attention is paid to children's successful defences, coping strategies and attempts to resist abusive situations, which should be addressed alongside identifying their powerlessness. Child abuse and exploitation appear to be

wholly adult-centric and adult-defined discourses in which children are not seen as agents in their own lives with capacities and ability to reason. What appears to absent from discourse on child abuse, is how do children define abuse themselves? What are children's own thresholds that they deem are crossed in defining child abuse in 'child trafficking'? How do children experience exploitation? What is not known is whether children's own representations of 'child trafficking' abuse and exploitation defy or confirm existing discourses.

Criminality

In Salt and Hogarth's (2000) review of migrant trafficking and human smuggling in Europe, early policy responses to the issue were framed by economic and crime discourses. With the UK's adoption of the UN Protocol, seen primarily a legal instrument enabling prosecution of trafficking offences, 'child trafficking' policy in England was orientated and structured as a criminal justice issue. With a rhetoric of focusing on the disruption of transnational organised criminal gangs, concerned with the prosecution of traffickers, 'child trafficking' was interpreted and communicated through criminal and illegal immigration discourses. The original discourse of criminality focused on traffickers appears to have evolved to a new discourse of criminality, the criminalisation of people subjected to trafficking themselves (Gearon, 2012*a*). Children's rights groups, 'anti-trafficking' campaigners and watchdogs have raised numerous concerns about the criminalisation of 'victims' (Children's Society, 2012*a*; GRETA, 2012; ATMG, 2010; Annison, 2013) and the matter was debated in the House of Lords (Butler-Sloss, 2010; Massey, 2010). The criminal justice approach in such cases overlooks the trafficking situation and abuse of children, focusing instead on the presenting criminal element of the situation. The discourse of criminality in 'child trafficking' has resulted in the criminalisation of 'victims', perhaps an unintended consequence of policy orientation. Alternatively viewed, the punishment and criminalisation of children in these circumstances can be interpreted as a form of 'positivist victimology' (Muncie, 2009, cited by Gearon, 2012*a*), a victim-blaming approach, whereby 'victims' appear to be apportioned blame for their own circumstance (Gearon, 2012*a*).

England has seen a significant shift towards a punitive approach to criminal justice policy, especially towards youth (Garland, 2001; Muncie, 2008; 2009). In 2007, the Chair of the Youth Justice Board resigned due to frustration of criminalising more and more children and young people for relatively minor offences, in order for the Home Office to achieve their target of increasing the number of offences brought to justice (Muncie, 2008). At the same time, more social policy areas have been linked with criminal justice, for example criminalisation within education, youth policy and the family (Rodger, 2008). Furthermore, adding to this political context, the UK has seen a significant increase in the migrant population in recent years and a growth of popular discourse of immigrants seen as scroungers and cheats, scapegoated as *"national abjects"* (Tyler, 2013, p. 9). 'Child trafficking' criminality meets this intersection of children and young people being subjected to criminal situations and at the same time being 'undesirable' immigrants, facing double factors of discrimination, given the social and political context. The criminalisation of children and young people who have been trafficked appears to be underpinned by objectifying a child's presenting 'criminal' behaviour resulting in further re-victimisation by the state (Gearon, 2015*a*). The conceptualisation of childhood with a primary focus on children's criminality, appears to be reminiscent of Puritanical perceptions of children as innate 'wrongdoers' and culpable, requiring discipline and punishment.

Risk

The discourse of risk in 'child trafficking' has been shaped historically by moral panic and media amplification of the scale and nature of the problem (Westwood, 2010, Gearon, 2015*a*). 'Child trafficking' narratives and discourses in the late 19th century, influential in policy development, were characterized as stories about innocence, purity and the defence of girls' virginity (Westwood, 2010). Social purity campaigning employed melodramatic tactics *"…serialised style and pseudo-factual-story-telling to convey to an unsuspecting public the tragic situations of victims through emotional appeals and righteous indignation"* (Westwood, 2010, p. 135). Current media amplification of 'modern slavery' and

rescue stories echo these 19th century social purity campaigns to end the 'white slave trade' (Westwood, 2010; Cree *et al.*, 2014).

Presently, 'child trafficking' narratives continue to utilise the discourse of risk, particularly in the form of moral outrage and emphasis on the global scale of the phenomenon. Moral indignation, particularly in NGO discourses, legitimises the victimhood discourse in 'child trafficking' reinforcing children perceived as "*immature, irrational, incompetent, passive, vulnerable, and helpless*" (Theis, 2001, cited by Breuil, 2008, p. 225). 'Child trafficking' is often sensationalised by foregrounding sex trafficking in campaigning activities (O'Connell Davidson, 2011) and moral outrage amplified through extensive media coverage of 'child sex gangs' seen in the recent investigations in Telford, Rochdale and Oxford (Gearon, 2015*a*). 'Claims-makers' (Clapton *et al.,* 2013) estimate the enormous scale of trafficking, 'tips of icebergs' are often quoted by 'anti'-trafficking agencies (Westwood, 2010; Gearon, 2015*a*). NGO's are keen to convey that figures of known trafficking cases and are likely to be far higher and trafficked children remain hidden in our community (UNICEF, 2007; ATMG, 2012).

The discourse of risk in 'child trafficking' has also been shaped by the preoccupation with risk in child protection policy and social work practice (Parton, 1998; 2011). By the early 1990's risk was a dominant feature of child welfare and child protection with risk management focusing on risk identification and risk assessment. Elimination of risk, became *"the essential element of the raison d'être of social workers"* (Parton, 1998, p. 20). A shift occurred whereby children were posited in policy more as 'risky children' than 'children at risk' (James and James, 2008) and as a result, the focus was taken away from meeting the needs of children and responding to child abuse and exploitation (Parton, 2011). A key feature of this discourse was the formulation of normalised standards of behaviour, in the Foucauldian sense, stipulating norms for human behaviour through regimes of power exercised through regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms (Parton, 1998).

The concern of the advancement of the risk discourse and expectations of 'normalised' behaviour continued to inform childhood studies (James and

James, 2008; Garrett, 2008) and in risk-driven policy-making extended to *all* children in the policy *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004). Garrett (2008) drew attention to the increasing political fixation with individual behaviour through social regulation. In terms of shaping the construction of 'child trafficking', children 'at risk of sexual exploitation' became a particular focus before a better understanding of other forms of exploitation within trafficking was then evident. By 2007, policy and guidance in *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (DCSF, 2007) was issued with a predictable focus on risk, complete with 'child trafficking risk indicators' and a 'risk matrix tool' developed for practitioners.

The positivistic approach to the risk discourse in the construction of 'child trafficking' and towards children more generally, draws upon normative concepts of childhood aimed at controlling children and determining what childhood should be and how children should behave. Echoing the concept of normative childhood in developmental and psychological models, and akin to Skinner's behaviourism, the observable and measurable behaviour becomes the focus, with universal indicators aimed at identifying specific behaviours. Listed behaviours are deemed to identify and measure 'risk of suffering' or actual harm to a child, defined as problematic, unusual or 'abnormal' behaviour or in the very least, behaviour which deviates from the accepted norm. Increased social regulation and adult determination of what constitutes 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviours of childhood, legitimizes control of children by adults and leaves no room for children's agency, choice or autonomy. As James and James (2008) observe, "*the current moral panic is not just about a particular group of children….it is about childhood as a category and all of its aspects*" (p. 125.)

Agency

'Child trafficking' literature and research presents an emergent alternative discourse of agency, as a theoretical concept centred on the subjectivity of children's experiences and capacity of children (Gearon, 2012*a*). Whilst the agency discourse is not as prevalent in narratives within the construction of

'child trafficking' to the degree of the major discourses discussed above, it is considered here due to its strong association with current conceptualisations of childhood as socially constructed. Children now have a right to participation, to express their views and have their opinions taken into account, as defined in the provisions of Article 12 and 13 of the UNCRC, an international legal space for the child's voice to be heard. This is supported by domestic law under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, which requires local authorities to ascertain wishes and feelings of children regarding provision of services. Munro's (2011) review of child protection resulted in a key recommendation that the child protection system needs to be child-centred, recognising that children,

> *"are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. Children are individuals, members of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development"* (p. 16).

Implicit to these intentions, which focus more on children as individuals, is the notion of children's agency, defined as capacity, or state of acting, or of exerting power (Jary and Jary, 1995). Acknowledging capacity and autonomy of children to voice an opinion, participate and be heard is synonymous with conceiving childhood as not only a distinct phase in the human life course, but also childhood as a period with unique qualities, in which intrinsic values are respected and taken into account. Conceptually, since the shift in childhood studies towards a perspective of childhood as socially constructed, it is no longer unusual to consider children as social actors, social agents and as competent informants about issues that matter to them (James and James, 2008). The conceptualisation of children as social actors is theoretically underpinned by social constructionism; attention is paid to the evolving agency of children and their subjective experiences, meaning and content of everyday life from multiple perspectives (Graham, 2011). A further theoretical development in social constructivism can be seen where sociologists have accorded children with conceptual autonomy and the primary unit of study as social persons in their own right, emphasising children's own voices as reflective of their selves, their lived experiences and their social realities (Graham, 2011). Sen (1999) helpfully further distinguishes agency by defining

an agent *"as someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well"* (p.19). In this sense, children are seen as subjects with agency who can participate in their own representation.

A powerful counter argument to the agency discourse presented by Lancy (2012) contests the movement of children's agency as ignoring key understandings of the evolution of childhood and culture. The discourse of agency, according to Lancy (2012) is based on ethnocentric and classist tendencies of contemporary bourgeoisie child-rearing, which has little relevance in other cultures, especially the global south. Others contest this, for example, Whitehead *et al.* (2007) indicate that the idea of the child who has agency is quite common in studies of children in developing countries. Lancy's (2012) argument rests on a somewhat unusual interpretation of agency as 'freedom' and 'efficacy' (p. 5). Utilising examples of 'street children', he argues against the notion of 'granting' agency, suggesting, *"to lengthen their lives* [street children] *would surely involve withdrawing agency not granting it"* (Lancy, 2012, p. 12). Conceptually, however, agency interpreted as a capacity to act, cannot be 'extended' or 'granted', which takes a presumptuous and fallacious position that adults can, and have the power to grant agency. Rather, to study agency is to investigate and explore children's agency (that they already hold) exercised within limiting childhood experiences. In the case of children experiencing trafficking, who may be under the coercive power of an adult who exploits them, the child would not typically be viewed as 'free' and yet may still exercise degrees of agency within that context. The same could be said of street children. Agency, therefore, is not by definition freedom, nor efficacy, it is more about how children exercise their agency within their experiences, and how they experience their own situation, in terms of their values and goals.

The agency discourse has further conceptual challenges to contend with. Conceptualising children as social actors with capacities necessarily challenges hegemonic developmental models and normative constructions of childhoods. The social constructionist paradigm counters the view of children as 'deficit' of

adult status, recognising intrinsic qualities of childhood. The example of older children involved in prostitution or alternatively, viewed as being in sexually exploitative situations highlights the tensions in discourses. From the perspective of children's agency, prostitution may represent a means of earning income in absence of alternative livelihoods, supporting oneself and degrees of active choice in participation. Approached from a normative perspective of childhood that ascribes older children as asexual and agent-less, 'sex work' is universally interpreted as sexual exploitation, as a blanket definition. This simplistic example serves only to highlight extremes of views; in practice, children's situations are likely to be far more complex and not fixed temporally or spatially.

Levels of maturity, especially when transcending norms or culturally accepted 'age appropriate' behaviour as defined legally and socially, do not necessarily fit normative conceptions of childhood or adolescence, resulting in views of 'deviance' or 'rebelliousness'. The Rochdale 'child trafficking' cases highlighted issues in practice of *misrepresenting* agency of the young person. The 'consent' of young people was inappropriately attributed to a 'lifestyle choice', resulting in a lack of focus on the exploitation being experienced, *"social work practitioners and managers wholly over estimated the extent to which Suzie could legally or psychologically consent to the sexual violence being perpetrated against her"* (RBSCB, 2012, p. 19). Girl A, trafficked in Rochdale stated that that *"'lifestyle decisions' we'd supposedly made…condemned us"* (Girl A and Bunyan, 2013, p. 329). Unfortunately, there are other examples of young people being treated as 'deviant' from norms resulting in grave consequences. The Serious Case Review into Operation Retriever in Derbyshire, where young women were moved around cities for the purposes of sexual exploitation, found that social services missed opportunities to identify the abuse among the young people, and instead treated them as 'rebellious teenagers' (Children's Society, 2012*a*). In the recent trial of seven traffickers in Oxford, charged with 43 offences including rape, organising child prostitution and trafficking (*BBC News Oxford*, 27 June 2013), one of the children giving testimony stated,

> *"Stop blaming the girls, that's the easy thing to do. It's harder to accept what's going on and do something about it"* (Meachin, 2013, p. 31).

As an alternative construction within 'child trafficking', the discourse of agency also threatens both constructs of the 'trafficked child' and the 'smuggled child' as they have been informed and shaped by discourses which assume the dependence and incapacities of children, rather than their strengths and capacities (Cree *et al.*, 2014). Not surprisingly therefore, concepts of childhood, agency and consent can become confused for those working with children experiencing trafficking (O'Connell Davidson, 2011). Professional practice that still tends to rely on a *"wholly paternalistic and deficit view of children's capacity"* (Graham, 2011, p. 1543) leaves little room for children's agency or competence, prohibiting a better understanding of children's lived experiences of trafficking. The chapter next examines 'child trafficking' research, highlighting how studies which acknowledge children's agency further challenge other discourses in the construction of 'child trafficking' and signal a different view of 'child trafficking', as seen through children's own perspectives.

Separated and moving children's 'realties'

Despite a development in conceptualising childhood as socially constructed, this understanding is largely absent from UK 'child trafficking' research. Not only are peer-reviewed 'child trafficking' studies very limited in number, children's experiences are also notably not represented. This indicates a major gap in UK based 'child trafficking' research. There are no peer-reviewed empirical studies in the UK that consider the views of 'trafficked children' (Kelly, 2012). Only one study, by Wirtz (2009), although not peer-reviewed as commissioned by the Children's Society, successfully engaged a small number of 'trafficked children' in being interviewed, in addition to practitioner interviews and analysis of case studies. Most research to date has focused on professionals' experiences in working with 'child trafficking' cases and has addressed front-line practitioners own views or their interpretation of children's experiences (Pearce *et al.*, 2009; Brownlees and Finch, 2010; Westwood, 2010). For this reason, research *with* children referred to as trafficked in other European contexts is considered in this literature review alongside UK-based research and includes studies from Ireland, France and Italy. Studies are also included that acknowledge

experiences of 'child trafficking' can overlap with children's circumstances of being 'separated', 'unaccompanied' or 'migrant' children. Research studies are critically explored in terms of their contribution to conceptualising childhood and 'child trafficking' as socially constructed from four subject positions: the socially constructed child, the minority group child, the tribal child and the social structural child (James *et al.,* 1998).

The socially constructed child

The socially constructed child approach views childhood as varied across settings, time and cultures and so challenges the biological determinism of developing child theory (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). Crawley's (2011) research addressing the experiences of 'separated asylum seeking children', points to problems with the application of Westernised constructions of childhood to migrant children. Migrant children who experience different childhoods, can present to Western practitioners as *"the unchildlike child"* (Aitken, 2001, cited by Crawley, 2011, p. 1181), contesting normative conceptions of childhood. Supported by research with 'child trafficking' practitioners, Pearce *et al.* (2009) highlight that separated migrant children can also present as confident or resilient. The difficulties that these children have gone through in source countries, combined with sometimes long and dangerous journeys to the UK (Sigona and Hughes, 2012), in addition to being exploited in the trafficking experience, can all have an impact on physical age appearance. Children can present as mature and resilient (by Western standards).

Cross-cultural issues in terms of age determination are also problematic as assessing age is an inexact science, with a margin of error as much as 5 years either side (Brownlees and Yazdani, 2012). Assessments of age measure maturity, and not chronological age (Brownlees and Yazdani, 2012), this can be problematic as practitioners can assume maturity beyond biological age. Children who are deemed chronologically older due to their presenting maturity, results in *"an extremely dangerous position"* (Hynes, 2010, p. 105) as children can be deported, with a potential failure in protecting them from exploitative

situations. A social constructionist approach views biological immaturity/maturity differently to normative stages in child development theory. Cultural meanings are examined in what it means to be 'childlike', or 'unchildlike' from a western perspective, with researchers highlighting the problems for children when other possibilities and cultural meanings are excluded.

Hynes (2010) and Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) challenge the construction of 'the trafficked child' as passive and helpless 'victims', by exploring alternative concepts. Resilience, coping strategies and strengths are posited as different constructs of children's experiences in their research. Hynes (2010) suggests that both constructs of 'vulnerabilities' and 'resilience' could be viewed on a continuum rather than as polemic extremes, which may enable a more nuanced understanding of 'child trafficking'. Hynes's (2010) significant contribution is recognising that trafficking is a process, rather than a one-off event and children can experience 'global points of vulnerabilities' - several points of vulnerability during the trafficking process occurring pre and post arrival in the UK. This perspective reflects the view that childhood is socially constructed across settings, times and cultures. Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) identified common coping strategies in the 'active survival' of unaccompanied children. A crosscutting, underlying theme of the role of religion, facilitating coping strategies gives particular insight into the context of these children's lives. Local, specific contexts, culture and particularism are key features highlighted by this kind of research.

The minority group child

Research from a minority group child perspective focuses on children's views of an adult world, emphasizes children not only as a minority group but also conveys notions of victimisation (James *et al.* 1998). Hales and Gelsthorpe's (2012) research with migrant females in UK prisons provides an example of the victimisation and powerlessness of separated children, as a minority group within the adult prison population. From an initial sample of 103 females where 'victimisation' was an element to the offence, Hales and Gelsthorpe (2012) found 43 individuals were 'victims of trafficking'. Five females had entered the

UK independently but had experienced work *"under slavery or servitude-like conditions"* (*ibid.*, p. 2) within the UK. Ten females had entered the country in the hands of smugglers who reportedly abused the control they held over them. Five of these females were brought to the UK as children and two were determined to be children at the time of the research, but were held in adult prison (Hales and Gelsthorpe, 2012, p. 21). Hales and Gelsthorpe's (2012) research identified a minority group of trafficked females, including children, criminally exploited by traffickers and further criminalised by the justice system. The failures in identifying 'victims' at arrest or recognising an 'offender' as a child is, according to Hales and Gelsthorpe (2012) was due to,

> *"failure to facilitate, believe or respond to disclosures made and to take into account the impact of multiple trauma, shame and need to survive on statements made"* (p. 4).

The systems set up for children to be recognised as 'victims of trafficking' rely on disclosure, usually at the first interaction with authorities. However, the findings of 'child trafficking' research indicate that disclosure of abuse takes time, and requires a relationship of trust to develop with practitioners over time (Wirtz, 2009; Rigby, 2011; Pearce, 2011).

A child needing to disclose information about what happened to them in order to get assistance or protection is taken up further by Chase's (2010) research with young people seeking asylum. Drawing upon Foucault's panoptic mechanism to examine children's expressed 'silence', Chase (2010) interprets this as a form of agency. Chase (2010) demonstrates that silence or selective disclosure about past experiences is used by young people as form of coping strategy, due to fear of normalising judgements, rejection and marginalisation. This type of 'minority group child' perspective acknowledges not only children's views of the adult world, but also gives 'voice' to their silence and further highlights their oppressed status as a minority in society,

> *"Indeed, one of the most striking themes from this study was the way in which the asylum system and the categorisation of 'asylum seeker' impinged on just about every dimension of the day-to-day lives of young people. Uncertainties about the future, the insecurities of their asylum status and of the story they had told in support of their application, how*

> *they could best position themselves in their contemporary social worlds and the fear of being returned to situations from which they had fled cumulatively created a huge amount of stress in young people's lives"* (Chase, 2010, p. 2065).

McCarthy and Marks's (2010) research with young refugees echoes the lack of power and control young people experience, due to their uncertain immigration status. Participants felt that their lives are in the hands of others, particularly the Home Office and social services, causing anxiety and fear about the future and hindering a sense a well-being (McCarthy and Marks, 2010).

In the minority group child perspective, the intergenerational relationship of children is typified as children being inferior to adults. This can be demonstrated by children not being allowed to make decisions affecting them, and expected deference to adult knowledge and authority (Mayall, 1994, cited by Freeman and Mathison, 2009). Wirtz's (2009) study with 'hidden' children, defined as *"separated children exploited or otherwise mistreated"* (p. 5) highlights private fostering as a key area where children experiencing exploitation can remain hidden, despite coming into contact with services. Of note, were children's experiences of local authority private fostering monitoring visits viewed as,

> *"Useless. So many opportunities and they missed it. I would have been like Baby P."* (Wirtz, 2009, p. 35).

The study highlights social workers failing to speak to children alone and asking children questions while their 'carers' were in the same room, or in the next room and could overhear (Wirtz, 2009). The study highlights practitioners giving private 'foster carers'' views more weight and not focusing attention on children. The power imbalance between exploitative adults and children in these circumstances were maintained, rather than challenged by practitioners, by not listening to children or giving them opportunities to express their views. Research that examines unequal power relationships highlights the oppressed status of 'trafficked children' and separated migrant children as a minority group. Adult maintained unequal power relations can victimise, marginalise and deny children access to power.

The tribal child

In the tribal child perspective, children are viewed as *"constructing autonomous, separate world from adults: childhood as a sort of exotic tribe with its own beliefs and practices"* (Freeman and Mathison, 2009, p. 9). Emphasis is on particularism, separateness, independence and agency, where children's constructions of the world are different to adults and their *"their relative autonomy celebrated"* (James *et al.* 1998, p. 29). In 'child trafficking' research, two ethnographic studies stand out as attaching this kind of significance to children's own view of their worlds; Mai's (2008) study of migrant minors in Italy and Breuil's (2008, 2010) research addressing the experiences of cigarette vendors in Marseille.

Breuil's (2008) and Mai's (2008) research both challenge the dominant view that children lack agency in 'child trafficking' narratives and discourses. Contrary to most portrayals of trafficked persons as coerced and agent-less 'victims', Breuil's (2008, cited by Gearon, 2012*a*) findings suggest *"children experience, according to them, variable degrees of powerlessness or control over their trafficking situations"* (p. 227). From their own perspective, child migrants in Marseille emphasise their autonomy and independence and commonly express that they are *"managing all right"* (Breuil, 2010, p. 194), many having left home due to poverty-related reasons or due to 'normal' intergenerational conflicts with parents or adults. The research highlights new difficulties for these boys such as frequent drug abuse and high incidence of scarification but in their own view, these hardships are relatively better than what they left behind (Breuil, 2010).

Breuil (2010) argues that the 'Maghrebi boys'' income-earning activities as cigarette vendors in Marseille *"obfuscates with their social status as children"* (p. 189). Even though the exploitation involved in their work might qualify them as 'child victims of trafficking' (labour and sometimes sexual acts exchanged for income and/or accommodation), they are not considered by the local authorities as 'trafficked children'. They have no legal status, they find themselves in a liminal space, *"betwixt and between"* (Breuil, 2010, p. 189) social and legal categories – they are workers *and* children but also illegal immigrants *and*

'victims' of trafficking. These categories therefore, fail to address their complex experiences, as being both a 'trafficked child' and a 'child migrant' which blurs the divisions created by norms, values, social roles and power hierarchies (Breuil, 2010).

Another key contribution of Breuil's (2008) tribal child perspective of children experiencing 'child trafficking', is contesting normative conceptions of home as 'safe' and the 'right' place for children to be. As Breuil (2008) observes, children can be forced to migrate by family members or experience abuse at home acting as a driver for migration (Breuil, 2008). Children's relative experiences of abuse at home or exploitation on the street, with alternative notions of 'home' and belonging, can be viewed as attacking the norms that order the social life of children. The *"ordering principle"* (*ibid.,* p. 224) of a 'safe home' coupled with children perceived as innocent 'victims' combine into a hegemonic image of what childhood should be (Breuil, 2008). The 'trafficked child' and 'child migrant' are thus often perceived as deviating from this image, and in doing so, threaten the ideals of what it means to be a child, challenging the norms of western social constructions of childhood.

Mai's (2008) study challenges *"generalised and stereotypical canons of victimisation"* (p. 46) whereby young people engaged in sex work are viewed as always exploited, with no room for alternative perspectives, including young people's views of their own situation. According to Mai (2008), social welfare policies ignore the possibility of voluntary acts, leaving no room for degrees of agency or choice, thereby maintaining the exclusive exploitation/trafficking category. As Shaw and Butler (1998) observed in an earlier study of young people's involvement in prostitution, *"adult myth-making about children and childhood reflects and maintains the relative powerlessness of children and ensures that they have little recognition as potential authors of their own biography"* (p. 180). Mai's (2008) research confirms that young people, can and do make active choices, *"many migrant male minors and young adults are exerting a sense of agency and can empower themselves by selling sex"* (Mai, 2011, p. 1238).

Mai (2011) argues that social protection systems that underestimate different degrees of agency and sexual awareness in adolescence often contribute to young people's marginalisation and stigmatisation,

> *"In fact, many migrant minors and young adults escape from the opportunities of social protection and support available to them. Most experience these opportunities as infantilising and find a better match for their needs in marginalised environments and in illegal or stigmatised livelihood strategies, including sex work"* (p. 1239).

Young people offered support in 'child trafficking' services or protection systems informed by concepts of childhood without agency, where adolescence is not addressed as a distinct period, would therefore need to give up some pre-existing agency. It is perhaps not surprising therefore, if systems can be infantilising and stigmatise young people, that large numbers of children experiencing trafficking in the UK go missing (Beddoe, 2007), once recognised as 'at risk' by the 'protective' systems aimed at supporting them.

The social structural child

The social structural child perspective accepts that children are a formative component of all social structures, children viewed as a body of subjects (James *et al*., 1998). How macrostructures interact with other social categories are of interest in terms of the shared commonalty of childhood (James and James, 2004). The status identity and subject position of the child can thus be examined in its inter-relationship with others, such as adulthood (James and James, 2004). Breuil's (2008) and Mai's (2011) research suggest unequal power relations are experienced by children and young people within hierarchical settings at home and within institutions, with 'child trafficking' practitioners such as social workers, immigration officials and the police. However, the potential structural powerlessness experienced by children, by the actions of state actors via sanctioned policies, which can cause further 'social harms' (Muncie, 2009), remain unaddressed. In the 'child trafficking' context, restrictive immigration policies are suggested as creating vulnerabilities

(O'Connell Davidson, 2011; Crawley, 2010*b*) but there is little attention paid to these aspects specifically in the body of 'child trafficking' research.

There also remains a distinct lack of research in the field, which addresses macrostructures and global inequalities. For example, 'child trafficking' and childhood within global economic contexts has not been addressed. Children in labour and work in the industrialised North have been largely invisible in the sociology of work (James *et al.,* 1998). There is however, a longstanding acknowledgement of children's participation in the labour market in developing countries (Hendrick, 2005). In the UK and Europe, research has not yet sought links between poverty, migration and children's autonomy in labour, in a comparative framework in the context of trafficking, as developed elsewhere in the field of child work and migration (for example, Iversen, 2002; Whitehead *et al.*, 2007). As awareness of 'child trafficking' has grown, across global contexts, empirical studies have not simultaneously developed in international and inter-cultural contexts. There is also a further gap in research where 'child trafficking' is conceptualised as a social structural group, addressing global inequalities of gender, race, age, class or ethnicity.

Summary

In critically deconstructing the social construction of 'child trafficking' the first task in this chapter was to trace the development of the construction of childhood, to understand how historical views of childhood have shaped contemporary constructions of childhood today. Developments in the studies of childhood took a sociological turn, conceiving children as autonomous beings, with abilities and capacities specific to age, rather than deficit of adult status. Despite this, the new studies of childhood, have not altogether replaced previous conceptualisations of childhood, or child theory. Childhood conceptualised as 'authentic', innocent and pure, as conditioned beings through processes of socialisation or approached through positive-scientific perspectives (Ryan, 2008) continue to inform how childhood is perceived in contemporary society, alongside new social studies of childhood.

The social construction of childhood in 'child trafficking' was deconstructed by locating major discourses within 'child trafficking' narratives and literature in the UK. The prevailing victimhood discourse in 'child trafficking' draws upon concepts of childhood as innocent, vulnerable to abuse and defenceless. 'Anti-trafficking' and child's rights campaigners appear to utilise this concept to attract public and media attention, to highlight the scale of the phenomenon and to attract funding. However, as O'Connell Davidson and Anderson (2006) observe, trafficking has become *"big business"* (p. 12) for researchers, lobbyists and politicians.

The victimhood discourse appears to be central in the political construction of 'child trafficking'. The labelling and categorisation of 'the trafficked child' and 'the smuggled child' through legal and bureaucratic practices, transforms children into legal classes. The power of the state in establishing access to support through the construction of hierarchical (and legal) categories sets conditions of who is determined to be a victim and deserving of assistance. The thresholds set by the state in determining a child to be a 'trafficked child' appear to be high with few children accepted formally as trafficked and accorded this label. This chapter has highlighted that the state also appeared to have a vested interest in constructing 'child trafficking' within immigration discourse, justifying tightening of boarders against illegal migration. The way that illegal immigration discourse has shaped 'child trafficking' policy and practice is taken up further in the next chapter.

Moral and cultural variables of social forces shape the construction of the child abuse discourse in 'child trafficking'. In the UK, child protection systems built on white middle-class values, can discriminate against other minority groups when judged against middle-class ideals. Child abuse, often presented as a 'lost childhood', reproduces the concept of childhood as a time of innocence and reinforces the view of children as naive and wholly adult dependent. Interventions can be experienced by children and young people as controlling and infantilising, in the guise of protection. Kitzinger (2004) pertinently argues

that rather than notions of 'protection', exploitation and abuse needs to be addressed by identifying and challenging young people's powerlessness,

"It is not just the abuse of power over children that is the problem but the existence and maintenance of that power itself" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 185).

The discourses of criminality and risk addressed in this chapter appear to both draw upon *"positive-scientific developmental theory"* (Ryan, 2008, p. 558) but in different ways. The discourse of criminality in 'child trafficking' appears to have shifted beyond an original focus on traffickers, towards the criminalisation of 'victims'. Framed by neo-moralism and *"portrayal of migrants as criminals, terrorists and scroungers"* (Collett, 2004, cited by Ferguson and Woodward, 2009), children's presenting criminal behaviour is objectified into re-victimisation by the state. Risk discourse appears to serve the interests of 'claims-makers' in stirring up moral panic about 'child trafficking'. Risk discourse also reflects a political fixation on individualised behaviours, seeking to control and measure children against normative patterns of behaviour.

Childhood and 'child trafficking' perceived as socially constructed are approaches that are *beginning* to present an alternative rendering of 'child trafficking' from young people's own perspectives. This approach envisions children in a wide variety of social contexts and counterbalances abstract individualised developmental perspectives (Graham, 2011). The way in which children experience their lives through specific social, cultural and economic arrangements facilitates different perspectives such as reconstructing singular notions of 'vulnerability' or 'exploitation' to capacities, resilience, coping strategies, defence systems and strengths. Alternative understandings of the trafficking experience in context of the cultural and social 'realities' of the subjects directly involved provide fresh insight and begin to challenge the assumptions underpinning present constructions of the 'trafficked child'.

The various concepts of childhood underpinning 'child trafficking' discourses, explored in this chapter provide a theoretical analysis of the social construction of childhood in 'child trafficking'. In order to continue to explore the implications for this group of children of a system built on these contemporary constructions

of childhood, 'child trafficking' policy in England is examined next in detail to consider how 'child trafficking' has been defined and interpreted in practice within the 'child trafficking' framework.

Chapter 3. The construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England

Introduction

This chapter critically engages with the construction of the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework in England. The chapter begins with examining how 'child trafficking' policy has been adopted from the UN Protocol and orientated in policy. The political context of positioning and structuring 'child trafficking' as an issue framed by immigration and criminal justice concerns is examined. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 is critiqued as strengthening law enforcement and powers of government in 'child trafficking' policy, with a lesser concern for better outcomes for 'trafficked children'. The 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework in England is further deconstructed examining the way in which different concepts of 'child trafficking' are applied in practice. Key determinants in the identification of 'trafficked children' in front-line practice are critically analysed. An argument is presented that the current construction of 'child trafficking' policy invokes in practice a dichotomous approach, resting on contested notions of 'consent' and 'coercion', which appears to not adequately reflect the complexity of children's experiences. Immigration-centred front-line practice is examined as dually sanctioned by the state's neo-liberal restrictive immigration policy and supported by public discourse of hostility towards migrant children.

UN Trafficking Protocol

The General Assembly of the United Nations met in 2000 and adopted a new Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the purpose of which was to set a new international instrument to *"prevent and combat criminal offences of a transnational nature committed by organized criminal groups"* (Ditmore and Wijers, 2003). The Convention is supplemented by two Protocols, one of which addresses smuggling of persons and the other trafficking in persons. Thus, the first international convention to define trafficking in persons (App. 1), known as the 'Palermo Protocol', was established as the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress*

and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN, 2000), and was considered as a *"watershed achievement"* (Scarpa, 2008, p. 207). The UN Trafficking Protocol was intended as 'a three Ps approach' (Scarpa, 2008; ATMG, 2012), measures to *prevent* trafficking, *prosecute* traffickers and *protect* 'victims'. However, in the negotiations leading up the construction of the UN Trafficking Protocol, Ditmore and Wijers (2003) reported a major disruption between two NGO-lobbying blocs on prostitution, hampering a consensus being reached on defining trafficking. The two opposing camps, abolitionists and pro sex worker's rights groups argued if prostitution *per se* is slavery and therefore constitutes trafficking in persons (Ditmore and Wijers, 2003),

> *"As a result the NGOs were ill-equipped to counter the natural tendency of government representatives to focus on repressive measures against illegal migration and organized crime, rather than on strengthening migrants' human rights"* (*ibid.*, p. 80).

The *"rancour"* (*ibid.*) between the NGO's was recognised as a lost opportunity to share goals in advocating for the protection of rights of trafficked persons.

Due to this, the UN Trafficking Protocol was negotiated by, and constructed by predominately law enforcement officials (Ditmore and Wijers, 2003), as a response to concerns of a growing and highly lucrative form of transnational organised crime (Haken, 2011). Hence, the outcome of the negotiations between nation states resulted in the UN Trafficking Protocol focused on combating transnational organised crime, as a criminal law instrument, focused on the prosecution of the offence of trafficking, rather than protection of 'victims' (Scarpa, 2008). As a consequence, the UN Trafficking Protocol is critiqued by many authors as focusing less on the prevention and protection elements as was originally intended (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006; Liempt, 2006; Scarpa, 2008).

Policy orientation

The UK signed the UN *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* in 2000, which signalled a key step in the development of 'anti-trafficking' legislation and policy. As a signatory, the UK government adopted

the UN Trafficking Protocol's definition of human trafficking, but significantly, also mirrored the UN's prosecution orientation by constructing 'child trafficking' domestic policy from a criminal justice approach. Framing trafficking as a problem of disrupting organised crime, the economic and prosecution focus was made clear by the Inter Departmental Ministerial Group on Human Trafficking (IDMG),

> *"The International Labour Organization estimates that the profits of traffickers worldwide are in excess of 32 billion US$ each year. Anti-trafficking actions must therefore seek to recover victims, reduce the profits of traffickers, and increase their risk of capture, prosecution and conviction"* (IDMG, 2012, p. 3).

Moreover, the UK government orientated their position on trafficking and 'child trafficking' as an illegal migration issue. As trafficking involves the movement of people, in its formulation, trafficking policy was deemed synonymous with illegal migration, despite the fact that trafficking can involve legal and illegal means of movement of people across borders. With a 'new' concern of transnational crime of trafficking to respond to, the UK government's 'child trafficking' policy orientation could be seen as justifying restrictive immigration policy, with explicit linking of trafficking to illegal migration. Development of 'child trafficking' policy in England ran parallel to New Labour's immigration and asylum agenda, which has seen an increase tightening of policy and legislation since the mid 1990's (Hynes, 2015). Garrett (2006) reminds us how New Labour's policy-making agenda at that time not only displayed a *"general antipathy towards refugees and asylum seekers"* (p. 326) but was also, an

> *"evolution of a neo-liberal order in which migrants to Britain are viewed with suspicion and are the focus of legislation and policy discourses which are increasingly punitive"* (p. 315).

Suspicion and deterrence became the new organising principles of New Labour's immigration policy (McGhee, 2005, cited by Garrett, 2006).

On the one hand, it was under New Labour's policy of encouraging unrestricted economic migration to Britain from the European Union (Miliband, 2012), which resulted in a substantial increase in the migrant population. Between 1997 and

2010, under New Labour, net migration averaged 200,000 per year, five times higher than under the previous conservative government (Migration Watch UK, 2015). Although the government stressed the benefits of this migration as making significant contributions to overall production and increased GDP, concerns were raised about the levels of migration adding pressure to underfunded public resources, lack of affordable housing and availability of lower skilled jobs (Davison and Shire, 2015). However, the government's economic migration policy continued to be unrestricted, cheap migrant labour after all, was vital to the neoliberal project (Davison and Shire, 2015). On the other hand, New Labour's increasingly restrictive and punitive immigration policy actively fuelled public concerns about migration, although somewhat misplaced as the number of people seeking asylum represented only a small proportion of net migration. Between 2004 and 2012, people seeking asylum ranged from 4% to 11% of net migration, and was estimated at about 8% for 2013 (Blinder, 2015). Nevertheless, the discourse of non-economic migrants being undesirable gathered strength, against the backdrop of demographic change in the country,

> *"the portrayal of asylum seekers as "bogus" or "genuine" claimants has entered public consciousness leading to narratives of "undeserving" and "deserving" refugees which have arisen from policies of deterrence"* (Sales, 2005, cited by Hynes, 2015).

Thus, positioning 'child trafficking' as a concern synonymous with illegal migration, served the governments interests in being seen to curb illegal migration.

In developing a policy response to 'child trafficking', the UK government's immigration orientation, as its primary focus, rather than concerning itself with the needs of children and protecting 'victims', can be evidenced in three significant delays. The first was a delay of six years between signing the UN Trafficking Protocol and ratification in 2006. The second delay was the UK government's reservation of Article 22 of the UNCRC, which restricted the application of the principles of the UNCRC in the case of children and young people who are subject to immigration control. The Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized this reservation as incompatible with the spirit and objective

of the Convention and repeatedly urged the UK government to withdraw the reservation (Rogowski, 2013). For many years, this pressure was resisted by government on the grounds that the reservation was necessary in the interests of effective immigration control (JCHR, 2006). The evidence base available to the government at the time however, clearly showed that many children were not receiving an adequate level of protection and care and that the ability to plan and provide for a 'trafficked child's' safety and well-being was being compromised (JCHR, 2006; Beddoe, 2007; CEOP, 2007). The government has now removed this reservation in relation to immigration policy and introduced a 'welfare principle' in section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. By removing the immigration-related reservation, the UK government in effect accepted that all children, irrespective of their immigration status, must enjoy all of the UNCRC's rights and protections (Children's Society, 2012*a*).

The third delay, affecting children's protection, was the UK government's non-compliance with Council of Europe *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (COE, 2008). Although ratified in 2008, obliging the government to offer trafficked persons assistance and measures to protect their rights, the UK 'anti-trafficking' framework was found to be lacking in its support for children (ATMG, 2010). Furthermore, the UK government delayed in opting into the EU *Directive on Human Trafficking*, designed to offer better protection to 'trafficked' children (GRETA, 2012). Reports of 'trafficked children' being criminalised and imprisoned, for 'prostitution' and other offences were raised as major concerns (CEOP, 2009; Butler-Sloss, 2010; ATMG, 2010; Brotherton, 2013). After a further delay, the UK government bowed to pressure and opted in to the EU Directive in 2011 (Home Office, 2012*a*). Monitoring of the UK government's obligations under both the Convention (COE, 2008) and the EU Directive to adequately legislate, investigate the crime, punish the perpetrators *and* protect the 'victims' of trafficking has been negative,

> *"the current implementation of the obligations under Article 26, and now under Article 8 of the Directive, is deficient and does not guarantee victims their right not to be prosecuted and, in turn, see their trafficker investigated"* (Annison, 2013).

The combination of these delays evidences the UK government's lack of commitment at the policy level to support children, which has resulted in children being afforded less protection (Annison, 2013; Brotherton, 2013).

National Referral Mechanism

Firmly situating 'child trafficking' as a criminal justice issue, the government designated the Home Office as the government department with lead responsibility for policy-making in England. Since ratification of the UN trafficking Protocol in 2006, England has seen new 'anti-trafficking' legislation, policies and practice guidance for agencies working with 'trafficked children' being introduced. The Home Office established the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), situated under the National Crime Agency (NCA), formally the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), whose main concerns are border policing, and tackling immigration, economic and organised crime. The Home Office released the *UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking* (Home Office, 2007) with an update in 2009 (Home Office, 2009). The human trafficking strategy acknowledges that a 'multi-agency approach' (*ibid.*) is best practice in 'safeguarding trafficking victims' but all lead responsibilities for co-ordination, decision-making in individual cases and collation of data sits with immigration agencies and the UKHTC.

The Home Office established the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2009, situated under the NCA. The UK Visas and Immigration agency (UKVI), formally known as UKBA, is the main 'competent authority' dealing with referrals of trafficked persons, with the primary remit of immigration control and securing national borders. Both UKHTC and UKVI assess whether individuals referred to them by 'first responders' [1] are, in their interpretation, a 'victim of trafficking'. The UKHTC deals with referrals from the police, local authorities and NGOs and individuals subject to immigration control are dealt with by UKVI (Home Office, 2013*a*). NGO's and 'anti-trafficking' campaigners have suggested that this arrangement presents a potential conflict of interest between the UKVI's role as

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[1] 'First responders' make referrals to the NRM from designated NGO's, UK police forces, National Crime Agency, local authority Children's Services and Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

assessing whether a child is a 'victim of trafficking' while at the same time assessing that child's asylum or immigration claim to determine whether they will receive protection and permission to remain in the UK (Children's Society, 2012*a*; ATMG, 2012).

Since the introduction of the NRM, concerns have been raised about the lack of clarity of processes between UKVI, UKHTC and Children Services, in cases where children are identified at a border point as being possibly trafficked. ATMG (2010) refer to confusion within immigration agencies about whether referrals to local authorities should be made due to child protection concerns. Additionally, in cases where the young person's age is in doubt and children are deemed to be adults by immigration staff, these cases might not be referred to Children Services potentially leaving child protection concerns unaddressed. According to ATMG (2010, p. 96), "*it is relatively common for the age of people under 18 to be incorrectly estimated and for the police, UKBA, or other agencies to assume that they are older (i.e. adults)".* Concerns have also been raised by various stakeholders about the handling of trafficking cases by the NRM, principally failing to ensure that 'potential victims' are identified. The NRM has been criticised as being too centralized, questioning whether the system is 'fit for purpose' in assisting 'trafficking victims' (ATMG, 2010; GRETA, 2012, Annison, 2013).

Suggested improvements to overhaul the NRM for children by NGO's and 'anti-trafficking' campaigners, included key recommendations as introducing a right of appeal and resting decision-making and responsibility for trafficking 'cases' within existing child protection systems (ATMG, 2014*a*; ILPA, 2014). In the present arrangements, decisions in the NRM are not independently scrutinised and are not made by experts with child protection knowledge (Setter, 2013). A restructuring of lead responsibility for 'child trafficking' policy in England was recommended away from the Home Office to the Department of Education in order to separate trafficking from immigration issues (ATMG, 2014*a*; ILPA, 2014). Subsequently, a review of the NRM was commissioned by the home secretary (Home Office, 2014*a*) but no significant changes were called for in respect of children, with recommendations focused *"around improving*

awareness of the indicators of trafficking" (Home Office, 2014*a*, p. 9) and rather vaguely, *"also recommends that the various child protection timelines are taken into account"* (*ibid*.).

The NRM review (Home Office, 2014*a*) does however, acknowledge the concerns raised about immigration officials being the only decision-makers in trafficking 'cases' and recommends a testing of regional multi-disciplinary panels in making formal identification decisions (p. 46). 'Slavery Safeguarding Leads' have been proposed in place of 'first responders' to improve the quality of referrals to the NRM and only then the *"reasonable grounds decision can be replaced by an alternative referral mechanism"* (Home Office, 2014*a* p. 30). The overall responsibility for 'child trafficking' is however, recommended to be retained by the Home Office and conclusive decisions about cases remains with immigration agencies pending outcome of the 'testing' of such panels with as yet, no timescales for implementation provided.

Political context

The government's policy orientation and structuring of the 'child trafficking' framework, reinforcing the criminal and immigration aspects of trafficking, appears to demonstrate less focus on the other elements intended in the UN Trafficking Protocol of *prevention* and *protection*. Prevention, according to ATMG (2012) is less understood than protection and prosecution and consequently given less attention in UK 'anti-trafficking' measures. The protection of 'victims', or rather the lack of an approach that gives primacy to children's rights to protection, has been criticised by social policy researchers, 'anti-trafficking' watchdogs (Craig *et al.*, 2007, Bovarnick, 2010, ATMG, 2010, Pearce, 2011; Annison, 2013) and recently, also by politicians. The House of Commons Education Committee (2013) put forward a proposal concerning this very matter,

> *"…we are not convinced that the system at the moment enables vulnerable children to be treated as children first. Other agencies, such as those involved in immigration and crime, cannot reasonably be expected to put the interests of the child before their statutory*

responsibilities on their own initiative. We therefore recommend that the Department for Education be given explicit overall responsibility for the welfare of all children, including those who have been trafficked or who are seeking asylum" (p. 14).

However, in response, the Coalition government stood firm in retaining the Home Office as the lead in 'child trafficking' policy-making and rejected the proposal of transfer to the Department of Education (House of Commons Education Committee, 2013).

The Coalition government's refusal to transfer responsibility of policy concerning 'trafficked children' and asylum seeking children to the Department of Education, was likely due to a number of reasons. First, was the intention of government to push through new legislation in time for the general election in May 2015. Keeping hold of 'child trafficking' responsibility within the Home Office was crucial to enable the enactment of the draft Modern Slavery Bill, which incorporated legislation concerning children subject to *"slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking"* (Home Office, 2014*b*). Secondly, tackling 'modern slavery' in introduction of a new bill was *"political opportunism"* (Furedi, 2013) for Home Secretary Theresa May who made it her 'personal priority', *"keenly aware of the importance of her antislavery crusade to her party's electoral success"* (Robinson, 2015). Immigration was *the* issue debated most in the run up to the general election in 2015 and the Conservatives were aware that an election strategy bolstered by policy and legislation addressing immigration (both the Immigration Act 2014 and Modern Slavery Bill) would *"equip us to take the fight to UKIP and Labour on some of their pet issues"* (Hill, 2015), and could sway the vote. Thirdly, the Modern Slavery Act took a different direction focusing on prosecuting those abusing labour for profit, a major departure from many 'anti-trafficking' debates (Robinson, 2015). Rushing through this piece of legislation was an opportunity for the now Conservative government to soften the blow of the *"not-so-hidden"* (Robinson, 2015, p.141) anti-immigration agenda. The 'modern slavery' rhetoric is viewed as not only deflecting concerns about immigration and deregulation measures (Quirk, 2015; Robinson, 2015), but has also given government a

"moral gloss to anti-immigration" (Gittos, 2015) to apply laws that target economic migrants.

Policy and practice framework

Data on 'child trafficking'

Due to the hidden nature of the problem, estimates of people subjected to trafficking in the UK vary considerably. In 2008 the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee estimated there were more than 5,000 'victims of trafficking' in the UK (Massey, 2010) and the Home Office chief scientific adviser, estimated that in 2013 there were between 10,000-13,000 'potential victims of modern slavery' in the UK (Silverman, 2014). However, the number of children identified as 'trafficked children' by the Home Office, charged with the responsibility of 'identification and monitoring of victims' remains very low in comparison to estimates. Data from the NRM launched in 2009 shows that for the calendar year 2014, the UKHTC received 2340 referrals of potential 'victims of trafficking' of which 671 were minors, an increase from 450 formally referred in 2013 (NCA, 2014*a*; 2015). Of the 671 minors referred in 2014, 348 were female and 323 were male. Recent statistics from the NRM do not provide the ages of children referred, however, earlier data showed that over 56% of 'potential child victims' were in the 16-17 year old age category and 11% of 'child victims' were less than 10 years of age (IDMG, 2012).

The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG), a coalition formed to monitor the UK's implementation of the Council of Europe *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*, found a lack of reliable data on children who are 'victims of trafficking' across the UK (ATMG, 2012). A disparity is evident not only between larger estimates of the prevalence of 'child trafficking' and those 'formally' identified as trafficked by the NRM, but also between known cases of 'child trafficking' amongst support organisations working with children and those referred to the NRM. SOCA aimed to establish a baseline of the scale of trafficking in the UK by asking various agencies for data on trafficking in an intelligence gathering report (SOCA, 2012). Interestingly, SOCA's (2012) report identified more than double the amount of children referred to as 'trafficked'

than official referrals made to the NRM in 2011, despite only receiving data from 9 NGO's. SOCA (2012; 2013) reported that of the 2077 people identified across the UK in 2011 (489 children), with a slight increase in 2012 (2255 people of which 549 were children), over half had not been referred to the NRM (53% of children were not referred). These findings reinforce earlier research by ATMG (2010) which highlighted many cases of trafficking were not referred to NRM,

> *"for a variety of reasons, but primarily because they did not see the benefit of being referred or were fearful of the consequences of being brought to the attention of the authorities because of their immigration status"* (p. 9).

The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) reviewed the UK's implementation of the Council of Europe Convention in 2012. GRETA's (2012) assessment of the NRM raised the concern that 'positive conclusive' identification decisions (the NRM accepting 'trafficking' has occurred) were made in only 33% of the total number of cases referred to the NRM in the first two years of its functioning. In the case of children, only 31% of children's cases referred to NRM to date have been accepted by this body as having been 'trafficked' (ATMG, 2014*a,* cited by Gearon, 2015*a*). Furthermore, the 'positive' decisions made in the cases of EU/EEA nationals (71%) has been far higher than non-EU nationals (21%) (GRETA, 2012). ATMG (2013) report that for children there are *"clear disparities among positive CG* [conclusive grounds] *decisions across nationalities, with British victims, and to a lesser extent, Eastern European victims, getter higher rates of CG decisions than non-EU nationals"* (p. 51). This variance indicates potential discriminatory identification decision-making by the NRM, based on nationality or age (GRETA, 2012; ATMG, 2013; ATMG, 2014*a*).

The overall low rate of acceptance of persons as having been trafficked by the NRM is likely to be contributing to a lack of trust between Home Office agencies and service providing organisations. According to ATMG (2012), service providers and NGOs may be reluctant to share information about cases with Home Office agencies for fear of compromising their service user's immigration

status. When the NRM makes a 'negative conclusive' decision for a non-EU national, in effect *not* accepting that 'trafficking' has occurred, this can result in the individual's removal from the UK. Adult 'victims' are required to give consent to be referred to NRM, which can, at least in part, explain the disparity between known cases of trafficked adults who may make an explicit choice to not be referred. However, children are not required to give consent to being referred and yet evidence suggests that many are not being referred by 'first responders'. This raises the possibility that those supporting children who are believed to have been trafficked are taking an active advocacy role by not referring children to the NRM, resisting formal monitoring systems by acting to reduce the threat of removal or adverse effect on children's immigration status. This suggests grave tensions implicit between immigration-led 'anti-trafficking' policies and welfare or rights-based approaches in 'child trafficking' practice. Problematic statistics and under-reporting notwithstanding, agencies (both governmental and support services) are in agreement that 'child trafficking' figures presented are 'tip of the iceberg' (UNICEF, 2007; SOCA, 2012; IDMG, 2012; ATMG, 2012). All stakeholders agree that numbers of 'trafficked children' are likely to be far higher than the existing data collection mechanisms report, although this claim is utilised by NGO's to attract funding and by government to justify policy importance and a restrictive immigration agenda.

'Child trafficking' is cited as taking various exploitative forms, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, cannabis cultivation, drug trafficking, benefit fraud, labour exploitation, illegal adoptions and servile marriages (CEOP, 2007). There is emerging evidence of labour exploitation in adult employment sectors such as children's labour exploited in restaurants, factories, agriculture and in nail bars (SOCA, 2012). However, the number of child referrals made to the NRM by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority remains at zero to date (UKHTC, 2012; NCA, 2014*a*). The first case of 'child trafficking' for organ harvesting has been reported to the NRM (UKHTC, 2012). In a relatively short period of time, an understanding of different forms of exploitation constituting 'child trafficking' is emerging, from the original focus solely on sexual exploitation.

The data gathered by SOCA (2012; 2013), resulting in a higher number of children identified as 'victims of trafficking' by agencies working with them (compared to the statistics reported by NRM), show that in 2012, in 32% of children's cases the exploitation type was unknown, 28% of children were sexually exploited and 24% criminally exploited (SOCA, 2013). 7% of children experienced more than one type of exploitation, 6% were in domestic servitude, 3% were trafficked for labour and 1% for organ harvesting (SOCA, 2013). In terms of gender breakdown, the NRM data shows that girls were predominantly sexually exploited, while boys were predominantly exploited for their labour (IDMG, 2012). NRM's data on prevalence of type of children's exploitation differs, labour exploitation is identified as the most common type in the period 2011-2014 (UKHTC, 2012; UKHTC, 2013; NCA, 2014*a*; NCA, 2015). This data is contrary to SOCA's (2012; 2013) findings which found labour exploitation less prevalent than both sexual and criminal exploitation. Rather confusingly, the Home Office figures include in their category of labour exploitation 'other means of exploitation' such as benefit fraud and criminal exploitation (IDMG, 2012). The lack of reliable data is therefore problematic, and poses a significant challenge in terms of policy responses and resource allocation. GRETA (2012) have recommended that the UK requires further development of data collection systems on trafficking, to be more comprehensive, coherent and offer greater analysis.

Legislative framework

Prior to 2003, England did not have any specific law prohibiting trafficking in human beings, or forced labour (ATMG, 2010). The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced offences of 'trafficking for sexual exploitation', including children. The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004, Section 4 introduced a new offence of trafficking, for the first time addressing other forms of exploitation other than sexual exploitation, including, slavery, forced labour and organ removal (Bokhari, 2012). The Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 defines exploitation as behaviour that would fall under the definition of 'slavery or forced labour' under Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (COE, 2014).

Internal trafficking is defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004 and occurs when a person is moved within the UK for exploitation. In practice, there are misconceptions about the interpretation of 'within'. A common assumption is that a person needs to be moved to another region or town to be 'internally trafficked' or that this definition only applies to British children moved within the UK (Annison, 2013). Both, according to Annison (2013) are incorrect, a person of any nationality or age can be deemed to be trafficked internally if they moved within the UK for exploitation. Moved 'within' the UK can be *"any movement to a site of exploitation giving "within" its literal/plain meaning. In fact it can constitute movement to the next street if there was sound evidence to support this"* (p. 31). A further piece of legislation under Section 71 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 introduced an offence of 'holding someone in slavery or servitude', or 'requiring another person to perform forced or compulsory labour'. This offence applies to all people subjected to forced labour, irrespective of immigration status (Brotherton, 2013) and embeds into English law the provisions of Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights, relating to slavery or servitude, and forced or compulsory labour (Annison, 2013).

In the current legislative framework in England, as there is no unified law against human trafficking in the statute books,

> *"criminal justice actors are uncertain about how to identify the crime and prosecute traffickers. Despite the steady increase in the number of potential trafficked persons identified, the number of traffickers punished for trafficking offences has decreased"* (Annison, 2013, p. 9).

Annison's (2013) findings in reviewing the UK's 'anti-trafficking' laws also highlight that 'trafficked children' continue to be prosecuted for crimes they were compelled to commit "*while their traffickers enjoy impunity*" (p. 9). Children are prosecuted particularly for forced begging, petty crime and cannabis cultivation (*ibid.,* p.118). Vietnamese children exploited for the production of cannabis, as 'human sprinkler systems' (Drugscope, 2007) are known to be subjected to debt bondage and emotional manipulation. Children's immigration status and the commission of an offence whilst being exploited are all methods used by

traffickers to maintain control over children (CEOP, 2007). Data from the NRM shows that Vietnam is consistently ranked first or second as a 'child trafficking' source country (UKHTC, 2012; 2013). Of all 'trafficking victims' identified who were forced into cannabis cultivation, 96% were from Vietnam, 81% of whom were children (Brotherton, 2013). Annison (2013) suggests further assessment is required to discover the true number of 'trafficked children' charged with offences, 'victims' who have been age assessed as adults and currently held in adult custody.

Modern Slavery Bill

The aforementioned confusing nature of existing multiple legislation was addressed by Peter Bone MP in the first reading of the proposal for a Modern Slavery Bill (HC Deb, 10 July 2013, cc395-397). The Modern Slavery Bill proposed to simplify legislation into one single act, and allow for the creation of an anti-slavery commissioner to represent the 'interest of victims of modern day slavery' (*ibid.*). Furthermore, a duty on local authorities to provide support for adult and child 'victims' was proposed, and the fourth purpose of the bill was stated as non-prosecution of 'victims', *"there would be a presumption that victims of trafficking should not be prosecuted for crimes committed as a result of them being trafficked"* (HC Deb, 10 July 2013, cc395-397). The Home Office accepted the idea of consolidation of existing trafficking offences, with increased sentences for traffickers and the draft Modern Slavery Bill (Home Office, 2013*b*) proposed creation of an anti-slavery commissioner. However, the draft bill did not include measures for victim protection and instead proposed a statutory duty for public authorities to report 'potential victims of trafficking' to the NRM (Home Office, 2013*b*, clause 35). As stated previously, the government's response to politicians and other agencies to overhaul the NRM was rejected. The government was made aware of what would seem to be discretionary reporting to the NRM, given practitioners' concerns about referrals being detrimental for children's immigration outcomes and access to support. It would appear that government has chosen to ignore the concerns raised about the functioning of the NRM and potential conflicts of interests in children's 'cases', instead deciding to 'force the issue' on reporting, or rather, enforce the

issue, by way of introducing a legal duty on practitioners to report to the NRM. This proposed statutory duty for public authorities such as police and social workers has been challenged directly by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC, 2013),

> *"As it stands, the NRM itself is flawed…as it currently stands we would not recommend placing a statutory duty on first responders to make a referral as we believe this is likely to be detrimental to child victims of trafficking and would not be in their best interests"* (5.1).

In the draft Modern Slavery Bill the government also declined to endorse moves by senior politicians and several years of lobbying by child-rights and 'anti-trafficking' campaigners towards the introduction of a guardianship scheme for children (Travis, 2013).   Both actions by government proposed in the new bill can be interpreted as a lesser concern for better outcomes for 'trafficked children', whilst strengthening powers of government in their control of existing systems.

The draft Modern Slavery Bill has also been criticised for lacking clarity in its definition of 'modern slavery', with questions raised about the purpose of introducing a new term and whether there is alignment to existing definitions of human trafficking (Arocha, 2014). Confusion in definitions is likely to present problems in practice of identification, *"which in turn will continue to justify government agencies' emphasis on identifying 'genuine victims of trafficking' from those who are not"* (Arocha, 2014). Other critics have highlighted that the draft bill, while introducing tougher penalties on traffickers and gangmasters, does not provide 'victims' statutory protection and more prosecutions of traffickers are unlikely until those subjected to trafficking are offered this provision in law (Skrivankova, 2013). Presently, more 'victims' are prosecuted than traffickers (Skrivankova, 2013). Despite the criminal justice orientation, successful prosecutions of traffickers are low, only 8 convictions were secured in England and Wales for 2011 'on a principal offence basis' (IDMG, 2012, p. 4, cited by Gearon, 2015*a*; Brotherton, 2013). Despite the home secretary's rhetoric of keeping 'victims' at the heart of government action (Home Office,

2013*b*), the bill is criticised as not providing statutory support for people experiencing trafficking. The draft act has been dubbed as a *"lost opportunity"* (Steen, 2014, cited by Gentleman, 2014) by the home secretary's former special envoy for human trafficking, as it focuses *"wholly and exclusively about law enforcement – but it shouldn't be enforcement-based, it should be victim-based"* (*ibid.*)

In response to government's continued focus on prosecution in the draft Modern Slavery Bill, and retaining decision-making in 'child trafficking' 'cases' by immigration agencies, the conflict of interest between immigration and children's protection was raised once again. The Office of the Children's Commissioner made clear its position that the Home Office should not undertake decision making under the NRM (OCC, 2013). This was echoed by ATMG (2014*b*) who recommended that the Home Office UKVI is immediately removed from its role as 'competent authority' in the current NRM and a 'recalibrated NRM' including children social workers is grounded in legislation. The Office of the Children's Commissioner took this a step further suggesting that statutory power could be given to a child welfare-based 'competent authority' to recommend *to* the Home Office that they should grant *"whatever leave they believe to be in the child's best interest"* (OCC, 2013, 5.5).

Whilst there appears to be no movement by the government on this particular issue, it would seem after heavy criticism by 'anti-trafficking' lobbyists, the UK government has now stated its intention for the first time, to protect 'victims' from criminalisation via a 'statutory defence' in the *Modern Slavery Strategy* (Home Office, 2014*b*). However, concerns have already been raised that the statutory defence (clause 39) will not adequately protect children from prosecution if they have committed an offence as a consequence of their trafficking. The proposed bill introduces a burden of proof requiring children to establish they were compelled to commit an offence before being able to access the protection of the statutory defence (Refugee Children's Consortium, 2014). Under the UN Protocol 'trafficked children' do not have to show they have been 'compelled' to commit a crime, the means (e.g. coercion, deception) and consent are irrelevant. Accordingly, the Refugee Children's Consortium

(2014) have proposed amendments to the bill as in their view, a child should not have to prove 'compulsion' in the way that an adult does, in line with UN Protocol. Moreover, the bill excludes a large number of offences from the defence that children are likely to have been compelled to commit, such as children instructed to travel on false documents by traffickers (Refugee Children's Consortium, 2014). The updated draft of the bill (Home Office, 2014c) does not incorporate these amendments. The Modern Slavery Bill is expected to be pushed through and enacted by 2015, the home secretary has stressed that there is limited parliamentary time before the general election and therefore this bill must urgently pass in to law (Robinson and Falconer, 2013). The concerns are that such urgency may result in missed opportunities to develop the bill comprehensively as a statute addressing trafficking in the 21st century, and respond to experts' views in how to strengthen the proposed law for those affected, particularly for children.

Practice framework

The 'child trafficking' practice framework in England focuses on migrating children to the UK, illegally, as 'child trafficking' policy has been constructed as an immigration and criminal issue (figure 1, p. 69). Hence, more is known about children migrating alone as 'unaccompanied asylum seekers', some of which are identified as trafficked (DfE, 2011a). Children migrating to the UK by legal means are also recognised as potentially being subjected to trafficking (Pearce, 2011), but to a lesser degree, and not addressed in main policy documents (DCSF, 2007; DfE, 2011a). Children trafficked out of the UK are given scant attention in 'child trafficking' policy documents, and little is known about this group of children. Separated children moving within the UK, inside UK borders, are also recognised in policy as group of children who may be trafficked (DfE, 2011a). However, the recognition of 'internal trafficking' of children is a recent shift in practice, and the reasons for this are explored below.

Whilst 'child trafficking' policy is structured under the remit of the Home Office, with a focus on immigration and criminal justice, 'child trafficking' is also

considered as a form of child abuse. As discussed in Chapter 2, child abuse narratives inform the construction of the 'trafficked child'. However, this construction of 'child trafficking' is defined by the Department for Education, without overall responsibility for 'trafficked children' policy-making. The construction of 'child trafficking' as child abuse, within existing child protection systems, is nested within an overarching criminal justice approach. The responsibility for the protection of children in England, including 'victims of trafficking' falls within the statutory responsibilities of local authorities under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. Local authorities have a legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care and provide support to children, irrespective of their immigration status or nationality, whether they are migrating children or UK nationals (DfE, 2011*a*).

Figure 1. Current practice framework
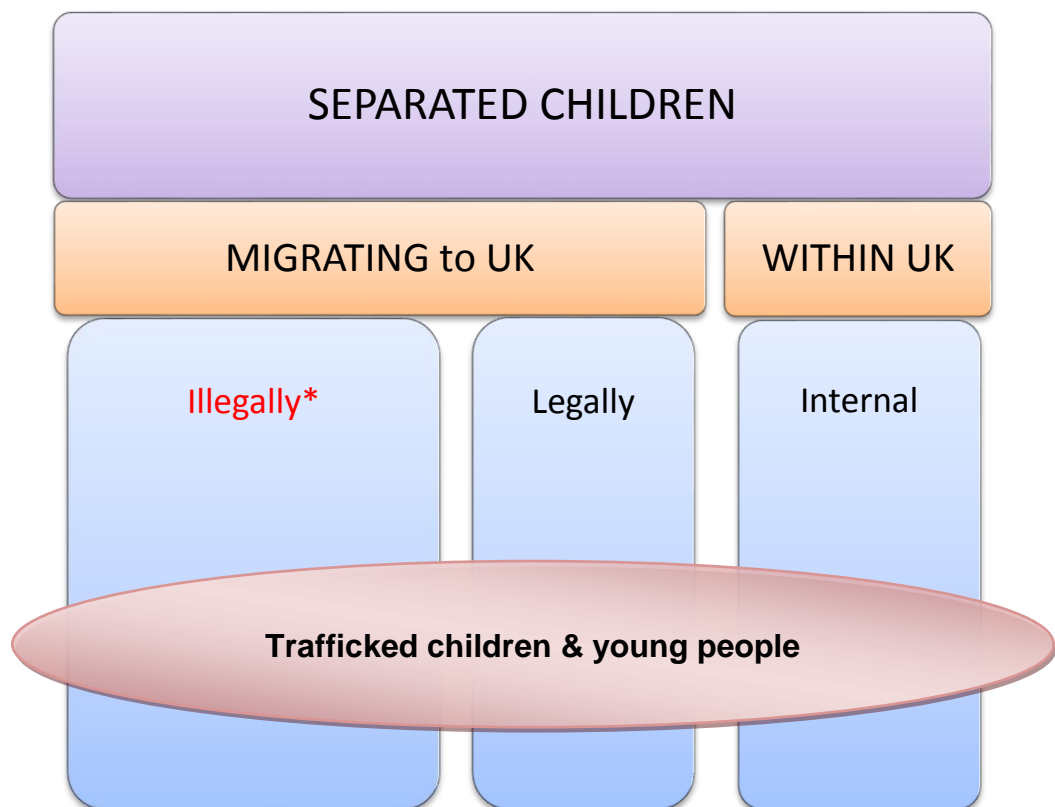
*illegally migrating children - main focus of 'child trafficking' practice

Front-line services that are likely to come into initial contact with 'trafficked children' are border control staff, immigration officials, the police, NGO's and

Children Services departments in local authorities. Any agency which identifies that a child that might be trafficked from any group in Figure 1 (p. 69) are required to refer the case to the Children's Services local authority departments where they are located (2011*a*). Other agencies or services that have dealings with children and young people where trafficking may be suspected include, health (particularly sexual health services), judges, solicitors, youth offending services, education, youth services, foster carers, residential homes for children and finally, but not exhaustively, members of the public. The construction of 'child trafficking' in policy as requiring a child welfare and child protection response (DfE, 2011*a*), relies on notification of front-line agencies contacting Children Services departments.

Social workers are required to respond to children who are believed to have been 'trafficked' in terms of assessing their needs, providing support and where necessary providing immediate protection under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 (DCSF, 2010; DfE, 2011*a*). This welfare approach focuses on protection and prevention of harm. However, social workers are required to work closely with various criminal justice agencies who work from a different approach, with emphasis placed on prosecution and punishment of associated crimes within 'child trafficking' (Gearon, 2015*a*). The police are concerned with crimes committed within the trafficking situation and focus on prosecutions, and the Home Office are concerned with tackling serious organised crime, with border control agencies focused on illegal immigration. These two approaches within front-line services in the 'child trafficking' practice framework; the welfare model and the criminal justice response, with their different orientations, infers implicit tensions between the key agencies' roles of care and protection or control and punishment.

Age

In 'child trafficking' casework, social workers have additional roles to their statutory duties under the Children Acts 1989; 2004 including referrals to the NRM as 'first responders', age assessments of migrating children and assisting children with their immigration claims (Gearon, 2015*a*). The process of the

much contested age assessments and age disputes are known to have an adverse impact on children who arrive unaccompanied to the UK (Crawley, 2007; Pearce *at al.*, 2009). Determining a 'trafficked child' to be an adult (incorrectly) can raise the obvious risk of a person no longer being afforded protection from child protective services. Determining a child to be either a child or an adult can happen at any initial contact with children by front-line staff such as border control, immigration officers and the police. If a child states they are a minor, they are, in accordance to Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking, meant to be given the 'benefit of doubt' and referred to Children Services for an age assessment (Home Office, 2013*a*). To complicate matters, children who may have been trafficked may have false or no documents, or can be instructed to lie about their age by traffickers (Pearce, 2012). Although Home Office guidance to front-line staff is that an age assessment should be commissioned *"where appropriate"* (Home Office, 2015, p. 38), the decision to request a person's age to be assessed requires judgements to be made by front-line staff, who may have no experience in working with children, child protection or 'child trafficking'. Such exercise of 'discretion' was evidenced in the uncovering of the 'Gentleman's Agreement' (Centre for Social Justice, 2013) when children were being deported from England to France without contact being made with Children Services, including 'trafficked children'.

Local authorities with responsibility of age assessments of unaccompanied minors also bear the financial burden of supporting children assessed as minors, thus further complicating the process and leading authors to question the objectivity of such assessments (Pearce, 2012; Finch, 2014). The implications for children are that they can be determined to be adults, deported, detained (Bhabha and Finch, 2006), placed in unsuitable accommodation (Pearce, 2012) and potentially re-trafficked and placed at risk of abuse and exploitation (Finch, 2014). Understandably, research findings by Chase *et al.* (2008) indicate that unaccompanied asylum seeking children find age assessments and age disputes cause substantial stress, adversely affecting their mental health.

Social work with 'trafficked children'

The expectations of social workers to work closely with Home Office agencies in assessing age, assisting with immigration issues and co-working (Finch, 2014) raises the issue of complicity of social work practice with immigration policy. Humphries (2004) cautioned this as inappropriate due to *"the profession's complicity in implementing social policies that are degrading and inhuman"* (p. 93). In the period 2006-2010 there were 196 unaccompanied asylum seeking children removed from the UK (Finch, 2014), including 'enforced removals'. Research indicates that 'trafficked children' are held in immigration detention, youth offending institutions and in adult prisons (Dennis, 2012; Hale and Gelsthorpe, 2012; Annison, 2013). According to Humphries (2004), social work's complicity with the detention and deportation of children cannot be aligned with the profession's anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice whilst delivering policies that discriminate against certain groups of people, and expose them to poverty, insecurity, exclusion and further harm. Further implications for children in terms of conflating social policy with immigration is Bovarnick's (2010) finding of uncertainty amongst practitioners within 'child trafficking' practice whether or not the same safeguarding standards apply to children from abroad. This is despite existing legislation and guidance confirming a legal duty to *all* children, irrespective of their immigration status (DfE, 2011*a*). However, there are emerging concerns that in practice, children from the UK receive better child protection services than those from abroad (Pearce, 2010).

The key 'child trafficking' practice guidance for social workers in England *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (DCSF 2007; DfE, 2011*a*) includes a series of risk indicators to assist professionals in identifying children as trafficked. Additional risk factors are listed in the 'risk assessment matrix' of the *Trafficked Children Toolkit* (LSCB, 2009), developed across the domains of the Assessment Framework (DoH, 2000). A major critique of social work practice and policy with 'risk' as a central discourse is the positivistic approach, which aims to predict certain outcomes from a definitive list that describes individual behaviours (James and James, 2008). A further criticism can be

levelled at 'risk-driven' policy-making due to the pre-occupation with risk factors with little or no attention paid to protective factors. Despite developments in understanding children's resilience as constituting both risk *and* protective factors in coping with trauma or adversity (Rutter, 2001), risk rather than protection *"gains the upper hand"* (James and James, 2008, p. 112). Furthermore, the main assessment tool for professionals working with children, the *Assessment Framework* (DoH, 2000) is grounded in the ecological paradigm of child development informed by system theory. Limits of the ecological approach include the broad conceptualisations of resilience, the arbitrary distinctions of good and bad coping, implied causalities and a lack of contextualisation (Ungar, 2003). For 'trafficked children' the combined approach of risk discourse and ecological paradigm to assessment, lacks not only addressing resilience and coping, but also lacks attention to context such as social, political factors or structural inequalities.

Social work practitioners working with children where trafficking is suspected to have occurred have further guidance to refer to, *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation* (DCSF, 2009) and a policy for missing children, updated in 2014 to statutory guidance (DfE, 2014*a*). The Department for Education has also issued strengthened statutory guidance for local authorities on care planning for unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children (DfE, 2014*b*). This series of polices and practice guidance indicates the complexity of 'child trafficking' and other areas of social work practice that 'child trafficking' overlaps with such as sexual exploitation.

Children 'at risk of sexual exploitation' were recognised as an area of child protection concern before a general awareness of 'child trafficking', including other forms of exploitation within trafficking, arose in the UK. As a result, 'child trafficking' policy and practice has, until recently, predominantly focused on 'trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation' (Scarpa, 2008). Although a separate category of 'child victims of trafficking' was first introduced in policy in 2006 (DfES, 2006), there is still a widespread perception that trafficking is solely linked to the sexual exploitation of women and girls (ATMG, 2012). This is despite developments in understanding other forms of

exploitation constitute 'child trafficking'. The DCSF (2007) policy expanded types of exploitation in addressing 'child trafficking' but this is a relatively recent development in practice. In 2011, a comprehensive action plan on the sexual exploitation of children in England was published by the Department for Education (DfE, 2011*b*). However, the action plan does not acknowledge the linkages between the general sexual exploitation of children and the trafficking of children into the UK for sexual exploitation (ATMG, 2012). This can be seen to add confusion and a separation in policy. In social work practice knowledge of 'child trafficking' has evolved *from* sexual exploitation, so is critical in understanding how 'child trafficking' has come to be constructed. However, 'new' forms of trafficking have appeared to not necessarily fit existing models of understanding sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation is one form of 'child trafficking' but development in both legal and policy responses to 'child trafficking' have been disjointed.

Definitions

In order to assist practitioners to identify 'child trafficking', the Department for Education's (DfE, 2011*a*) practice guidance defines 'child trafficking' consistently with both the definition provided in the UN Protocol (App. 1) and the Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (COE, 2008). All definitions cover the three aspects: the criminal *act,* by the (abusive) *means* for the purpose of *exploitation* (Liempt, 2006; ATMG, 2010). Both the UN Protocol and the Convention explicitly state that the issue of consent to the intended exploitation is irrelevant where any of the abusive means have been used. They also make a distinction between the trafficking of children and adults, as the abusive means need not have been used in order for the case to be considered as 'child trafficking'. Any act that amounts to recruiting or moving a child for the purpose of any of the forms of exploitation constitutes trafficking (ATMG, 2010). Thus, effectively a child's consent is nullified as a child cannot consent to abuse, and the abusive means needs not have been used. This is reflected in the DfE's practice guidance,

> *"Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether or not they have been forced or deceived. This*

is partly because it is not considered possible for children to give informed consent" (DfE, 2011*a*, p. 5).

The definition of 'child trafficking' can however, be difficult in interpretation, given differences between adults and children, and differing decisions can be made as to which different actions and outcome, and in which combination, constitute trafficking (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006). To illustrate this very issue, in the practice framework, the NCA distinguishes adult and 'child trafficking' as *"children cannot give consent to being **moved**, [emphasis added] therefore coercion or deception elements do not have to be present"* (NCA, 2013). NCA's (2013) interpretation of the constituent elements is somewhat unusual in linking (lack of) consent with movement rather than children not being able to consent to exploitation. The NCA (2013) goes on to state *"countries throughout Europe translate and interpret the Palermo Protocol in different ways so the definition of what constitutes human trafficking can differ between nations"*. However, their interpretation is different to *existing* 'child trafficking' policy and definitions set out by the Home Office (Home Office, 2013*c*) and DfE (2011*a*). Although this may seem to be splitting hairs, NCA's specific interpretation is likely to obfuscate issues of consent and coercion in children's movement, especially in migration. As Bovarnick (2010) highlights in her research with practitioners, *"The issue of 'consent' was particularly prevalent in debates about the distinctions between 'smuggling' and 'trafficking'"* (p. 85), creating confusion around definitions which *"impeded their ability effectively to identify and work with trafficked children"* (p. 93). Moreover, various terms within the definitions in practice such as 'coercion', 'vulnerability' and 'servitude' are not defined explicitly, multiple terms left open to subjective interpretation of constituent elements of trafficking (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006, cited by Gearon, 2012*a*).

Forms of exploitation associated with trafficking, are referred to as *"at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs"* (UN, 2000, Art. 3a). Child exploitation is defined more broadly in the UNCRC, referring to 'exploitation through child

labour' (article 32), 'sexual exploitation' (article 34) and "*all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare*" (article 36). However, the UNCRC, which determines rights to protection from exploitation, has no legal force in the UK and 'exploitation' itself is not legally defined. Both international and domestic frameworks imply however, that there is a detrimental effect on the child in exploitation, synonymous with child abuse (Kapoor, 2010). The only distinction between child abuse and exploitation is that in an abusive situation, someone does not necessarily derive a benefit from the abuse, whereas exploitation infers some gain to the exploiter. However, ascertaining exploitation in a situation is difficult to assess, what degrees of deception or levels of control constitute exploitation (Liempt, 2006; O'Connell Davidson, 2011). 'Exploitation' as variably defined is problematic; it is a culturally and socially variable concept.

In practice, the concept of exploitation has developed around sexual exploitation and other non-sexual forms of child exploitation have been brought to light through work undertaken in response to 'child trafficking' (Kapoor, 2010). There is a concern therefore, that sexual exploitation has foreshadowed 'child trafficking' and other forms of exploitation associated with trafficking. The plethora of recent high profile cases of 'child sex grooming gangs' in Derby, Rochdale, Telford and Oxford (*BBC News Derby,* 7 January 2011; *BBC News*, 9 May 2012; *BBC News Shropshire*, 18 June 2012; *BBC News Oxford*, 27 June 2013) received extensive media coverage with reference to child sexual exploitation by organised grooming. The Rochdale case in 2012 was landmark in bringing the first prosecution in England of the offence of trafficking within the UK and yet the media focus remained on sexual exploitation, with no reference to the girls being trafficked. Common to all these incidences of organised sexual grooming, girls were being sexually exploited and moved around for the purpose of exploitation, defined as 'internal trafficking'. Girl A, trafficked in Rochdale highlights the lack of awareness of 'internal trafficking' and the possibility that children who are UK nationals can also be subjected to trafficking,

> "*I knew from magazines that girls from other countries were trafficked*
> *into Britain for sex, and that they might end up in brothels, unable to*

escape…But what about this story, that was happening to me? What was happening here was still trafficking, except there were no air fares, no girls to pay" (Girl A and Bunyan, 2013, p. 139).

Alexi Jay's (2014) independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham found a very high prevalence of 'internal trafficking' of children, conservatively estimating 1,400 children across a 16 year period. Jay (2014) explicitly made links between the organised sexual exploitation of children and 'child trafficking' in the UK (Gearon, 2015*a*). Coupled with the Modern Slavery Bill proceeding through parliament at the same time, the organised grooming of children for exploitation is now beginning to be recognised as 'child trafficking'. Post Rotherham Inquiry (Jay, 2014), newspaper articles reporting on such criminal activity have been headlining as *"Gloucester police make four child trafficking arrests"* (*BBC News Gloucestershire*, 17 March 2014), *"Trafficking arrests are a 'wake-up call to the UK"* (Gilbert, 2014), *"Police swoop to free 'slaves"'* (*Western Daily Press* 9 December 2014, p. 1) and *"Children 'Trafficked' around by UK Drug Dealers"* (Hirsch, 2015).

The recent media coverage on child sexual exploitation has led to an awareness of 'localised grooming' as a specific form of exploitation (CEOP, 2011). However, as the government has not made links between the sexual exploitation action plan (DfE, 2011*b*) and existing 'child trafficking' policy, 'localised grooming' is not referred to as 'internal trafficking' (ATMG, 2012). Not surprisingly, the separation of policy responses to sexual exploitation and 'child trafficking' have led to confusion in practice, there is varying understanding of the definition of 'internal trafficking' (Pearce, 2011). Practitioners use the term to relate to UK nationals trafficked inside UK borders for sexual exploitation and others use the term to refer to children trafficked from abroad and then further 'internally trafficked' within the UK (Pearce, 2011). Pearce (2010) has noted her concern that if 'internal trafficking' is linked solely to UK nationals this *"may hijack attention from the needs of children and young people internally trafficked within this country after being brought in from abroad"* (p. 8).

Identification

One of the known problems with identifying 'child trafficking' in practice is that the focus is on exploitation at the point of destination only, linked to the use of force or deception after the migration process (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006). In the 'child trafficking' framework, a rigid legal definition in terms of exploitation occurring at the destination only appears to be practiced which does not address the possibility that exploitation can occur before, during *or* after the migration process. This definition is limited in not recognising 'trafficking' and 'migration' as wider, interlinked processes, or as continua of experiences (Bovarnick, 2010). The UN Protocol does not impose a time limit *when* a 'victim' was trafficked (ATMG, 2010). Despite this caveat, as the UN Protocol has been interpreted primarily a legal instrument, shaped by concern for prosecution of the crime, the Home Office has no vested interest in recognising trafficking situations before the point of destination, crimes committed outside the UK. A 'victim' focus would necessarily recognise the experience of 'victims' across borders, not solely a fixed point of exploitation within a state border, reflecting interlinked and more fluid processes. As a result, there may be many more children who have experienced being trafficked and exploited before entering a state, possibly a reason for migration itself, but are not 'formally' recognised as being 'trafficked' due to the legal interpretation limitation.

Reflecting the problems in identification and varying definitions, Pearce, Hynes and Bovarnick (2009) found that in practice, practitioners hold pluralistic notions of 'exploitation' and 'trafficking', rather than adhering to a particular uniform interpretation. Exacerbating the problems with interpreting definitions in practice, practitioners are faced with scenarios where children usually do not identify with or understand what 'trafficking' means. Traffickers use various means of control, physical and sexual violence, removal of identity documents, threats, social isolation, debt bondage, dependency, voodoo and traditional beliefs (Walker, 2012). These means can distort children's perception as to what is happening to them and they may not have an understanding that they are being exploited. Furthermore, 'trafficked children', especially from abroad,

are not likely to be aware of their rights under UK law (Wirtz, 2009; Bovarnick, 2010) or have an understanding of what constitutes criminal behaviour towards children.

Assuming a distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal' migration poses further problems in identifying people as trafficked (Liempt, 2006; ATMG, 2010). As the 'anti-trafficking' framework is constructed as an illegal migration problem, legal systems of migration are excluded where trafficking can occur. Children who have entered the country legally, for example with a distant relative or friend, termed in practice as 'private fostering', can be trafficked and subsequently exploited and abused. Victoria Climbié's tragic death in 2000 was an example of a child in such a situation, tortured and murdered by her great aunt and boyfriend. Victoria was separated from her usual carers, migrated to the UK by legal means, for the purpose of exploitation by her abusers. Legally migrating children are known to have been trafficked for benefit fraud, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation (CEOP, 2010; ECPAT, 2010). Additionally, CEOP (2010) have tracked a rise in the number of 'trafficked children' from EEA countries and a trend has been identified of an increase of trafficking of EU citizens (Vassiliadou, 2012). Legally migrating children from the EEA and A8 countries (that joined the EU in 2003) are an under-researched (Kelly, 2012) and potentially large group of children where trafficking situations may be undetected. Legally migrating children, therefore, some of whom could be defined as 'trafficked', are largely overlooked through policy-makers' orientation of 'child trafficking' as being synonymous with illegal migration. 'Child trafficking' is linked to wider migration processes, both legal and illegal forms (Figure 1, p. 69). The focus on illegality, in 'child trafficking' policy is taken up further in the discussion to follow, as a significant feature of 'child trafficking' practice.

Discussion

The consent-coercion dichotomy

'Child trafficking' literature is prevalent with debates about the problems arising in front-line practice in distinguishing between children who have been

'smuggled' and those who are 'trafficked' (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006; Liempt, 2006; Craig *et al.* 2007; Bovarnick, 2010). 'Smuggling' and 'trafficking' are different concepts, although both address the circumstances of migrating children. The concepts are defined in two different protocols drafted to supplement the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Palermo Protocol (the UN Protocol) addresses trafficking and a separate Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (Scarpa, 2008). Smuggling is referred to as 'facilitation', an offence under the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act, smuggling always involves the illegal crossing of an international border, whilst trafficking can be internal as well as transnational and involve illegal as well as legal border crossing (Pearce, 2011). The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS, 2013) provides legal guidance on the distinction between the two concepts, 'smuggling' is framed and interpreted as a voluntary act where *"the immigrants concerned are normally complicit in the offence so that they can remain in the UK illegally"* whereas 'trafficked persons' have little choice in what happens to them.

A fundamental issue in 'child trafficking' practice is that the smuggling and trafficking protocols assume *"a neat line of demarcation between voluntary and consensual and involuntary and non-consensual migration"* (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006, p. 20). Trafficked persons are constructed as involuntary 'victims' who have been deceived or coerced and smuggled migrants as 'consenting' to their migration (Gearon, 2015*a*). These constructions reflect a prevailing victim-threat discourse and polarised policy agendas of protecting children and immigration control. In front-line practice, the demarcation of coercion and consent as a key determinant between 'trafficking' and 'smuggling' (Gearon, 2015*a*) presents as an oversimplified approach towards children's complex migration experiences. The apparent paradoxical notion of coercion/consent with regards to 'trafficked children' is explored indicating that interpretation of both concepts from children's experiences is not straightforward. The 'consent' of 'smuggled' children, it is argued, is a contested notion. Likewise, attributing 'consent' of teenagers in their exploitative situations is also contested. Similarly, the concept of 'coercion' of 'trafficked children' is also problematised.

The Home Office (2012*b*) reports that between 2007 and 2011 there were on average 2,819 asylum applications from unaccompanied children each year, dropping to 1,945 applications in 2014, before rising again sharply in the current 'migrant crisis'. In 2014, 230 unaccompanied children required foster care in Kent, the figure mid-year in 2015 was already over 600, and is expected to rise further (Gibson, 2015). These are separated migrating children, without an adult to care for them, who have come to the attention of immigration authorities. Most unaccompanied children arrive in the UK in a clandestine manner, for example in the back of a lorry (11 Million, 2008), suggesting they have been 'smuggled' illegally. Research suggests that in the majority of cases, unaccompanied children seek political protection rather than economic wealth (Kohli, 2007), contrary to popular opinion. Many have suffered or have been threatened with persecution at the hands of their government or local social groups and have experienced physical punishment, threats to their life, persecution for religious beliefs, forced national service or participation in criminal groups, land disputes, being trafficked or sold in the sex trade (Wright, 2012). Due to the irregularity of their arrival to the UK, the focus by immigration services is on the illegal nature of their immigration. Upon arrival at screening units, children are 'processed', fingerprinted, interviewed and detained by immigration officials (11 Million, 2008; Refugee Council, 2015).

The Children's Commissioner's (11 Million, 2008) research into the experiences of separated children claiming asylum found that that the system children go through is oppressive, with immigration officials focusing specifically on smuggling aspects of the child's journey,

> *"extraordinary levels of detail were requested regarding descriptions of agents who had assisted them, and the number and type of vehicles travelled in. We did not get the sense that any of this was useful information from an 'intelligence' point of view, and we question whether this information is ever collated or analysed for this purpose"* (p. 30).

From an immigration perspective establishing children as 'smuggled' and thereby interpreting their migration as consensual, establishes them as illegal immigrants involved in a criminal act of *"violation of state sovereignty"* (Home

Office, 2013c, p.7). Crawley's (2010a) research with migrant children highlighted they experienced difficulties when navigating the UK asylum system, *"children are treated with contempt and a lack of basic care when they present their claims for protection"* (p. 167). The construction of 'smuggled' children as 'consenting illegal immigrants', employs a hardened 'threat discourse' where children are seen to threaten the integrity of immigration controls, which in turn serves the state's interest in controlling and tightening borders, a stated aim of the Modern Slavery Strategy (Home Office, 2014b).

Immigration staff 'over-focus' on assessing the 'credibility' and consistency of children's claims for political asylum (Crawley, 2010a) appear to reflect right-wing populist discourse that illegal migrants come to the UK to abuse the system, typified with tabloid headlines such as *"Asylum cheats fake poverty claims"* (*Express*, 16 July 2014) and *"Britain a magnet for cheats"* (*Sun*, 9 February 2013). There appears to be a 'culture of disbelief' practiced towards migrant children and their accounts, which is 'pervasive' throughout the immigration system (Children's Society, 2012b). Children can be afforded less protection, as *"Labelling children as 'smuggled' undermines their ability to claim asylum and may affect the level of assistance they are entitled to"* (Bovarnick, 2010, p. 86). Despite research indicating that migrating children experience exploitation, violence and abuse before and during migration, an immigration-centred approach in front-line practice undermines the ability of children who may have been 'trafficked' to disclose the abuse to which they have been subject (Bovarnick, 2010). 'Smuggled illegals,' according to Bhabha and Zard (2006) are treated as *"culpable and complicit actors"* (p. 6) with the effect that both trafficking and abuse children experience may be overlooked. Where a child is seen to be complicit, blame is apportioned and the child may seem to be treated as responsible for their situation (Pearce, 2011). As a result, a 'smuggled child' is not necessarily perceived to be as vulnerable as a 'trafficked child' (Pearce, 2011).

Evidence suggests that the notion of 'consent' of a child to a smuggling situation, the crux of the decision-making process as being identified as an illegal immigrant can be contested. Research indicates that children have a lack

of choice in decisions to migrate or even know where they are migrating to (Wirtz, 2009; Crawley, 2010*b*). Hopkins and Hill (2006) and Crawley (2010*b*) found in their interviews with children that for the majority someone else had made the decision for them to leave their origin country. Similar findings are reported by Chase *et al.* (2008), noting that children arrived in the UK as young as nine years old. It is therefore highly questionable to assign or assume the 'consent' of the child in these circumstances when children are not party to the decision-making process to migrate. In doing so, attention may not be given to the family and social circumstances of the child leading up to the migration, examining the dynamics and power relations between adult-child relationships, and consideration made of their capacity to consent given their age.

Parallel concerns regarding disbelief of children's accounts, their lack of credibility and dubious interpretations of consent can be raised with children who have been 'internally trafficked', typically UK nationals. In Rochdale, children felt disbelieved by various agencies and reported them 'commonly' as failing to act on the disclosures of abuse they were subjected to (RBSCB, 2012; Girl A and Bunyon, 2013). Failure to follow through investigations and a lack of prosecutions against abusers despite evidence provided to the police, left the girls and their families distrustful of the police and *"more vulnerable to being exploited"* (RBSCB, 2013, p. 46). Often, the girls' credibility was deemed questionable in the criminal justice system and a lack of understanding of the methods used in exploiting their consent was apparent (RBSCB, 2013). In Rotherham, the *"the collective failures of political and officer leadership"* was highlighted as *"blatant"* (Jay, 2014, p. 1), resulting in many children being regarded with contempt by the police, failing to act on their abuse as a crime. 'Consent' attributed to many of the girls as making a 'lifestyle choice' was identified across agencies, including lawyers and social workers. The assumptions of free choice, coupled with moral judgements can be viewed as a gross misrepresentation of children's agency to make meaningful choices about the way they could live their lives (RBSCB, 2013; Jay, 2014). The focus on problematic 'high risk' behaviours apportioned blame to the girls, suggesting a degree of control and power over their actions,

> *"young people being viewed as problematic and referred to in terms of "hard to reach" "rebellious" and "challenging behaviour" rather than by attempting to understand the behaviour and provide sustained support. In understanding why this might have been the case, it should be recognised that there is a significant body of evidence regarding wider societal attitudes to young people which are often punitive and critical"* (RBSCB, 2013, p. 83).

These recent 'child trafficking' cases show that consent was attributed punitively by 'responsibilising' (Muncie, 2006) these young people experiencing significant abuse. 'Responsibilation', according to O'Malley (1992, cited by Muncie, 2006) *"is but one element of a series of risk reduction or insurance based strategies in which the burden of managing risk is held by individuals themselves"* (p. 5).

The construction of 'trafficked children' as passive subjects of exploitation that have been forced or coerced at the other polarised end of the 'victim-threat' discourse is also problematic. Contrary to victimhood discourses positing 'trafficked children' as forcibly removed, the International Labour Organisation found that *"the majority of children were enticed or forced by a parent into trafficking situations; only 6% of victims were found to have been kidnapped or abducted"* (ILO, 2007, cited by Gearon, 2012*a*). These findings indicate a more complex picture of home life prior to migrating, and similar to unaccompanied children deemed to be 'smuggled'. Family members can play a significant role in children's migration across borders and movement inside borders,

> *"Family members can force children to migrate, they can (unwillingly) drive them into an exploiting trafficking situation, or the family itself can be the locus of abuse and exploitation"* (Breuil, 2008, p. 231).

Where family members have been party to the decision-making in children's migration or have themselves been abusive at home, children may be very reticent in implicating family members when questioned by authorities. Cultural differences in adult-child power relationships, loyalty, trauma, taboos, shame and fear of repercussions are all likely to affect a child's narrative about their exploitation. 'Coercion' and 'abuse of position of vulnerability' as defined in 'child trafficking' front-line guidance (Home Office, 2015) may therefore be a

difficult aspect to identify and may very well be presented as the opposite, as a 'consenting' child.

Many independently migrating children come from countries where there are well-documented human rights abuses, endemic violence or war (Crawley, 2010*b*), children flee from mass killings, escape from being recruited as child soldiers or experience the death of loved ones (Children's Society, 2012*b*). A study of the pre-flight experiences of 100 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK (Thomas *et al.*, 2004) found that the primary factor in flight in almost all cases was some form of violence. A third of the children had been raped before fleeing their origin countries, of which half reported multiple rapes (Thomas *et al.*, 2004). The contexts in origin countries and experiences of children leading up to migration can be significantly exploitative and violent. It seems that attributing choice and complicity to 'smuggled' children in the decisions to migrate in such circumstances could be viewed as misplaced (Gearon, 2015*a*), when the decisions to migrate (especially when made on behalf of children by others) could be justifiably interpreted and framed as necessary migration, a form of survival, seeking safety and protection of basic humanitarian rights.

Structural inequalities that 'trafficked children' often experience in origin countries include poverty, lack of educational opportunities and armed conflict (SCCYP, 2011). Economic deprivation can cause families upheaval preventing people from building a secure family home (Breuil, 2008). Such children have been found to be particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including trafficking, due to multiple forms of violence and neglect at home (Dottridge, 2008). The inequalities and social and family contexts contributing to children's vulnerabilities to trafficking are very similar, if not identical to the factors identified as contributing to decisions for children to migrate independently, suggesting a division between these groups of children is arbitrary. The UN Protocol defines coercion within trafficking as including not only force, but also 'the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability'. The common structural inequalities and social contexts can result in poverty, hunger, illness, lack of education, displacement, violence and abuse. These factors, could all *"in theory*

constitute coercive circumstances that induce a position of vulnerability" (Bhabha and Zard, 2006. p.7). This raises an issue not only with the commonality of migrating children's social, economic and political backgrounds, but also conceives 'coercion' in a broader, structural way. Coercion interpreted in this way moves away from an approach that sees migrating children as complicit, culpable and in some ways responsible for their situation. It would also imply that many 'smuggled' children might fall under the UN Protocol as being 'trafficked'. The rationale for this could be defended as these children experience not only a position of vulnerability from the aforementioned inequalities and abusive situations at home, but also can experience exploitation and further abuse as part of their migration.

Sigona and Hughes's (2012) research with 'irregular' migrants highlighted the arduous and dangerous journeys that children endured in their independent migration before reaching the UK. Journeys could take up to 18 months overland and particularly from Afghanistan and Kurdistan entailed extreme hardship and violence, including witnessing deaths of fellow travellers (Sigona and Hughes, 2012),

> *"The agent used to force up to 100 people into a container. The lorry travelled slowly. It was parked most of the time. We had to lie on top of each other because there was no space and no air. I remember the smell of human sweat, as people never had the chance to wash. When so many people are put in a small place with no air the temperature is so high. When the driver reached a destination and opened the door, we saw many people who had died…"* (p. 16).

The experiences of children being 'smuggled' under extreme physical conditions includes forced marches, reports of death by suffocation due to being crammed into containers, drowning by small boats capsizing, sleep deprivation, lack of food, water and clothing (Crawley, 2010*b*; Freedom from Torture, 2014; Sigona and Hughes, 2012). UNITED for Intercultural Action (2015) report 22,394 documented deaths of refugees and migrants (including children) in the European Union between 1993 and 2015 due to hazardous migration journeys, detention, deportations or border militarization. The death toll of 373 African migrants in one boat off the cost of Lampadusa in 2013 highlighted the plight of

migrants paying 'people traffickers' large fees for extremely dangerous journeys (*BBC News Europe*, 3 October 2013). The occurrence of migrant death during these journeys appear to be rising, in Sep 2014, in the space of one week a further 750 migrants died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (*BBC News Europe*, 15 September 2014).

Accounts from children of inhumane treatment by people traffickers towards their 'commodities' are very explicit; being 'treated like an animal' (Sigona and Hughes, 2012), being held captive for long periods (Crawley, 2010*b*) and fearing for their lives,

> *"People who don't walk fast or keep moving, the agents kill them so that the authority doesn't find out about the others. If the government soldiers find these individuals then they could get information from them and that's why the agents kill them"* (Sigona and Hughes, 2012, p. 16)*.*

Rape and sexual exploitation is another risk faced by children migrating by irregular channels (UNFPA, 2006, cited by O'Connell Davidson, 2011). The smuggling experience appears to be exploitative and abusive, especially for separated migrating children, who feel threatened, unsafe and do not know where they are going (Crawley, 2010*b*). Consent by a family member may have been given for the child to migrate and a contract entered into with an agent by payment of a fee, but the same holds true as it does for 'trafficked children' - children cannot give consent to the abuse that can follow during the process of being smuggled. The abusive experiences described at the hands of agents amount to *"practices similar to slavery"* (UN, 2000), a form of exploitation defined in trafficking. Therefore, it could be argued that smugglers are people traffickers, as any act that amounts to recruiting or moving a child for the purpose of any of the forms of exploitation constitutes trafficking (ATMG, 2010). People traffickers could be viewed as transporting children for the purpose of financial exploitation (fees and debts ranging from £200 to £15,000) (Crawley, 2010*b*), using exploitative methods, and subjecting children to extreme physical conditions and neglect for financial profit and gain.

What is apparent is that the distinction between 'smuggling' and 'trafficking' situations is not so clear. Analysis of the concepts, drawing upon research with

migrant children has shown there is considerable overlap between 'smuggling' and 'trafficking' experiences. As Bhabha and Zard (2006) observe, *"the majority of migration strategies and circumstances defy easy categorisation"* (p. 7). The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS, 2013) concedes that despite an attempt at distinguishing between the two concepts, in some cases, distinction will be blurred and both definitions could easily be applied. The principal concern is that 'child trafficking' may be overlooked due to the way that the conceptual division has been constructed through policy and practice into a victim-threat dichotomy. Violence, coercion, deception and exploitation can and do occur within both the trafficking and smuggling process, within the formal and informal economy, within the legal and illegal migrant experience (Bhabha and Zard, 2006). At present policy and practice does not consider this. Practice guidance *Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked* (DfE, 2011*a*) makes no reference to 'smuggling' and 'trafficking' being similar in circumstances of migrating children with potentially overlapping experiences. No guidance is offered on how to determine when a child is 'smuggled' rather than 'trafficked' or vice versa. Yet the risk indicators listed as possible signs that a child may have been trafficked (DfE, 2011*a*, p. 19-20) are equally valid to children who have been smuggled.

It is credible that within the group of children defined as 'smuggled', children who have been trafficked are not being identified. Not all 'trafficked children' enter the country by clandestine means. However, separated migrant children, migrating independently, coming to the attention of the police, immigration authorities and Children Services departments are a large group of children where there are existing opportunities to identify trafficking. There is already some evidence to support this; Thomas *et al.* (2004) found that 10% of their sample of 'unaccompanied asylum seeking children' in the UK were 'trafficked children'. Rigby's (2011) research with 'unaccompanied asylum seeking children' in Glasgow who were supported by Children Services departments, found that 21% met the formal trafficking indicators but *"identification and child protection assessments were noted as being largely absent"* (p. 333). Other case studies showed children who were perceived to have been 'smuggled' into the country were then later further trafficked (Bovarnick, 2010), raising the

concern that if these children are defined as 'smuggled' at the point of entry to the country, the offence of trafficking and the organised crime accompanying it may be overlooked.

The concept of consent, interpreted through the legal framework of the smuggling protocol is a key determinant in establishing a person as 'smuggled' and a differentiator between 'trafficking' and 'smuggling'. Similarly, determining a child as consenting to particular behaviours that are recognised as risk factors in 'child trafficking' and exploitation, denies them access to be recognised as a 'victim'. Figure 2 (p. 89) depicts the decision-making within the current practice framework, whether a separated migrating child is deemed 'consenting' or 'coerced'.

Figure 2. Establishing consent or coercion
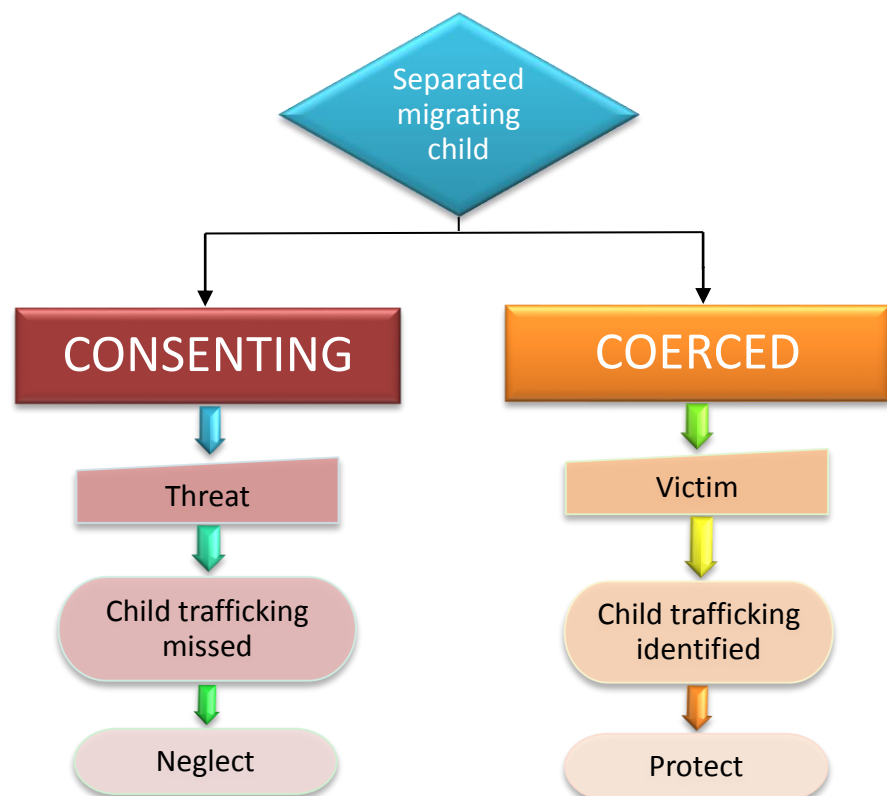
If a child is determined to be consenting, the likely response is punitive and identification of 'child trafficking' can be missed. Yet in exploration of the concepts, it is apparent that consent and coercion can overlap. The exploitation of consent itself can be another means to control a child and be used to protect traffickers and smugglers from detection from authorities. Consent may also be expressed by a child who is unaware of their own exploitation.

The argument presented here, is that interpretation of consent in the context of separated migrating children who may be trafficked is contested. Consent can be attributed to children as being complicit in illegal immigration or being blamed for 'choosing' to engage in risky behaviours, yet the notion of consent may not reflect a child's circumstances, given that consent can be exploited. Consent is deemed irrelevant in the legal definition of trafficking (in adults), where exploitative means have been used. A similar exclusion of consent may be needed in the consideration of separated migrating children's circumstances. At least, expressed consent should not be assumed, as a given and fixed reality. That is, not to render the child as agent-less with no capacity, but to recognize that misrepresenting the child's agency as 'consenting' to smuggling or other exploitative situations, making them accountable and complicit, seems inappropriate. Consent, therefore, in its current interpretation in practice, can be (mis)used to determine a child's legal status, deny a child from potential protection required and access to specialist support (Gearon, 2015*a*).

What also appears to be overlooked in practice is that in order for a 'case' to be considered as one of 'child trafficking', the means (the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception) need not have been used, as defined in the UN Trafficking Protocol. So in effect, a child need not have been coerced, deceived or threatened to be considered a 'trafficked child'. However, in practice, the issue of assigning consent to a child or trying to establish if a child has been coerced, immediately invokes a dichotomous approach of *either* they are a passive and deserving 'victim' *or* a complicit and undeserving 'threat' (Figure 2, p. 89). As consent is contested, and coercion does not need to be established, and the two can overlap, the axis of

involuntary-victim and voluntary-threat as a determinant in 'child trafficking' highlights a potentially oversimplified and false dichotomy (Gearon, 2015*a*).

Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England. The origin of current policy-making in 'child trafficking' was the UK government's ratification of the UN Trafficking Protocol and adoption into domestic policy. The UN Trafficking Protocol was formulated primarily by criminal justice actors, resulting in a law enforcement tool to 'combat' organised crime associated with trafficking. The UK government adopted this criminal justice orientation but further explicitly linked trafficking policy to illegal migration. In doing so, the UK government's positioning and structuring of policy responses could be seen as justifying restrictive immigration policy. 'Child trafficking' policy development ran parallel to New Labour's neo-liberal agenda of restrictive immigration policies on one hand, and unrestrictive European migration on the other. Positioning 'child trafficking' as a concern synonymous with illegal migration, served the governments interests in demonstrating to the public that action was being taken to curb illegal migration, in the context of a significant increase in net migration to the UK. The Coalition government continued to align 'child trafficking' policy with illegal immigration and took further steps to strengthen its control, legislatively and administratively. The Conservatives required an election strategy to win the general election, with immigration as centre stage. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 served this purpose, and indeed secured a win for the Conservative party. 'Child trafficking' policy and discourse on 'modern slavery' has been highlighted as serving the present government's interests in pursuing an anti-immigration agenda and focus on illegality of 'economic' migrants.

Claims by government that 'child trafficking' policy is best responded to through a *"multi-agency approach"* (Home Office, 2009; 2014*b*) or is 'victim'-centred is not borne out in deconstructing the policy and practice framework. The rhetoric of multi-agency 'child trafficking' practice is evident in the structure and orientation of lead departments, experts in children's policy are not designated

with responsibility and the NRM decision-making on individual trafficking cases is exclusively immigration-led. Although 'child trafficking' is also constructed as a child protection concern by the Department of Education, a child protection response in practice is reliant on existing systems within an immigration-centred approach, to request Children Services involvement. The construction of 'child trafficking' as child abuse, within existing child protection systems, appears to be circumscribed by an overall criminal justice approach. The Home Office construction of 'child trafficking' policy is therefore, the stronger, defining account, shaping how 'trafficked children' are responded to in practice.

Front-line practice within agencies that are likely to come across children who may be trafficked seems to be driven by concerns of illegal immigration and criminality, an approach that appears to have been sanctioned by successive governments. Immigration-led front-line practice is not only shaped by the state's neo-liberal restrictive immigration policy, but also reflects and reinforces public discourse of the undesirability of migrants. Asylum and immigration deterrence policies combined with public attitudes of hostility creates an overarching mistrust towards refugees, and an atmosphere of indifference towards migrant children (Garrett, 2006). The outcomes for children are that very few are defined formally as a 'trafficked child'. Children experiencing trafficking, statistically, are more likely to experience a greater emphasis on immigration matters over child protection concerns (Gearon, 2015*a*). The focus on crimes committed against the state, rather than potential crimes committed against children can lead to a lack of protection and access to 'child trafficking' services (Gearon, 2015*a*). Furthermore, the criminalisation of children who have been trafficked, either as illegal immigrants or prosecuted for trafficking related crimes, indicates a neo-moralising approach within the 'child trafficking' framework, at the expense of children accessing their rights to protection.

Within the present orientation of 'child trafficking' practice, with an overarching criminal justice approach, a large group of children, those referred to as 'smuggled' have very similar experiences to known 'child trafficking' situations. In practice, 'smuggled' children are deemed to be 'consenting' to their illegal migration. A primary focus on immigration presents the likelihood that

opportunities to identify trafficking situations are being missed, despite a considerable overlap between 'smuggling' and 'trafficking' experiences as evidenced in practice. The failure to detect, prevent and protect children may result in their return to abusive or exploitative situations, including the risk of being re-trafficked. Furthermore, current discourses and policy constructs invoke in practice a dichotomous approach towards children as either passive, deserving 'victims of trafficking' or as complicit, undeserving threats. These concepts underpin the decision-making process in establishing whether a child is trafficked. Having analysed the concepts of 'consent' and 'coercion', both are shown to be contested, and overlapping, in children's experiences. Yet in practice, this complexity is not reflected.

What is apparent in deconstructing the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework is the absence of knowledge about children's experiences of 'child trafficking'. Progress has been made in 'child trafficking' research with practitioners working with this group of children helping us to understand the complexities in policy in practice (Pearce *et al.*, 2009, Westwood, 2010). However, little is known about the lived 'realties' of 'trafficked children', hearing from them directly about their experiences and how they encounter the policy and practice framework. This missing dimension and gap in knowledge raises a number of questions. Are children's own accounts of their situation reflected in theorising 'child trafficking' and concepts of childhood more generally? How do 'trafficked children' experience the current policy and practice framework? The next chapter incorporates these questions into the study's research aim and objectives and sets out the research design in order to engage children directly. Until children's views and perspectives are heard on matters directly affecting them, only a tentative and partial understanding of the construction of the current 'child trafficking' framework can be reached.

Chapter 4. Research design and process

Introduction

The body of academic research with children who have experienced trafficking is particularly limited. Despite the establishment of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), in which listening to the voices of children is advocated, many social science researchers have omitted children as active participants informing knowledge and theory about issues affecting children directly (Gearon, 2015*a*). Children's experiences are notably not represented in research on 'child trafficking'. In the UK, only Wirtz's (2009) study, commissioned by a NGO includes the views of 8 children defined as trafficked. Most research carried out to date has favoured practitioners' views, working within the UK 'child trafficking' framework or analysis of case files (see for example Peace *et al*., 2009, Westwood, 2010, Brownless and Finch, 2010 and Rigby, 2011). Currently no peer-reviewed empirical studies in the UK give voice to children who have experienced trafficking (Gearon, 2015*a*). A distinct gap in understanding the subjective experiences of children and young people who have experienced trafficking remains.

This chapter establishes the research aim and objectives of a qualitative study, which gives voice to children, and young people, to gain a perspective of children's own accounts of their lived experiences of trafficking, hitherto marginalised. In addition to hearing young people's journeys, this study explores how they experienced 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England. This chapter lays out the research methodology and considers specific ethical considerations in researching a particularly sensitive subject area with children experiencing trafficking. The research process undertaken, detailed in this chapter entered unchartered waters and was necessarily exploratory and emergent, needing flexibility and at times reorientation of ideas. The choice of methods in order to both access young people and actively engage them in the research process evolved as the research progressed. An account of the creative methods developed is highlighted as overcoming some of the specific methodological challenges cited as barriers in child trafficking research. The chapter reflects upon the limitations of the research design and authenticity of

the research process. The chapter concludes with key messages from the methodology developed in this study as successfully accessing and engaging young people.

Research Question and Objectives

To what extent does 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of trafficking?

Objectives

1. How do contemporary constructions of childhood shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy, practice and research?
2. How has 'child trafficking' become defined and interpreted within the policy and practice framework in England?
3. To explore existing and new methods that enable successful engagement of children and young people who have experienced trafficking to participate in research about their experiences.
4. To explore young people's own accounts and lived experiences of trafficking as children.
5. To explore how young people experience services within the 'child trafficking' framework in England, along with their perspectives on how existing services could be improved to reflect their needs.
6. To explore the 'fit' between children's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England, in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs.
7. To consider the implications for children and young people experiencing trafficking, of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking'

Methodology

A social constructivist epistemology

This study takes a relativist and subjective philosophical position, which considers reality as multiple constructed realties that can be studied only in their

totalities (Rodwell, 1998). A relativist position considers 'truth' as constructed, as illuminated by Italian philosopher and scientist Vico in his treatise on the construction of knowledge,

"Verum esse ipsum factum" (Vico, 1710, cited by Pompa, 1982).

Vico's observation that 'the true is what is made' or 'the truth itself is made', holds that there is nothing that is true or real other than what is created within the mind (von Glaserfeld, 1989). A subjective position holds that reality is created and interpreted by individual consciousness whereby *"free human beings participate actively in the creation and construction of their social reality"* (Rodwell, 1998, p.17). Understanding the nature of the social world from this perspective happens at the level of subjective experience. Prediction, control, causal inferences and universal laws in the positivist perspective are therefore incongruent with seeking understanding of how multiple realties are constructed and co-constructed by individuals who actively create, modify and interpret the world in which they live (Rodwell, 1998).

To address the overall research aim of exploring to what extent does 'child trafficking' policy and practice reflect the lived 'realties' of children's experiences of trafficking, a social constructivist epistemology is adopted. The 'child trafficking' framework is multi-faceted and a cross-disciplinary area of law, policy and practice. The way in which childhood and 'child trafficking' is constructed in the framework is likely to differ between disciplinary areas and between individuals' perspectives working within the field, presenting multiple realities. A social constructivist epistemology considers the way in which contemporary childhood is constructed and shaped by multiple perspectives, mediated by the social, historical, institutional and economic conditions within which these constructions occur. In order to address young people's experiences of being trafficked and their experiences of the 'child trafficking' framework, from a constructivist point of view, requires engaging with young people as social actors. Each individual's knowledge claim is seen as legitimate and of value, driven by their experiences and opinions, while also acknowledging the shaping effects of social, cultural and other contexts. Thus, the assumption is held that realties are constructed 'from experience and in experience' (Freeman and Mathison, 2009).

A social constructivist epistemology invariably challenges many of the assumptions of previous 'child trafficking' research undertaken as it places children and young people centrally in an attempt to understand their experiences from their perspective. UK 'child trafficking' research to date has tended to objectify 'trafficked children' through characterisation, profiling and measurement against risk indicators. Objectification of this kind does not address the subjective experiences of young people, taking a positive-scientific approach where children are viewed as products, quantified and 'risk-assessed' according to prescriptive behaviours. Interpretive epistemologies in 'child trafficking' research, mostly commissioned by INGO's and NGO's, favour practitioners' perceptions and evaluate organisational responses to 'child trafficking'. Notably, children's direct experiences are lacking in interpretivist research as most of the research that has been undertaken has implicitly accepted normative constructions of childhood where children are seen as passive and non-agential. A social constructivist approach departs from the common assumption that children experience life in universal manner (Freeman and Mathison, 2009) and views subjects as proactive and purposive (Rodwell, 1998). Epistemologically, social constructivism acknowledges individual children's agency and autonomy, and positions them as competent social actors in their own right.

In order to explore the subjective experiences of young people, acknowledgement is made of the interactional nature of human behaviour, a connection between the individual and social environment and influences from social relationships. These facets are shared with social constructionism but a social constructivist approach diverges in conceptualizing how reality is shaped and constructed (Rodwell, 1998). Social constructionists emphasize the social construction of meaning through the power of language, narrative and cultural processes (Freeman and Mathison, 2009; Teater, 2010), whereas a social constructivist perspective emphasises the unique experience that each individual mentally constructs, making sense of experience (Rodwell, 1998). Social constructivism also holds that individuals interact with a socially constituted environment, termed as a 'structural coupling' by Rodwell (1998),

rather than interaction based on linguistic negotiated meanings. This distinction is therefore aligned in addressing structural factors of the experiences of young people recognising the 'social structural' perspective of childhood (James and James, 2004), both aspects hitherto lacking in 'child trafficking' research epistemologies. A social constructivist epistemology accepts and illuminates that multiple realities are constructed by individual, social *and* structural factors.

Design

Qualitative data was sought as was deemed most appropriate to answer the specific research questions, and a qualitative design was amenable to the interactive nature of the process of research and co-constructing findings. Basic tenets of social constructivism hold that the dialogic nature of knowing is central, information comes through conservation and narrative-based data gives voice to the unique and individualistic (Rodwell, 1998). Quantitative methods tend to be synonymous with aggregate data which can be viewed as insensitive to uniqueness and require establishing a set of variables at the outset (Silverman, 2010). Quantitative research cannot easily address the complexity of multiple perspectives of children's experiences and perceptions, nor the dynamism of multi-faceted and changing processes within the 'child trafficking' framework. Children's experiences of trafficking and encountering services within the 'child trafficking' framework present non-static variables. Complex and dynamic variables are not well suited to quantitative tools and methods (Ragin, 1997). Qualitative research is better able to deal with social actions and meanings, which are imbued with uncertainty (Denscombe, 2003). The rationale for qualitative methods within a hermeneutic and dialectic methodology therefore, is to seek understanding, interpret subjective meaning of children's experiences and allow for complexity. Brunovskis and Surtees (2010) suggest qualitative research is important to understanding interactions between trafficked persons and 'anti-trafficking' measures which quantitative research cannot provide.

Values

Guba and Lincoln (2005) have revised and updated their position on the importance of values in the qualitative research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), to the centrality of axiology *"as a basic foundational dimension of paradigm proposal"* (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 200). Therefore, the design of this study is aligned with social work research values and conducted from this value-base. Central to both constructivism and the social work frame of reference is an interactive and context-bounded approach, with attention to dignity, individuality, empowerment and mutual respect (Rodwell, 1998, p. 4). Social constructivist research is consistent with social work values of supporting human agency and autonomy, belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people and respect for the individual's self-determination. This is achieved by adopting an openness and curiosity to social phenomena and practicing in ways that are egalitarian and collaborative (Greene and Lee, 2002).

Social constructivist research is aligned with anti-oppressive social work practice as not only are personal values examined but also constructivist research enables the researcher to look at alternative perspectives with more flexibility thus facilitating an anti-racist and anti-oppressive orientation. Stereotypes and assumptions are removed by a treatment of each person as a unique individual, with a uniquely shaped reality (Teater, 2010). Cooper (2001) advances social constructivism in social work as 'participative practice viability', whereby service users and practitioners co-construct understanding, through a partnership of conjoint exploration of individual personal perspectives on their situation. Drawing on Cooper's (2001) ideas, this study aims to bridge social constructivism and collaborative research and in doing so, aligns the study with social work values and anti-oppressive practice. By focusing on young people's individual journeys and how they encountered services, the study attends to the uniqueness of individual experiences, which is *"a precondition for co-constructing an anti-oppressive practice perspective that doesn't use the power of the professional relationship to impose preconceived ideas and beliefs"* (Cooper, 2001, p. 731). Specifically in relation to children and young people, a social constructivist research approach adopted here, as advocated by

Freeman and Mathison (2009) is also a way of empowering participants. The participation of young people in expressing their perceptions of being trafficked and their views of the 'child trafficking' framework, not previously studied before, promotes *"value pluralism (diversity)"* (Rodwell, 1998, p. 9) by providing a vehicle and space for children to be heard. Attention was paid to the relationship with participants within this study, to be humanistic, collaborative and sensitively engage young people in the difficult subject of trafficking, abuse and exploitation. In doing so, the research was aimed at emphasising process, plurality of both knowledge and voice and to recognise the relational quality of knowledge (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000).

Intersubjectivity

What I did not expect to uncover was discriminatory social work practice. I rather naively assumed that state harms can be perpetrated more structurally by policy-makers in constructing policy without children as a primary concern, which could result in unintended and yet harmful consequences for children. When I discovered that children experienced individual social work practitioners as acting unprofessionally and unethically in ways that were harmful to them, I was dismayed and anxious. I was alarmed at professionals tasked in 'protecting' children, abusing their authority and causing harm to young people, and experienced trepidation about reporting the findings. I found it very difficult in writing up the findings, worried about the impact this may have on readers, how it may portray social work in a negative light and feed into already critical and pejorative views of social workers. This tension was resolved by an overarching commitment to report findings honestly and openly and expose discrimination of marginalised groups, a core practice of anti-oppressive social work, even if social work practice itself is being exposed as oppressive.

Reflexivity requires an acknowledgment of components of the self and intersubjectivity (Berger, 2013), and to use reflexivity as a means to monitor how personal characteristics may pose tensions and be managed in research. Being a female researcher, engaging with mostly female participants on a

sensitive subject including sexual abuse, I am aware of the likelihood that female participants were more comfortable in sharing these personal experiences to another female. This may have proved problematic if more male participants were recruited. In terms of differences in characteristics between myself and participants, there were many, posing potential sources of power differentials that required acknowledgement. I am white British, have secure citizenship, enjoy rights as an adult, speak English fluently, I have been educated and have not had personal experiences of childhood abuse. The participants had very different life experiences, which limited their power and status, most were black, migrants to the UK and experienced uncertain immigration status. All participants did not speak English as their first language, had little education if any, and had experienced multiple and repeated abuse. I am certain that despite this gulf in experiences, I was able to attend to these issues of power, with transferable skills from social work practice to social research, which enabled me to engage with participants sensitively and ethically.

Amongst all these differences in characteristics and experiences between researcher and researched only one particular aspect emerged, affecting me profoundly. One young person casually complemented me on the pretty style of my diary, I smiled and replied, *"Yes it's nice isn't it? My mum bought me that for Christmas"*. *"Oh"*, she replied, *"you have your mum, that's nice, to have that"*. My own stable upbringing by both parents, both still alive and recently having celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary was in such stark contrast to their experiences of having no parents, no adults caring for them, no friends or family and experiencing little stability in their lives. The meaning of being 'separated' as a child did not really come off the page, as a mere descriptive word until this moment. The magnitude of the actual, lived experience of being separated as a child, how the participants in this study had no one to care from them really hit me hard in this interaction.

One of the concerns in sampling young people from services who assist trafficked 'victims' was the question if young people appropriated a 'victim identity' in order to access support and services. Hynes (2010) noted that

refugees can be reduced to a 'situational career', required to *"maintain and demonstrate their 'vulnerability' in order to retain access to services"* (Malkki, 1995; Zetter, 1999, cited by Hynes, 2010, p. 104). Participants may therefore, feel that they need to give certain answers, which are aligned with a particular construct. However, I did not find this to be a problem in this study. The conceptual exploration of approaches within 'child trafficking' policy and practice directly *with* young people, enabled them to reflect on how their personal experiences 'fit' current narratives of 'vulnerabilities' of trafficking 'victims'. In actuality, young people refuted the position and construction of 'victim'.

Interestingly, I also broached the term 'survivor' with young people, having read and listened to other young people talk about this, as an alternative construct. This was met with laughter in a focus group, and a reflection,

> *"I guess that, if you want to see someone as a survivor, it's like, you feeling sorry for the person and I don't want people to feel sorry for me, I want someone to tell me 'you know what things will be ok', not 'oh I'm so sorry this has happened to you' and this and that. That's not going to make any difference in my life, sorry doesn't really change anything in my life, it's how they push you to become, not to bring the past to affect your future, so I think I don't want anyone to take me as a survivor"* (Monifa).

This was followed by one young person starting to sing, *"I will survive"* (in the style of Gloria Gaynor) with all the others joining in, to much laughter. I was therefore, assured that young people were not only fully aware of labelling and prevailing constructs, but also the impact this can have on their own reactions, perceptions and constructing their own identities. Furthermore, young people squarely rejected the construct of 'victim' (and 'survivor'!) and were keen to propose a different approach in 'child trafficking' practice, more aligned with their own experiences, and interpretations of their own situations. This is expanded upon in Chapter 7 (*A different approach*, p. 230).

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are often cited as barriers in involving children directly as participants in 'child trafficking' research (Theis, 2002; Goździak, 2008; Kelly, 2012). The risks of re-traumatising young people is of major concern (Theis, 2002; Goździak, 2008; Kelly, 2012), alongside the risk of identification and continuing risk from traffickers (Theis, 2002; Goździak, 2008). Power, as another central ethical concern is addressed in this study as previous research undertaken indicates children are likely to have a lack of trust in adults due the abuse experienced in being trafficked (Wirtz, 2009; Hynes, 2010). Similarly, recognition of a mistrust of people in positions of power as highlighted in refugee studies by Hynes (2003) pose further ethical challenges in engaging children in this kind of research. These concerns, mitigation of harm (to both participants and researcher), risks to participants, and power are addressed next, detailing specific steps taken in order to give primacy for the welfare of research participants (BASW, 2002) in accordance with the principle of protecting, safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people (HCPC, 2012). This study was guided by the ethical principles for social work and social care research laid out by the British Association of Social Work (BASW, 2002), the *Framework for Research Ethics* (ESRC, 2010), Health and Care Professions Council *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (HCPC, 2012) and University of Bath Ethics Committee guidance.

Mitigation of harm

Ethically, accessing young people within existing 'trafficking assistance' services are likely to be the only sites where persons referred to as 'trafficked' can be accessed for interviews in a safe manner (Brunovskis and Surtees, 2010). Participants who are in receipt of specialist 'child trafficking' support services have a professional support network around them, people who are aware of the young person's stage of recovery and typically, the young person would no longer be in a trafficking situation. Access to participants was therefore sought through 'child trafficking' service providers, or other services already offering support, which facilitated easy and swift access to specialist support should the need arose during the research process.

Discussions were held with key professionals once potential participants were identified to determine the young person's level of awareness of their situation and likelihood of not causing harm in asking for participation in this study. Some young people identified were not asked to participate in the study after consultation with key practitioners. This was because young people were either still in a trafficking situation and not aware of their own situation, or were at continuing high risk from traffickers. On balance, the potential harm or risks to these participants outweighed the benefits of contributing to the study. Additionally, an important factor was to not compromise any active criminal or child protection investigations.

During interviews, direct questions about abuse and exploitation were avoided but not evaded. All interactions with young people were guided by their preparedness to convey their experiences. When a young person initiated speaking about the harm they experienced, a space was maintained to listen and allow their narrative to flow. Creating an emotionally safe space to listen to difficult accounts requires skills of empathy from a humanistic approach and the ability to 'sit with' sometimes very distressing accounts of exploitation and abuse without outwardly expressing reactions of shock, horror or disgust. During the research, there were times when young people were upset, particularly in recalling the abuse they suffered. At these times, an option was offered to pause, allowing time for being upset and acknowledgement made of their pain. In all cases, young people wanted to continue stating it was important for them to be heard. Each personal contact with a young person ended with a focus on strengths, resilience or positive aspirations in the future to not leave the interaction in a negative frame of mind. A card was left with each young person with my contact details with an offer to contact me afterwards if they felt the need to. Young people were encouraged to contact me afterwards if they had a question about the research, wanted to add or clarify something or if they felt they needed someone to talk to after recalling difficult experiences. In groupwork and focus groups, sessions were ended similarly, positively, with sharing a meal together, making plans for next sessions, with support staff at hand to deal with practical issues arising or for emotional support if required. Although young people did not contact me for emotional support afterwards, the

offer of being available was a gesture of sensitivity, and showed young people that I was aware that sharing difficult experiences could be difficult and cause distress.

Although my own experience in child protection social work equipped me with skills in listening to young people who have been harmed and abused, research is distinctly different requiring an immersion into the content and context without direct intervention. At one stage of the fieldwork, I felt particularly affected after a forensic and detailed account of a young person's abuse spanning several years. The participant cited actual quotes and used the present tense recalling the past, immersing me in her experience, in the present. Coupled with transcribing these experiences at slow speed in detail, left me feeling very fragile and exhausted. I was also experiencing the cumulative effects of listening to many such stories in detail. Authors have raised concerns that practitioners and researchers who work with traumatised people can develop Secondary Traumatic Stress or Vicarious Traumatisation (Palm *et al.*, 2004; Bride and Figley, 2007). Vicarious trauma reactions may include intrusive imagery and thoughts, avoidance and emotional numbing, hyper-arousal symptoms, somatisation, and alcohol use problems similar to those experienced by direct trauma 'survivors' (Palm *et al.,* 2004). Being fully aware of this, I was already taking action in self-care. Apart from supervision for regular de-briefing, I found it helpful to relax my mind and body through yoga, physical exercise and swimming. Through concentrating on breathing in exercise, listening to my own breath in relaxation, I was able to settle my mind, and rest from mental attachments. However, at the transcription stage of the research I felt increasingly overwhelmed, powerless and angry, and uncomfortable in this (untypical) state of mind. The embodied experience of bearing witness to a lot of pain and suffering required a different level of energy to expel and to channel the anger in a safe way, rather than allowing it to fester inside the body, an unwholesome state with potentially damaging affect. I changed my fitness programme and started practicing mixed martial arts and high intensity cardio-based exercise. I felt the increased intensity in exercise and space for directed aggression worked well to cope with the intensity of negative feelings arising from exposure to many children's traumatic experiences.

Risk of identification

Involving children and young people in 'child trafficking' research presents a very real risk of identification that may have grave consequences and present a danger from traffickers (Theis, 2002; Goździak, 2008) or their networks. This study therefore does not divulge sensitive information or any identifiable characteristics of young people or their circumstances. All documentation (fieldwork notes, transcripts and final report) were anonymised, removing names of identifiable small organisations or other identifiable characteristics of young people's circumstances. Mobile phone contacts for individuals were also anonymised. The names of young people have been changed and other people they mention, as well as identifiable geographic locations. The countries of origin have not been changed. The research process ensured that conditional confidentiality was applied in respect of young people should the risk of harm to any person emerge.

As nearly all participants were accessed via trafficking support organisations, or other specialist support services, it was likely that information divulged during the research about criminal activity of traffickers and other young people who may be at risk would have already been made known to the authorities (police and Children Services). Unexpectedly, in one situation, a participant divulged information not about a trafficker, but about a foster carer's actions, which caused me concern about the young person's safety in this foster carer's care. In accordance with the duty to *"take appropriate action to protect the rights of children and vulnerable adults if you believe they are risk"* (HCPC, 2012, p. 8), this information was discussed with a senior worker in the organisation supporting the young person, together with the young person present. This was in order to ensure that the relevant Children Services agencies were aware of the concerns about the foster carer and the young person had advocacy support in place.

Power and empowerment

Howe (1994) suggests that a consideration of power is necessary in a social constructionist approach. Further, that performance, both institutional and

bureaucratic means that power is processed by needs to be acknowledged, in addition to the concept of participation (Howe, 1994). These facets guided this study. Power and performance are interlinked with ethical considerations in how the research was conducted to ensure that participants were not marginalised or disempowered through participation. A particular ethical consideration was the use of interpreters, required in two individual interviews. Firstly, there are potential confidentiality concerns when interpreters from the same ethnic community are used. Possible community links need to be explored such as same places of worship, community activities, *etc.* and the degree, if any, this may affect the young person. Secondly, I considered the quality of interpretation, making sure that the interpreter effectively acts as the 'mouthpiece' for the young person (Crawley, 2013, personal communication) and nothing more.

In the use of interpreters, primacy was given to the young person's personal choice and willingness in conducting an interview with two adults present. Young people were given the opportunity to decline the interpreter sourced and the right to withdraw was stressed in their first language. Clear explanation was provided that the research was independent and different to formal interviews such as Home Office screening interviews where interpreters are used. The interpreter signed a confidentiality agreement (App. 11), which the young person was made aware of. Thirdly, the interpreter was briefed beforehand; instructed to translate verbatim and made aware of the subject area to prepare for the likely content to be translated. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, of concern was the power imbalance of having a researcher and interpreter present, outnumbering the young person in the research interaction. The presence of another adult may have affected the willingness of the two young people interviewed with an interpreter present in being open about their experiences and sharing sensitive information. Both of these young people did not talk about being abused or exploited in the interviews. There is of course the possibility that they had no such experiences to share or didn't want to at that time, but recognition has to made of the fact that both had interpreters present, tilting the power imbalance in the research context.

Acknowledgement was further made of power imbalances, between me as an adult researcher and young people as participants. Power can be exercised by inadvertently creating undue pressure to participate and this was mitigated against by obtaining individual consent. Young people's freedom to participate, right to withdraw and conditional confidentiality were re-iterated at the start of each session to remind young people of their rights and was treated as an ongoing process and checked at different stages. There was also an important factor of not raising unrealistic expectations during the research. Young people were familiar with interview situations with professionals such as social workers, therapists or counsellors where the expectation of adults is to ameliorate a given issue, give advice or offer practical solutions. The limits and expectations about my role and purpose of the study was made clear in a way that young people could understand how a researcher's role differs from usual adult 'helping' relationships. This was explained verbally and in the information sheets (App 7) provided to young people. In addition to this, *potential* benefits to participants were made explicit; as was assurance that the research was independent from the services they receive.

The empowerment of young people is recognised as a crucial element of 'anti-trafficking' work, including trafficking research (Theis, 2002; Dottridge, 2008). Participants in this study stated that they wanted to contribute to research to make their voices heard, they hoped that sharing their experiences could lead to improved services for children experiencing trafficking and wanted to share advice to other young people. The research process supported young people to articulate what was important to them and overall, this study privileges young people's voices, supporting their empowerment. There is an additional ethical responsibility on the researcher in conveying experiences of young people accurately, with credibility, in a way that contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon, combined with respecting people's moral agency and beneficence (Butler, 2002).

The works by Fay (1987, cited by Creswell, 2003) and Heron and Reason (1997) suggest that the constructivist approach does not go far enough in advocating social change for marginalised groups or address issues of social

justice. The approach in this study, which bridges social constructivism and collaborative research, advocates a partnership of joint exploration of individual personal perspectives on their situation. In doing so, young people's experiences are re-positioned from the 'margin to the centre' (Humphries, 2005) where individual experiences are privileged, re-dressing the marginalisation and exclusion of young people's views in research on trafficking. Power, can thus be acknowledged and sought to be addressed through a person-centred approach, which can explicitly bring to light 'subjucated knowledges' (Humphries, 2005, p. 284).

This study proceeded collaboratively to not further marginalise the participants in an approach orientated towards empowerment. The choices of interactive and creative methods developed in this study were guided by young people's preferences to engage them in the research process. Inclusive methods necessarily challenge the orthodoxy of research where participants are passive providers of data, where research is carried out by researchers *on* subjects, thus reinforcing power differentials (Ife, 2001, p. 160). The methods of engagement in accessing young people attended to cultural differences, avoiding cultural power that can be imposed by a sole reliance on interviews, which may not be a cultural norm outside the developed North or where English may not be the first language of young people.

Reciprocity

Hugman *et al.* (2011) observe that the principle of 'do no harm' in refugee research is insufficient to ensure ethically sound research practice. Unethical research practice is highlighted through feedback from research participants by Hugman and colleagues (2011); refugees expressed they were fed up with researchers 'stealing' their stories, not getting anything in return and not being included in dissemination of final reports. Such tokenistic participation does not treat participants with respect, can cause harm to individuals, and the research community, and can limit further opportunities for research in the field. This study therefore adopted a reciprocal and relational approach that can be gauged in terms of what is offered back to participants in ways that are meaningful to them (Hugman, 2005; 2010). This meant forging reciprocal

relationships with participants, where there is an exchange of ideas and benefits can be gained by the participant's involvement.

The groupwork, as method of access and engagement, was offered to young people via their peer groups as a gesture of wanting to connect with them personally and form relationships. I conducted the groupwork sessions without an expectation of young people to continue to be involved in the study; individuals decided to participate during and afterwards. Thus, an investment of time and effort was given first, giving something of benefit to participants before young people were invited to participate. Young people were also offered high street gift vouchers for their individual time for interviews. As a result of participation, young people expressed their desire to be more involved in the research afterwards, such as dissemination of research findings to other young people. Young people were also willing to present the findings to various audiences at a later date. The overall aim was to offer and support participation as a form of reciprocal research, whereby the costs of involvement, including potential risks, are balanced by the potential for gains that are valued by the participants.

Research process

Recruitment

The scarcity of research with 'trafficked children' as direct informants is likely to be in part attributable to methodological challenges of gaining access to a 'hard-to-access' and vulnerable population (Goździak, 2008; Pearce *et al.*, 2009; Kelly, 2012). For the purpose of recruitment, I mapped support organisations assisting children defined as trafficked across England, through extensive web-based and telephone research. Contact was made with numerous organisations supporting children and young people offering specialist 'child trafficking' services. From these, further contacts were provided of other organisations or key professionals through the snowballing method, to scope the support available nationally to this group of young people, outside formal statutory services. Site visits to various organisations enabled me to introduce my

research interests personally, make further contacts within the 'child trafficking' assistance framework and explore potential research sites and participants. An invitation aimed at young people (App. 6) was widely circulated amongst these organisations and staff had access to my research proposal, detailing what the study would entail.

Very few children are defined formally as trafficked at a national level due to problems in recognition of trafficking circumstances even when practitioners suspect trafficking has taken place (Pearce *et al.,* 2009). Due to this, a strategy was taken to include a wider group of children in order to not exclude those children that may not have been formally labelled as a 'victim of trafficking' by statutory services or by the National Referral Mechanism. Migrating children separated from their families or customary carer were included in the search for participants. Further rationale for taking this strategy is that there is considerable overlap between circumstances of children who are defined as trafficked and children who migrate alone. The process therefore involved identifying groups of children within support services such as unaccompanied asylum seekers and children suspected of having been trafficked, but had either not disclosed or were not formally defined as trafficked by the Home Office. In addition to seeking individual 'cases', I also gathered information on peer groups that support children with specific needs such as refugee and asylum groups and trafficked children peer groups.

Contact was then made with social workers or key workers, the nature and scope of the research was explained to professionals to ensure that potential participants were not likely to be harmed or too distressed by the research process. An information sheet for practitioners (App. 8) was provided for reference and this enabled them to check on the young person's likely state of readiness to participate emotionally and psychologically. A poster inviting young people's participation was widely distributed amongst organisations and young people's peer groups offering young people to contact me directly (App. 6). Children and young people were only then approached directly if they wished to participate and provided with an invitation with details of the study. Where possible I arranged to meet with the young person as a separate introductory

visit or meet young people by attending their peer group and participating in their organised activities. This was in order to introduce myself, explain the study first hand and presented a chance to get to know each other in order to build trust and rapport. Young people were given the opportunity to decide if they wished to participate by meeting me directly and they asked further questions about the research or my background experience.

When potential participants were identified, an information sheet was provided to each young person in an initial meeting with them (App. 7). Assumptions were not made that if a young person was put forward by an organisation, he or she was automatically willing to contribute to the research. Individual choice and freedom to participate was stressed in not only the information sheet but also at *all* subsequent contacts with young people. The poster and information sheet for children and young people was written as an open invitation, in plain language and a format following NHS (2011) guidance on information sheets for children and young people. The purpose of the study was outlined, what was expected of participants, freedom to participate, the right to withdraw and full contact details to contact me at any stage of the project. Gift vouchers for participating were offered alongside other possible benefits of being involved in the research such as to be heard on matters important to them, information may help other children in similar situations and an offer was made to be more involved in the research if they chose. In order to address language difficulties, potential participants were met in person to explain the project verbally to ensure understanding.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used as the method for identifying potential participants for the study as this sampling method is particularly useful in qualitative research and when a specific predefined group is sought (Trochim, 2006). Mapping and contacting services that support children and young people referred to as trafficked facilitated purposive sampling of children who have experienced trafficking. In this study, young people were selected purposively that had experienced trafficking as a child, a distinct experience from other

young people, a targeted group predefined by their experience. Snowballing sampling technique and opportunistic sampling methods were also used, as both are especially useful when trying to reach hard to reach populations such as children defined as trafficked (Theis, 2002).

Extensive contacts with these 'child trafficking' support services (not including statutory services) provided an approximate sampling pool of 151 children and young people referred to as trafficked and receiving support from these specialist services. Purposive sampling requires the parameters of the population of study to be critically considered and to choose sample cases on this basis (Silverman, 2010). The parameters of the sample population were established as: separated children and young people aged between 14 and 17 defined as trafficked or believed to have been trafficked, and 18 - 21 year old young people who had a recent experience of being trafficked, whilst still a minor. This is because statistically, the most commonly identified ages of young people defined as trafficked in the UK are 16 and 17 (Bokhari, 2008; NCA, 2014*b*). However, age assessments (carried out on children from abroad with no documents) can have a margin of error of as much as 5 years either side (Brownlees and Yazdani, 2012). Additionally, some services referred to as 'trafficking assistance' support young people up the age of 25, so in order to broaden the sample population participants up to the age of 21 were included in the study, who were trafficked whilst under 18 years of age.

In order to widen the sampling pool a wide range of services were approached, local authority Children Services departments, non-government organisations and children's charities. In the first instance, I gained permission from directors and senior managers to approach key professionals that currently work with these groups of children. Local Safeguarding Children's Boards were contacted and meetings held with Principal Social Workers in Children Services departments and specialist roles such as Operational Leads on Child Sexual Exploitation. A number of children were identified within local authorities within the parameters set for this study but due to current child protection investigations, collating of evidence for potential prosecutions or some children still being actively at risk from traffickers, most of these children were deemed

not to be suitable for inclusion. Table 1 below shows the origins of the source/type of organisation where participants were recruited from for the study.

Table 1. Sources of access to participants

Source/type of organisation	Participants *n*
Specialist 'child trafficking' assistance services (children's charities)	16
Refugee and asylum seeker project (charitable status)	2
Local authority Children's Services	1
Introduction to other young people from participants' social networks	1
Total	*20*

The process of networking, sampling and mapping organisations was protracted (taking 6 months) requiring good organisation skills and constant work on chasing contacts, follow-up calls, emails and conversations. Recruitment of participants for the study took 7 months from ethics approval stage to first interviews being conducted. Overall, the fieldwork stage took 9 months to gather data. Figure 3 below provides a timeline of this study taking 3 years to completion from 2012-2015.

Figure 3. Timeline
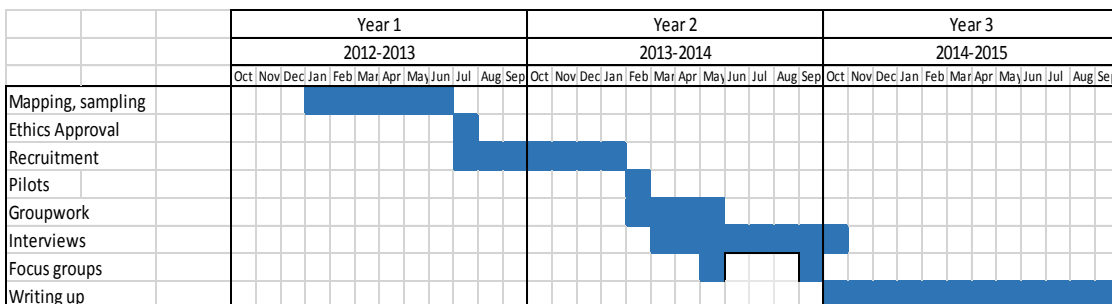
Groupwork

Groupwork was used as a method of accessing young people and engaging them in the research process. After identifying different peer groups for trafficked young people and a community group supporting refugees and asylum seekers, I secured an invitation to meet young people from directors or service managers. This enabled me to participate in existing activities within the groups. When introduced to young people, my role was made explicit, that I was a researcher looking for participants to share their experiences for this study. I also stated that I wished to be guided by young people what methods might be best suited for young people in their circumstances to express their views. In one of these peer groups for trafficked young people, after I had got to know the young people over several visits, I was invited to organise and lead fortnightly groupwork sessions with the peer group over a period of 4 months. I worked closely in collaboration with the organisation in order to match my planned activities for research engagement with the needs of the group. Activities needed to be interactive, therapeutic and beneficial to the young people as a group as well as being sensitive to individual's needs at that time, dependant on the stage of their process of recovery from being trafficked. A plan of activities after discussion with the organisation and the young people involved included interactive music, dance and creative arts-based activities.

In terms of my objective to engage young people in the research through the groupwork sessions, I facilitated young people to construct a personal box, using arts and crafts materials. The idea was developed from the use of memory boxes with families living with HIV in order to make sense of the past and to build a future (IRIN, 2013). Memory boxes have a variety of applications with children experiencing bereavement or trauma (Cohen *et al.*, 2006), exploring identity and allowing people experiencing war to construct and create meaning to the past (Marafat, 2013). In order to explore how young people construct their experience of trafficking, they were invited to bring in personal objects that were meaningful to them to keep securely in their memory box. The idea was to use the boxes and self-selected artefacts to facilitate discussion in one-to-one interviews after the groupwork. Posters and handouts (App. 3)

presented the idea and young people were immediately very keen and enthusiastic, made their personal boxes discussing between them what items might go inside. However, despite the positive engagement from young people, the needs of the group superseded the possibility of following this through. Unexpectedly, new members were joining the group and practitioners felt that the concept of a 'memory box' would be too painful for them, given that the new members had all only recently left their exploitative situation. I also made the observation that whilst the activity was well received by young people already attending the group, sitting down and creating a personal box was quite an introspective and quiet process, less amenable to helping new members bond with the group and getting to know each other.

The groupwork content therefore developed into more interactive sessions, instigating more energising activities, motivating young people to actively engage with each other and welcome the new members. Music and improvised dance became the key activity in every session. To set the mood for this activity, I changed the ambiance of the room before young people arrived with a sound system, wall hangings and ultraviolet lights. Improvised dance took place with up-beat dance music playing loudly, standing in a circle and showing a few dance moves for everyone else to copy. The dance moves were repeated rhythmically as a group until another person took the lead and showed the group a new set of dance moves for us to follow. Young people encouraged each other to each have a turn, the less confident and shy gently being persuaded to share equally in the dancing. Everyone was provided with finger lights, accentuating the movement of arms and creating a light show of their own in their choice of dance moves. The dancing served as a vehicle for self-expression and encouraged group collaboration, young people taking the lead and deciding which dance moves to show and music tracks to play. The activity was highly expressive with each person offering a personal creative contribution, whilst others validated their expression through incorporating the moves into the group dance.

Dance scholars suggest that 'rhythmic entrainment' (a biomusicological term for synchronization of organisms to external rhythm) promotes communal relations

and social bonding (Freeman 1998; Benzon, 2001) but also aids self-actualisation (Clark-Rapley, 1999). As improvisational dance breaks away from patterned movements and habitual ways of being and doing, discovery is promoted (Leavey, 2009). Young people were encouraged to discover themselves through self-expression and simultaneously as a group foster openness to others, accepting difference and multiple ways of knowing.

In terms of research engagement, a number of young people participating in the groupwork, even for just one session, were recruited for interviews. Young people were also willing to participate in focus groups after interactive music and improvised dance sessions, at two different organisations. The interactive sessions ended with a break, to re-organise the room facilities for the purpose of the focus group, and speaking to young people about informed consent. This break delineated each activity as a separate process. Whilst the groupwork was not a method for data collection in itself, the group sessions became a methodological device to promote dialogue, allow young people to form a relationship with me and each other, and constructed a sense of trust in being able to share their experiences either in interviews or in the focus groups. The groupwork using creative and interactive methods proved invaluable in accessing young people and establishing trust, two key barriers in child trafficking research. Additionally, this method served the purpose in communicating epistemology to young people, my intentions and approach, by demonstrating how I could interact with young people and receive their ideas.

Data collection procedures

Separated children from abroad are typically separated from their parent/s or a customary primary caregiver and therefore have no legal guardian to provide consent. Consent, therefore, from a key professional in the children's professional support network was obtained (App. 10). Written consent or verbal informed consent was obtained from each young person before conducting the research and discussed thoroughly in person (App. 9). The consent form focused on the need for children and young people to be informed of their rights as participants in clear, concrete ways and to clarify their role, based on

research participants' *Bill of Rights* (Alderson, 2004). All research participation was on a voluntary basis, including right of withdrawal at any point.

The data produced during the research, including text, visual or audio data has been handled in accordance Data Protection Act 1998. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcripts of interviews were kept locked away. Any possible identifiable characteristics names, schools, specific services, etc. were anonymised or removed in transcripts. Computer documents were protected with passwords for additional security and documents that could identify any person were not sent via email, held online or in 'cloud' virtual storage. The recordings from interviews will be deleted following completion of the study. Participants were advised how the information was collected (audio recordings and transcripts), securely stored and what the information is being used for.

During the process of negotiating access, providing information about the scope of the research and obtaining consent, information about existing support networks for each participant was also established. This provided information about specific support that could be accessed if the participants required it. Although this was not required in the study, knowledge of the young person's support network would have ensured a swift and tailored response if the need arose. After each interview, participants were offered time to answer any questions that they may have arisen about the research or the process and my contact details left with them if they later wished to change their mind, add something or had afterthoughts. Particular attention was paid to offer a space for emotional reflection after interviews to ensure that the young people were not adversely affected.

Sample

The total number of young people who participated in the study was 20, of which 18 were female and 2 male. At the time of participation, young people were aged between 15 and 21 years old. The term 'young people' is used when referring to participants in the present. In presenting the findings, young

people's experiences are presented as 'children's' experiences, as all participants were separated from their parents or primary caregivers and experienced being trafficked as children, whilst under 18 years of age. All participants were living in England at the time of the study although some were without residency, with pending asylum claims, for example not granted leave to remain in the UK temporarily or permanently. At the time of the study all participants lived in the south of England; the research was conducted in the southwest, southeast and London regions of England. Some participants were residing in foster care provided by the local authority, others in supported accommodation for young people aged over 16 and some had recently begun living independently.

All participants had migrated to the UK as children. Children migrated in different ways and had various journeys; most had entered the UK by illegal means such as instructed by traffickers to travel on false documents or to hide in vehicles. Only one young person arrived in the UK through legal means. All participants had encountered formal services within the 'child trafficking' framework in England such as the police, Home Office and local authority Children Services. In addition to this, participants had experienced a range of other services from NGO's and charities, such as specialist 'child trafficking' support or support offered to refugees and asylum seekers.

The language young people used to describe their journeys and experiences varied. 18 young people recognised themselves as having been trafficked, but only after contact with support organisations. These children were not aware what trafficking in human beings meant or what 'child trafficking' was, at the time they were experiencing being trafficked. One young person, who migrated to the UK by clandestine means, hiding in a vehicle, recognised herself as having been 'smuggled' rather than trafficked. Although this young person's key worker suspected her to have been trafficked, no formal identification had been made of her experiences as 'child trafficking', and therefore, she received no specialist support as a trafficked person. This is likely to have shaped and formed her own understanding of what happened to her, defining herself as a 'smuggled' person.

Many participants in this study, who defined themselves as having been trafficked, expressed that they identified their own experiences with that of the 276 Nigerian girls from Chibok captured by the group Boko Haram in April 2014. The similarities in being Christian, Nigerian, from similar backgrounds living in rural Nigeria, and of similar age, resonated with participants in this study. At the time of the fieldwork, these participants were closely following media for news about the girls, and government responses to their capture. These young people expressed empathy and concern, knowing some of what the girls were likely to have experienced, at the hands of their traffickers, having already lived through similar experiences.

All young people were no longer experiencing abuses and exploitation associated with 'child trafficking' at the time of the study. The one participant who had migrated to the UK by legal means did not experience trafficking or exploitation. He travelled to the UK with one parent and subsequently experienced separation from his family after his migration to the UK. He could not return home due to political upheaval and sought asylum in the UK. Due to his age, he was required to submit an independent asylum claim and became separated from his parent in the UK in order to receive assistance with accommodation. This young person experienced migration to the UK and then subsequent separation, distinct from all other participants who experienced separation from their primary carer first and then migrated to the UK.

The number of participants by country of origin is broken down in table 2 below. Nigerian nationals represented the largest group of participants in this study. Although the sample in this study is not precisely representative of trends in prevalence of countries of origin of 'child trafficking' cases reported to the NRM, government statistics show that Nigeria is consistently in the top one or two most prevalent source countries (SOCA, 2013; Hyland, 2015) of trafficking cases. Furthermore, recently trafficking cases from Nigeria have increased by 31% from 2013 to 2014 (Hyland, 2015).

A limitation of this study is that no children from Vietnam are included, the origin country with the highest reported cases of 'child trafficking' (in period 2009 to 2012) (ATMG, 2013). The vast majority of participants in this study (90%) originated from African countries, so whilst other continents are underrepresented, such as Asia and Europe, a higher proportion of experiences of young people from African countries are represented in this study than from other countries.

Table 2. Participants' country of origin

Country of origin	Number of participants
Nigeria	10
Somalia	2
Ivory Coast	2
Guinea	1
Uganda	1
Ethiopia	1
Eritrea	1
Syria	1
China	1
Total participants	*20*

Of the 20 young people participating in this study, 10 participated in in-depth interviews and 10 different young people participated in two focus groups. A summary of which data from interviews and focus groups was utilised in this study to answer the research objectives is summarised in Table 3 below. The corresponding findings chapter for each objective is also listed.

Table 3 Summary of data used for research objectives

Objective	Method	No. participants	Findings
Lived experiences of trafficking	In-depth interviews	10 Total 10	Chapter 5
Experiences of services	In-depth interviews Focus group #1 Focus group #2	10 5 5 Total 20	Chapter 6
Conceptual exploration of 'fit'	In-depth interviews Focus group #2	10 5 Total 15	Chapter 7

Research techniques

Interviews

To explore how young people experienced trafficking, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were held. Interviews are the main method of information collection in social science investigations (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004) and provide a way of generating data about the social world through narrative interaction. Qualitative interviews are advantageous in focusing on individual thought or experience and a useful method with young people when the topic is sensitive or private (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). Addressing the subject area of trafficking and interaction with services, participants cannot be observed directly, so the interview method is also advantageous as historical information about these experiences can be provided (Creswell, 2003).

A total of 12 one-to-one interviews were held with 10 young people. Individual interviews were arranged at a place and time to suit young people. The qualitative interviews used open guiding questions to focus on young people's experiences of becoming separated from parents or usual carers and experiences of migration and trafficking (App. 4). Young people's views were also sought on the services or support they encountered in the UK. The

purpose of semi-structured interviewing is to address the research questions with guiding questions, whilst allowing a degree of freedom to make adjustments in response to the way the interview progresses (Arksey, 2004). Semi-structured interviews are therefore 'context-embedded conversations with a purpose' (Kahn and Cannell, 1957, cited by Rodwell, 1998) with flexibility for young people to address issues important to them. Open questions were followed up with probes and prompts for more detailed responses, specific examples and clarifications (Arksey, 2004). Exploring the sensitive subject of experience of trafficking, required more than one interview for some participants, to not cause too much distress in recalling traumatic experiences. A second interview was offered to provide the young person with some flexibility in pace and greater control, facilitating an opportunity for sensitive issues to be shared (Theis, 2002). Open questions in interviewing allowed participants to answer in their own way, and using their own terms. This is pertinent to young people who can use their own language and voice rather than feeling the need to employ adult language or adult interpretations (Freeman and Mathison, 2009).

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and reflected upon in supervision. During the pilot interviews with young people, I found that I avoided direct questions about abuse, consciously not wanting to be as direct as a child protection social worker. I took the young person's lead on what they were comfortable talking about and which terms they used to describe their experiences. In this sense, the interviews were ethically sensitive to the young person's state of readiness to share experiences. However, even after the young person described exploitation and grooming, I was somewhat over cautious and tended to 'skirt around the issue' of labelling their experiences and if they perceived their experiences as exploitative, as having been trafficked or groomed. With guidance from supervision, the interview questions were adjusted to remain exploratory and non-directive, but more focused on young people's perceptions of how they viewed their experiences, without shying away from existing labels of trafficking, exploitation or grooming. This was achieved through improving reflective questioning, summarising and gaining more confidence in discussing a difficult subject with young people. The interview

schedule was refined (App. 4), but still acted as a guide rather than a rigid framework, allowing narrative to flow.

Interviews within a social constructivist framework are viewed as a social event that enables young people to express their interpretations of events and experiences within the research interaction (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). In order to create a space for young people to voice their thoughts on a directed issue and share their experiences, a relational approach was taken. Relational practice in interviewing, to facilitate narratives, is based on a dialectal way of thinking about the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewed (Hydén, 2014). Although the two parties as partners have different tasks and responsibilities in the research process (Hydén, 2014), they are connected by mutual search for shared meaning (Rodwell, 1998). The process itself is also dialectic, where meaning is co-constructed through dialogue, although as Hydén (2014) notes, there is a 'dance of balancing involvement' (p. 802) to avoid the researcher being the dominant party. Rodwell (1998) advocates constructivist 'hermeneutic circles' (p. 81) where information is shared, perspectives are presented, considered, evaluated, rejected or incorporated into an emerging understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This hermeneutic dialectic was adopted where emerging concepts from the literature review, coupled with perspectives from young people, were explored together in order to encourage an expansion of ideas.

Focus groups

Two focus groups with young people took place following the groupwork described above. In each focus group, 5 different young people shared their views (total 10 participants). Using a semi-structured group interview process, young people were asked how they experienced services within the 'child trafficking' framework. In the first focus group the aim was to facilitate discussion on young people's interactions with the services they encountered. In the second group the aim was to explore young people's perceptions of the current construction of UK 'child trafficking' framework, a more conceptual exploration to examine if their own experiences are reflected in current approaches.

My role as moderator and facilitator (O'Sullivan, 2003) was to create a space where young people could to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange stories and comment on each others' experiences and points of view. Focus groups are particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and group discussions can generate more critical comments than interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). Shared experiences can be exchanged, compared, reinforced or negated within the group setting, providing valuable insight on the subject. The focus group method was chosen purposefully as it is particularly suited to disempowered populations who may be reluctant to give negative feedback (Kitzinger, 1995) for fear of services being withdrawn, affected or simply not having the opportunity to comment on services before.

Initially I thought very carefully about whether a focus group would be appropriate given that young people's experiences with services are inextricably linked with personal circumstances of a sensitive nature and this may prohibit young people wanting to share this in a group setting. In reviewing focus group research Farquhar (1999) notes that *"people may be more, rather than less, likely to self-disclose or share personal experiences in group rather than dyadic settings"* (p. 47). I found this to be the case in the focus groups held, young people were very willing to convey their views, they had a lot to say and interacted with each other in sharing their personal experiences. Focus groups attend to power differentials between researcher and participants as participants outnumber and through facilitating focus groups with young people with similar experiences, participants can feel supported in a group setting of peers. Coupled with spending time and effort to build relationships beforehand in the groupwork sessions, these factors are likely to have contributed to young people feeling at ease to express their views, despite the subject matter being sensitive.

A key challenge with the focus group method was language. All participants of the focus groups did not speak or read English as their first language and had varying degrees of English comprehension. Despite this, all but one participant were able to communicate verbally in English to express their thoughts and

experiences in a focused discussion. However, prepared written consent forms for one group of young people were redundant as none of the participants could read English sufficiently to ensure full understanding of what they were being asked to read and sign. Providing written information in their own language would have been preferable, but not possible in this situation as it was unknown which young people would arrive that day for the groupwork and the focus group. Additionally, the participants in the focus groups came from 5 different countries with many more languages being spoken within these nationalities, making it impossible to accommodate everyone in terms of first language needs. In this circumstance, consent was obtained verbally, I spoke with each person individually ensuring they understood what was happening and checking informed consent was in place. This took time but was necessary in lieu of written consent and also allowed me to check the actual level of verbal comprehension in English to ensure that my choice of words and questions could be matched to their level of understanding.

For the one participant not speaking English to a similar degree as other participants, other young people offered to translate. This was only agreed with the consent of the young person themselves and fortunately, their first language and dialect was matched with other young people, a benefit of organising a focus group via an existing peer group. Whilst this young person was able to contribute and convey her views in the focus group, her participation was reliant on other young people's translating abilities. Managing other languages being spoken in the focus group presented practical problems on two counts; firstly, exchanges between young people in their own language could have provided valuable insight in how participants constructed meaning collectively so these could have been missed. Secondly, transcription was far more difficult with different accents from various nationalities and the occasional use of another language for translation during the focus group interrupted the conversational flow in reading scripts for analysis.

Visual aid

In both interviews and the second focus group, young people's perceptions were sought on the current construction of the 'child trafficking' framework. This

was in order to address the objective of exploring the 'fit' between young people's own accounts of their situation and the current construction of the 'child trafficking' framework. As this was more of a conceptual exploration, to examine if young people's own experiences are reflected in current approaches, a visual aid was used to open the discussion and stimulate more abstract thinking (App. 5). Using a visual stimuli can help to overcome unequal power relationships between researcher and participants as the method reduces eye contact (Theis, 2002) and can also assist with overcoming differences in cultural conceptions, which could present as barriers in traditional interviewing, reliant solely on verbal communication (Huss, 2012). Acknowledging there may be different cultural conceptions was especially pertinent in this study as all participants migrated to the UK from abroad. Theis (2002) specifically recommends visual methods with young people as assisting with dealing with sensitive subjects that are hard or embarrassing to talk about such as child labour exploitation and trafficking.

In practice, the visual aid offered a method of 'de-centring' personal experiences and encouraged thoughts and reflections on situating those personal experiences within a wider context, thus stimulating discussion about young people's views on the construction of the framework. The graphic used, was formulated from a critical analysis of the policy and practice framework, as set out in Chapter 3. Rather than assume that my own diagrammatic representation was fact, or true, young people were asked if they recognised themselves in the graphic or did they see their own situation differently? The diagram was thus used as a springboard for discussion and open to challenge, disagreement or confirmation. Additional labels with the words 'willing', 'forced', 'choice' and 'no choice' (App. 5) were made available for young people to prompt thinking about constituent elements of the concepts of 'coercion' and 'consent'. These labels were deliberately moveable, allowing young people to place them anywhere they wished either on the diagram or to pick up, which prompted verbalising a thought and further discussion.

Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic analysis was chosen as a method for *"identifying, analysing, and*

reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79), across the data set from individual interviews and focus groups. Theoretically, a social constructivist framework utilising thematic analysis is aligned with reporting both the unique, children's personal journeys and experiences, as well as examining how these experiences *"are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81), in the constructionist view. Thematic analysis in social constructivism goes further in also examining structural factors shaping individuals interactions in a socially constructed environment.

For the presentation of children's personal journeys, (presented in Appendix 12), a decision was made to not attempt a redaction, or grouping of similar experiences into a condensed format, or present a hybrid vignette. The intention is to provide the reader with rich detail, and to preserve each young person's personal account of their journey recognising the uniqueness of individual experiences. A degree of interpretation was still required however, as complete transcripts of children's accounts are not provided. In order to ensure that participants' accounts were interpreted and presented fairly, follow-up meetings were held with 3 young people, as a sample of the participants, to provide them with the opportunity to comment or amend how I had written and constructed their personal journeys. These meetings acted as a validation and feedback exercise to ensure accuracy and allow young people to have further input. Young people provided positive feedback that their experiences were *"captured excellently"* (Maya) and made no major corrections.

The interpretation of children's experiences (Chapter 5) and their experiences of services (Chapter 6) involved coding data without a pre-existing coding frame, as an inductive analytical process, strongly linked to data. Whereas, in order to analyse children's experiences of the 'child trafficking' framework, and 'fit' between their experiences and policy and practice (Chapter 7), a theoretical thematic analysis was used, coding for a specific research question, with analysis examining underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A conceptual framework following the literature and theoretical review provided a basis of assumed dimensions and major

discourses within the construction of 'child trafficking', guiding the research questions and subsequent analysis. The elements of the conceptual framework created the parameters of the 'hermeneutic dialectic' (Rodwell, 1998) but are not themselves the result of the enquiry. The goal of a hermeneutic approach is *"not deriving theory for predication and control"* (Rodwell, 1998, p. 155) but to seek understanding, rather than to offer explanation or to provide an authoritative reading (Kinsella, 2006). The analysis and key findings were shared with young people in 3 individual follow-up sessions and one group session in order to enhance the credibility and authenticity of research findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

The steps taken in the method of thematic analysis involved distinct phases. The first phase was transcribing the data, noting down initial thoughts and reactions. Immersion into the data for analysis began once all data had been transcribed by reading, and re-reading texts several times (simultaneously listening to audio recordings), noting potential patterns and ideas for coding. The next phase was generating initial codes manually, coding interesting features, collating data to relevant codes and constant comparison as advocated by Rodwell (1998) and Braun and Clarke (2006). I found the use of colour particularly useful for this purpose, organising and tracking data into groups. Searching for themes consisted of collating codes into potential themes, and categorising data extracts within themes. I used various methods to assist with this complex stage, using visual mind-maps and tables to organise themes and coded data extracts. Reviewing themes, as the next stage involved refinement of themes, aggregating similar themes together and checking that data extracts coherently sat under a particular theme, which started to *"adequately capture the contours of the coded data"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Defining and naming themes as the final step involved writing definitions, refining and re-defining themes to remove overlaps, and to consider the ordering of themes to present an overall narrative that provided coherence overall, and between themes.

Reflections on research process and methods

Limitations

Guidelines for an adequate sample size in qualitative research vary (Mason, 2010) with the aims of the study driving the design and sample size (Charmaz, 2006). However, Charmaz (2006) suggests 25 participants are adequate for smaller qualitative projects and with modest claims may achieve saturation sooner than larger samples. Although this study managed to successfully engage 20 young people and provided rich data about their experiences, I acknowledge that the sample size is still relatively small. Due to this, the generalizability of research findings are reduced with a recognition that the experiences of young people in this study are context-bounded and specific, a key tenet of qualitative research (Bryman, 2004). All participants recruited for this study had migrated from abroad, to the UK. No British born young people were recruited presenting a limitation of the sample. A further limitation is the lack of representation of males' experiences; only two participants recruited were male. This raises an important gap in research, to study the 'gendering' of 'child trafficking' policy and practice and to address the experiences of boys and young men.

Brunovskis and Surtees (2010) highlight that bias is likely to occur as recruiting respondents through the 'trafficking assistance' system presents likely systematic differences between assisted and unassisted 'victims'. Brunovskis and Surtees (2010) also raise concerns about unequal access to participants, as service providers can act as gatekeepers and not involve their service users as active agents in choice to participate in research. A further limitation could be that service providers can refer researchers only to 'successful' cases due to a function of what is possible but also to profile successful work to outsiders (Brunovskis and Surtees, 2010). In choosing to access participants through support services, this was the only feasible option. Finding 'unassisted victims' was not possible due to the clandestine and illegal nature of trafficking, this group of children can remain hidden in the community and not be known to children's services, authorities or NGO's. Additionally, this study specifically explores how this group of children experience the 'child trafficking' framework,

so accessing young people via organisations within the framework, with experience of these services was beneficial to answer the research question and objectives.

Despite sample limitations and the study's bias of addressing the experiences of 'assisted' children, a benefit of the rich data analysed in this qualitative study may *"enable readers to make decisions about applicability of findings to other settings of similar contexts"* (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 129). The possibility of transferability to other research settings could be envisaged, for example, the research design and methods developed in this study could be applied to research with other hard to access groups of young people or to research sensitive subject areas.

In terms of limitations of research techniques, there are weaknesses of any study based on interviews. Interviews with young people reflect their subjective reality, which can differ from information from various other sources, for example, their key workers, social workers or case file information. This study privileges young people's experiences and their perspectives on their own situations, in doing so, practitioner's perspectives (those working with 'trafficked children') are omitted. An extended study including both young people's subjective views and data from other sources could be envisaged to aid data triangulation and increase credibility of research findings, however, was not possible within the time and resource constraints of this study. Further potential limitations of consulting young people are that memory, perceptions and recall are all very personal. Trauma, taboos or shame can all influence how a young person responds and because traffickers often rely on deceit and threats to control children, personal understanding of what has happened to young people may be distorted (Dottridge, 2008).

A key feature of this study was developing methods to engage young people in research from this hard to access population. This required flexibility, a heavy investment in time, resources and effort in running groupwork sessions with young people who had experienced trafficking. Whilst this resulted in successfully engaging participants for this study, there was however, the risk

that this process resulted in no agreement for participation and no data collected for analysis. Typically, participants recruited would proceed with an element of trust, they *may* benefit in some way from participation, investing their time and effort 'upfront'. This study took an unconventional approach and turned this typical arrangement around. The process of engaging young people in this study was beneficial to them whether they decided to participate or not in the data collection phase. Whilst this worked positively in this study, researchers may not have the time and resources to replicate the way this research was conducted or wish to run the risk of not securing participants. I argue however, that the process was not only reciprocal, but aided a development of trust, a known key barrier in 'child trafficking' research.

Authenticity

The notion of fairness as an evaluative criterion in qualitative research has been well established and developed (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). Key tenets of constructivism, values of pluralism, multiple perspectives and qualitative approach focused on process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were adhered to in this study, ensuring that different constructions were fairly considered. 'Member checking' (Rodwell, 1998) was carried out to ensure fairness in interpretation of children and young people's experiences and accuracy of reconstructions. Meetings were held with 3 individuals and one group session held with a peer group of 4 young people for this purpose, to share the findings and provide opportunity for feedback to assist validation and credibility of this study.

In constructivist research, Rodwell (1998) defines authenticity as potentially radical and challenging,

> *"authenticity speaks to the integrity and quality of the interactive process in constructivism that is attentive to multiple constructions shaped by the context. It also calls on the inquirer to attend to contextual betterment which should also result from the action orientation of the teaching/learning that goes on"* (p. 107).

The dialogic nature of interviews and focus groups in this study provided young people an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences, learn from others and

situate these constructions of self in a wider conceptual framework. The research process offered a possibility of a better understanding of self and others, as ontological authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Educative authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) occurs when the research process enables *"members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting"* (Bryman, 2004, p. 393). The follow-up sessions with individuals and a group session with young people to discuss the findings of this study provided a vehicle for this purpose. The group session with young people included both participants of this study as well as other children and young people who were interested in the research, but had not participated as had joined the peer group after the data collection phase. The process of sharing the findings and encouraging feedback not only validated the research but also facilitated other members to learn about their peers and their experiences within a research context.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the research aim and objectives, the design of the study and process undertaken to recruit participants from a hard to access population. The research design, aimed at researching 'child trafficking' *with* young people, not empirically studied before in the UK, was therefore necessarily emergent and exploratory. An argument has been presented that a qualitative research strategy, based on hermeneutical and dialectical methodology was best suited to achieve the aim and objectives of this study. The choice of a social constructivist epistemology was aligned with examining how contemporary constructions of childhood and adolescence shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

The research design has been informed by the concept of children as active social actors and competent informants, in order to explore the lived 'realities' of young people's experiences of trafficking as children, and their experiences of the 'child-trafficking' framework. In order to explore young people's experiences the study required a development of methods in the field, breaking new ground.

In an effort to share the research practice developed in this study and to make explicit the challenges and pitfalls encountered, the research process and techniques chosen to successfully engage young people and hear their views has been detailed in this chapter. In the hope of benefiting advancement in research with young people with difficult life experiences, key messages that have emerged from the research process are presented below.

1. Flexibility was key in aligning research methods with this group of young people. Planned methods changed and evolved as contact with young people progressed.

2. Groupwork using creative methods aided both access and engagement of young people. Interactive and creative methods became key in establishing contact with trafficked young people and developing a trusted space in which young people could express themselves.

3. Emphasis was placed on relational research practice, requiring skills of empathy, a humanistic approach and the ability of the researcher to listen to traumatic personal experiences. Relational practice enabled an emotionally safe space for young people to share difficult accounts of abuse and exploitation.

4. Reciprocity helped to engage young people in the research, with the aim of the research process benefiting young people directly, outweighing potential risks.

5. Individual interviews offered an opportunity for young people to share detail about personal and lived experiences of being trafficked, whilst focus groups facilitated a safe space in which young people voiced their views on services within the 'child trafficking' framework and how the framework is constructed.

6. A visual aid used as a springboard for discussion and exploration around more abstract concepts proved useful for young people both in interviews and focus groups.

The next two chapters present the findings of young people's personal journeys of separation from families, experiences of trafficking and encountering services in the 'child trafficking' framework in England.

Chapter 5. Children's experiences

"How can we judge fairly of the characters and merits of men, of the wisdom or folly of actions, unless we have...an accurate knowledge of all particulars, so that we may live as it were in the times, and among the persons, of whom we read, see with their eyes, and reason and decide on their premises?"

(William Wilberforce, cited by Belmonte, 2007, p. 206)

Introduction

This chapter provides space for children's voice to be heard, to gain a perspective of young people's own accounts of their lived experiences of trafficking as children. Listening to children on matters directly affecting them and hearing what they say about how they experience their situation, counterbalances existing 'child trafficking' research which has predominately privileged adult interpretations and perceptions. The findings of this study aim to contribute to this gap by presenting children's distinct lived experiences of being trafficked. This chapter presents the findings from the fieldwork undertaken with young people, in order to address the research objective:

4. *To explore young people's own accounts and lived experiences of separation and trafficking as children.*

This chapter focuses on children's experiences and perspectives, explored in-depth interviews held with 10 young people who had been trafficked as children. Young people shared their unique experiences of how they separated from their parents and families and their personal journeys of leaving home to travel to the UK. Young people provided individual accounts of subsequent exposure to adults who mistreated them and abused them, adults who trafficked these children for their own gain. The main body of this chapter is thematically presented around children's experiences. Children's experiences of family care arrangements at home, and childhood framed by poverty and political upheaval

provides the reader with context of what life at home was like for children. How young people understood their particular childhood is explored, highlighting what being a child in their circumstances was like for them. Children's experiences in wanting to improve their life opportunities, manipulated by traffickers' false promises, provide insight into the process of children's exposure to trafficking. Children were mistreated and used in their experiences of being trafficked and conveyed how they were subjected to cruelty, degradation, and severe forms of abuse. Isolation as a means of control by traffickers, and as a subjective state arising from the trafficking experience portrays how alone children felt in their circumstance of being 'stuck' in the trafficking situation. The processes children experienced treated as commodities, bought, sold and resold, as objects for traffickers profitable gain is highlighted. Despite children experiencing a lack of resources and at times powerlessness, children developed certain coping strategies in their situations, and these shed light on some tactics employed by children to lessen the harm they experienced. Children's accounts also provided an unexpected, yet significant aspect of their experiences, that of assistance received from other children and young people, who at times played an instrumental and critical role in helping children to escape and leave traffickers.

The chapter concludes with a discussion, which reflects on the themes of children's experiences of trafficking and explores children's perceptions of their childhood, of child abuse and trafficking. Children's own representations of these aspects of their experiences are explored in relation to present constructions of childhood and 'child trafficking'. A conclusion is drawn that from children's own lived experiences, their perceptions of childhood are very different to western ideological constructions of childhood informing 'child trafficking' policy and practice. Similarly, children's own views of being trafficked present an alternative rendering of the experience, departing from assumptions in how 'child trafficking' is understood.

Interviewees

Young people interviewed shared their personal journeys in becoming separated from their families and homes, and experiences of being trafficked as children. These accounts were gathered from in-depth interviews with 10 young people. Pseudonyms have been used to protect young people's identity and the countries of origin are detailed below.

Table 4. Interviewees and country of origin

Name	Country of origin
Jiao	China
Ammar	Syria
Grace	Eritrea
Olana	Nigeria
Hayley	Ivory Coast
Isabella	Nigeria
Jessie	Nigeria
Kayla	Nigeria
Maya	Nigeria
Ethan	Guinea

The participants' ages at the time of experiencing being trafficked ranged between 10 and 17 years old. The lengths of time young people were in these situations varied greatly, from a number of weeks to a number of years. Two young people interviewed stated their exploitation spanned for more than two years and one young person was trafficked for a duration of six years. At the time of the study, five participants had experienced being trafficked within the last three years and four participants had these experiences within the last five years. Three young people described experiences of exploitation *en route* to the UK and six young people described being trafficked to the UK and said they were exploited in the UK. One young person described being trafficked in their country of origin and then further re-trafficked to the UK, experiencing

exploitation in both countries. Ethan, legally migrating to the UK was the only young person who had not experienced any exploitation.

The relational and sensitive interviewing approach taken with young people allowed them to talk openly about their journeys, letting their story emerge thorough their own words. This often invoked recalling painful memories. Many young people chose to talk in detail about difficult accounts of abuse and exploitation, without direct prompting, necessitating active listening, being compassionate and conveying a preparedness to hear what they had to say. Some young people chose to highlight other particular aspects of their journeys and were less explicit about the harm they suffered. These young people were not overly probed during interviews in order to attempt to provide the same level of details as others. Sensitivity was required respecting young people's state of readiness to talk about whichever aspects of their lived experience were important to them. As a result, young people's journeys are unique narratives, are not uniform and vary in the level in detail. These journeys are presented in *Children's journeys* (Appendix 12) for each participant interviewed, in order for the reader to have access to more detail of individual accounts provided. What follows, is a thematic presentation of young people's experiences in becoming separated from their carers and families, leaving home, coming to the UK and their lived experiences of being trafficked.

Loss of family ties

Despite young people having varying personal histories and circumstances in how they experienced being trafficked, all participants shared the experience of separation from their birth parent or parents as children. This separation, for many, was earlier in life, due to being 'maternally orphaned' or 'double orphaned' (children losing both parents) as defined by UNICEF (2006). Young people who were orphaned, explained that as children, they never knew one parent or both parents, and stated this more as a matter of fact rather than an emotional experience, to provide context to their family composition,

> *"I don't know my parent, only my grand mum, grandmother... That's my mother, because, I never, I don't know really much about my mother.*

Apparently, so when she was giving birth to me, she lost, she lost herself, that why I survived" (Jessie).

"I never really knew my mum properly, she passed away...I met her before she died...I didn't know her until I was 9, and she passed away when I was 11...in that short period of time. But she never looked after me, she wasn't around" (Hayley).

Jessie was raised by her grandmother in rural Nigeria and Jiao, who lived in rural China, was raised by her grandmother as she too was orphaned. Hayley, from the Ivory Coast and Grace from Eritrea were both maternally orphaned and raised by their fathers, before being separated from them when they left their countries with traffickers. Orphaned children who were looked after by alternative family carers, such as grandmothers, expressed a sense of belonging and had close bonds with their family carers,

"I was with my grand mum right from child... From a small child, she never leave me, I never leave her. I, never leave me for one day" (Jessie).

The separation that young people emphasised as significant in their lives was a loss of family connection through being separated from the carers who had raised them. When grandmothers passed away, children experienced a great loss,

"When I lost my grand mum so I was depressed, I couldn't say anything, just crying...

...it's like when I lost my grand mum, it's like I was in another world entirely, I was thinking like god should have taken me rather than taking my grand mum" (Jessie).

For children experiencing bereavement of these carers, they lived through not only being orphaned, or left by parents in earlier life, but also experienced a further separation from carers, and dislocation from family ties. For some children these circumstances resulted in no immediate family member being available to provide them with care that they had been accustomed to,

"I was used to living with grandmother before and after grandmother passing away, the the uncle took over the house" (Jiao).

When Jessie's grandmother passed away, no family was available to care for her, she was told by her grandmother's friends *"there is nothing here in this village* [for you] *since you lost your grand mum"* (Jessie). Kayla, who lived in rural Nigeria, experienced a sense of belonging to the couple who raised her, thinking they were her parents, until unexpectedly, when she was 14, the man who she knew as her father informed her she was not their child. Kayla was told she was found by the river, crying and was taken in by the couple,

> *"...so when he told me this, about my life, I was really cry. Because I never expect this from my life. I thought, I know the woman, the man treats me, it's as a child, I don't know".*

Kayla's sense of belonging and family identity was dislocated,

> *"You know... I thought they were my parents. Yeah, but when they told me he's not the one that gave birth to me, I'm not daughter. Because he <u>find</u> me, you know. I don't know who is my mum, don't know who is my dad, I don't know if I have brother and sister, which is really difficult for me. You know now still seeking about my life"* (Kayla).

For these children, initial separation from birth parents and then further separation from carers was experienced as a loss, a loss of family connections and ties, and family identity. Children lived through the feeling of belonging with a family, albeit with alternative, yet close, carers, which was then severed, through bereavement or disconnection from familiar adults.

Poverty and politics

Life at home for many children was framed by household poverty,

> *"So it was my grandmother was taking caring of us. It wasn't really that good, because food and everything, everything was very tight... Yeah, you know like young people like 8 or 9 year old in this country, some of them they don't even know how much to buy their food and something like that...So no, how it's completely different, you have to think about food...So it was quite tight"* (Maya).

"...my Dad had a lot of kids and he couldn't really look after some of them ... he had a lot of kids, a lot of persons, it was a bit hard being there" (Hayley).

Household poverty was linked by young people to a lack of opportunity to attend school or continue education,

"It was only my nan, and she was getting older. So I stopped going to school as well, I didn't finish my primary school. We were quite poor to put it in a short form" (Maya).

Kayla described how there was *"no money to go to school...I didn't go to school...I can't read, I can't write"* (Kayla). Hayley was also not attending school at home and saw this as *"things that my Dad meant to do and couldn't do it"* due to having many children to look after as a single parent, living in poverty. Maya, saw poverty as causing instability and the reason her parents could not look after her, *"it just messes everything up, not having a proper stable home"* (Maya). Maya saw poverty, separation from parents, and not being in education as increasing a child's vulnerability to trafficking,

"…I think I was a victim of poverty...Yeah…Because if my parents have sent me to school, to take care of me, I wouldn't be in this place… I wouldn't be separated from my sibling, from my family"

"...not being education, not being in a proper family, you...you know, it makes that person <u>more</u> vulnerable, more like they [traffickers] *can use as a thing, they can go anywhere, take you anywhere, do anything to..."* (Maya).

With a lack of access to education, and a strain on families materially and economically in having enough to get by, children experienced needing to grow up quickly. Adults' expectations of children in daily life were to assist with collecting water, cooking and working. Daily life for Maya, aged 9 at the time was,

"...chaos. Like my mother's brother, he was beating me and starving me even though you do what they ask... So they would ask me to do things, if you don't do exactly what you've been told...like asking me going to collect water, I would collect water, and you see everybody else eating

and you're not eating so you'll be like I'm not going anymore, I'm hungry! So I used to get beaten a lot because I was the oldest one, from my sisters, so they expect more from you... Yeah, so you kind of have to grow really quick... because they expect a lot. It would be like, you should know should how to cook for that age, do a lot of things, washing up and all that" (Maya).

For Kayla, daily life consisted of *"You know, go to farm every time, go to market, go to farm"* (Kayla). Isabella also never attended school and was working aged 14, employed in cleaning and domestic work,

"In Nigeria, because my family don't like, don't, they not rich and I had to work" (Isabella).

Household poverty, a lack of education and economic opportunities for employment at home, combined as push factors for carers to make decisions for children to leave their homes, when approached by other adults who offered better life opportunities. The decisions for children to migrate to more prosperous countries was seen by both adult carers and children themselves, as an opportunity to alleviate poverty, by seeking education and employment opportunities elsewhere. At home, children explained that they wanted to be in education, *"because I never go to school before...no money to go to school...and I want to go to school"* (Kayla) and this yearning would turn out to be manipulated by traffickers in offering children education, work and employment,

"...when I heard of all the good things, the education and all that. I was really really excited, yeah. I go back to school, you know like stuff that I wanted to do and think it's going to happen" (Maya).

Grace, Ammar and Ethan described how immediately before their separation from their parents, they experienced a different context and set of circumstances in their home countries, distinct from other participants. Rather than poverty, these children framed their experiences at home politically, affected by, and engaged in politics. These young people described how they experienced political unrest, war and human rights abuses in their home countries, and how this led to their enforced separation from parents. Ammar

explained how he experienced death and destruction in the Syrian war, *"like a disaster"*, living in the city when bombing raids started. Ammar witnessed seemingly innocent civilians shot by troops on the ground,

> *"they come inside this street, and take control and started like search for person who worked for government and they kill a lot of people. The free army"* (Ammar).

Fleeing to the countryside with his parents did not result in an escape from death, as Ammar witnessed brutal killings by terrorist groups in his home village,

> *"Islamist groups they started attacking Kurdish people and like attacking us like we are not Muslim, and they say okay we are like animals of Islam and you know that groups, it's like terrorist completely…imagine they start to, to kill the people like, like monster…They like cut the head…*[crying and showing motion of slowly slitting throat]*"* (Ammar).

His friends were forced to join an Islamist group to fight for their cause and his cousin was killed by them. Ammar described how he was himself a target, as Islamists were aware of his involvement in a youth group distributing food aid funded by a Christian organisation. Ammar experienced political and religious upheaval, trauma of witnessing violence, his family had been uprooted and he experienced separation from his siblings. His sister and brother were presumed to be dead, taken by Islamists,

> *"they take my sister and brother until this moment and we don't know anything about it"* [crying] (Ammar).

Grace described how in her country, Eritrea, the government was taking many political prisoners, especially people working towards political independence. No other political groups are allowed to organise in Eritrea, opposition to the existing single-party regime is forbidden. Grace experienced her father's arrest by government forces and was then herself imprisoned as a child, for political activity in distributing leaflets with her father. She subsequently became separated from her father, both held as political prisoners. Through this set of circumstances, she lost all contact experiencing enforced separation, and Grace has not seen or heard from her father since.

Like Ammar and Grace, Ethan was also involved in political activity in his home country, Guinea, in opposition to the presiding government. Ethan was a youth activist engaging in *"actions in reconciliation"*, organising youth events and was targeted for arrest by security forces along with his father. Security forces attacked and destroyed the family shop and his mother was arrested. Ethan and his father evaded arrest as they had left Guinea a few days before to visit a relative in the UK. Ethan's mother was released after days of questioning once security forces had ascertained that Ethan and his father had left the country. His mother subsequently fled Guinea and Ethan has not heard from her or his sisters since. Due to political unrest and violence against opposition supporters in Guinea, Ethan's family have been dislocated, unable to return what was once their home. Ethan thus became separated from his family, although his father remains in contact with him in the UK, he has no contact with his mother or sisters or know their whereabouts.

Obedient children

> *"In terms of where I come from, no matter what a grown-up says, we have to obey by it"* (Mirembe).

Childhood, for the children in this study, was understood as a subordinate status to adults, in which children experienced no room to voice an opinion, or to have a say in decisions made by adults affecting them directly. Central to children being assigned to this subservient position was the expectation from adults that children should unquestionably obey adult authority, and behave obediently. Young people described how, as children it was customary in their upbringing, not only to obey adults, but also to not approach adults, nor speak to adults unless spoken to,

> *"I couldn't really say much because you know, an African person you are not really allowed to talk with a grown up unless they want to talk to you"* (Hayley).

Young people explained that they were raised and taught as children, not to ask adults questions or open a conversation, as this is viewed as *"disrespectful"*

(Hayley). *"In my country you don't ask, you don't, especially if you are young"* (Grace). Saying 'no', opposing adults or challenging adults was described as not permitted culturally,

> *"In my culture as well it's quite disobedient like when adult talking to you, to reply, in a manner maybe you say 'I'm not going to do that', you don't say that"* (Maya).

Young people described how as children, adults exerted power over them by the use of threats, *"being beaten"* (Hayley) or withdrawing food, to maintain control and demand obedience. As children they were taught obedience, and age deference, not just to obey adult family carers in a parenting role, but to show deference to *any* adult, a form of 'age patriarchy' (Hendrick, 2005), where adults know best. *"In our country, from Nigeria we respects people, if they are older than us, we respects people"* (Amadia), speaking up to an adult, voicing an opinion is *"being rude in our country, so we are not allowed to say, we can't"* (Amadia).

Against this backdrop of childhood viewed as a time to be deferent to all adults and obey all decisions made by them, children experienced adults making decisions and arrangements for them to be 'looked after' by someone else, on their behalf. These life-changing decisions involved children leaving their carers and families, leaving their siblings behind and the place they knew as home. Children could not dispute or challenge these decisions made by adults, given their cultural status, as subordinate to adults. As Hayley recalled,

> *"I didn't have any say. What can I say, because they wanted to bring me and those are the grownups who does the talking so you really shouldn't say much about it... My Dad was pushing me, you have to go and that's another mouth out of his table so this is someone else he doesn't have to look after, so for him it was a bonus that one of them, one of them because less for him to look after... so he was kind of like pushing, you know... Telling us you have to go. But even if I said I didn't want to, they still was going to send me there anyway"* (Hayley).

Children were *told* what to do, obeyed and followed instructions from family members or other adults, feeling they had no choice, nor any voice in decisions made on their behalf. When Jessie was left with no adult to care for her when her grandmother passed away, she was told what to do by her grandmother's friends in her home village, that she should go with a woman offering to take her in, to live with her in the city. Kayla was instructed by the man she knew as her father, soon after being informed that she wasn't his child, that she was to leave her home, *"he told me that some people coming to pick me up, to go to school [in the city]"* (Kayla). Similarly, the decision was made for Maya,

> *"So when I was told that I was going with her, to be living with her child, that child living in London, like in village we used to call it like 'white peoples' land', so that's what my nan said. And that time you don't really have say on this matter, the adults know what's best, you carry on, even if you don't want to go"* (Maya).

Jiao recalled the decision for her to leave, as being sent away by her uncle from her family home, to earn money abroad. Jiao explained how she did not know where she was being sent to or how she was expected to earn money. The uncle arranged her departure, Jiao stated how she had no choice but to go otherwise *"I would have nowhere to live, as he would kick her me of the house"* (Jiao). Grace's escape from prison in Eritrea was organised by her aunt who also organised her clandestine departure from the country, via a people trafficker. Reflecting back on who made the decision for her to leave, Grace explained,

> *"I had no choice. I know, she* [aunt] *told me I can't live there, so I don't have… if they catch me I will have to go to prison again so it's going to be worse because no one can, the prison are … she pay for the police the money* [to get out of prison]*"* (Grace).

Olana was the exception amongst the interviewees as she left her family, seemingly of her own volition, *"I made the decision myself", "I left them because I came to this country to work and go to school and then some money to support them"* (Olana). Olana was living with her parents when she had contact with adults who offered her employment and travel abroad. Olana initially asked

her parents' permission to travel, to seek work and education abroad but they refused,

> *"I said I want to travel because they say in this country you can work, you can go to school at the same time. That's why I said I wanted to come to this country to work and study... Yeah they said 'no' because I am still a child, they would not allow me to go, then I tried to, like beg them, and they said 'no'. Then after, I did my passport, everything, then I travelled, they did not even know. Then before when I came to this country, then I call them, and they say 'how come?'"* (Olana).

Promises

Poverty, a lack of education, a lack of economic opportunities, and countries being unsafe to reside in due to political upheaval or war, were all features of children's experiences prior to migration. An opportunity to leave behind these adverse circumstances and seek alternatives, were presented to children and their families when they came into contact with adults who promised them education, work, somewhere to live or a safe passage abroad, in order to gain better life opportunities. For children in this study, trepidation of leaving behind loved ones and dislocation from family ties was tempered by hopes that migration will bring about positive change in the future. Traffickers generated and fuelled children's hopes and dreams,

> *"Yeah. So because I never had someone that tells me before that she's going to send me to school, in my life, I haven't been to school, so excited because she promised me to come over here to go to school. So yeah..."* (Isabella).

Manipulating children's desire to improve their circumstances, traffickers made promises of education or work 'in the city' or in the UK,

> *"…because she move me from my village to her city, which is* [city in Nigeria], *she promised me that she is taking me to city to continue my study. So when I got to* [city in Nigeria] *I now notice that I was just sleeping, sleeping, eating, so I ask her that, 'when am I going to the school like you promise me?', because that's what she promised me before I left my village"* (Jessie).

"She asked me if I can come, if I can come to her daughter to be helping her kids and the house work for her. While she's working. And there, yeah I was, yeah, she was going to send me to school, while I'm here and she was tell me to do like, to be learning stuff like, do her ….and she will pay me some money every month and send me to school" (Isabella).

For the young people in this study, these adults used children's hopes to improve their life opportunities to establish contact with them, gain trust and to begin to form a relationship with them. Having raised children's expectations and made promises to them, coupled with other adults around them telling them they should go, children left their homes to travel with these adults. Some children described how they were excited about new prospects and were keen to travel,

"I was excited…yes I was excited….who doesn't want to come to a place where they said you have pretty much, have anything you want, go to school, you will meet new people and you know of course you feel excited, I just wanted to come…" (Hayley).

Other children felt they had no other choice but to leave, and to travel with these adults who were offering an alternative. Jessie was left with no one to care for her; she was at the time grieving for her grandmother and described how she did not know what was really happening at the time,

"I was depressed, couldn't say anything, just crying...I didn't know what I am doing, when I was travelling down to [Nigerian city] *so I wasn't myself"* (Jessie).

Ammar, Jiao and Grace left with 'agents', to be smuggled out of their home countries by people traffickers, arrangements made for them by relatives,

"When my uncle he do a deal with agent...I didn't have choice. I didn't have choice anything to do with him or anything..." (Ammar).

Unbeknown to them at the time, these adults would abuse the trust they had gained with children and go on to mistreat and use them for their own gain.

Mistreated and used

Children then found themselves in situations where the promises made by adults did not materialise and children's hopes were not realized. Young people described how the adults they had come to trust to provide them with education, work or a safe migration route, started to abuse their power over them and mistreat them. Children experienced mistreatment by these adults at different stages of their journeys, before, during and after arrival to the UK. Some children experienced sexual abuse as soon as they left their villages, when they were taken to cities in their home countries,

> *"So, to go to school, they will take me to school, they will train me, I was so happy. Not knowing that another person want to use me to. You know, I never knew until I, until I get there you know... When I get to* [city in Nigeria] *they put me in the house with other guests. There are some boys amongst us, you know, they was using us, they bring other boys, other men to the house, to use us"* (Kayla).

Kayla was later re-trafficked to the UK and continued to experience physical and sexual exploitation,

> *"When I was in UK, I was with this man, and he bringing some people, he's really mistreating me...bring other men to use me"* (Kayla).

Children who left their home countries with people traffickers experienced physical and emotional abuse and financial exploitation *en route* to the UK. Ammar experienced his journey from Syria to the UK as very traumatic with people traffickers using physical force by hitting him, threatening him, denying food or water for long periods and financial extortion. The dangerous migration route Ammar was forced to take across the Mediterranean Sea, in an overladen boat was life threatening, the experience itself was *"like we are dying"* (Ammar), Ammar stating his journey was worse than the war he left at home. The clandestine journey Jiao made to the UK, taking several months, upsets her recalling the cramped, dark conditions and treatment by the 'agents', Jiao *"won't forget that horrible memory"* (Jiao). Upon arrival to the UK Jiao was kept in a house by traffickers, demanding fees to be paid for her journey. Grace travelled with people traffickers from Eritrea to the UK via the 'jungle' migrant camp in

Calais, France. Grace described being in the 'jungle' as frightening as there were *"a lot of boys there"* (Grace). She was mistreated whilst staying in the migrant camp waiting to cross the Channel to get to the UK,

> *"you are in the hands of the…what they called…Yeah with the agent, so you can't do <u>nothing</u>, because my aunt she was telling me 'just do what he told you to do' yeah otherwise I was going to be in trouble"* (Grace).

Other children travelled to the UK and it was not until they were at their destination, in private homes that their mistreatment began, experiencing sexual abuse, physical abuse, labour exploitation, emotional abuse and severe neglect. Arriving in the UK, Jessie explains,

> *"So, I met another life, I faced another life entirely, that was horrible, I couldn't explain myself, all I need is just that, they would ask me, they ask me, they ask me, the man would come to the house, and they would ask me to follow the man to go and collect something. When I go to the man, the man would need to sleep with me, the man would be telling lie that, that, that because that, oh this is bad, that even the lie, they are full of lie... three of them and* [name] *and two of them,* [name] *and woman. The man would be telling me that if you don't sleep with me* [frustrated sigh]*, that, oh my god, that police will catch me. If police catch me they will throw me..."* (Jessie).

Hayley, Isabella and Maya were all tasked domestic work immediately upon arrival to the UK, set long hours of work, cooking, cleaning, childcare and looking after elderly people. After a week of working in the house, Hayley asked

> *"what's happening? Is that the main reason why I am here?...that's not what you told me. That's not what they told me, that's not what my uncle told me I should, I will come and do. She was like, 'listen, I didn't pay £2,000 for you to come and sleep and for you to have free reins'..."* (Hayley).

Similarly, Isabella's trafficker stated, *"she's allowed to do anything she want"* (Isabella) as she spent money to bring Isabella to the UK.

Many children experienced multiple and repeated forms of abuses of power by adults, and were subjected to extreme forms of violence, either physical, sexual

or both. The term 'extreme' in this context, accepting the subjectivity of its interpretation, refers to the level or degree of force used in the violent acts, using weapons or implements, causing injuries, and sexual assaults including rapes. Only two participants did not refer to experiencing violence against their person. Ethan was not exploited or mistreated in his experience of separation and migration. Jiao, although not explicit about being subjected to personal violence, was physically mistreated during her migration to the UK. Young people experienced physical assaults against their person, often after expressing resistance to their exploitation, 'talking back' or questioning the adult over their situation. The language young people used to describe these assaults included being 'being hit' or 'beatings', which were often regular and for no reason,

> *"He, I think it make him feel like a man any time he touched me. So he felt like, because, like, because like being beaten for no reason?"* (Maya).

Many times, the physical assaults were severe in nature with young people sustaining facial and head injuries,

> *"she came from nowhere, just punched me in the eye, really hard that my eyes just ache. For now my vein pop, there was blood all inside my eye, it was swollen like and, and she continue hitting me…"* (Hayley).

> *"I was being beaten...my whole face was all big, by my madame's husband…he mashed his hand with my face, my face was so huge!"* (Maya).

Children experienced the use of implements or weapons during physical assaults causing significant injuries. Young people had scars from such abuse; Hayley was burned by a cooking pot when her trafficker's cooking did not turn out as she hoped,

> *"she just took the pot and she threw it on me and I think I had a burn, a scar... She just threw it on my, on my tummy and I don't mind telling you, the burn, I couldn't go to the hospital because I didn't have any GP so I had to kind of treat it at home and until it healed up"* (Hayley).

Isabella was whipped regularly with a long cable, with wires exposed,

> *"So that's what she used to beat me with, I don't know if you can see it from back here, to here* [showing scars across her body]*"* (Isabella),

the trauma of recalling this experience shaking Isabella's voice. People traffickers terrified Ammar when he was held and threatened with automatic weapons,

> *"they say again, again and again who open his mouth we will kill him... they have it like automatic guns... Yeah, yeah and I say 'oh my god, we are really in problem, if they kill me, don't speak, that mean don't speak'"* (Ammar).

Young people described how they experienced sexual violence, reported being assaulted and raped. Jessie and Kayla experienced multiple rapes being sold to men by their traffickers. Threats were regularly used,

> *"'if you don't cooperate with me, I will kill you here. Because I've paid money'…*
>
> *I don't have anyone in my life…using that advantage to threaten me. The fact you don't have anyone, 'we will, we will kill you and nothing will happen'"* (Jessie).

Traffickers also made it known to children that they knew exactly who to target back at home,

> *"You know, I always cry, they didn't take me back to my, to my village, they refuse. They don't want to take me back to my village. If I say anything, they will kill me, and kill the, the family I live with, they will kill them"* (Kayla).

Later on, once Kayla was re-trafficked to the UK, she was told they *had* killed her carer,

> *"Yeah, because the man, the woman, they told me already. And they kill the man I live with, in the village. You know, they said they going to kill me, really"* (Kayla).

Young people also described how they experienced emotional abuse, on a regular basis, taking the form of bullying, being blamed, insulted or humiliated,

> *"really like embarrassing me outside like, very insulted me and things like, I didn't really like it. But at the same time, I didn't have a choice. I*

didn't have a say in anything so, so she was always discriminating me and kind of insulting me telling me my life was worse back home" (Hayley).

Isabella's trafficker blamed her for other people's actions in the household in order to manipulate other adults into mistreating her also. Young people were also scapegoated in arguments between adults, often as a precursor to further physical abuse. Personally, young people were put down, and made to feel worthless, Isabella was told,

"you never ever get a child in your life, like, like you too poor" (Isabella).

Children were told that they were stupid and often reminded that nobody cared for their existence. In addition to being constantly reminded that they owed their traffickers for the financial costs of bringing them over, they were told that they should be grateful,

"You have a roof over your head" (Maya),

"Back home I didn't have this I didn't have that, now I have it. You know, I should be quiet, I shouldn't talk" (Hayley).

In addition to extreme violent acts committed against children and regular emotional abuse, young people's very basic needs were also severely neglected. Some children were in abusive situations for more than a year and during this time, they were not only denied access to any education, social activities or chance to make friends, but they were also subjected to more severe forms of neglect. The injuries caused by physical and sexual abuse were left untreated, with no access to medical care for illnesses or infections,

"I did ask to go to hospital, she said 'Oh how you going to go to the hospital?' I said, 'Well what am I supposed to do?' she said 'Well you don't have any papers how can you expect to go to the hospital? That guy, you know he took his daughter's passport so there is nothing I can do for you right now'" (Hayley).

On another occasion Hayley needed medical treatment she was told,

"I don't have the money to take your tooth out. If I go there it's probably going to cost me a hundred pound for me to take it out, why should I waste my money?" (Hayley).

Young people also reported they were malnourished with little time to eat due to the level of work they were expected to do in people's homes, or not being given adequate food. Isabella described how she was *"so skinny",* allowed only a thin porridge to eat and sometimes given permission to *"pick"* at leftovers from meals that she had cooked for rest of the household.

Several young people experienced abasement such as being left outside to sleep with no shelter or protective clothing. Hayley, Isabella, Jessie and Kayla were all neglected in this way as a form of punishment for objecting to abusive treatment,

> *"There is one day they want to use me, I refuse, he pour my clothes, do want he want to do. And I get, he want to do this and I was crying and crying and crying. What he did to me, because I was very cold, it was cold time. Yeah winter time. Yeah he pulled me outside, at midnight. At midnight yeah...midnight. I was very chilled me, I don't even have clothes...the clothes I have was what I bought from Nigeria because there is no clothes, like summer clothes. Yeah because in this country, for the winter, is not good to be in the summer clothes. It's very cold. I was shivering with cold. Later, nobody, nobody pass me because it was midnight, I was crying, lie down the floor, with my small wrapper, with my small luggage, you know I was crying, trying to get to sleep, I found a small card but no one see me... he shoed me like this, he said you should come, and from there I follow him again, he put me in the garden, in the cold. I was crying, crying where he put me, no heater. I was crying you know. And then he leave me there and bring other men to use me, you know"* (Kayla).

Children experienced being humiliated and degraded,

> *"I wasn't treated as a human when I was in that situation, I was like a dog, because the food the children spat on, they said I should take that"* (Maya).

> *"she always say that I animal anyway, she always call me animal. She always say animal, I animal. But in this country, when I left her, in this*

country, they look animal, they look after animal better than the way she treat me" (Isabella).

Alone

Being subjected to these experiences of extreme violence, humiliation and cruelty, young people recalled their fear and helplessness,

> *"I was afraid because, I can't say anything, I can't call…I can't run, I can't make call, no phone, even if there's phone, there's no phone in the village, you know…no phone, nothing. I can't write letter…who I give it to?...Nobody."* (Kayla).

Young people explained that they not only lacked the resources to be able to ask for help, but also described how they were acutely aware of their isolation, in having no one to turn to, or ask for help. They were aware that they were alone, and that they had no one to ask after them as they had no family, or were dislocated from family in a foreign country. Children were reminded by traffickers that their existence in the UK was unknown, typically having entered the UK on false documentation, or by hiding at the border, so were hidden from local communities and authorities,

> *"I didn't have courage to run away because of what they used to tell me, like what they gonna do to me, and how I meant nothing, nobody know I am here, if you die, I will bury you. No one will ask for me"* (Maya).

Children realised they were isolated in a foreign country, and had no knowledge how, or where, to seek help. Hayley recalls how she was ridiculed by her traffickers, who boasted to their friends,

> *"...telling her, her friends about it and joking away, they were kind of laughing about it like 'Oh, if she knew where to go and she was just going to leave the house, I mean!'. She's telling her friend that if I knew people, in London at all, I was just going to walk off and go there because I don't know, and I don't really know much, police number or something like that, because if I knew, I was going to call them and run away or something like that. So they were kind of laughing about it... So they were laughing because as I said, I couldn't, I couldn't, I didn't know where to go, and I didn't have the choice in not being there"* (Hayley).

Experiencing this isolation, with no resources to seek help, with no people to contact, or people aware of their presence in these households, children realised they were 'stuck' in their situation,

> *"like I have nowhere to go, I have no family here, so there's no way. I just like staying there to, you know"* (Isabella).

Isabella described how seeing there was no way out of her situation, left her feeling hopeless,

> *"Yeah it was a very hard time. I was just like you know, just kill me or send back. Was so, so distressed"* (Isabella).

Similarly, other children experienced mental distress in feeling alone and experienced acute suicidality,

> *"…no one asked for me, no one asked for me,* [upset] *so I felt <u>alone</u>… I felt like no one wanted me, and the people that wanted me it's only for me to be helping them out. I was <u>so</u> depressed…I wanted to kill myself. Even though I don't go to church, I was praying like, apart from, other two days I didn't eat, I had been feeling, that if god exists he needs to help me, that I cannot spend another day in this house….it was like, it's not like understanding like me saying it now, it's to be there, to hell"* (Maya).

Isabella recalled how she actively looked for something to drink to poison herself, Maya thought of burning everything down, and Jessie recalled how at the time *"I can't stand the life anymore"* (Jessie).

Commodities

Young people provided accounts of how they were bought, sold and resold by traffickers. Children witnessed exchanges of money between adults accompanying them in travelling to the UK and adults residing in the UK, and traffickers being explicit about sums of money having been paid out to bring children over to the UK. Children were made to feel indebted for the 'fees' paid by their traffickers, Olana was told,

> *"the man said, the one that brought to this country said maybe when I am working, then I will pay the money and little by little, yeah"* (Olana).

When Isabella asked to be sent back to Nigeria, her trafficker told her,

"all the money is spent, you haven't did the job. You haven't do the job you supposed to be do, so, you have to stay. If you have the travel money, you can, you can go by yourself" (Isabella).

Maya was constantly reminded that she owed her trafficker for the money she paid to bring Maya from Nigeria,

"... 'it's my money that I used to bring you here, and you're going to do anything, nothing, to even talk about, even you having some spare time to yourself. It's my, my money'. That thing was very powerful in her mouth, 'my £3,000'...

...all the time she always talking about £3,000... Yeah, that it's <u>her</u> money that she used. Even when her friend was telling her to take me to school, she say 'It's <u>my</u> £3,000, it's not your money that I used to bring her here'. You know, 'So whatever I do, it's my time', you know?" (Maya).

Further commodification of children was reported as children described how traffickers sold them for sex to other adults or exploited children's labour for profit. Many participants also reported how they were aware that they were to be to be re-sold, and preparations for them to be re-trafficked abroad were being made, *"the man here want to sell me to another country, another person"* (Kayla). Maya recalls how she was being sold to a male abroad,

"And the man specifically tell them that he didn't want a young girl that if the girl is too young, that he have a problem with the police over there, for sleeping with a young girl, that he end up in court, you know. And the sister that was discussing this matter on the phone... Describing me, saying that she wanted something from him, because after the conversation later a couple of weeks later, they send a big box from America. Timberland, big puffy jacket for her and trainers, Timberland, boots. Most of them had the logo on... Yeah, just sent over. But in that conversation what I understand is that he doesn't want to take me now, that I'm still too young... But the sister was telling him that I'm being well trained, that I know how to cook, know how take care of children, I'm very respectful, so they describing me to him" (Maya).

The man who trafficked Olana told her that they were moving house, she did not know at that time she was being re-trafficked,

> *"the man tried to take me out of the country, I don't even know, I don't even know that the man's try to take me out the country, he take me to Kings Cross and Pancreas…took me there, then bought the ticket, for me"* (Olana).

Olana found out later that she was deceived,

> *"that the man is not trying to, the man is not trying to take me to live in another apartment, the man was trying to take me out of the country"* (Olana).

Other, less obvious situations of commodification were reported, where children were not openly bought or sold, but were still treated as financial assets, by being transported and/or held for traffickers' financial gain. Children described how people traffickers were paid for agreed migration journeys, which did not transpire, and money was extorted from children in order to continue journeys or to be released, once the journey had ended. Children were thus also treated as commodities, as objects of value to traffickers, for profitable gain. Children experienced being treated as objects, as products, and 'owned' by traffickers,

> *"I felt like I was, like a, like a product. A product… she owned me, so I have to do everything she said"* (Maya).

Power

Traffickers exerted power over children, through a combination of physical, psychological and emotional tactics, and sustained control over children,

> *"they show us they have the power, we can do anything, we can kill you"* (Ammar),

> *"…and not just the threats, they make it known to me that they have power to do things and people don't understand it, it's only if you witness it"* (Maya).

Maya described how her traffickers threats and use of 'ju-ju' (voodoo) became a reality to her, she was told that no one would believe her if she spoke to anyone about her situation. When Maya eventually did have contact with police and social workers, and explained she was in fear of her life, she described how she was not believed, and left in the household with her traffickers, *"believing the*

adults, so I felt powerless" (Maya). For Maya, her traffickers threats played out in her reality, she lived through being *"completely ignored"* (Maya) by professionals attending the house, which made her believe even *more* in her traffickers power over her, and others.

In addition to children not having knowledge of who they could ask for help, and not speaking English to make themselves understood properly, children were in fear of coming into contact with authorities because of what they had been told or threatened with,

> *"we were all trained even the small children, not to say outside when you have been beaten… we were all trained not to answer the door to the police"* (Maya).

Traffickers told children if they came into contact with the police they would be arrested, go to prison, die in prison, or be sent back to home countries. These factors combined to create fear in children in approaching others for help, reduced their power in accessing support and simultaneously created a dependence on traffickers. When Jessie managed to escape her traffickers, she was on the streets. Never having left her village before in rural Nigeria, Jessie found herself in a large foreign city, where everything was alien to her, and could not communicate with people. Jessie recalls how she would have returned to her trafficker's house if she knew how to find it,

> *"I got lost, I was thinking that I am going back to* [name]*'s house, I got lost...but I don't know where to go back, I don't know the address"* (Jessie).

Despite being mistreated and exploited, children considered returning to traffickers as they felt that they had no other options. When Isabella was thrown out onto the streets at night, she tried to get back in the house early in the morning, conditioned in her role looking after the children,

> *"So I knock on the door and she didn't open the door, I was there for two, three minutes knocking, for me to get the children ready to school"*,

despite fearing that she would come to more harm,

> *"I was thinking anyway she open the door, she, she going to finish me anyway…So, she didn't open the door, so in my head I was thinking that she would have killed me"* (Isabella).

Ammar experienced one occasion during his journey when he could have left his people trafficker,

> *"you leave him and run away or you stay you go with him. I stayed. It's more better for my brother and for me because if the government office throw me in the street, that meaning what they going to do? These people in outside, they take me and my brother, maybe they kill me"* (Ammar).

On balance, at that time Ammar felt more at risk from other people and Italian government officials, than his people trafficker, finding himself on the streets in a foreign country. He was dependent on his trafficker for his knowledge and contacts to continue his journey and the trafficker held his papers and mobile phone.

Children lacked power in their position not only as subordinate in status to adults, but also because of the specific means used by traffickers to control them. Children experienced traffickers exerting and sustaining control over their bodies, their space, and time, and manipulated children's sense of duty, and loyalty. In these circumstances, at these times, children experienced powerlessness,

> *"I can't do nothing, I don't have no choice"* (Ammar).

Agency

With traffickers exerting such power over children, children experienced little room or capacity to manoeuvre. Despite this, young people indicated that as children they developed and used certain strategies whilst experiencing abuse. Children's attempts at resistance through defiance or objection to abusive treatment were often responded to with harsher treatment or additional 'punishment'. However, young people described how they did exercise a degree of agency within their constraints. Children developed various tactics in enduring some of their difficult circumstances, finding ways of lessening the

harm they were experiencing, or sought ways to gain some knowledge and power.

Ammar was people trafficked with his younger brother and described how on many occasions during their difficult journey he needed to act and think for both of them in order to stay safe. Upon reaching the UK, Ammar resisted separation from his brother, when he initially approached the Home Office seeking assistance,

> *"they say okay we can take your brother but you no… they say 'it's not allowed for you to take care, like take care of your brother because you are 18 and your brother is in 15'. And I tell them one answer is like 'I can to take care of my brother for a long time, I pass a lot of countries, a lot of dangerous place, and I keep my brother with me and I make it like safe place with him and I protect him. And now you tell me I cannot protect him, no I <u>can</u> protect him! I am allowed to protect my brother'"* (Ammar).

Resistance meant they were not helped on that occasion and slept rough, but stayed together. Despite facing limited options and choices in his own circumstances, Ammar appeared to have capacity to act protectively towards his sibling, offering him a degree of protection,

> *"so I take everything on, I cover him. So what happened, I cover everything, I don't let anyone to touch him"* (Ammar).

In Hayley's experience, she tried to speak to adults when the opportunity arose, to let them know what was happening to her in the house that she was held, but she could not make herself understood *"because my English wasn't that good"* (Hayley). With no access to education, Hayley *"had to learn English from watching English programmes"* (Hayley) on TV. Learning some English enabled her to understand more content of conversations about her in the house. Hayley also learnt to eavesdrop on her trafficker's telephone calls, which is how Hayley became aware of plans being made to re-traffick her back to the Ivory Coast. The little knowledge Hayley had gained was enough to act as an impetus for her to escape, as she feared being sent back to where she came from.

Maya, who remained in her exploitative situation for six years, explained that it took her time to develop some coping strategies,

> *"But you know it was later on that I was developing all those skills as I know it's not going to be given to me willingly"* (Maya).

Maya described how on occasion, she was able to snatch some time to herself,

> *"Like when everyone was watching a movie, they would tell me to work like drying, washing, folding, so I used to sneak on the stairs, like stealing* [time] *to watch movie what they're watching. And when they called me I would run back upstairs… Yeah* [laughing]...
>
> *…or I go into the toilet, and say I am pooing, but I'm not pooing. I just using that to sit down because I hadn't sit all morning"* (Maya).

In order to avoid certain tasks, Maya learnt how to,

> *"say I'm on my period. Because they always saw me like when I'm on my period don't touch my things, don't touch this one, like I will spoil it. So I like to tell them I was on my period"* (Maya).

Maya used this tactic as a coping method, for example, when she did not want to perform 'ju-ju' on the trafficker's own children when requested to. Maya learnt how to call the police from television programmes, although when she later had the courage to do so, she dialled the wrong number,

> *"Yeah and I called the wrong police!* [laughing] *I called the American one!"* (Maya).

Maya also hid the note that was given to her by a member of staff in school, who was concerned about Maya and wanted to refer her to Connexions. Maya used this note, much later, when she was ready to leave the traffickers and seek support.

Other children

An unexpected, yet significant theme emerged of children receiving support from *other* children and young people. Many young people in this study had contact with other children and young people during their experiences of being trafficked. Some children, particularly those held in domestic servitude, lived with traffickers who had their own children, that they were tasked to look after, or had contact with other children and young people connected to the

trafficker's friends or relatives. Some young people in this study were trafficked with other children, whilst others had contact with children when visitors came to the homes they lived in. These other children and young people mobilised support for those who were trafficked and subjected to abuse and exploitation.

Children experienced these other children and young people as sympathetic towards them, experiencing acts of kindness, such as being given small gifts or chocolate,

"the only person who was actually getting things for me was her [trafficker's] *daughter. Her daughter, she had a daughter, she was 17 or 18, something like that but she wasn't living with her so she used to come and see her all the time. So she the one who take me out and buy me clothes and do shopping with me and things like that. So she was, she was really nice; she was really nice to me...I used to like her a lot"* (Hayley),

"the sister was really nice to me, she used to buy a lot of chocolate a lot of biscuits when she was coming back. I like chocolate biscuits she used to buy Kit Kat and the one with nuts was it Snickers? She gave me a lot. So I used to hide it where I sleep under…I used to eat that. Most of the time I don't have time to make my own food, I'd be eating it when I was making other people's food" (Maya).

In absence of these children being allowed to form friendships, interacting with peers in the community or attending school, these seemingly small gestures were highlighted as the only pleasant interpersonal interactions children had, in otherwise very difficult circumstances.

In addition to acts of kindness, other children and young people also played a critical role in enabling children to leave their abusers. Other children and young people facilitated escape directly or indirectly through their interactions with several participants in this study. Upon arrival to the UK, Jiao realised she would not be released by her traffickers as she had no one that could pay the debt owed for her journey. Jiao's escape was made possible as another girl she was trafficked with suggested a way for Jiao to leave. Between them, they

planned and carried out her escape successfully. This same friend further assisted Jiao in making new contacts through her own, found her a place to stay and arranged transport for her to get away. Jessie was also able to escape after a young person attending the house recognised Jessie's abuse,

> *"she now see me. The way that* [name] *was treating me, the way that she hurt me, what was going on"* (Jessie).

This young person asked Jessie to run away and showed her how the door latch worked to test if it was unlocked, gave her a note to find the *"office home"* (Jessie) with some cash, and further advised her on the time to leave,

> *"she really helped me but I can't see them anymore to appreciate. Because if not for her, I would still be dead…with* [name], *enslaving me"* (Jessie).

Maya's traffickers *"arrest me my understanding and my speaking"* (Maya) of English, only speaking to Maya in their *"normal traditional language"* (Maya). However, unbeknown to Maya's traffickers, Maya was taught English by one of the trafficker's own children,

> *"She the first one that actually helped me to learn to read and write. She like a teacher, learn me to read and write. She print a lot of letters, word, when she come from school she would be telling me, do this for me, even when I was cooking, she'd be reading it"* (Maya).

The traffickers were unaware of this, the children keeping this from them. Having learnt some English from another child in the house, Maya was able to understand conversations held about her. This enabled Maya to overhear plans being made to re-traffick her abroad. Additionally, the children passed on information concerning Maya directly to her. Maya's decision to leave was informed by having acquired some knowledge about what was planned for her, as a direct result of the actions of other children in the household.

As these experiences suggest, the support from other children and young people was not only in providing some kindness and pleasant interactions, peer-to-peer, but the assistance offered was also at times *critical*, in terms of protection. Children and young people encountering participants in this study appeared to be motivated to take positive action to alleviate the suffering they

could see. Children and young people created their own relationships, and other children and young people mobilised what resources they had available to them, in order to help children in less fortunate circumstances than their own. The actions of these other children and young people helped the children in this study to navigate around abusive adults, in a clandestine manner, to enable young people to leave their exploitative situations.

Discussion

A different childhood

Children being separated from parents and losing their family ties, was the first striking aspect of childhood that young people perceived as shaping their experience, not unusual in their background contexts, and very different to western constructions of childhood. A 'normal' childhood in the west is generally understood as a "*peaceful existence in the protective bosom of the family*" (Kitzinger, 2004, p.166), inside a family and home (Engebrigsten, 2003), children typically cared for by at least one parent. Although children's separation from their families is not unusual in the west, with many children living in alternative care arrangements, being orphaned or separated from all family ties is more uncommon. For example, in Nigeria and the Ivory Coast more than 15% of the total population of children are orphaned, mostly due to parental death from AIDS related illnesses (UNICEF, 2006). There are limited statistics available for orphans in England as there are so few (UNICEF, 2015), but only 0.6% of all children in England were in care in 2013, of which only 8% were in care due to parental absence, parental illness or disability (DfE, 2014*d*). Children in this study experienced childhood very differently to western constructions of childhood, childhoods shaped by vastly diverging contexts. For example, socio-demographic factors such as high parental mortality and lower life expectancies of alternative older family carers, affects care arrangements of children of the global South. As for many children in this study, initial separation from parents, or being orphaned, was followed by an older relative carer passing away, leaving no immediate family member to care for them.

Separation, and a severing of family ties was a significant aspect of this experience, children left without any family bonds or connections,

> *"it's so stressful, for you to live your life alone with no one to support you, I've not got family, I not got that"* (Jessie).

Children's experiences of adults' expectations of them at home, was framed by household poverty, with children tasked with roles assisting the family in both reproductive and productive work. Children were tasked with responsibilities to support their families' existence, day-to-day, such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and looking after siblings. Children were also in productive work such as working on the farm, selling produce at market and in domestic work in other people's homes. Children viewed these expectations of them as hard, adults expecting a lot at their age, perceiving themselves as having to grow up quickly. Children seemed to share the burden of not only chores and work, but also concerns about having enough food to eat, and how they might contribute to support their families economically. These experiences can be seen to challenge western ideological constructions of childhood, as "*a carefree phase of innocence, in which children are free from 'adult' responsibilities and work*" (Evans, 2010).

Noticeably, young people did not talk about aspects of daily life associated with privileged notions of childhood; there was a clear absence of talk about friends, time for play, exploration and learning. Their experiences can be seen to defy universal models of childhood in which children are cared for, and their time is predominately spent in education or recreation, preparing for a productive adult life (Katz, 2004). Western notions of childhood are privileged built on assumptions that all families have enough material and economic resources to provide children with these opportunities. Furthermore, western ideological constructions of children can be seen to view children as deficit of 'adult' skills, and therefore, wholly adult-dependant until adulthood. However, the children in this study spoke of skills of independence, familial duties and responsibilities, aspects which from a western-centric perspective of childhood are typically associated with later stages of maturity, skills for adolescents or even young adults to learn how to live independently. Culturally patterned ideals of western

childhood can be at odds with alternative concepts of childhood, with differences about ideas about children's age of independence, social roles as breadwinners, carers and contributors to family income (Boyden, 2004).

The children in this study, whose childhood experiences were marked by trauma of war, political and religious oppression, and human rights abuses, also can be seen to challenge a hegemonic understanding of childhood as a time of peace, in a safe space, protected from atrocities, and exposure to harm. This view of childhood is underpinned by assumptions of childhood as a time of innocence, which views children as passive, dependent on adults to protect them, and have no innate capacities (Jenks, 1996). This conceptualisation of childhood fails to address the experiences of children who are exposed to violence, death, destruction and persecution, due to structural and political factors prohibiting adults being able to protect their children. Furthermore, the children in this study who witnessed political upheaval and experienced enforced separation from their parents and families were all politically engaged as individuals. Children conveyed how they were active politically, suggesting independent political thought and capacity to act upon their beliefs. Children experienced being politically active in humanitarian work, youth activities aimed at reconciliation and promoting opposition to single-party and oppressive regimes, despite the risks to them personally, and to their families. These experiences depart from childhood conceived as passive, children not having agency and expectations that children are apolitical, signalling a different view of childhood as politically aware, engaged and active. The children in this study who experienced enforced separation and were fleeing death or imprisonment, also challenge predominant views of child migrants as untrustworthy (Watters, 2008) migrating solely to take advantage of economic opportunities in more prosperous countries, rather than seeking refuge, safety and protection.

Perceptions of abuse and trafficking

What did young people in this study, as children, understand about child abuse when they had no frame of reference as to what kinds of adult behaviour towards them would be constituted as abusive, in the UK context? At the time,

children only had their personal experiences and what they had learnt at home, by which to gauge from how they viewed their traffickers treatment of them, as right or wrong. Children who experienced being trafficked for sexual exploitation, from the onset, appeared to have a clear understanding that to them, they were being 'used' and 'mistreated' by being sold for sex to men. Viewed as a clear transgression of their bodies, young people explained how as children, they tried resistance, and refusal, to adults' sexual abuse. Explaining their thoughts about the abuse, sexual abuse was rationalised and interpreted as a matter of survival,

> *"All I know is just that it's child abuse. Even I don't know that is child abuse because I'm thinking oh I don't mind for me to survive, that because, that person say if you don't allow us to sleep with you, you will be, you will be killed. You will be thrown away. Your corpse, you know my dead body…corpse will be thrown in the water, so I'm just doing the sex because I want to survive"* (Jessie).

Grace explained being mistreated in the 'jungle' migrant camp in a similar way,

> *"So I was like 'ok I have to do that one'. So when he says something I have to say 'ok' to everything. So otherwise, maybe I would not be here today..."* (Grace).

For children abused in non-sexual ways, the awareness that they were being 'used' for the sole purpose of traffickers' gain, appeared to take longer to realise, although the small sample size prohibits making any generalisations about the length of time in a trafficking situation associated with the type of abuse experienced. Children held in domestic servitude as 'house girls', experienced their traffickers expecting them to work long hours, beyond what would have been an accepted norm at home, were hit and beaten regularly and their very basic needs of food, shelter and medical treatment neglected. What is interesting about children's experiences in these circumstances is that initially, children accepted what they were expected to do in these households, in the hope of benefiting sometime in the future, with promises of education or employment. Given their childhood experiences of reproductive and productive work at home, coupled with being raised as obedient children, it is perhaps not

surprising that these children did not realise, until later, the apparent permanence of their situation,

> *"You know even doing the house girl work and everything that I was always thinking that my job would finish very soon, and it never finished, you know?"* (Maya).

Despite being raised and taught to be obedient children, with adults at home resorting to hitting children to control them, the physical abuse children went on to experience whilst trafficked, crossed a threshold of acceptance for children, especially being hit or beaten for no reason,

> *"but even if it is a reason, it's not right for someone to get hit in the eyes"* (Hayley).

Although not directly confirmed by the data, some form of physical chastisement may have been an accepted norm, in children's experiences of adult/child relationships back home, with the suggestion that being hit was sometimes justifiable, if there was a reason. However, children were clear that being hit, causing them injuries was not an acceptable way to be treated. In time, children grew aware that they were being 'used' for their labour, and being hit, beaten and ridiculed was a form of gratification to traffickers, *"was kind of like a drug for her"* (Hayley). Children became aware that they had been effectively bought, for sums of money, and overheard plans that they were being sold to others. This information, coupled with an escalation of physical violence against their person, often with weapons and children sustaining further significant injuries, acted as a catalyst for children seeking help.

The conceptualisation of childhood as subordinate to adults and the requirement of children needing to be obedient, informed the way children perceived their status in adult/child relationships. Raised culturally to never question adult authority, and to obey adults' decision-making, children in this study continued to be obedient with traffickers. The expectation of child obedience appeared therefore, to be a cultural custom and norm of childhood, abused by traffickers to control and manipulate children they trafficked,

"when I ask her she hit me for no reason because I ask. So I wasn't really allowed to talk about anything or asking questions and things like that" (Hayley).

Young people's perspective on the relationship between how they were raised and the process of them being trafficked, was that being taught to be deferent to all adult authority, created vulnerabilities to trafficking. Reflecting back on her trafficking experience, lasting six years, Maya explained,

"The reason this thing go on for so long is because I never challenge anybody, I always do, because my grandmother always tell me not to be disobey, you live a peaceful life as a child, you don't rebel... you go in hellfire, you know these things, you don't talk back, that thing stay with me" (Maya).

In the present construction of 'child trafficking', in which separated migrant children are variably constructed as an innocent and passive victim or, if not appearing to conform to this ideal, constructed as complicit children, neither side of this construction sufficiently explains the lived experience of children in this study. Children followed decisions made by adults, they were taught to be obedient and conformed to this expectation by obeying adults around them, both in the decisions to migrate and once within the trafficking situation. Obedience, then, was a lived experience for children in this study in the trafficking process, which appears not to fit the construct of a 'trafficked child' as innocent, or as a complicit and volitional individual.

As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, none of the children in this study were aware at the time, what trafficking meant, or that they were being trafficked. Foremost in children's experiences of trafficking, was the point of realisation that the adults they travelled with, deceived them. When the promises made by traffickers of children getting an education, or employment did not materialise, children became aware that traffickers had manipulated their desires for their own purposes. Children's trust was abused, being lied to by adults, was a significant experience of being trafficked,

"this is not what they told me when I came here, you should be, you know be, I mean a bit clearer to me, if that's all, if that is the reason what

> *I am doing, fair enough, I will do it, but that's not what you told me"* (Hayley),

> *"they are full of lie… if only they asked me"* (Jessie).

Reflecting back on their experiences, with hindsight, young people in this study explained trafficking to be a manipulation of their hopes and desires,

> *"trafficking means, you know, people make a wish, wish for things, I mean dream about some things that they* [traffickers] *know is not going to be real. And that's exactly what happened"* (Hayley).

Children's experiences of having their desires and dreams manipulated and exploited, indicates a complex process and dynamic of trafficking, where children in this study were effectively sold a story, believed this to be true, travelled with adults willingly, were excited about prospects in the future, but later on realised that they had been lied to, and deceived. The present construction of a 'trafficked child' as an innocent victim, hapless, vulnerable and forcibly coerced, and the construction of a 'smuggled child' as complicit and consenting, both do not seem to encompass the lived experiences of children in this study. The findings in this study suggest a different construction, a complex interplay between children obeying adults, whilst being manipulated, which can be presented externally (for example, at the point of entry to the UK), as a happy child, eager to travel, and excited about arriving in a new country.

The construction of trafficked children as innocent 'victims' also appears to not sufficiently encompass the complexity of children's onwards experiences when they experienced exploitation at destinations, after arrival in the UK. Children in this study were not forcibly held by physical constraints by traffickers. Trafficking and traffickers methods have evolved as to be unrecognisable from the historical view of slavery in human beings, in shackles. As children's experiences in this study suggest, children found themselves coerced by traffickers psychologically, through threats, children were controlled by fear of violence against them and their families. Children in this study experienced being bound emotionally through traffickers instilling a sense of loyalty and creating material dependence and indebtedness.

Children came to realise that they were trafficked only after intervention from services, children's experiences of coming into contact with various agencies is the subject of the next chapter. Looking back on their experiences, young people view their trafficking experience as defined by an absence of freedom, by being exposed to trauma, near-death experiences, violence and threats. 'Child trafficking', for the children in this study was a lived experience of a process, of being deceived by adults and lied to, leading to being mistreated and used. The 'child trafficking' experience was marked by an absence of education and health care, feeling alone and isolated, and treated as a product, bought for traffickers' personal gain, sold and resold.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of children's distinct and unique, lived experiences of being trafficked. The journeys children experienced have been presented to inform the reader of what life was like at home before migration, and how children perceived their particular childhood. Separation from parents and families was marked by poverty or political upheaval with children experiencing disconnection from family ties. Traffickers, for their personal gain, manipulated children's desires and hopes of improving their life opportunities. Children conveyed how they were deceived and lied to, and found themselves stuck in difficult circumstances, in unfamiliar places. Children's lived experiences have highlighted their systematic objectification by traffickers through processes of dislocation, manipulation and isolation. Children experienced significant mistreatment and being used, abuse which humiliated them and degraded them. Being alone and alien in a foreign country, children struggled to access help, with traffickers exerting power over children's minds and bodies. Despite having very little room for manoeuvre, children found some space to develop coping strategies. Significantly, other children and young people played a critical role in helping many children in this study to gain some power, leading to their escape.

Following the presentation of children's experiences, the discussion explored children's perceptions of their childhood, of child abuse and trafficking, in relation to present constructions of childhood in 'child trafficking'. Children's distinct experience of separation and losing family ties, was explored as the first aspect of childhood that challenges the Western ideological construction of childhood, in which 'normal' childhood is understood to be at home, in the family, with parents. Secondly, children in this study experienced their childhood as being engaged in productive and reproductive work to assist families in daily existence. These experiences defy universal and privileged models of childhood, which assume adequate resources are available to provide children the time and space for exploration, play and learning. Furthermore, children had skills of independence, they were used to familial duties and responsibilities, which can also be seen as not conforming to views of childhood as deficit of 'adult' skills, and signal different assumptions about maturity and age of independence. Conceptualisations of childhood as a time of peace, and protected from harm, also appear not to encompass children's experiences in this study of exposure to violence, death and persecution. Structural and political factors created upheaval, preventing adults being able to protect their children, challenging the notion that adults can provide safety. Children in this study were also active politically, challenging prevailing constructs of childhood in 'child trafficking' as non-agential and apolitical. Experiences of enforced separation, fleeing death and imprisonment, can additionally be seen to challenge the construct of migrants as solely seeking economic advantage, rather than requiring refuge and protection. A conclusion is drawn that for the children in this study, their own representation of their experiences and perceptions of childhood challenge western ideological and universal constructions of childhood informing 'child trafficking'.

Children's own representation of their experiences of being trafficked also presents an alternative rendering of the 'child trafficking' experience, challenging present constructions of the 'trafficked child'. Children in this study experienced a complex interplay between obeying adults, whilst being manipulated, initially willing to travel with the exciting prospect of new opportunities. This representation can be viewed as defying both the

construction of the 'trafficked child' as an innocent 'victim', coerced by force, and the construction of the 'smuggled child' as a complicit actor, inferring consent. Additionally, children's experiences of being trafficked at destinations after travel, also challenge the construction of 'trafficked children' as forcibly restrained and help captive. In this study, children experienced a range of methods of control and not necessarily by physical constraint, indicating a far more complex process, which present constructions allow for.

The next chapter presents the findings from listening to children's experiences of the next stage of their journeys, when they encountered services, along with their perspectives on how existing services within the 'child trafficking' framework could be improved to reflect their needs.

Chapter 6. Experiences of services and support

Introduction

Research in the field of 'child trafficking' to date has mainly focused on practitioner's responses, identification of 'child trafficking' and levels of awareness amongst front-line agencies (Pearce *et al.,* 2009; 2013). Brownlees and Finch (2010) conducted research into the provision of services for separated migrant children in three local authority areas and included young people in their study, but excluded 'victims of trafficking'. Research directly with 'trafficked children' is scarce; there is an absence of young people's voices in research not only about their personal experiences of being trafficked, but also as recipients of 'child trafficking' services. Hence, the focus of this chapter is to present the findings of young people's experiences of encountering services in England within the 'child trafficking' framework. This chapter, specifically addresses the research question,

> 5. *To explore how young people experience services within the 'child trafficking' framework in England, along with their perspectives on how existing services could be improved to reflect their needs.*

As set out in the *Research design and process* chapter (Chapter 4), young people's views on their experiences of interacting with services were obtained from 10 participants via individual interviews and an additional 10 young people participating in focus groups, a total of 20 young people's experiences of services were incorporated into the data set for analysis. All young people in this study experienced interactions and interventions with front-line practitioners and agencies: the police, local authority Children Services, the Home Office and professionals within the criminal justice system.

The main body of this chapter, represents how young people experienced services, presented under thematic headings. The themes that were identified were prevalent and patterned responses of young people talking about their experiences of encountering services. In addition to prevalence, the 'keyness' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of a theme was identified as capturing an important

aspect of children's experiences in relation to how children are responded to in 'child trafficking' policy and practice. The second part of this chapter presents young people's views on how existing services could be improved to respond to 'child trafficking' and assist children and young people affected by trafficking. From young people's lived experiences of interacting with services, young people offer practical advice to specific professionals and agencies, that in their view could aid prevention, identification and improve intervention to support their needs. The chapter also presents *Messages to young people*, young people offering advice from their own experiences of 'child trafficking' and encountering services, to other young people who may find themselves in a similar situation. The chapter concludes with a discussion on 'culturalism', an emergent aspect of the findings relating to how services respond inter-culturally and intra-culturally to children and young people experiencing trafficking.

Children and young people's experiences of services

Not being believed

The first contact with a front-line agency for many children was with the police. The police were contacted when children disclosed that they needed help, to an adult or to a member of the public, who in turn contacted the police. Many children's interactions with the police, particularly at first point of contact after requesting assistance was problematic. Maya contacted the police directly for help, fearing for her life due to her trafficker escalating physical violence perpetrated against her. Upon police attendance at the home where Maya was being exploited and assaulted, the police did not believe what she had told them that she feared for her safety at the hands of her trafficker. The police accepted the trafficker's account about the situation in the household, Maya's behaviour was dismissed as being *"just upset"* (Maya). Her paternity was left unchallenged even when the trafficker failed to provide a date of birth for her,

> *"it's the most stupid thing for police to accept… they accept it and they left me with him! Because he say he's my father. You know? And my father doesn't know my date of birth! … But I just think it's really disturbing, that the police who accept that. It make me feel like the police*

are so dumb, the dumbest person you can <u>ever</u> imagine! Because if he was gonna kill me that day you know, when they believe what he say, and just leave me, and they didn't turn up in the morning like they said… its bad like, it's really depressing… You know like all these people say 'oh the police will help you', it just come down to what my madame say, about them, 'they're not going to help you, they're not going to do anything', you know?" (Maya).

Maya's experience highlights not only how she felt let down by not being believed by the police, and left in an exploitative situation, but also the importance of how not being believed, fed into, and reinforced the narratives used by traffickers.

For several children, their first contact with agencies was due to being caught carrying false identity documents. These children experienced being processed through the criminal justice system, encountering the police, lawyers and court professionals. Kayla was arrested and charged for carrying false documentation and sent straight to prison. Kayla was not believed that she was, in fact, younger than the false age on the passport. *"I tried my best to tell them"* (Kayla) but Kayla felt she was not listened to and sent to an adult prison, as the age on the passport was used to determine agencies' response to the crime (despite accepting the passport was false). Kayla was 14 years old at the time,

"I think to me they don't supposed to put me in prison because I don't know what is happening. It's not me that, do this… I was in my village, you know… Never travelled before you know. I didn't go to school. I can't read, I can't write, so I don't think they were supposed to put me in prison because I don't know anything" (Kayla).

Olana and Isabella had similar experiences, with assumptions made about their awareness of committing a crime. Olana was given false identity documents by a man attempting to re-traffick her out of the UK,

"I did not even look at the ID, because the man give me the ID saying 'take this', and then when I got it they [police] *stop me and they take ID from me. They said 'this is fake ID this is not for me'. And the age in the ID was 20, 30 or something"* (Olana).

Despite trying to explain to professionals and telling the truth about their personal details, children were accused of lying and held responsible,

> *"So I was… telling them* [police] *my surname and they couldn't believe. And the Home Office also together and they was telling me that I'm lying, that this is not my surname, because they check the day I come to the country, and my pass… my document on the, on their computer and everything showed that my name is you know, the name that the woman gave me, so from there they told me that I'm lying… and I told them that this is not my real name, that is the people that bought me over, that give me that name, they done it"* (Isabella).

Children experienced being held accountable, treated as a criminal, charged with offences and prosecuted. Assumptions were made about children committing crime of their own volition, despite children trying to tell professionals facts to the contrary. Maya explained when she left her trafficker,

> *"the police took me to the station and I felt like a prisoner. Because they locked me in the small room of the, bang door … I felt like a criminal.*
> *...what have I done that makes me be in this place? I thought you had to do something bad, so instantly they make it like criminal, something bad, maybe something bad I did…It's like me dreaming to be free all this time, to be out of the place. And actually being out and being treated like that!"* (Maya).

For those children whose initial contact with agencies was with the Home Office for the purpose of claiming asylum, several experienced disbelief of their accounts of being trafficked. Jiao felt *"helpless"* (Jiao) when she was refused asylum, not being believed that her uncle had sent her to the UK via people traffickers. Similarly, Ethan was accused of lying about political upheaval in his country in order to gain access to the UK. Grace, who was fleeing imprisonment and persecution by government forces in her country, found the experience in the Home Office,

> *"it was so hard, like they don't believe you what you tell them"* (Grace).

Children experienced a similar lack of belief when disclosing what had happened to them with initial contact with social workers and foster carers.

Children Services did not believe Maya and Hayley after both had disclosed their experiences of being held as 'house girls', beaten and abused, and thought they should go back to the trafficker's house,

> *"the social service saying that they believe what my madame say"* (Maya).

Maya told her social worker that she would kill herself if she was sent back to the traffickers house but,

> *"they* [social worker and foster carer] *still didn't believe me, they still think I was crazy"* (Maya).

Hayley experienced overt disbelief in her account of being trafficked by her social worker and was asked to return to the trafficker's house. Despite later leaving the trafficker of her own accord, accessing services and being granted leave to remain in the UK by the Home Office, incredulity continued,

> *"Even, still today, she* [social worker], *when I meet her she still telling me in the background 'ah I still know what you are doing* [lying]*, I still don't believe you'"* (Hayley).

Not being listened to

Despite children telling professionals directly about what they were going through and being explicit about their fears, children experienced not being seen, listened to, or heard. When social workers visited the house where Maya was held, due to an investigation concerning Maya looking after younger children which resulted in the children being taken into emergency care by the police, the social workers did not ask to see or speak to Maya,

> *"Yeah like they completely ignored, forget about me…*
>
> *…the social worker didn't ask for me, nobody asking for me I'm being forgotten! My madame was back home that time, I strongly believe that something tell me that she was doing something, to make everybody forget about me, or if I say anything that they're not going to believe me anyway"* (Maya).

Similarly, Hayley found that social workers did not hear her and act on what she had told them about being afraid of returning to the trafficker's home. Children in this study spoke to professionals directly, but experienced a lack of acceptance

of their perspective on their situation, resulting in inaction by agencies. Children required someone to listen to (and act on) their concerns, but experienced difficulties in making themselves heard, "*when Child Services say 'oh you have to speak your mind' they don't listen*" (Olisa).

Several children also experienced not being heard due to language difficulties and problems associated with the use of interpreters. Olana, Kayla, Hayley and Ammar experienced the absence of an interpreter altogether, during initial contact with agencies. Olana and Kayla were presented at court without any explanation of what was happening to them, nor did they have any opportunity to respond to the charges brought against them due to not understanding or speaking English as their first language. Kayla spent six months in an adult prison before an interpreter was provided, eventually enabling Kayla to begin to express her voice about her situation. Olana was also charged with criminal offences without an interpreter and was unaware of what was happening to her.

When interpreters were used, several children experienced being provided with interpreters, who did not speak their language,

Amadia:	"*They give someone from* [name region] *but I am not from* [region]. *I don't, they don't, that day I use English I don't use* [language] *because the interpreter was dreadful.*
Olisa:	*Mine too*
Alinka:	*You too?*
Olisa:	*Yeah*
Udoka:	*…with the Home Office interpreter, I cannot understand because they are really fast and false, they are really false, they speak different, completely different…*
Amadia:	*What I would like to say, if they don't have the right interpreter they should make it so they have the right interpreter. Most of us scared of the interview and disappointed in having the wrong interpreter.*"

The quality of interpreting was an additional problem for many children in order to be understood and heard accurately,

"What I was saying was different, what the interpreter was saying was quite different" (Amadia),

"because the interpreter make it confused" (Olisa),

"what she was saying was different to what her interpreter was saying, was interpreting. Misunderstanding of language" (Udoka translating for Iana).

However, addressing the poor quality of interpretation was experienced as a problem for children, in not being able to challenge adults due to cultural custom,

Amadia: *"In our country, from* [country] *we respects people, if they are older than us, respects people. So where we see sometimes that the interpreter is not saying what we are saying, telling the interpreter to shut up is like being rude in our country, so we are not allowed to say, we can't…*

Olisa: *We can't stop them*

Amadia: *We can't show them, coz it's like respect…*

… We have to, if this thing happen in interview room we from [country] *would wait until the interview was over which might be too late."*

Providing evidence

Children experienced a primary focus on gathering evidence in contact with agencies and the requirement of children to provide material proof to back up their testimonies. Jessie's first contact with any agency was at the Home Office,

"I got to Home Office, they ask me that first and foremost, I need to show them that house… the house… I say 'I don't know!'" (Jessie).

Similarly, the police required evidence from Isabella, and asked her to take them to the trafficker's house,

"I couldn't, you know because I don't leave the house, I don't go out, at that time, I don't read and write for the postcode or these things…" (Isabella).

Hayley's experience highlights the kind of difficulties in agencies obtaining evidence during investigations,

> *"[I]* have interview and all these things, and ask me question and same question over and over and over and over. And at the end they said 'well we couldn't find enough evidence that we had a trafficker here'. 'Well' I said 'you know you're not going to find any because she, you know the person who trafficked, who brought me here, took passport as well so there's nothing actually for you to find'"*(Hayley).

A lack of concrete, tangible evidence to prove what children had disclosed about being trafficked was, in their view, connected to them not being believed by practitioners. As a consequence of a lack of material evidence, the police and Hayley's social worker did not accept that she was trafficked,

> *" because, for them it's like, as long as we cannot see any proof we don't believe you've been trafficked because probably, one of the lady was telling 'a lot of kids make up things, so part of it is you, you, you're one of those that probably made up things what happened to you' and whatever"* (Hayley).

Similarly, Ethan's experience in claiming asylum centred on his ability to provide additional evidence, but that, which had been already provided. The Home Office insisted on original copies of his father's arrest warrant, impracticable to obtain from hostile government forces in his home country. The Home Office accused him of fabricating his experiences, telling him that there was *"no real proof of what we were saying"* (Ethan), and consequently refused his claim.

Isabella indicated a conditionality of being helped by agencies if she co-operated with the police investigation and prosecution of the trafficker,

> *"…like they* [police] *told me that all this way, they can help me if, I had to take the woman* [trafficker] *to court"* (Isabella).

Despite continuing to be very frightened of her trafficker,

> *"…I was so scared that if they took her to court, she would hurt me. She going to hur… Yeah, she going to kill me anyway, she see me. Because she have money, she can give money to people to do anything"* (Isabella),

Isabella assisted in the investigation to identify her trafficker. However, children experienced an increased risk to their safety during such investigations. Isabella was asked to go the trafficker's house, knock on the door, to see if she could identify the people and children there, *"it was so scary that they took me to the place* [trafficker's address]*"* (Isabella). In Amadia's experience, her traffickers knew that they were being investigated because of Amadia speaking to the police. During enquiries, the police had told them what Amadia had disclosed, so the traffickers knew whom the allegations were made by. In Amadia's view *"they should try to like keep the victim out of sight, they should keep the victim's opinion out of it"* (Amadia). As a consequence of the investigation, Amadia felt more at risk as she was attacked on two occasions whilst in foster care,

> *"I know this is real we were trafficked before and we was really scared…*
>
> *… it puts my life more at risk than it was already. In my own case now, it's getting to a point that I feel that talking to the police was the wrong idea"* (Amadia).

Jessie experienced formal acceptance as having been trafficked by Children Services and the Home Office, after medical evidence was obtained, but without a positive outcome for her,

> *"I received a letter from Home Office saying that it was true that I was trafficked because they examined my body, they see the way, I don't know, they take me to GP, they took me to GP to do something in my body … Home Office get back to me that I was trafficked… Yes, but they refuse to give me* [status]*"* (Jessie).

For many children, the criminal and Home Office investigations into their abuse failed to result in successful prosecutions. For the young people in this study, providing substantial evidence appeared to present as conditions for acceptance in children's accounts, and therefore access to assistance and support. Isabella experienced being disbelieved for over a year and a half until her trafficker was prosecuted, only then Isabella was assured by the police that she would not be sent back to Nigeria. For Jessie, despite her assurances of co-operation,

> *"I promise them if I see* [trafficker's name], *I will point her out…"* (Jessie),

she has not been granted permission to stay in the UK, leaving her fearful of deportation,

> *"…but it's like they are not ready to listen, now in stark reality I've started blaming myself. Because I know if I, because if they deport me now, where do they want me to go? I don't know where to go now. Now they want me to be blaming myself that why did I say the truth?*
> *...now, I'm scared of Home Office now"* (Jessie).

Blame and complicity

Beyond initial responses of disbelief experienced by children, several participants felt blamed for their circumstance by professionals in front-line services,

> *"I had a lawyer which come, she from my country, anything I said to her, she doesn't believe me. She said someone, she always like blaming me, that someone bring you over and you lazy person. She always like, she doesn't want to do, she doesn't want to help me… like she's telling me that someone bought me from my country… and they, she's asked me to do something and I don't want to do it, that's what happened like. The lawyer, she blame me what happened… that I had to do whatever she* [trafficker] *ask me to do…and she said that the woman* [trafficker]*, she's right, like the woman she's right"* (Isabella).

In Isabella's situation, when the Home Office accused her of lying, the lawyer, appointed to represent Isabella's interests, agreed with the Home Office. Children experienced social workers taking a similar position,

> *"one of the social workers was telling me that 'oh what did you actually do for your aunt to do this?' Like… Yeah, it was like, 'are you sure that it's not something that you done', it's, because she was a black lady, I don't know what country she was, but she was a black lady. And she was like, 'are you sure it's not something that you did, that's the reason why your aunt done that'"* (Hayley).

In Hayley's account, the social worker 'reasoned' that Hayley herself was to blame, despite presenting with visible facial injuries *and* Hayley explicitly telling

the social worker how she was treated. As highlighted earlier, Hayley was sent back to her trafficker by Children Services practitioners.

Maya experienced 'acceptance' of her trafficking situation by her a social worker, who told Maya,

> *"'you know what you're saying, mmm it's true what you are saying but these people* [social work team] *don't want to take that, they don't want to believe that. That it's quite really really strong, that my case is very strong, but that it's not something they see often, that they're not going to accept it'… but she <u>understand</u>, she understand… she understood exactly what happened…*
>
> *…Yeah she believed I was a victim of slavery, like being a house girl in the house and everything, she say she understands. But she doesn't want any, you understand what I mean like, she is not sharing it* [with social work team]*"* (Maya).

This same Nigerian social worker also acted as Maya's interpreter, but was *"interpreting things that I didn't say"* (Maya). When it came to taking a statement and reading it back to Maya, there were many mistakes,

> *"Yeah she was just writing the things in her own words, in her own perspective of the situation. Which I was quite shocked about that"* (Maya).

Maya was convinced that this social worker was working together with her trafficker due to not reporting her circumstances to Children Services, coupled with attempts to submit a false statement,

> *"That's when I start knowing, that she was actually, that she knew my madame and that they were working together… I think that maybe when she went into the house and must have had some kind of discussion with my madame and she might have said 'I will help you, don't worry'"* (Maya).

Informing Maya's suspicion of professional complicity and collusion, was Maya's observation of other professionals asking for their own 'house girl' whilst she was being exploited in domestic servitude,

> *"…when I was in the house, like important people used to come, like lawyers, teachers, you know…I know one woman, I think she is a lawyer*

she was even asking them [traffickers] *she wanted a girl like me. You understand, to be living with her, what kind of girl does she want? They make it like a pet, you know like when you have a dog, I like your dog, it's very good, well behaved, where can I get one?'"* (Maya).

Several other young people in this study indicated that whilst experiencing being trafficked, they came into contact with various adults in the community, particularly of the same ethnic origin, who were aware that they were being exploited. Children experienced coming into contact with neighbours, parents, hairdressers, restaurant staff, family friends and priests, in addition to front-line professionals who failed to act on their situation,

> *"So it made me feel the whole system was corrupt. Because you know like when people are in denial? She* [social worker] *doesn't want, I felt like, the people from my country working in their department* [Children Services]*, they don't want anyone else to* <u>know</u>*, that something like this could happen in their… community or in their culture. So they want them to see their culture like as perfect, well behaved"* (Maya).

This indicates a possible cultural protectionism within communities, leaving young people distrustful of adults. Inter-cultural and intra-cultural recognition of child abuse is taken up further in the discussion in this chapter.

Lack of support

For those children allocated a social worker after initial contact with agencies, a common experience was that children felt they could not turn to them for support, to have someone listen to their concerns. Jessie experienced being allocated three different social workers, with variable levels of contact and support, and found their intervention as *"not helping the situation on the ground"* (Jessie). In young people's perspectives, social workers were preoccupied with writing reports and letters, *"because my social worker would write a letter…through post"* (Olisa), rather than speak to children, *"they should have a meeting, instead of sending letters"* (Amadia). An absence of regular contact with social workers, a lack of opportunities to meet face-to-face and not being

listened to when concerns were shared, left children with the impression about a lack of care,

> *"you don't really think of the person you are working for… You only think about how much you will get paid and how your payment will be done this month… not all of them do the job because they care"* (Monifa),

> *"It's all about business, you make your money and you get paid the next week…none of them do this job as a serious matter any more"* (Hayley).

Children experienced further difficulties in being heard about concerns they had about the quality of their foster care arrangements. Amadia was concerned about her foster carer's reaction when she wanted to change her placement,

> *"my one said…it's not bad, stop complaining, you cease complaining… the foster carer put fear inside me"* (Amadia).

Other young people described how they experienced what would appear to be harmful actions by their foster carers. Iana was taken to a 'prophet' by her foster carer,

> *"He ['prophet'] said that where she's coming from she did a very bad thing there, the prophet said that to the foster carer"* (Amadia translating for Iana),

> *"The prophet was praying and the prophet said 'oh it must have been something horrible in* [home country]. *You are wicked'"* (Olisa translating for Iana).

Iana was scared, her foster carer having threatened her, *"if she told anyone about this, she would hurt her, she will punish her for saying"* (Udoka translating for Iana). Maya also experienced serious concerns with her foster carer,

> *"I felt like she start wanting to slave me. She said don't use a mop, you have to get on your knees and be mopping the toilet, mopping everything, not just our own, upstairs, even her dad, because he would make an accident, someone who is disabled expected of them. So he would make an accident, so I would be cleaning wee and all that, and she started telling me I'm an illegal immigrant, they're going to send me back, without her I'm nothing. I'm not going to stay here…even the social worker won't come and check on you, I was left with her and she keep*

telling me that her money didn't come on time. That even make her more angry that no one is helping her enough. And because of that I was actually going back to my old way of living" (Maya).

In these situations, children reported their concerns to social workers, but experienced social workers siding with foster carers. Iana *"was not believed... social services said don't worry about it"* (Amadia translating for Iana). Maya was not given the opportunity to speak to her social worker alone during her placement review meeting to express her concerns. In foster care placements children experienced not being heard, or having a voice,

> *"and in the assessment, the review, a young person have a right to express his own view! We are in foster care, we are not in prison. So we have the right to defend ourselves to say… and not social services believing what the foster carer says"* (Amadia).

Positive experiences

Amongst the difficult experiences young people reported with agencies within the 'child trafficking' framework, individual professionals and key support services were experienced that made a significant and positive difference to children. Key aspects of positive experiences with professionals were a sense of trust and relational qualities of the support relationship, combined with practical support. For this group of children and young people *"trust is very important as it's very difficult to trust any other person"* (Mirembe), which can take time to establish, and requires a person,

> *"to listen, young person would be able to more open up, not be able at first…*
>
> *it takes a long time for that young person to open up, in my experience"* (Mirembe).

Maya encountered many different professionals from various agencies whom she distrusted after experiencing that they failed to respond to her needs. In contrast, an immigration officer was a 'stand-out' professional who offered her assurance,

"...he was the first person that tell me, that, he's one of the professionals not from my country, that he know and understand what happened to me. You understand? It's not like something new to him, he is assuring me that no one is moving me anywhere without his permission. That I should feel, how can I say, I should feel relaxed to know that nobody is going to do anything to me without him being, being asked...so immediately like that, I feel I have somebody, that is there" (Maya).

Children appreciated the relational qualities of relationships with professionals coupled with practical support, such as *"social workers who were more caring"* (Hayley). Jiao felt she had *"no hope"* (Jiao) until her social worker began supporting her, aided her release from custody, arranged accommodation and foster care, subsistence and legal advice. For Jiao, the social worker gave her hope, her *"life changed as soon as the social worker was involved"* (Jiao). Olana's social worker who *"was really nice,* [name] *is lovely, she's friendly you know. She advised me, she talked to me, she tried to get some more information for me, yeah she's really nice"* (Olana), helped her to navigate the age assessment and immigration processes, which were a *"headache"* (Olana). Other qualities children appreciated in positive relationships with professionals were those who treated them *"like their own"* (Amadia). Jessie experienced a social worker that was *"like my grand mum"* (Jessie) who *"was nice to me. She understands the situation"* (Jessie). Jessie also experienced a key worker who could listen to her being upset, *"to console me, she tried to encourage me"*, keeping in contact with Jessie when feeling low and suicidal, and making her laugh.

Key support services that young people valued within the 'child trafficking' framework were the Refugee Council and NGO's supporting 'trafficked children'. The Refugee Council was experienced by many participants in this study as the only service offering advocacy and helped children deal with the many problems encountered with *other* statutory agencies and services. Maya was able to voice her concerns to the Refugee Council about her foster carer which she experienced as abusive, who then intervened and got her moved to another placement, *"they were brilliant"* (Maya). Hayley managed to get legal

representation via the Refugee Council to challenge Children Services who were refusing to support Hayley to leave her trafficker, having already condoned her return to the trafficker previously. Isabella's lawyer who blamed her for her situation and advised the Home Office that Isabella was lying, was removed from her role in representing Isabella, after intervention from the Refugee Council. In Ammar's experience, after three months in adult refugee detention, the Refugee Council played a central part in challenging the Home Office and aiding his release. For these children the Refugee Council appeared to act in an important advocacy role on behalf of children, liaising with and challenging statutory services, to secure children's rights, entitlements and access to support.

Many participants in this study experienced involvement with NGO services, specifically designed to assist 'trafficked children'. In addition to direct individual support from specialist support workers, these services facilitated children's engagement in peer support groups or youth programmes. Young people placed a high value on these services, providing them with two key functions, raising awareness and peer-to-peer support. Children experienced an increased awareness of their own situation by being involved with these services and gained knowledge about trafficking,

> *"I don't know that it's called trafficking, I don't really…when I joined the group…that's when I am now listening to 'trafficking'"* (Jessie).

Olana was not aware that her trafficker was attempting to re-traffick her out of the country, until a NGO practitioner helped her to understand the situation she was in. Children had trouble in navigating several different agencies and processes within the 'child trafficking' framework, which the NGO's provided support with. Children also experienced an increased awareness of their rights and entitlements,

> *"being here kind of made me more tougher, being in this group, kind of make me more aware of a lot of things that social workers and foster families, and police are meant to do"* (Hayley).

Most young people in this study, experienced no contact with family nor had any social networks, and very limited, if not any, knowledge of how to access resources or services. The specialist peer-to-peer support offered by these

services, provided an opportunity for children to meet others, share experiences and develop friendships,

> *"I have met people that have been trafficked as well, I was trafficked too. I can see them as a family. They are the one that I need, have in my life, I have not got any others in my life which is true…I see them as my family"* (Jessie).

Recommendations from young people

The chapter next addresses young people's views on how existing services could be improved to respond to children and young people experiencing trafficking. Children's lived experiences of interacting with services, within the 'child trafficking' framework have been represented in the main body of this chapter. This section specifically focuses on young people's practical advice for front-line services such as the police, the Home Office, Children Services departments and other relevant agencies coming into direct contact with children and young people. Young people suggested several improvements to services and interventions, which in their view, could aid children and young people who experience trafficking.

Young people explained it was difficult to offer services advice to aid prevention of their trafficking and exploitation as the trafficking process had begun much earlier in source countries. In their experiences, upon arrival to the UK, they were travelling with hopes and promises of better life opportunities and so a trafficking situation may be difficult to identify,

> *"So it would be very hard let's say for, for immigration person to, to notice a trafficking little girl because she will be very excited and happy and bubbly and things like that"* (Hayley).

Furthermore, at the point of entering the UK, many children had not yet experienced exploitation and did not know what was going to happen to them at the point of destination. Despite this, young people advised, that there is potential in identifying a 'trafficked child' *en route*, at the first point of arrival. Several young people in this study travelled on false identification, posing as other young people. Young people advised that border staff and police *"should*

ask them question, and look the documents where, if they do come, do fingerprints on their system, to check every passport" (Kayla). As was the experience of many young people in this study, the photograph in passports was similar to their own appearance, but border staff could be aware that children and young people are made to look older, such as wearing high heels. Young people advised border staff to speak with children directly, by asking their name and age, *"if it's really the person, if it's the real person that holds the passport"* (Kayla). Despite children being coached by traffickers for travel, in what to say to officials, children stated that when they were challenged by officials, they would often not be able to maintain the lies they had been coached to say. Furthermore, young people advised that services could target arrivals of children from known source countries, *"I think they need to do something about it…especially Nigerian people"* (Kayla).

Apart from recommendations to increase checks at border controls and children to be spoken to directly, in the hope of preventing a child from going on to be exploited, *all* other advice from young people to improve services focused on children and young people requiring assistance in later stages of their journeys. Once the reality had set in, that young people's hopes and promises were not going to be fulfilled, and they experienced being abused and exploited by adults, young people advised that it was at this stage they required most assistance. The following recommendations therefore, address the needs of children and young people at this later stage of their trafficking experience.

Contact with services

Young people's central message to all services, when children approach professionals seeking support is to "*believe"* (Maya, Jiao) them when they explain what they have been going through. Young people advised that professionals need to *"listen more"* (Jiao) to children, particularly the Home Office, who tend not to believe them, leaving children feeling *"helpless"* (Jiao) when accused of lying. Listening, was identified as a key facet of improvements services could make, central to children and young people being believed,

>   *"Listen to the victim before you judge"* (Ekene).

In addition to believing young people and listening to them, young people advised that professionals *acting* on the information conveyed by young people could improve services,

> *"listen, take in what they like, you know, if someone goes to them with information, take it in, use that information, don't just stick it in the back of your head and forget about it"* (Hayley).

With specific reference to the police, in suggesting ways to aid identification of children who have been trafficked, young people stressed the importance of the police needing to speak to children alone. When young people were spoken to in the presence of adults abusing them, with the police *"believing the adults"* (Maya), young people *"felt powerless"* (Maya). By speaking to children alone, young people felt that the police could ascertain a truer picture of the circumstances. The police could also challenge adults over simple facts such as dates of birth of children in their care.

For social workers, advice given was to question their own disbelief of children's accounts, by asking themselves *"what if?"* (Maya) the child were to be telling the truth, *"and go extra mile to find out what that 'what if?' is"* (Maya). Young people suggested further improvements to existing services as professionals having better awareness and knowledge of trafficking. Children Services could do with *"more information on trafficking"* (Olana) and training was advised for the police,

> *"the police, so they need to be more, more trained…they need to have more ways of finding out the key person who is trafficked…to observe and notice who is been trafficking and how it is"* (Hayley).

Advocacy

The importance of advocacy for children and young people in this study has been covered earlier in this chapter, specifically the role the Refugee Council played in assisting many children when encountering problems with statutory services. Young people suggested that other agencies, coming into contact with children who have been trafficked could *"get the Refugee Council involved from the beginning not later"* (Maya) or seek other forms of advocacy for them. Many

children experienced the importance of these services, including Refugee Action, in providing them with independent representation. Concern was expressed about proposed cuts to funding of these services, *"it is very bad* [if they close] *because all people they come here, as they don't know what they doing"* (Ammar), the service acting as an essential lifeline for children and young people from abroad.

Timescales

The Home Office delays in children and young people receiving decisions about their asylum status caused participants uncertainty about their future and fear of deportation. In young people's views, children who have experienced being trafficked need to be provided temporary status to remain in the UK. Applying for asylum and waiting for a decision was commonly experienced as *"taking a long time"* (Monifa), young people suggesting that quicker decisions would be an improvement. To speed up the process of claiming asylum, young people advised that better information systems, agencies sharing information with each other, could be possible, and would be less stressful for young people,

> *"why do they have to ask so much questions when they can easily get the details from the police, or the social worker or possibly the foster carer… They should not be asking a child, young persons that he already she have already said, they should just go and find details rather than asking again…When the police, the social worker and the foster carer and the hospital, these questions can easily be given to the Home Office"* (Amadia).

Use of interpreters

Young people's experiences of issues arising in the use of interpreters applied to all agencies, but in particular, participants found Home Office interpreters were problematic. Young people advised on the importance of ensuring an interpreter was present, and having the right language spoken by an interpreter to ensure children and young people could be heard and understood.

Furthermore, the quality of the interpreting was raised an area of improvement, in order for children to be understood accurately,

> *"the Home Office should tell the interpreter not to change the words…when the interpreter is interviewing someone, they should make sure that the interpreter is saying exactly what the client is saying, exact words, not putting more in so making it look good"* (Amadia).

Additionally, young people raised their concern that there can be cultural norms that affect interviews with interpreters and prevent children from challenging adults who may not be carrying out their work sufficiently or accurately. Young people stressed that practitioners need to be aware of this, as inaccurate interpreting can have a significant impact on investigations, asylum claims and outcomes for children and young people.

Social work skills

Young people's advice on improvements to social work intervention centred on social workers' interpersonal skills,

> *"I think some of them do care about what they do but some of them do not really care, they see it as a daily job, they just finish it and go home and it's another day. And some of them do take the young people in, into their own hearts and you know, they have the kind of like, they kind of understand more. And I think you should have more people like this… social workers to be more caring and … less heartless"* (Hayley).

Improved communication with children and young people from abroad was also identified as an additional skill required for social workers,

> *"I think that they need to be well trained, in terms of how they communicate with the young person…Young people from this country, and young people from ours… the way we think and how we behave, there is not much of a similarity… need someone who understands my culture"* (Mirembe).

Young people also advised that social workers could have better in-depth knowledge of trafficking, an awareness of prevalence, and cultural understanding of children from these source countries,

"...need to trained in different areas of where sex trafficking is taking place, what country is more common and also more training about young people in this country and listen to their, what their needs are" (Monifa).

In terms of improvements to social work practice, young people advised that social workers could ensure that checks are made on children's details, who lives in the household and to check if children are attending school. When social workers visit homes, they could check *every* room and ask questions, *"what about this room, who sleeps there?"* (Maya), and ensure they speak to children on their own. Young people raised their concerns in not seeing their social workers, face-to-face often enough. Meeting social workers, being listening to, and an attitude of openness about sharing concerns, were highlighted as important aspects of social work practice for young people, over and above sending letters,

> *"We are all saying that they should listen to the views of the children, they should have a meeting, instead of sending letters, a meeting, it should be all in the open"* (Amadia).

In response to problems occurring whilst in foster care, for example raising concerns about foster carers, young people suggested that they have opportunities to discuss their concerns, in person to their social workers,

> *"They should like have a meeting, a private meeting. When it's like private and confidential. I think that a private meeting without the foster carers is really better for the child to speak her mind"* (Olisa).

Safe accommodation

Reflecting on their experiences of requiring foster care placements, young people were concerned for their own safety staying in the same area where they were trafficked. The continuation of fear of the traffickers' power and possible connections they may have in the community was of concern,

> *"Because in something like this, there is a big gang in this, in things like this, and they are well bigger than police, that you can ever imagine. It could even be someone that is working with them? That they are working*

together you know? Someone that can expect that would be feeding information back to these people" (Maya),

"Because she [trafficker] *have money, she can give money to people to do anything"* (Isabella).

Young people advised that Children Services could improve safety by finding foster care placements away from locations where traffickers and perpetrators still resided, reflected in children feeling at continued risk from traffickers, and feeling more at risk during police investigations.

Messages to young people

This section provides space for young people's advice to other children and young people and is the final substantive component of children and young people's direct voice in this study. Young people were willing to offer advice to other children and young people, learning from their own personal experiences by reflecting on their journeys and encountering support services within the existing 'child trafficking' framework.

Advice on travel

In relation to children being convinced by adults to travel, and finding themselves later dislocated and disconnected, young people advised against starting journeys without family connections at the destination,

"before you travel to somewhere, it is better you, it's better when you have people there, you have family there to go and meet not, you don't have any family then travel, it's not good" (Olana).

Young people warned against unfamiliar adults arranging their journeys,

"so when someone says something, we believe so quick. We believe that you know, this person is going to help and, because they are not a family, family members or anything so we just have to be very careful… believing people…

…Don't be so excited about whatever they say, they can lie… Lie, and you can end up someone, you know taking you somewhere you don't

know. And the killing you know, they can kill you or they can use you as a, you know, to make money" (Isabella).

Referring to travel arrangements made by people traffickers, young people warned about agents taking fees and then not carrying out what was agreed, *"Don't believe the agent, never"* (Ammar). Young people warned that travelling with people traffickers exposed them to personal danger, trauma and abusive treatment. They found that their lives were in the hands of these adults, *"you don't have any choice… nothing, you can't do nothing"* (Grace) and traffickers placed children in further danger by exposing them to hazardous conditions, *"because a lot of people die, and they don't care"* (Ammar).

Asking for help

A common experience for children in this study was being told by traffickers that they would get into trouble for talking to anyone and asking for help. Children were led to believe that if they talked to others and disclosed what was happening to them, they might be harmed, imprisoned or deported *"that's like the lie, they get into our head that we believe it"* (Maya). However, being told that services *"going to hurt us if we tell the truth"* (Jessie)*,* young people wanted to stress, *"is not true"* (Isabella), *"they're full if lies"* (Jessie), advising others,

> *"If you tell the truth in this country they will help you"* (Isabella),
>
> *"Tell the truth… Yeah, because I think say the truth, they will find help… It's better to say the truth you know because, you say the truth then you will be safe"* (Kayla).

Reflecting on their experiences of encountering services, advice was offered in regards to social work intervention. Young people *"should request not to have a social worker from their country"* (Maya) due to several negative experiences of practitioners (including social workers and lawyers) from the same ethnic origin and culture as the child. This advice was given in order to avoid any potential intra-cultural complicity, and potential connections within the community between practitioners and traffickers.

As a number of young people experienced problems with statutory agencies, participants advised other young people,

> *"To be more open to someone who is independent, someone like the Refugee Council"* (Maya).

Additionally, advice was given to seek out specialist support such as NGO's offering individualised support coupled with opportunities to meet other young people, as *"it is no good for you to face your life alone"* (Jessie). Meeting other children and young people in a similar situation helps to be *"together, share experiences and have a nice time, together"* (Jessie), helping to fill the void of having no family and no social connections. In terms of foster care placements, young people's advice was to try to get safe accommodation,

> *"Fight, to stay away from that area, until it's been clear that they're* [traffickers] *not actually there"* (Maya).

Personal advice

Young people offered personal advice to other children and young people should they be unfortunate enough to find themselves in a similar situation, although hoped and *"pray that I don't want anyone to be in my shoes, same shoe, because it's not good. It is not a good experience"* (Jessie). Young people advised others in a similar situation to *"be strong"* (Grace), *"just got to be strong"* (Maya) to get through their experiences. Young people added that to be heard requires strength, to defend yourself,

> *"I would say that young people should make their minds to speak their minds, there may mean some fear or might be some intimidation or whatever, they should learn to stand up for themselves and not instead of whoever, because they have a right to express how they feel. So they should come up and be strong and defend themselves"* (Amadia).

Young people also advised *"you have to be patient"* (Ammar; Grace) *"and you have to ask"* (Grace) for help, even though asking for help may not be what children are accustomed to doing from their own culture,

> *"Here its normal, you have to ask. In my country you don't ask"* (Grace).

Maya's advice for children and young people was to *"think about your own safety first"* (Maya), instead of considering other people's needs over your own, as she was accustomed to doing,

> *"I think you should start actually thinking about yourself, thinking about your life because, all these people you're thinking about* [the family Maya was living with]*, don't give a toss about you"* (Maya).

From personal experience, recognising that for *"people in that position, it's very difficult"* (Isabella), to *"think straight"* (Isabella), Isabella advised other children,

> *"if they are in that pain, if it's too much, try to move a little bit…*
> *Yeah try to talk to someone"* (Isabella).

Having lived through their difficult experiences and reflected upon their journeys, young people wanted to ensure others, that if they were unfortunate to endure similar experiences, *"that it's not their fault"* (Maya). Young people conveyed that *"once you come out of it"* (Hayley), it's helpful to *"keep focus on the future, and think less of the past"* (Hayley). The final message to other young people was offered as a reflection of personal growth arising from difficult life experiences, quoting Nietzsche,

> *"I kind of take it, take all my experiences as a strength. And as I say, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Well as long as you are not dead, you are a strong person!* [laughing]*"* (Hayley).

Discussion

Culturalism

In presenting young people's experiences of interactions with services in this chapter, two interrelated issues emerged, professional complicity and potential community protectionism, particularly when coming into contact with professionals from the same ethnic background of the young person. Complicity is referred to as *"the fact or condition of being involved with others in an activity that is unlawful or morally wrong"* (Oxford dictionary, 2015). In young people's perspectives, professionals were viewed as not taking action on disclosures, seemingly, accepting children had been harmed, but blaming children for their circumstance. Young people also perceived professionals as negatively

influencing other agencies' decisions in determining levels of support and discrediting children's accounts, acting in ways contrary to report or act upon, concerns of child abuse. Complicity is also defined less commonly as *"complexity"* (Chambers dictionary, 2003) and beckons an interpretive exploration of why it may be that professionals, in children's perspectives, responded to them in the way they did. Children's experiences with services and professionals appear to indicate a complex interplay between power and culture. Acknowledgement is made that this study did not address the views from practitioners, and so the findings reflect children and young people's views of adults' actions or inactions, as seen from their particular perspective.

'Culturalism' is discussed here as a concept which serves the function of seeking understanding children's experiences of complicity, or complexity of power relations relating to culture. Rather than the broader philosophical approach of Florian Znaniecki's (1919) thesis on culturalism as an epistemological and ontological alternative to idealism and realism, the term 'culturalism' is referred to here, in the anthropological sense, as cultural essentialism or relativism (Booth, 1999). Booth (1999) describes culturalism as the

> *"Particularity of each culture ... 'its' values and ways of behaving... can and should be interpreted only in terms of the particular values, beliefs and rationalities of the culture concerned"* (Booth, 1999, pp. 36-37).

Developing Booth's (1999) and Ife's (2001) position that culturalism undermines the theory and practice of human rights, two areas are discussed further, inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism.

Inter-culturalism

In 'child trafficking', cultural relativism is a critical area as questions arise about relative perspectives of what constitutes exploitation, especially in cross-cultural contexts. However, culturalism constitutes the assumption that if something is a cultural tradition it is above criticism, and *"somehow sacrosanct"* (Ife, 2001, p. 68). Ife (2001) asserts that social workers are prone to culturalism through a well-meaning desire to engage in culturally sensitive practice and value diversity

(Ife, 2001). However, a potential fear of challenging 'cultural practices' that are abusive towards children, beyond relativist perspectives, may arise from not wanting to implicate a specific community, in a climate of anxiety about being accused of discrimination or racism. The Laming Inquiry into Victoria Climbié's death acknowledged this climate, *"that child welfare practitioners may have acted, or not acted, in a particular way because of fear of being accused of racism"* (Garrett, 2006, p. 318) and *"that the views of practitioners, based on 'racial assumptions', may have had an impact on how Victoria was treated"* (Garrett, 2006, p. 317).

Fear of racism, prohibiting an acknowledgement that certain 'cultural practices' are abusive towards children and constitute child abuse, was also evident in recent reporting of 'child trafficking' cases. The Oxford case of 'child trafficking' fuelled national debates around the majority ethnicity of perpetrators as Pakistani (also in the trafficking of children in Telford, Derby and Rochdale), with questions arising about the propensity in objectifying white western girls by Pakistani men (Vallely, 2013; Hitchens, 2013; *Newsnight* 2013). Important issues began to be raised about dynamics between cultural perspectives, religion, abuse and community responses to the problem. However, these debates were quickly quelled in a climate of what can be regarded as cultural (over)sensitivity. Child sexual exploitation was quoted as affecting *"all communities, all races"* (Berelowitz, 2013, cited by Ramesh, 2013) with a particular emphasis being made that perpetrators of child abuse belong to different ethnic groups and no particular ethnic group being responsible (*Newsnight* 2013). These universalising statements failed to address presenting concerns and appeared to shut down an exploration of cultural issues raised, prohibiting open debate.

A fear was apparent of blaming specific communities for child abuse against a backdrop of concerns of a right wing backlash, especially given the rise of support of the English Defence League in the UK and following UKIP's political success on immigration issues in May 2013. Worryingly, confirming this, the Rotherham Inquiry (Jay, 2014) found a *"nervousness about identifying the ethnic origins of perpetrators for fear of being thought racist; others*

remembered clear direction from their managers not to do so" (p. 2). Jay (2014) reported a 'widespread perception' from senior people to 'downplay' the ethnic dimensions of the abuse (p. 91). Inevitably, this led to suspicions of collusion, intended cover-up (Jay, 2014) and allegations of professional negligence (Brooke, 2014; Pidd, 2014; Norfolk, 2014; Peachey, 2014). Inter-culturalism, manifesting as both cultural oversensitivity and fear of racism, in addressing issues of culture and abuse in the 'child trafficking' context, can be viewed as a form of 'cultural blindness' (Cross *et al.,* 1989). Whatever the form, culturalism of this kind fails to seek understanding how abuse might be specific to some 'cultural practices', values or beliefs. Without investigation, abuses remain unchallenged and tacitly permitted to continue.

Intra-culturalism

Intra-culturalism refers to how culturalism may affect responses towards children within a particular culture, between members belonging to the same ethnic group. For example, children may be allocated a child welfare practitioner, lawyer, foster carer or other professional from the child's same ethnic background, from a well-intended 'culturally appropriate' approach in practice with migrant children. However, the findings in this study suggest that children experienced relationships with practitioners from similar or same ethnicities as problematic, and caused them further difficulties. In young people's perceptions, professionals appeared to convey a certain acceptance that a child in their (trafficking) circumstances, was not unusual, and further blamed children for abuse experienced. As stated, with no data from professionals in this study, no inferences can be made, but questions arise how adults interpreted 'cultural practices' towards children within their own communities. For example, how did practitioners view, and balance, what would appear to be middle-class households in keeping 'house girls' relative to concepts of child abuse and exploitation in 'child trafficking' practice?

One possible explanation of a lack of acceptance that children were being exploited, could be a form of intra-culturalism, where professionals from the same culture as children and traffickers did not want to bring their culture into

disrepute or implicate a fellow community member. Acknowledging certain 'cultural practices' constitute child abuse could result in negative consequences for individuals within their communities. On the other hand, failing to act upon practices that are abusive, infers that one's culture or practices within it, are held in higher regard, above local laws, norms and practice in relation to the mistreatment of children. Failing to recognise, acknowledge and address 'cultural practices' that harm children can result in the reproduction and continuation of the *"most abusive and oppressive practices"* (Ife, 2001, p. 68).

Research with 'child trafficking' practitioners has indicated similar issues, Bovarnick (2010) expressing concern that some practitioners naturalised exploitation and child maltreatment as 'cultural practices' (p. 93). Lamings's Inquiry, also drew attention to Victoria Climbié's social worker commenting on Victoria 'standing to attention' before Marie Therese Kouao and Carl Manning, as *"seen in many Afro-Caribbean families because respect and obedience are very important features of the Afro-Caribbean family script'"* (Garrett, 2006, p. 318). As was evidenced in the findings of this study, obedience was a central feature in children's own experiences of their childhoods, but, importantly, this was as aspect of their cultural tradition that was abused by traffickers. Assumptions in practice based on race and culture can unwittingly contribute to culturalism, both inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism. As Ife (2001) notes, culturalism is based on false assumptions that cultures are static and monolithic, which denies those within communities who would view such 'cultural practices' as abusive to have a voice. Indeed, Victoria Climbié's parents *"made it clear that their daughter was not required to stand in this formal way when she was at home with them"* (Garrett, 2006, p. 318).

This discussion has considered how cultural oversensitivity, fear of racism and 'cultural blindness' (Cross *et al.,* 1989) can contribute to inter-culturalism within 'child trafficking' practice. Intra-culturalism has also been explored as problematic in falling to address 'cultural practices' as abusive towards children. A potential 'cultural protectionism' or collusion between professionals and community members, clearly signals dangerous and negligent practice and warrants further research. An exploration of how cultural values, belief and

practices shape practitioners' practice in recognising and acknowledging abuse is suggested as addressing some of the questions arising from this discussion. In 'child trafficking' practice, both inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism can result in serious implications for children by failing to acknowledge abuse and allowing the continuation of abusive practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of how young people experienced services and support in England within the 'child trafficking' framework. Young people reflected on their experiences of coming into contract with front-line services; the police, local authority Children Services, the Home Office, professionals within the criminal justice system and NGO's specialising in supporting 'trafficked children'.

Children's initial contact with agencies when they disclosed details of their circumstances and concerns, often with the police, was problematic for children, experiencing disbelief, not being listened to or ignored. Children were charged and prosecuted for offences such as carrying false identity documents, with assumptions being made that children were conscious of what was happening and committing crime of their own volition. In these circumstances, children did not know what was happening at the time, were not aware that they were trafficked, or even that a crime had been committed that they were implicated in. During investigations by the police and Home Office, children perceived that their testimonies about their circumstances of being trafficked and exploited were not believed without additional, material evidence. For several children, unsuccessful prosecutions of traffickers and a lack of substantial evidence appeared to present as conditions for children being disbelieved, denying them access to assistance and support.

Children experienced further difficulties in being both seen and heard by professionals across all front-line agencies. Despite some children having allocated social workers, they experienced not being listened to when they

shared their concerns with them, compounded by irregular contact, a lack of opportunities to meet face-to-face and social workers not speaking to children alone. Children's experiences of not being listened to, continued as a theme in the findings, due to numerous issues raised about the quality of interpreters used by agencies and failures in accurately representing children's voices. Children continued to experience not having a voice in foster care placements, even when at times, the foster carer's actions towards the young person appeared to be harmful.

Blame and professional complicity has been highlighted as a distinct aspect of children's experiences in encountering services, especially interacting with professionals of the same ethnic background. Amplifying this, the findings suggest that children experienced a denial that certain 'cultural practices' constitute child abuse, even when children disclosed abuse, or exploitation had been witnessed by adults. Children's experiences with services and professionals appear to indicate a complex interplay between power and culture, discussed further drawing upon the concept of 'culturalism'. In 'child trafficking' practice, inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism have been considered in how they prohibit a more culturally proficient understanding of cultural dimensions of children's experiences of trafficking.

The chapter also presented young people's views on how existing services could be improved to reflect their needs. Young people's recommendations centred on requiring assistance in later stages of their journeys, once they felt they were trapped in abusive situations and needed help to get away from traffickers. Young people's key message to improve front-line services is better recognition of the abuse children experience. Believing children is perceived as key to this, listening to *and* acting on what children are saying. Young people gave several accounts of talking to professionals and being explicit about the harm they were experiencing, but felt they were not heard or believed and services did not take action. Services offering advocacy were identified as critical in assisting children with problems encountered with statutory services and securing what they were entitled to. Improvements were suggested to Home Office timescales and better information systems between agencies to

reduce stress and uncertainty children experience caused by delayed asylum claims. Several recommendations were made to improve social work intervention, centred on social workers' skills in communicating better with children. Young people suggested that social workers could be more caring, ensuring children are seen in person, and provided with opportunities to express their views. The importance of safe accommodation was stressed as important, as children felt at continued risk from traffickers and their connections in the community.

The chapter also presented young people's messages to other young people. Young people offered other children and young people advice on interactions with adults, advice for children on the move and asking for help. Reflecting on their own journeys of being trafficked, young people offered personal advice to other children and young people. The next chapter draws upon the findings from listening to children's experiences of trafficking and interactions with services and explores the 'fit' between young people's own accounts of their situation and the current construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

Chapter 7. Exploring 'fit' between experience and policy and practice

Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of separated migrating children's lived 'realties' of trafficking and subsequent involvement with 'child trafficking' services and considers their experiences within the context of the existing 'child trafficking' framework. This chapter addresses the research question,

> 6. *To explore the 'fit' between children's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England, in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs.*

The UNCRC facilitates a space for the child's voice to be heard, through children's right to participation, to express their views and have their opinions taken into account, with article 3 particularly applying to those who implement budgets, policy and law (UNICEF, 2014). Despite the UNCRC having no legal force in the UK, and therefore no statutory duty to comply with it, *"the government has reiterated its commitment to pay 'due regard' to the convention when new policy is made and legislation proposed"* (DfE, 2014*c*, p. 1). Until now, there has been a distinct absence of children's voices on how they experience 'child trafficking' policy. Despite the government's rhetoric in introducing the Modern Slavery Act 2015, as *"always keeping the plight of victims at the very heart of our policies and in everything we do"* (May, 2013, ii), 'child trafficking' strategy, policy-making and practice have been shaped without knowledge from children directly. An argument has been presented in this study that until children's views and perspectives are heard on matters directly affecting them, only a partial understanding of the construction of 'child trafficking' can be reached. Thus, having listened to and heard children's experiences to contribute to this gap, a pertinent next step is to explore the 'fit' between children's experiences, their perspectives on their own situation and the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework, in order to examine if the existing system is meeting their needs.

In England, 'child trafficking' has been interpreted by policy-makers through criminal, immigration and economic discourses and as a result, the 'child trafficking' framework has been orientated and situated as primarily a criminal justice issue, concerned with transnational organised crime, the prosecution of traffickers and illegal migration. However, within the practice framework 'child trafficking' is *also* constructed as a child welfare issue, with statutory responsibilities of local authorities under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. Children Services have a statutory duty and role to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children who may have been trafficked under existing legislation and established child protection systems (DfE, 2011*a*).

The key practice guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (DCSF 2007; DfE, 2011*a*) guides social workers *and* other practitioners how to respond to this group of children's specific 'risks' and 'needs' with a focus on assessment and protection. Within the 'child trafficking' practice framework, guidance for practitioners advocates a child protection response to protect children who may have been trafficked, recognising that 'child trafficking' involves children experiencing physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation (DfE, 2011*a*),

> *"The identification of a child who has been trafficked, or is at risk of being trafficked, should always trigger the agreed local child protection procedures to ensure the child's safety and welfare"* (*ibid*., p.11).

Furthermore, the practice guidance stipulates that all agencies, not just Children Services departments, need to consider the safeguarding needs of all children who may have experienced trafficking, and to promote their welfare,

> *"All agencies working with children who may have been trafficked into and within the UK should work together to safeguard and promote their welfare, providing the same standard of care that is available to any other child in the UK"* (*ibid*., p. 19).

This approach is reliant on front-line agencies encountering children who may have been trafficked, practicing from a welfare perspective, recognising situations where a child may require a child protective response, and working together with Children Services departments.

This chapter examines 'child trafficking' policy and practice, *vis-à-vis* children's experiences and accounts of their own situation in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs. A different system, as conceptualised by young people is presented which addresses the current framework's limitations. Following this analysis, key findings of the study are presented, drawing together children's experiences of trafficking, their experiences of services and views on the existing framework.

This chapter draws upon the data from young people's experiences presented in Chapter 6 (in-depth interviews with 10 participants) and from a further focus group (5 participants) which focused on a conceptual exploration of approaches in the framework. The total number of young people's experiences informing this chapter is 13, rather than 15, as one young person did not experience abuse or exploitation and another young person had minimum input in the focus group, and so her views on the framework were not made clear. All 13 participants experienced the framework and front-line services within 'child trafficking' practice whilst children, under 18 years of age. The findings reveal the experiences of a small, atypical and heterogeneous sample, therefore inferences and generalisations cannot be made about the experiences of the populations from which they are drawn.

Discussion with young people about the current policy and practice framework involved a conceptual exploration around approaches of services towards young people. Young people were presented with a visual aid (App. 5) to springboard discussion, whilst reflecting on their own experiences. In the first instance, young people were asked if they recognised two systems, one where young people were treated like 'victims' and another focusing on criminal matters. All young people participating in these discussions recognised both approaches in responding to 'trafficked children',

> "*The government does tend to use these approaches. It depends on the particular perspective of the services and part of the government*" (Mirembe).

As this chapter proceeds to explore, young people provided their views on the approaches they encountered within the 'child trafficking' framework.

Immigration-led and prosecution focus

In terms of young people being asked which approach was closest to their experiences, overall, young people in this study reported that they experienced a criminal justice approach, as an initial response by services. Most participants migrated to the UK by irregular means, they were 'smuggled' into the UK by people traffickers clandestinely or 'smuggled' in by traffickers with false identification documents. The Home Office was a key agency young people came into initial contact with. With a remit of controlling borders and prohibiting migration by illegal means, young people experienced immigration officers focusing solely on the illegality of their migration. Young people gave several accounts of being explicit to professionals about their circumstances, how they were treated *en route* to the UK or subsequently experienced abuse by traffickers in the UK, but found their accounts to the Home Office were consistently met with disbelief and mistrust. The experiences of the young people in this study confirm Crawley's (2010*a*) findings of an over-focus by immigration staff in assessing the 'credibility' and consistency of children's claims (p. 166) and in doing so, young people's needs arising from being trafficked remained unaddressed. As a result, young people experienced a lack of protection, felt they were treated punitively, as illegal migrants, *"as person that don't have his rights… as human rights"* (Ammar).

Informed by their personal experiences of not being believed, young people were of the view that agencies' initial responses are shaped by commonly held beliefs that immigrants are to be distrusted, they lie, and come to the UK to abuse the system,

> *"Yeah, so they will take them* [UK nationals] *as, more as, more as a…how do you call it again, as a …what that word…um… take as vulnerable. And we are most like those people who probably lie about everything and want to be in the UK for certain things and we have always been placed as a criminal, <u>always</u> at the first time…"* (Mirembe).

The disbelief and distrust experienced by young people's through an immigration-centred approach, is very similar to Bovarnick's (2010) observation that practitioners can promote *"the view that trafficked children mainly come to*

the UK to 'abuse the system', thus questioning the integrity and 'genuineness'
of child victims of trafficking" (Bovarnick, 2010, p. 84). Further to this, as
Mirembe's quote above shows, young people felt that as non-UK nationals, they
were treated differently to UK nationals, and were more likely to be seen as,
and treated as, a criminal first, rather than seen as 'vulnerable' by agencies.
Young people from abroad in this study felt they were discriminated against,

> *"…it hurts, I feel like, that even though racism doesn't exist anymore, in a*
> *way it does still, because, if it's more, a kid who kind of like is born in this*
> *country and like want help, they will get more help that we coming ask.*
> *So they will take them as a victim and they will take <u>us</u> as a criminal.*
> *That's how I see it"* (Monifa).

These findings suggest that the young people in this study experienced a
primary response to their needs from an immigration-centred discourse, which
focused solely on the illegality of their migration, with the trafficking situations
young people experienced and need for protection overlooked. These findings
resonate with Pearce's *et al.* (2009) research with 'child trafficking' practitioners
that agencies working from an immigration-centred discourse put immigration
concerns ahead of children's safeguarding needs (p. 110). The unequal
treatment of non-UK nationals as perceived by young people in this study, echo
Pearce's (2010) concerns that in practice, children from the UK may receive
better child protection services than those from abroad. Overlooking child
protection concerns and treating children from abroad differently to UK nationals
are both contrary to the *statutory* duty introduced by the 'welfare principle' in
section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, which was
placed on immigration agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of
children. Prior to this recent policy change, as discussed in Chapter 3 (p. 53)
the UK government held a reservation of Article 22 of the UNCRC, which
effectively sanctioned restrictions on applying the principles of the UNCRC
(such as rights to protection and special care of children deprived of family) to
migrant children.

Another facet of young people experiencing a criminal justice approach to their
needs was a focus on prosecution. The findings suggest that young people in

this study experienced *two* dimensions of a prosecution focus, firstly, primacy given to investigations and onus on children to provide evidence and secondly, young people experienced being criminalised for offences. Young people experienced the primacy of providing sufficient material evidence in investigations by the Home Office and the police, to prove their testimonies. A conditionality of young people being 'helped' by agencies was also inferred, if young people co-operated with ongoing investigations. Young people in this study felt that without tangible evidence, agencies did not believe young people were trafficked. At times, young people experienced that material evidence was requested that they could not provide and when they were asked to assist in police investigations, young people perceived that they were placed in increased danger from traffickers. The findings suggest that for the young people in this study, agencies operating from an evidence-based approach in responding to 'child trafficking', may have been more likely to accept a child or young person's account with credible, material evidence leading to successful prosecution of the offence. A prosecution focus, rather than an approach centred on the protection of 'victims' (Scarpa, 2008) is aligned with the orientation of 'child trafficking' constructed as a criminal justice issue.

The second dimension of a prosecution focus was young people in this study experiencing being criminalised and prosecuted for offences associated with their trafficking circumstances. Children were held in police cells, prosecuted for carrying false identity documents, presented in court, and spent time in adult prison. As Maya observed, in 'child trafficking' the criminal act the child can be involved in masks the actual perpetrator,

> *"Because rather than thinking about the child being a criminal, you know like when they find some young people in a cannabis factory? Immediately they arrest them and maybe they find some documents in the young person's possession? Immediately they will arrest them thinking they are the ones that actually process the whole thing. Actually, they are not the one that actually commit the crime, it's like the person that actually committing the crime is using them to cover himself or herself"* (Maya).

Annison's (2013) research suggests that despite guidance issued by the Crown Prosecution Service on the non-prosecution of 'victims', children who have been trafficked are still being detained and prosecuted for crimes that are integral to their exploitation. Additionally, children can also be wrongly assessed as older and processed through the criminal justice system as adult criminals (Annison, 2013), also highlighted by young people's experiences in this study.

In response to calls for the non-prosecution of 'victims', the Modern Slavery Bill (Home Office, 2013*b*) proposed a new statutory defence. However, the defence clause (45) in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (enacted during the writing of this study), introduces a 'reasonable person test', which requires children to prove that they have been compelled to commit a crime in order to access the protection of the statutory defence (Refugee Children's Consortium, 2015). This appears to be a further condition imposed in law, placing onus on children to provide evidence of their trafficking, a concern raised by the young people in this study, in order for children to access protection from prosecution. As stated in Chapter 3 (p. 67), the conditionality of the statutory defence is in contradiction with the definition of 'child trafficking' in the UN Trafficking Protocol, which states that the means (e.g. being compelled or used to commit a crime) need not have been used in the case of children.

Only one young person in this study did not experience a criminal justice approach in her initial contact with agencies. Grace felt that she had a more neutral experience of agencies' responses. In Grace's situation, her primary contact was with the police, who used an interpreter and responded to her needs by contacting Children Services promptly, recognising that she was a minor, and a young person in need of protection. Interestingly, Grace felt that rather than being treated as a 'victim' or as a criminal, or disbelieved, she was treated as an individual, an approach which was *"fair"* (Grace). Grace felt that her needs had been responded to, and had little criticism of the way services responded to her.

Overall, young people in this study experienced an immigration-led and prosecution focus approach in practice, framed by 'child trafficking' policy

constructed as a criminal justice issue. An immigration-led approach appears to focus on the criminal act of child migrants transgressing borders, crimes committed against the state, rather than address crimes against the person, problematic for children in this study who experienced abuse and exploitation. A prosecution focus, in policy intention aims to tackle the organised crime of trafficking and secure prosecutions against perpetrators (NCA, 2013). However, the findings reveal that young people in this study experienced an onus placed on them to provide substantial evidence, not just to secure evidence for convictions, but also, in their perception, in order for their testimonies to be believed. For these young people, recognition of them as 'victims' of trafficking appeared to be 'evidence-dependant'. What appears to underlie both the immigration-led and prosecution focus is the premise that children and young people do not tell the truth. Popular narratives and political discourse that views illegal migrants as undesirable and untrustworthy appear to inform practice on the front-line. Assumptions that immigrants lie in order to 'abuse' or 'cheat' the system, are likely to inform practitioners' responses to migrating children. The political orientation of 'child trafficking' policy constructed within immigration discourses, coupled with restrictive immigration policies are likely to sanction state actors' approach towards children as being less concerned with children's rights to protection. Young people in this study experienced the requirement to provide significant material evidence before being believed, evidence to disprove these commonly held assumptions.

Criminalisation of children was a further aspect of a prosecution focus evidenced in this study, with agencies appearing not to recognise children's criminal exploitation in trafficking. For those children criminalised in this study, the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework appeared to not only fail to recognise their trafficking circumstances altogether, but state actions further re-victimised children and young people. The immigration-led and prosecution focused approach experienced by young people in this study, within a criminal justice orientation to 'child trafficking' appears to be incongruent with children's own accounts of their situation. Consistently, young people stated that they needed adults to believe them when disclosing abuse and asking for support,

"Give them the benefit of doubt first and also look at the broader picture...not just arresting them for the sake of having someone to arrest for the crime" (Maya).

High threshold of 'victim' status

As the predominant initial response by agencies experienced by young people in this study was from an immigration-led or prosecution-focused approach, the trafficking and exploitation they had been subjected to was overlooked and not addressed. The exception to this was Jessie, who experienced that her account of the abuse she endured was believed, and services accepted that she was trafficked. For all other participants, initial responses from professionals from various agencies did not acknowledge the abuse children described, or identify these as indicators of a trafficking situation and therefore, these children and young people were not formally defined by services as 'trafficked children' or *"children who may have been trafficked"* (DfE, 2011*a*) and needed protection.

Young people described how after initial interactions with agencies, involvement with various front-line statutory services continued, due to young people requiring accommodation, foster care and other basic necessities. Kayla, Olana and Isabella experienced a shift, in terms of acceptance of their situations by front-line services, with professionals acknowledging that they trafficked. However, this acceptance only occurred much later, despite earlier disclosures by young people, possibly due in part to young people being represented by an independent advocate, or due to the successful prosecution of traffickers. For example, Isabella experienced a delay in being identified as having been trafficked, she was not believed by Children Services and the Home Office for one and half years until the police secured a prosecution of the trafficker. Olana was prosecuted for carrying false identification documents and after a period in foster care, an NGO helped her to realise she was trafficked and advocated on her behalf. As Goździak (2015) observes, when trafficking policy has a narrow conceptualization of victim support, *"It seems that "identification" really means prosecution"* (p. 1). As stated, only one young person, Jessie, described how she was accepted as having been trafficked by the Home Office. However, of

note, Jessie described how she had a medical examination, which provided evidence for professionals to confirm that she was raped and sexually exploited. Later acceptance and identification of these young people's experiences as having been subjected to trafficking, appeared once again, to be conditionally based on further evidence being available to professionals. Evidence or successful prosecution, it seems, was required before young people met the threshold of being ascribed 'victim' status.

Despite ongoing service involvement, the other young people in this study were never accepted as having been trafficked. Hayley experienced how she was never believed to have been trafficked, in her view due to a lack of proof, to disprove the commonly held assumptions about the propensity of migrants lying. Hayley was explicitly told by professionals,

> *"I know that you are not from this particular country. I know that you are lying. Something in your face is tell me that you are lying"* (Hayley).

Maya cited only one professional, out of several that she was in contact with, who accepted her situation, but this person failed to report and act on it,

> *"It's not like they fully believe you, they don't fully believe it, that you are victim, you understand? And the one that fully believed I was a victim, doesn't want to share it with the team* (Maya).

For those young people who experienced exploitation in their home countries or *en route* when migrating, but did not go on to experience further abuse in the UK, were also not recognised or defined as trafficked. Young people in this study not only experienced abuse at the hands of people traffickers but also trauma, violence and abuse was experienced in home countries. This suggests that in practice, practitioners may adopt a narrow and legalistic definition of 'child trafficking', interpreting exploitation as experienced at point of destination only. In this study, young people experienced abuse and exploitation before, during and after migration, at various stages of their journeys, reflecting Hynes's (2010) observation that *"trafficking is a process, not a one-off 'event'"* with *"global points of 'vulnerabilities'"* (p. 92). For the participants in this study who experienced abuse and trauma before arrival to the UK or during their journey,

as they were not recognised as trafficked, they did not receive support as 'victims' to address their experiences of abuse.

The experiences of young people in this study reveal that identification of their circumstances as abusive, requiring protection and access to support appeared to be very limited and conditional. Many young people in this study were never identified formally by statutory services as 'trafficked children'. This suggests that the special category of 'victim' is set with high thresholds with practitioners requiring material evidence or successful prosecutions to prove a 'victim's' testimony. Young people in this study who experienced not meeting this threshold, described how state actors actively drew upon xenophobic views towards child migrants, which could be interpreted as serving to protect the special 'victim' category, reserved for others. In young people's experiences in this study, the 'child trafficking' framework appeared *not* to be orientated towards their identification or protection as 'victims'. A narrow and legalistic interpretation of who is a 'victim' of trafficking appears to set a high threshold of achieving this protected status.

Failure to identify child protection concerns

Young people in this study experienced trying to tell professionals that they had been mistreated. As young people did not know what the terms 'trafficked', or 'trafficking' meant at that time, they did not use this terminology. However, young people reported that they told professionals, using other words, that they were 'beaten', 'hit', were 'used', were 'made to sleep with men' and showed professionals they had sustained injuries from abuse. These findings are contrary to existing 'child trafficking' research with practitioners, which points to complexity in disclosure and identification, due to children's willingness to disclose or lack of awareness of their rights (Refugee Council and Children's Society, 2013, p. 24). Using their own language, children told professionals what had happened to them, and yet, many professionals appeared to take the stance of disbelief, or worse, appeared to blame the child for the abuse experienced. Many children and young people in this study *were* aware that they had been abused at the time: *"it's child abuse"* (Jessie), *"it's not right for*

someone to get hit in the eyes" (Hayley), *"mistreating me"* (Kayla) and used this terminology when asking for support.

Young people also told professionals their real names and dates of birth, when challenged, and that they were given identification papers or other names by traffickers. In not believing what children were saying, their accounts appeared to be ignored or dismissed by professionals, resonating with Pearce's *et al.* (2009) observation that in practice disclosure may not always be listened to or believed. Pearce *et al.*, (2009) further suggested that trafficking *"can be hidden behind a wall of silence"* (p. 9),

> *"On the one hand, practitioners noted that children and young people can find it hard to disclose information about their experiences or may be silenced by traffickers. On the other, practitioners may not identify cases, may not believe what they hear or be able to respond to the needs presented"* (*ibid.*).

The findings in this study suggest that children were willing and able to disclose abuse but they experienced the latter aspect of the *"wall of silence"* (Pearce *et al.,* 2009), silence from professionals who failed to act on their accounts of abuse and exploitation. In considering the 'fit' between experience and practice, the disjuncture between children's experience in this study of not being heard and listened to, could not be more disparate.

As 'child trafficking' policy has been linked almost exclusively to migrating children, the guidance for social workers is specific in determining children's rights to access support,

> *"The nationality or immigration status of the child does not affect agencies' statutory responsibilities under the 1989 or 2004 Children Acts. These issues should be addressed in discussion with the UKBA only when the child's need for protection from harm has been addressed and should not hold up action to protect the child from harm"* (DfE, 2011*a,* p. 19).

This guidance applies to *"all agencies working with children who may have been trafficked"* (*ibid.*, p. 19), emphasising that agencies need to co-operate with each other in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare, with no

distinction between the standard of care to UK nationals and children from abroad. Despite this clear guidance in practice, young people in this study experienced discrimination by services and perceived this to be due to their nationality or immigration status. Young people perceived that professionals treated them differently to UK nationals who in their view are more likely to be seen as *"vulnerable"* (Mirembe), be treated as a 'victim' and *"get more help"* (Monifa).

Young people in this study encountered professionals within Children Services that were viewed as forming judgements about young people from abroad as primarily likely to be lying. Despite being granted her *"papers"* (Hayley) from the Home Office (leave to remain in the UK), Hayley was continued to be challenged by her social worker, *"'you are lying'...I felt like everyone was bullying me actually"* (Hayley). Young people felt they were discriminated against, not only in initial responses by agencies, but also afterwards, when trying to access services via social workers,

> *"because, I mean, I, what I experienced, when it comes to social workers, and things like that, when I had need and I asked her, the answer that she give me is like, 'oh people who are born here, who are in the UK, they need more help than you do'"* (Monifa).

When asking for assistance with accommodation, Hayley was advised,

> *"'Your priority is not a special priority. There are a lot of people here that need more things than you...We have the main priorities, you are not the main priority'...they make me wait until I am the <u>last</u> priority"* (Hayley).

Children Services appearing to deny access to support migrant children was further evidenced in the findings. Maya was refused support with accommodation *"the social service saying ... they don't think that I'm their responsibility...That I'm not their problem"* (Maya) and referred her to the Nigerian Embassy for assistance. Hayley was also refused immediate protection she required on two separate occasions by Children Services. After legal intervention *"they were actually forced"* (Hayley) to assist her,

> *"they didn't have a choice because my solicitor told them that because of what happened the first time, if they don't get, take care of me, she was going to sue them"* (Hayley).

As highlighted in Chapter 6, the Refugee Council played a critical role in challenging these refusals to support migrant children who experienced trafficking, to access the support they were entitled to, according to the practice and legal framework.

Practice guidance advises practitioners that 'child trafficking' involves children experiencing abuse and exploitation that *"should always trigger the agreed local child protection procedures"* (DfE, 2011*a*, p. 11). However, young people in this study did not experience a child protection response to their circumstances, despite most having contact with social workers, who initiate child protection procedures. The experiences of young people in this study seem to support observations by Pearce *et al.* (2009) that children trafficked from abroad might not receive the same rights and treatment as children born in the UK. Authors have also suggested that older children are less likely to receive a child protection response (Pearce, 2010), specifically young people who have experienced sexual exploitation (Harris and Robinson, 2007). As the most common age of 'trafficked children' in the UK is 16 and 17 years old (Bokhari, 2008), it is possible that this group of young people are subject to a lack of child protection response due to age. Young people's experiences in this study reveal that felt they were discriminated against due to their nationality and asylum status. It is reasonable to suggest that, given what is known about a lack child protection responses for young people, that participants faced multiple factors of discrimination in practice, by their age *and* ethnicity.

Bovarnick's (2010) research found an uncertainty amongst 'child trafficking' practitioners whether the same safeguarding standards apply to children from abroad, a practitioner suggesting,

> *"I think that where it gets lost in a local authority is that because a trafficked child or a smuggled child or a child that is presented without any parents, they all get labelled under the umbrella of a Section 20 child"* (p. 91).

In practice, Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on local authorities to look after 'unaccompanied asylum seeking children' below the age of 18, a form of voluntary foster care accommodation. Whilst providing children with accommodation, the practice of labelling separated migrant children all under section 20 has been criticised for not providing an adequate level of protection for those who have been trafficked (ECPAT, 2011). This concern echoes the experiences of young people in this study who felt at risk in accommodation after leaving traffickers, especially when accommodated in the same area as the trafficking took place. Furthermore, the provision of accommodation under section 20 is also not in itself, a child protection response to children who may have been trafficked.

A lack of addressing children's requirement for protection, as experienced by the young people in this study, was also highlighted by the Refugee Council and Children's Society's (2013) review of support for 'trafficked children', with practitioners conceding that,

> *"It is seen as an immigration issue, it is a problem, child protection needs are not necessarily coming first"* (*ibid.*, p. 48).

The findings in this study suggest that rather than a 'confusion' amongst practitioners if the same legal and child protection systems apply to separated migrating children, young people experienced an *overt* withholding of services due to their nationality or immigration status. Young people in this study were told by practitioners directly that they were less 'deserving' and a lesser priority over indigenous children. These experiences relate directly to Bovarnick's (2010) findings with practitioners that practice informed by an

> *"Immigration-centred discourse displayed a limited understanding of child trafficking, and was constituted by xenophobic and discriminatory tendencies"* (p. 93).

In exploring young people's experiences, *vis-à-vis* the practice framework, front-line social work practice appears to have been experienced as also immigration-led, driven by the top-down criminal justice approach to 'child trafficking', designated by the Home Office. Rather than Children Services being a distinct service, aimed at serving children's 'best interests' and protecting

children, irrespective of age or nationality, social workers were experienced as appearing to adopt similar discriminatory discourses towards children, as experienced by the sample in immigration practice. Pejorative political attitudes towards refugees as a *"swarm"* (Cameron, 2015, cited by Elgot and Taylor, 2015) of people waiting to come across to the UK, coupled with sustained discourse on immigration as *"one of the biggest crises of our time"* (*BBC News,* 31 July 2015), combine to construct illegal immigrants as undesirable and a threat to public resources. As the experiences of young people in this study reveal, these discourses appear to shape social work and other areas of child-related practice.

A close relationship between professionals was evidenced through young people's experiences, between social workers, immigration staff, immigration solicitors and interpreters presenting a powerful combination of professionals with the ability to co-construct their particular viewpoint of the child's circumstance, and together influence outcomes for children. This apparent conflation of child welfare policy and practice with immigration is of noteworthy concern, given the indicators that immigration-led practice gains the upper hand, and detracts from the legal duty to protect children and young people within our borders. As Humphries (2004) warned,

> *"State social work's relationship to immigration controls typifies its relationship to social policy generally...it adopts a role of subservience in implementing policies"* (p. 95).

Social work's subservience in immigration-led 'child trafficking' policy can result in *"social work drawn into implementing racist policy initiatives"* (*ibid.*). This study suggests that immigration-led social work practice can be experienced by young people as discriminatory and negligent in its legal duty to provide equal access to child welfare and child protection.
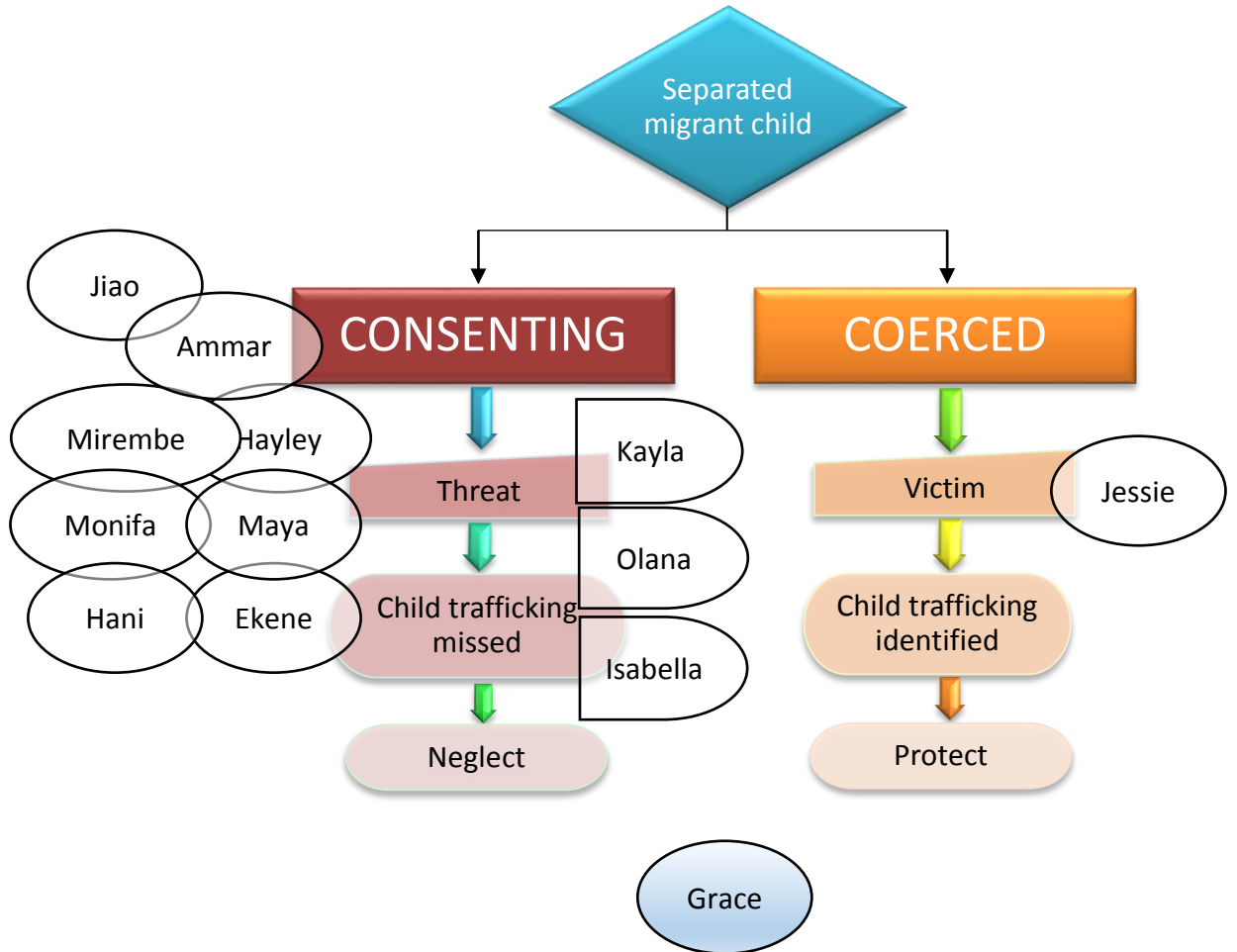
'Consenting'?

In the critical analysis of the policy and practice framework discussed in chapter three (p. 79-90), I argued that the way 'child trafficking' has been constructed in policy, invokes in practice a dichotomous approach towards separated migrant

children. I suggested that children and young people are approached in practice as either passive, deserving 'victims of trafficking' or are seen a threat, undeserving and culpable of their actions. These concepts I argued, underpin the decision-making process in the practice framework, in establishing if a child has been 'coerced' or is deemed 'consenting', a key determinant in whether a child is identified as trafficked. These concepts were explored with young people in relation to their personal experiences of the 'child trafficking' framework, including an exploration of their agency, level of choices they felt they had and how young people perceived these were interpreted by practitioners. Figure 4 (p. 225) is a representation of practitioner responses as experienced by young people, mapped onto the decision-making model in the 'child trafficking' framework.

In mapping young people's experiences of practitioner responses, the majority of young people perceived that professionals deemed them to be 'consenting' to their circumstances (figure 4, p. 225). Young people deemed to be 'consenting' experienced 'child trafficking' practice from an immigration-led perspective. As an immigration-led approach focuses on the irregular and illegal means of entry to the UK, determining a child as 'smuggled' becomes the primary focus. The concept of consent underlies the decision-making practice in determining an 'unaccompanied asylum seeker' as 'smuggled', interpreted as a voluntary act, individuals are seen as "*complicit in the offence so that they can remain in the UK illegally*" (CPS, 2013). Young people experienced a criminal justice approach due to being categorised as illegal immigrants and the credibility of their personal accounts of their journeys was challenged. This approach in practice appears to be based on the assumption that young people are voluntarily 'consenting' to their illegal migration. However, young people's experiences reveal that for the majority, they exercised no choice in the decisions to migrate, with family members often making or agreeing to the travel arrangements on their behalf,

> *"When my uncle he do a deal with agent...I didn't have choice. I didn't have choice anything to do with him or anything.... because I didn't choose the country, because my uncle he choose this for me"* (Ammar).

Figure 4. Practitioner response

Many young people did not know where they were going, for example, Kayla was trafficked in her home country before being re-trafficked to the UK, *"they told me I am going to abroad... I don't know where I am going"* (Kayla), and Jiao, had no idea where she was travelling to, her uncle sending her *"outside China to earn some money"* (Jiao). The findings suggest a misalignment between the majority of young people's experiences of having no choice and yet being held accountable and complicit in their migration. The experiences of children's lack of choice in migration, destination or routes are similar to findings of Hopkins and Hill (2010) and Crawley (2010*b*) who also found that for the majority of children interviewed, someone else had made the decision for them to leave their origin country. Furthermore, determining 'consent' in practice is not straightforward, as the findings in this study reveal, children's consent can be exploited. Children can present as willing and 'consenting' at different stages of the trafficking experience. Children's experiences therefore, indicate a more complex process than fixed notions of consent/coercion as determinants, at any given point of potential intervention.

Young people in this study who were trafficked via people traffickers, and experienced exploitation *en route,* the abuse they had been subjected to was overlooked with an apparent assumption of their 'consent' to their migration. Although the exploitation they had experienced may have ended at the point of destination, upon arrival to the UK, the impact of being mistreated during the journey, outside of the UK's borders remained unaddressed. The experiences of these young people being subjected to traumatic journeys and inhumane treatment at the hands of people traffickers relates directly to research with migrants (Sigona and Hughes, 2012; Crawley, 2010*b*) and raises doubts about any distinction between 'smuggling' and 'trafficking'. As Triandafyllidou and Maroukis (2012) conclude,

> *"Our research has shown that there is thin line between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. The profiles of trafficked and smuggled people, the routes they take, the modus operandi of smuggling and trafficking networks and the level of dependence of the smuggled/trafficked migrant on her/his smugglers/traffickers can be quite similar"* (p. 204).

There appears to have been a recent shift in perception in the media in recognising illegal migrants are people trafficked, 'people smugglers' are now regularly referred to as 'people traffickers', particularly since the sharp increase in migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea in 2014. Despite this, there has not been a shift in policy or practice, presently, the construction of 'child trafficking' policy does not recognise that children migrating alone are likely to have been people trafficked. Children trafficked by 'people traffickers' are also likely to have experienced exploitation and abuse *before* arriving at a destination.

Young people in this study who experienced abuse and exploitation in the UK (at the point of destination), which is how 'child trafficking' is commonly interpreted and defined in current policy and practice, also experienced an immigration-focused approach, due to the irregular nature of their arrival to the UK. These young people perceived that the overriding focus was on the illegality of their immigration status or on the crimes they were compelled to commit, with child protection concerns and details of abuse experienced dismissed or discredited. For those who experienced being criminalised and processed through the criminal justice system, they perceived that their 'consent' was interpreted by agencies as acts of volition, young people knowingly and intentionally breaking the law, a moot point,

> *"I don't think that some of the criminal activity, some people that do it, do really have choices really, they have to do through, through what they are being told"* (Monifa),

> *"When you see, you think they willingly do that but no! It's what we're being instructed and trained to do"* (Maya),

> *"In our circumstances, we didn't have the choice, because we were being forced"* (Mirembe).

Young people's experiences of apparent dismissal of their accounts of abuse not only led to further abuse being experienced in some circumstances but also, young people appeared to be re-victimised through being criminalised, processed through criminal courts and spending time in adult prison. These

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young people felt let down, punished by agency responses, and did not feel protected, despite a later shift in acceptance by some professionals. For most young people, experiencing initial responses by agencies which treated children as 'consenting' appeared to set the trajectory of agencies continuing to deem them culpable in some way, complicit and responsible for their circumstance.

Only one young person clearly identified her experiences within the conceptual framework as being responded to by agencies as having been 'coerced', as a 'victim' (Figure 4, p. 225). Jessie experienced multiple rapes, trafficked for sexual exploitation. Medical evidence substantiated her account of abuse,

> *"I received a letter from Home Office saying that it was true that I was trafficked because they examined my body"* (Jessie).

Despite being deemed to be a coerced 'victim' of trafficking, Jessie only felt *"partially protected"* (Jessie) by agency responses as she experienced an overriding immigration focus to her situation, with her uncertain asylum status causing her fear of deportation. Although generalisations cannot be made, there is a possibility that a narrow conceptualisation of coercion, as limited only to force having been used, such as rape, which can be proved with medical evidence, was interpreted as meeting the threshold of defining a victim.

The problem with a potential limited interpretation of coercion of trafficking as being forced, is that more sophisticated means of manipulation used by traffickers, as evidenced in young people's experiences in this study can be missed. As highlighted, young people described traffickers' manipulation of their desires for education and better life opportunities. Young people's trust was gained enabling traffickers to establish a willingness of young people to go along with their propositions, subtly exploiting their consent. Young people explained how this can be perceived as the opposite to coerced, presenting as *"happy to go"* (Kayla) and *"really excited"* (Maya). However, it must be noted that despite a young person likely to be expressing 'willingness' and 'consenting' in these circumstances, for example at ports of entry to the UK, at that stage they have not yet gone on to experience abuse at the intended destination. The young people in this study all came into contact with services once they *had* experienced abuse and exploitation, at a later stage in their

journeys by which time they were no longer expressing 'consent' and 'willingness'.

Other means of coercion may also be missed through a narrow interpretation of coercion as being simply by force. In addition to physical force used, psychological, emotional manipulation, threats and dependence were all methods experienced by young people in this study. Professionals were cited as failing to understand the nature of these types of coercion,

> *"They even asked me questions 'why don't you run away?' As if I willingly want to stay there and let all those things happen to me... 'Why don't you run away? Why don't you do this or that?'... Maybe if one of them go through what I've been through, maybe they wouldn't be able to ask me that. It's not that easy. Maybe they send you to buy some milk, they send you out to go and do the shopping. 'Why don't you leave it and run away?' I was like 'run to where? Who do I know? These are the only people I know'. And you are being instructed, it's so bad that you don't want something to happen"* (Maya).

The exploration of 'fit' between young people's experiences and the conceptual framework in 'child trafficking' practice, suggest that the application of the concepts of 'consent' and 'coercion' in practice appear to be disconsonant with the lived experiences of young people in this study. The findings suggest that children and young people who were deemed as 'smuggled', appeared to be considered as complicit, suggesting that an overriding focus of immigration appeared to overlook their experiences of trafficking. The findings also suggest that children appeared to be incorrectly assumed to be 'consenting' to migration or criminal acts when in their lived experiences, young people appeared to have had no choice or were coerced. The findings reveal that young people in this is study who were perceived to be 'consenting', appeared to experience professionals dismissing or discrediting their trafficking situation. Young people's experiences suggest that the concept of 'consent' can be misconstrued in practice and overshadows child protection concerns. Experiences of young people in this study also suggest a form of 'responsibilising' (Muncie, 2006) by professionals, viewing children as culpable of immigration crime, or other crimes

associated with their trafficking circumstances. The findings also indicate the possibility that the concept of 'coercion' in practice can be limiting, if narrowly defined as coercion by force. The current conceptual framework, underpinned by the concepts of 'consent' or 'coercion', determining whether a child is trafficked, appeared to not encompass or address the complexity of children's experiences of trafficking in this study. Reflecting on the framework, and the 'fit' with experience, one young person observed,

> *"It's never that simple"* (Monifa).

A different approach

Reflecting on their personal experiences of services and exploring the existing conceptual framework in 'child trafficking' practice, young people were of the view that a different approach is required in 'child trafficking' practice, to be able to respond better to the needs and requirements of children experiencing trafficking. Young people advised that an alternative approach, underpinned by front-line professionals treating children and young people as *individuals,* would necessarily step away from categorising and labelling young people as 'illegal immigrants', 'criminals' or 'victims'. Based upon their personal experiences, young people suggested a better system was centred somewhere *"in the middle"* (Grace) (Figure 5, p. 231), rather than the existing predominant immigration-led and prosecution focus *or* the lesser-applied 'victim' approach.

Young people envisaged that a more individualised approach requires professionals to be more reasoning, to listen to children and young people to gain a better understanding of their situations. More reasoning was suggested as looking at reasons behind actions (such as presenting criminal behaviour) and not taking situations at face value. A more humanistic approach was advocated by young people, for children and young people to be treated as *"a human being, as a normal person"* (Maya), suggesting that existing approaches can de-personalise children and young people and pathologise their experiences.

Figure 5. Participant's representation of a better system

Young people reflected on what worked well in positive experiences with services and professionals and stated that when professionals showed a more caring approach, this helped to build trust with adults, a key problem for this group of children. Relational qualities were highlighted as important for professionals to have in front-line 'child trafficking' practice, children being shown *"mercy"* (Maya) and greater sympathy,

> *"You need to show them empathy for the young person to trust you a bit.. You know, showing them that what they haven't had before?"* (Maya).

Young people suggested that an improved approach in 'child trafficking' practice, was one in which professionals understood and accepted that disclosures made to them are *"not always lies"* (Hayley). This challenges existing assumptions seemingly held by professionals that separated migrant children are to be distrusted. *"Benefit of doubt"* (Maya) ought to be practiced in interactions with children and young people, necessarily requiring adults to trust children and young people.

Informing young people's conceptualisation of an alternative approach was their experiences of unequal treatment by professionals, due to their nationality and immigration status,

> *"It's bad how they don't treat people the same. How many people are racist…horrible. It's still taking place all way around this country...they say that it's not happening in this country, everyone united being in this country but in my opinion, you can say what you like but it's still taking place...* (Mirembe).

Non-discriminatory attitudes towards children and young people and especially towards separated migrant children were identified as an essential element in helping children experiencing trafficking, *"It's very important then in this...treating us equally"* (Ekene),

> *"No matter from what background or ethnic group you come from…it would be good to listen to the person...rather than just be so concerned about how they look, or where they come from or which country they come from, things like that, you should put that aside and work in a different way.. working with young people more effectively"* (Mirembe).

Key findings

This chapter has explored the 'fit' between children and young people's own accounts of their situation, experiences of services and the current construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice. The experiences of young people in this study reveal that they perceived 'child trafficking' practice predominately as immigration-led and prosecution focused. This approach was experienced as professionals appearing to overlook the abuse and trafficking children had experienced, which largely remained unaddressed. Young people in this study experienced what would appear to be a high threshold in being recognised as a 'victim', requiring material evidence to convince professionals and 'prove' their testimonies. A narrow and legalistic interpretation by professionals of who is a 'victim' of trafficking appeared to further restrict children and young people being recognised as having been trafficked. Young people experienced professionals failing to identify child protection concerns and acting upon disclosures made, with an overt withholding of services and xenophobic attitudes towards separated migrant children.

Analysis of the application of the concepts of 'consent' and 'coercion' in 'child trafficking' practice, appear not to sufficiently address the complexity of children's experiences of trafficking in this study. The combination of these experiences and views of children and young people on the way the existing framework is constructed, reveal an incongruence between children and young people's own accounts of their situation, what support they required and how they were approached in 'child trafficking' practice. The findings reveal children and young people's experiences of the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework, did not appear to 'fit' their lived 'realties' of being trafficked, their needs resulting from this, or serve their interests.

This study has facilitated listening and hearing young people's personal accounts of trafficking as children, and the views of how they experienced services they encountered in the 'child trafficking' framework. A further exploration of the conceptual framework underpinning 'child trafficking' practice was explored with young people, based on their personal lived experiences.

Bringing together these findings, this study has evidenced for that this sample, separated migrant children experiencing trafficking encountered a number of problems with a system, which, in its present construction, appeared not to reflect their needs. Young people proposed a different system, an approach which steps away from the present immigration-led and prosecution focus, and challenges existing assumptions about children and young people. A different approach is advocated by young people as treating children and young people as individuals, more humanely, as neither 'criminals' nor 'victims'.

Drawing together the presentation of children's personal experiences of trafficking (chapter 5), thematic analysis of children's experiences of services in the 'child trafficking' framework (Chapter 6), and analysis of 'fit' between experience, policy and practice (Chapter 7), key findings are presented below.

1. Children and young people experiencing trafficking experienced multiple and severe abuse, before arriving in the UK, during migration and at destinations in the UK. This challenges narrow and legalistic interpretations of 'child trafficking' as experienced only at the destination.
2. Children and young people experiencing trafficking abuse tended not to be believed by adults, underpinned by assumptions that child migrants are to be distrusted. As a result, professionals failed to act on children's accounts of abuse and exploitation.
3. Children and young people experienced an onus to provide evidence in order to be believed, with an apparent high threshold set of meeting the special category and status of 'victim'.
4. Children and young people experienced re-victimisation by state actors, they felt blamed, punished and unprotected. Some children were criminalised for being criminally exploited.
5. Children and young people experienced xenophobic and racist attitudes, through refusal of child welfare support and child protection due to nationality and asylum status.
6. An overriding focus on immigration and prosecution overshadowed welfare and child protection issues. The majority of children and young

people experienced no choice in their migration and exploitation, but were treated as 'consenting' to their circumstances.

7. Children and young people experiencing trafficking required a more proactive welfare and protection response to their needs, professionals to believe them and act upon their concerns.

8. Children and young people require a different approach in 'child trafficking' practice, an individualised response to their needs, with more reasoning and empathy. A different 'child trafficking' response is required in practice, which treats children and young people as equal human beings.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the 'fit' between young people's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England, in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs. In this study, young people experienced 'child trafficking' practice as immigration-led and prosecution focused, which appeared to be incongruent with their 'realities' of having been trafficked and requiring support. Young people in this study experienced difficulties in being formally identified as trafficked, which appeared to be very limited and conditional. This suggests an apparent high threshold of meeting the requirements of the special status of 'victim' in 'child trafficking' practice, and appears to act as a barrier in securing support. The findings reveal that young people in this study experienced a failure in front-line practice in identifying or responding to child protection concerns, even when children disclosed abuse. The findings further reveal how young people experienced overt discrimination and xenophobic attitudes in front-line practice in trying to access services, due to their nationality or immigration status.

The conceptual framework underpinning the decision-making model within 'child trafficking' practice, determining 'consent' or 'coercion' was critically explored with young people, in relation to their experiences and practitioners responses to their situations. A conclusion is drawn, based on the findings of children's experiences, that the 'child trafficking' framework, in its existing construction, did

not serve the participants interests or meet their needs. Young people proposed a different approach in 'child trafficking' practice, rather than the existing predominant immigration-led and prosecution focus *or* the 'victim' approach, which appeared not to address the complexity of their experiences. A more reasoned and humanistic approach was advocated by young people, as a better way of responding to 'child trafficking', in which relational qualities of practitioners are of key importance and ensuring children and young people from abroad have equal access to support and assistance.

Drawing together the findings of listening to young people's experiences of trafficking, their experiences of services and their views on the 'child trafficking' framework, the key findings of this study have been presented. The next chapter considers the implications for children and young people experiencing trafficking of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking'. The study's findings are synthesised to answer the main research question, and the implications for 'child trafficking' policy and practice are considered.

Chapter 8. Discussion

Introduction

The discussion draws together the findings from earlier chapters in this thesis, which critically analysed the social construction of childhood in 'child trafficking' and deconstructed the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework. The findings of young people's own accounts and lived experiences of 'child trafficking' and encountering the 'child trafficking' framework, are considered alongside present constructions, narratives and discourses in 'child trafficking' policy and practice. The implications for children and young people experiencing trafficking, of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking' are discussed.

Separated migrating children appear to be tested and measured against an ideal 'victim' type with a high threshold of conformity. Deemed by practitioners as non-conforming, the binary opposite construction to an innocent 'victim' appears to be invoked, where children are perceived to be guilty, held morally and legally culpable. The political power in constructing the identity and legal category of 'the trafficked child' through the prism of illegal immigration, appears to be sanctioned by the state's criminal justice orientation. Non-conforming children appear to be treated punitively through state sanctioned exclusion via immigration-driven and prosecution focused 'child trafficking' practice. A conclusion is drawn that the way in which 'child trafficking' policy and practice is presently constructed, appears to not reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of trafficking.

In light of the findings, I reconsider core concepts underpinning current 'child trafficking' policy and practice, concepts of childhood, victimhood, 'child trafficking', trafficking as child abuse and children's agency. I offer observations about how developed understanding of these concepts positions me in relation to current approaches in 'child trafficking' policy and practice. The chapter proceeds to consider the implications of the findings of this study for 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

I acknowledge that this qualitative study is based on a small sample of young people who experienced being trafficked and encountered 'child trafficking' practice as children. Generalisations cannot therefore, be made from an atypical, gendered and heterogeneous sample to wider populations from which the sample is drawn. Notwithstanding, an important first step has been made in listening to young people in how they experienced their situation first hand, and how they experienced the current 'child trafficking' framework, not addressed in research before now. An alternative rendering of 'child trafficking', as viewed from children's own perspective challenges many assumptions held within the current 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework.

An ideal 'victim'

This study began by examining how childhood is constructed in 'child trafficking' discourses (Chapter 2) highlighting how the concept of victimhood is heavily embedded in trafficking narratives, especially concerning children and 'child trafficking'. Victimhood in 'child trafficking' discourses is synonymous with perceptions of helplessness, vulnerability through weakness, and susceptibility to abuse through forced coercion (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2006). In 'child trafficking' discourses, the concept of victimhood constructs children as *"stereotypical tragic child victims"* (Westwood, 2010, p. 172) both historically, and to the present day. The victimhood concept underpinning 'child trafficking' discourses, policy and practice, has as its firm foundation, childhood perceived as innocent and passive. As the 'modern' child evolved from ideas from Rousseau and Locke, *"a strong and continuous commitment to conceptions of childhood innocence"* (Jenks, 1996, p. 123) can be traced. As Meyer (2007) argues, this concept is pervasive, and to the present day informs conceptualisations of childhood. The moral quality of the discourse of innocence not only reinforces *"a sacred status of the child"* (Meyer, 2007, p. 94) but also *"produces childhood as a moral rhetoric"* (*ibid.*). The assumption underpinning this pervasive view is the passivity of children, with no innate capacities, *"like halfwits, as a consequence of their lack of social experience",* (Jenks, 1996 p. 124) and wholly adult dependent until adulthood. The concept of childhood as innocent and pure can be seen to have evolved into contemporary views that

children are not only dependant on adults, but also that childhood should be 'safe' (Butler and Wiliamson, 1996), at 'home' (Breuil, 2008), asexual (Kitzinger, 2004; Meyer, 2007), behaving, conforming (Muncie, 2009) and undamaged (Hunter, 2010).

As Meyer (2007) argues, the 'sacralisation' of childhood as innocent is a representative ideal (p. 98), an adult ideal that constructs a hegemonic image of what childhood should be, as an ideal type. In the Weberian sense, an ideal type is a *"measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases"* (Coser, 1977, p. 223, cited by Bancroft and Rogers, 2010). In 'child trafficking' discourse, the victimhood concept, underpinned by the concept of childhood innocence, constructs a powerful ideal type,

> *"formed by the one-side accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent, concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints"* (*ibid.*).

An ideal type however, according to Weber, is not a description of reality, but rather a mental construct for analysis *"not to compare an empirical situation with the ideal type, but to compare several empirical situations with one another; through the medium of ideal type and derive testable hypothesis which account for the various deviations"* (Priyadarshini, 2015). I suggest however, that the ideal type of victimhood within 'child trafficking' narratives is utilised exactly as Weber did not conceive of as its purpose. 'Empirical situations', individuals experiencing trafficking, are compared and measured against the ideal type, and thereby tested against an ideal, *"which can never be found in that reality"* (Coser, 1977, cited by Bancroft and Rogers, 2010).

The findings in this study suggest that young people experienced an approach in 'child trafficking' practice that overwhelmingly treated them as culpable, not as passive 'victims' perceived as vulnerable to abuse, especially in initial responses by agencies. Young people's experiences reveal that an apparent high threshold of being recognised as a 'victim' was encountered, with state actors requiring substantial material evidence to prove children's testimonies of abuse and exploitation. However, young people experienced the evidence

required was not always possible to provide or realistic, suggesting that the bar to meet the requirements of being deemed to be 'victim' was experienced as very high. Young people appeared to experience a default position taken by practitioners, one of suspicion and mistrust, without giving children the benefit of doubt. Without provision of evidence to prove children's testimonies were not lies, children were seemingly held as culpable and irrational.

Non-conforming

As several authors observe, children who do not conform to the romanticised ideal of childhood innocence, or to the ideal 'victim' type are excluded (Kitzinger, 2004; Meyer, 2007; Breuil, 2008; O'Connell Davidson, 2011). Exclusion, however, is not simply a denial of access to being ascribed a 'trafficked victim' status. Children who do not conform to the ideal challenge the very assumptions underpinning the construct of an ideal victimhood and can be treated as transgressors of social and moral norms. The transgression of idealised constructions of childhood appears to invoke the binary opposite concept to innocence - guilt. Perceiving children to be culpable of action or inaction attributes guilt, whereby children are held morally or legally responsible. Those who are perceived as guilty can be blamed, as they are held personally accountable. If children conform to the ideal of innocence, and are perceived to be telling the truth, then non-conforming children who are constructed as guilty are likely to be perceived as liars, or dismissed as irrational. The experiences of young people in this study reveal how front-line practitioners frequently disbelieved or dismissed children when disclosing abuse, directly accused children of lying and even blamed them for their circumstance. As highlighted in the findings, some children in this study were held accountable for crimes committed, linked to their trafficking situations, and criminalised, with assumptions about children's awareness and volition. Young people felt blamed and punished, experiencing neo-moralism, a victim-blaming approach that is *"frequently used to divert attention away from social structural contexts of individual behaviour"* (Muncie, 2009, p. 404).

The way in which young people in this study perceived their own childhood, framed by different sets of assumptions, can be seen to challenge western and normative constructions of childhood informing 'child trafficking' in many ways. Children in this study were not wholly dependent on adults, they experienced being skilled in familial duties, chores and responsibilities. Childhood for many young people in this study involved productive and reproductive work, life at home was marked by poverty, and children shared the burden of daily existence of survival. Childhood was also experienced as not a time of peace, or 'safe', or children having a sense of secure 'home'. Anthropologists Panter-Brick and Smith (2000) argue that the 'abandoned' child (or separated migrant child) is a threat to the ideal of security and control at the heart of Eurocentric models of childhood. The findings reveal how this group of children's experiences involved crossing social borders, not just geographical ones, challenging privileged middle-class assumptions of children having no economic or political agency, a lack of skills and belonging within stable homes and care arrangements. The migration of children to the UK from across borders, from countries with alternative concepts of childhood, can present children as not fitting the ideal type enshrined within western constructions of childhood, as Ariès (1996) observed,

> *"The concept of the family, the concept of class, and perhaps elsewhere the concept of race, appear as manifestations of the same intolerance towards variety, the same insistence in uniformity"* (p. 399).

Young people in this study underwent a number of processes when encountering front-line services within the 'child trafficking' framework, by which conformity or non-conformity to ideals of victimhood appears to be 'tested'. The process of labelling and categorising appears to have been central in children's experiences of services and driven by immigration-led policy and practice. Children appeared to experience legal and bureaucratic practices, were deemed to be 'consenting' in their (illegal) migration and labelled as 'smuggled children' based on immigration law. Only one young person in this study was accorded the label 'trafficked child' by the Home Office. Whilst generalisations cannot be made to a wider population, the predominant experience of young people in this study was categorisation as an 'illegal immigrant' as a primary

response. These young people appeared to have their child protection needs overlooked or actively dismissed. This suggests that labelling separated migrant children as 'illegal immigrants' and focusing on the illegality of their means of arrival and asylum status, invokes a barrier to a child being seen as experiencing abuse.

As Bourdieu (1987) suggests, legalistic and bureaucratic practices are separated from social processes, such as children asking for assistance from services, facing the difficulties of being separated, dislocated, and deceived by adults, having experienced trauma and abuse. Despite children advising practitioners they had been subjected to abuse, they experienced a process of 'testing' their credibility and a burden of proof placed upon them. As Rodger (2008) and Muncie (2009) observe, children and young people's social policy areas have been increasingly linked with criminal justice issues, 'child trafficking' policy and practice appears to be another. The findings suggest that children experiencing trafficking in this study, appeared to be subjected to 'tests' based on evidence, legalistic categorisation of their circumstances and focus on prosecution (of children). Immigration-led and prosecution focused 'child trafficking' practice, embedded within immigration policy and immigration procedures, appears to circumscribe the 'child trafficking' framework in a criminal justice approach. Failing to meet high thresholds of conformity of victimhood, children in this study appeared to find themselves already inside a system where a criminal justice response to their needs was more likely.

Sanctioned exclusion

The legal and bureaucratic practices in immigration-led 'child trafficking' practice appear to not only be separated from addressing the social 'realties' of children, but can also disguise the power contest between the state and individual citizen (Bourdieu, 1987). The exercise of state power over individuals can be further amplified for this group of migrant children who are *without* citizenship. The political power to define a legal category of 'child trafficking victim' and 'smuggled child' sets the conditions for how 'child trafficking' is perceived. As highlighted in this thesis, successive governments in the UK have politicised

'child trafficking' in conflating 'child trafficking' policy with immigration. 'Child trafficking' appears therefore, to be constructed and understood as an immigration problem by state actors, sanctioned by the state's criminal justice orientation. Separated migrant children experiencing trafficking are thus more likely to be perceived and responded to, as illegal immigrants, rather than a group of children requiring a proactive and protective response to their needs. The power seems to lie in constructing identities and legal categories through the prism of illegal migration. However, behind the state's rhetoric in seeking to protect 'victims of child trafficking', (and more recently 'modern slavery') there appears to be a disguised political force at play. 'Child trafficking' policy appears to have been appropriated to serve the state's interests of neo-liberal restrictive immigration policies, electioneering, and more recently, as a vehicle to tighten legislation against 'economic' migrants.

As this study has explored, 'child trafficking' is also constructed as a form of child abuse and child exploitation, as apparent in many 'child trafficking' practice guidance documents issued in recent years by the Department for Education. However, the experiences of young people in this study reveal a lack of child protection response, and failure of practitioners to recognise and identify children's exposure to trafficking as a child protection issue. Child abuse and child exploitation as concepts are not unproblematic, and relativist perspectives could pose problems for practitioners in establishing what exactly constitutes abuse and exploitation, especially in cross-cultural contexts of 'child trafficking'. However, the findings suggest that children in this study were aware that they had been mistreated at the time, and perceived that their thresholds of abuse had been breached. The language children used in this study to describe to practitioners their experiences of abuse, appeared to be unambiguous, and very direct. It is therefore, difficult to conceive how children's experiences of telling practitioners about the abuse they were subjected to, could have been interpreted as vague, misleading, or open to a relativist interpretation of abuse. On the contrary, children's experiences reveal that their accounts of abuse were met with adults dismissing them, ignoring what was said or blaming children suggesting their own actions sanctioned being mistreated. What seems to be apparent in this study, espoused 'multi-agency safeguarding and promoting

welfare of children' (DfE, 2015*b*) and a child protection response advocated with children *"who may have been trafficked"* (DfE, 2011*a*), was not evidenced in young people's experiences of the 'child trafficking' framework.

Similarly, the discourse of risk, also identified within 'child trafficking' narratives (Gearon, 2012*a*) and 'child trafficking' research with practitioners (Westwood, 2010), was also not evidenced in the findings of this study. The absence of a child protective response and being perceived by practitioners to be at risk, in young people's experiences can be interpreted as a finding in itself. Although risk discourse is heavily associated with social work practice and a key concept shaping child protection social work (Parton, 1998; 2011), the findings suggest that young people experienced social work practice as immigration-led, rather than concerned with children's protection or risk. For the young people in this study, 'child trafficking' practice constructed as requiring a child protective response to child abuse, appears not to have been experienced. This suggests that the perception of 'child trafficking' as a child protection issue is a less powerful construction in the 'child trafficking' framework. The Department of Education, which oversees the existing well-established child protection system, appears to have little relative power in constructing and influencing 'child trafficking' policy and therefore, how the identity of the 'trafficked child' is shaped. Policy responsibility sits with the Home Office and key immigration agencies are tasked with 'child trafficking' functions as determined by government. The *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* practice guidance (DfE, 2011*a*) which is applicable to all agencies working with children, appears to be somewhat enveloped within a more powerful and encompassing criminal justice and immigration system.

In addition to immigration-led discourses appearing to deem children as culpable and irrational, young people in this study also experienced narratives of resource protection and xenophobia in interactions with front-line services, including Children Services. A key finding of this study is that young people did not experience social work practice as a distinct service, different to immigration-focused agencies, as a service to uphold their rights to protection and access to support. Despite the Children Act 1989 providing a legal

framework for migrant children to have equal access to resources, the findings suggest that young people experienced social work practice that appeared to be negligent in its legal duty. Young people in this study experienced front-line practice as overtly discriminatory, practitioners seemingly drawing upon xenophobic views towards migrant children, and withholding child welfare services based on children's nationality or immigration status. This finding echoes Hays and Humphries (2004) conclusion that social workers have become directly or indirectly part of the *"internal policing of immigration"* (p. 219). Substantial cuts to public services due to austerity measures in recent times, coupled with the growth of public and political discourse of intolerance towards migrants, illegal migrants have become *"national abjects"* (Tyler, 2013, p. 9). Those deemed to be transgressing moral, social and physical borders can be targeted, scapegoated, and denied access to support, in the name of resource protection.

Collectively, young people in this study experienced non-conforming to ideal constructions of childhood and victimhood, their agency misconstrued as 'consent', attribution of culpability and blame, resource protection and xenophobia. All these experiences within the 'child trafficking' framework can be interpreted as serving to position children and young people as the 'other' and excluding them from support and protection. As Bauman (1991) observes, 'otherness' is central in establishing identity categories,

> *"...abnormality the other of norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health...stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, 'them' the other of 'us', insanity the other of reason, foreigner the other of the state subject, lay public the other of the expert"*
> (p. 14).

The process of 'othering' serves to oppress those who do not conform to ideals, or fit categories and social identities created by powerful elites through exclusionary practices. The discourses drawn upon in 'child trafficking' and legal and bureaucratic processes children experience in the 'child trafficking' framework, appear to produce and maintain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively a 'trafficked child'. The non-conforming appear to be treated punitively, through state sanctioned exclusion, which in turn serves the state's

interest in reinforcing a restrictive immigration system, simultaneously preserving the concept of the ideal type of victimhood in 'child trafficking', and fuelling public discourse of hostility towards migrant children.

The aim of this thesis was to explore children and young people's experiences of trafficking and the 'child trafficking' framework, and to critically examine the construction of 'child trafficking' policy and practice, in order to address the main research question,

> **To what extent does 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of trafficking?**

A conclusion is drawn that the way in which 'child trafficking' policy and practice is presently constructed and experienced, appears to not reflect the lived 'realties' of young people in this study who as children, experienced trafficking. Children and young people's own perceptions and lived 'realities' of childhood and 'child trafficking' appear to not be reflected in current assumptions underpinning the 'child trafficking' framework, shaping the 'child trafficking' policy and practice response.

Core concepts

This thesis has critically engaged with core concepts constructing the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework. How childhood is conceptualised has been examined forming and underpinning the prevalent 'victimhood' discourse in 'child trafficking' policy and practice. The construction of 'the trafficked child' has been critically analysed alongside how 'child trafficking' is defined and interpreted in practice. Concepts of trafficking as child abuse and children's agency have been explored in this study, how both are constructed, interpreted in practice and experienced by children themselves. In light of the findings, focused on children and young people's experiences of trafficking and the current 'child trafficking' framework, I consider my developed understanding of these core concepts constructing and shaping current 'child trafficking' policy and practice. I offer observations about how the findings have informed my position in relation to current approaches in policy and practice.

I have argued in this thesis that the hegemonic and pervasive concept of childhood as an ideal of innocence and adult dependency shapes how the 'child' in 'child trafficking' is constructed. This idealised western construction of childhood is built on notions of white, middle-class and privileged values. Universalist concepts of a normative childhood based on western values fail to sufficiently address different childhoods, highly relevant today with increasing migration of children across borders. Young people's experiences of their childhood challenge many assumptions of normative and western concepts, with this study revealing how children were skilled in familial duties, economically active and politically engaged. Young people's life experience was also very different to assumptions that children ought to be safe, at home, cared for, dependent and settled. Separated from families, young people in this study experienced dislocation, a loss of family ties, poverty and political upheaval, challenging norms and ideals of childhood in affluent western industrialised societies. My position on childhood departs from a normative conceptualisation informed solely by western-centric norms and ideals. I do not advocate a universalist position, but rather a politically and culturally competent one, which recognises childhood(s) are diverse and not uniformly experienced. Childhood experiences are constructed by individual, social *and* structural factors. The position I take is that contemporary childhoods are constructed and shaped by multiple perspectives, mediated by the social, political, cultural, institutional and economic conditions within which these constructions occur.

The construct of the 'trafficked child' in policy and practice, revealed in this study as narrowly and legalistically defined, draws heavily on the embedded concept of victimhood in 'child trafficking' narratives. I have argued that victimhood discourse serves to drive a moral rhetoric that reinforces children's dependency and vulnerability. Additionally, children experiencing trafficking perceived through victimhood discourse can be pathologised by their experience. Narratives of a 'loss of childhood' or 'robbed of innocence', feeds into perceptions that experiences of abuse irretrievably 'damages' a 'pure' childhood. The moral quality in linking harm experienced by children with the underpinning concept that childhood is an ideal of innocence and sacrosanct

(Meyer, 2007), presents a powerful narrative that few could contest. Indeed, the power of the victimhood discourse serves different groups' interests in 'child trafficking' (policy-makers, NGO's and the media) in order to invoke a moral response, attract funding, provide sensationalist headlines and stir the electorate.

I began my work in this field with a value-base of recognising that *"a victim-centred, human rights approach to child trafficking is necessary and desirable to combat trafficking"* (Gearon, 2012*b,* p. 7). As my research progressed with critical engagement of the 'child trafficking' context, I no longer ascribe to a victim-centred approach, having critically explored victimhood as a discourse. I have argued that victimhood discourse, which engages with the concept of childhood where children are viewed as innately passive does not sufficiently encompass the complexity of children's lived 'realities'. I reject the discourse of victimhood on the basis that victimhood in 'child trafficking' policy and practice constructs an ideal type, which does not serve children and young people's interests. I take the position that victimhood discourse, as a way to conceptualise harm experienced by children is disadvantageous. Overwhelmingly, the majority of children in this study did not experience a 'victim' approach to their circumstances. Children's experiences appear to confirm a restrictive and high threshold of being recognised as a 'victim' of trafficking via immigration-led 'child trafficking' practice. The construct of ideal 'victim' appears to serve the state's interest, not children's, by actively excluding children and further deeming them as transgressors of physical, social and moral borders.

I adopt the position that the construction of 'the trafficked child' based on the concept of victimhood, both reinforces childhood as a state of innocence, and victimhood as a state of being a victim. I hold the view that children experiencing trafficking can experience being a victim of crime or of abuse, in the common usage of the term 'victim'. I assert however, that these experiences are not a permanent state, and therefore, children's negative experiences should not be pathologised into a 'state of being'. I reject victimhood discourse as labelling and categorising children by their experiences and simultaneously

maintaining and reinforcing notions of vulnerability and passivity of childhood, thus denying children any power.

This study has addressed definitional problems in identifying acts of 'child trafficking' in practice and identified a reluctance by practitioners to accept that children have been trafficked. The definition of 'child trafficking' as established in the UN Protocol, cited in policy and practice as the core interpretation of what constitutes trafficking, is defined as the criminal act (recruitment, receipt, transportation) by means (such as threats, coercion, deception, abuse of position of vulnerability) for the purpose of exploitation (such as sexual exploitation, forced labour or slavery) (ATMG, 2010). I have accepted this definition throughout this study with the caveat that this definition is a starting point, not a complete and definitive answer to defining exactly what 'child trafficking' is. I acknowledge that since the definition's first inception 16 years ago, understanding in this field is evolving. Moreover, given that there has been a distinct absence of children's views up until now, as to how they define 'child trafficking' when experienced first-hand, existing definitions are only part perspectival.

How the existing definition is interpreted and applied in 'child trafficking' practice has been contested and argued as not aligned with the UN Protocol's intention in provision of a 'lesser test' when applied to children. The abusive means (threats, coercion, deception, etc.) need not have been used in order for the case to be one that constitutes 'child trafficking'. Yet, in my critical analysis of the practice framework, the concepts of 'consent' and 'coercion' are shown to be key determinants in the identification of 'child trafficking' in practice. Establishing a child's 'consent' or if a child has been coerced, inform decision-making as to whether a child is defined as trafficked or smuggled. The findings suggest that both interpretations of 'consent' and 'coercion' are oversimplified and a present a false dichotomy, not adequately reflecting the complexity of children's experiences. I therefore, take the position that 'consent' should not be a key element in the case of labelling migrating children as 'smuggled', nor 'coercion' as the determinant of a 'child trafficking' case. As children's experiences suggest, their apparent 'consent' can be manipulated by traffickers,

a child can be deceived to express 'consent', and 'coercion' can be far more subtle than narrowly defined as a child being forced. Furthermore, those responsible for making these judgements in immigration-led practice are not practitioners with expertise of working with children. I therefore, reject both constructs of 'the trafficked child' and 'the smuggled child' in current 'child trafficking' practice, based on concepts that are contested and form the basis of a decision-making process that can be viewed as flawed. I refute both labels that construct legal identity categories, which do not reflect separated migrating children's experiences nor assist children to get the support they require.

In addition to contested interpretations of 'consent' and 'coercion' in practice, 'child trafficking' is also narrowly defined as exploitation experienced solely at the point of destination, in the UK. The findings suggest children experienced abuse and exploitation at different times and places, and at different stages of their migration. The current immigration-led approach in 'child trafficking' practice, whereby children are more likely to be seen as illegal immigrants first, and deemed 'smuggled', child protection concerns can be overlooked. The findings suggest how trafficking and smuggling experiences overlap, indicating that present interpretations are limiting and do not encompass children's actual lived experiences. Reflecting the findings, I take the informed position that separated migrating children can experience abuse before arriving to the UK, during migration to the UK *or* at destinations in the UK. Children who are trafficked by people traffickers or agents are currently labelled as 'smuggled'. These children may not go on to experience further abuse at their final destination, but are likely to have been abused or exploited in source countries or *en route* to the UK. These children have been trafficked but are not likely to be recognised as such in present policy and practice. I take the position that distinction between smuggling and trafficking in current 'child trafficking' policy and practice is arbitrary. Children in this study recognised themselves as having been trafficked, including children deemed in practice as 'smuggled', exploited by people traffickers.

Children's experiences of being trafficked to the UK, being sold and used as 'house girls' or sold for sex, are aligned with present understanding that children

can be trafficked for domestic servitude, labour and sexual exploitation. Despite this, children were not identified or formally recognised by state actors as having been trafficked. This supports my position that interpretation of what constitutes the act of 'child trafficking' by practitioners has serious definitional and conceptual limitations. A seemingly narrow interpretation of abuse experienced at destination only, by forcible means, with an evidence-dependent approach (children needing to prove they were trafficked with tangible physical evidence over and above children's testimonies) limits children's access to help and protection. Children's own perceptions of what trafficking is, broadens the present narrow interpretation in practice. Forefront in children's experiences of trafficking was how traffickers deceived and lied to children, manipulating their desires. Children defined trafficking as an abuse of cultural traditions, a loss of freedom, by power exerted over them emotionally, psychologically and physically. The findings revealed that children were not necessarily forced to travel or held captive, traffickers created material dependence and instilled a sense of loyalty and indebtedness. Children revealed processes of dislocation, objectification and isolation, restricting their capacity and resources to act to stop the abuse experienced. I have come to understand the act of 'child trafficking' in this broader sense, reflecting the study's findings.

This thesis has examined how 'child trafficking' is constructed as child abuse in policy and considered how children themselves defined the harm they experienced. Safeguarding 'child trafficking' policy guides practitioners to assist children through existing child protective services, in which child abuse is defined as physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse or neglect (DfE, 2011a). In listening to children's personal accounts of separation, migration and trafficking, my position has not shifted, in terms of understanding that the deceit, hurt, maltreatment and undue advantage these children can experience constitutes child abuse. This understanding was confirmed through listening to children's perspective on the situations they were in, they held the view that their own thresholds of what harm was unacceptable, had been breached by abusive adults. Children viewed rape as transgression of their bodies and as child abuse, being beaten causing injuries, with weapons, and for no reason, was wrong. Children defined emotional abuse as bullying, ridicule,

insults and being humiliated. Psychologically, children experienced threats, and dependency and loyalty manufactured through indebtedness. Neglect was also a significant feature with their basic needs for food, shelter and access to medical treatment, education and social contact restricted and controlled.

Difficult as these experiences were, children wanted to be listened to and conveyed these personal accounts of abuse in the hope of developing a better understanding of trafficking in order to improve the existing policy and practice response. Their testimonies provided rich detail, which offers a deeper insight into the kinds of trafficking abuses experienced by children and what forms trafficking abuse takes. Children trafficked to the UK often had already experienced significant trauma at home, human rights abuses, child imprisonment, witnessing violent death and destruction through war or civil unrest. Migration journeys were perilous and children endured 'slavery-like' conditions in clandestine methods of movement in cramped, dark conditions over long periods. Sexual and physical assaults, being threatened with firearms and financial extortion were cited as abusive practices at the hands of people traffickers. Children who experienced abuse in the UK, exploited by traffickers for their own gain, revealed severe and multiple forms of abuse causing injuries, with abasement, degradation and inhumane mistreatment. The findings expand my understanding beyond present conceptualisations of abuse as *acts* of cruelty, violence and neglect. Trafficking abuse was also experienced as *processes* of deceit, manipulation, isolation and commodification.

In this study, children experienced multiple and severe forms of these types of abuses, sought assistance and disclosed abuse to practitioners in unambiguous language and meaning. Despite the alignment between defining abuse in 'child trafficking' policy and children's experiences of abuse, this study revealed how children experienced their accounts were met with disbelief, they felt discredited, ignored and at times blamed. An immigration-led approach that upholds public and political views that migrants are to be distrusted, prohibits children being seen as genuinely requiring help and protection. As the discussion on culturalism explored, the current climate of cultural oversensitivity, practitioners' fear of racism and potential cultural protectionism

may also serve to prevent acknowledging child abuse of children from other cultures. I take the position that culturalism allows child abuse to remain unchallenged and tacitly permitted to continue, and is therefore, wholly unacceptable. Cultural, familial or traditional beliefs and practices towards children that are customary within different cultures, do not transcend local laws and practices. Whatever culture, ethnic background or community a child is from, local practices of child protection and access to welfare apply to any child. All children in the UK (irrespective of their immigration status) require protection from abuse and exploitation. Entitlement to equal access to protection and support is already defined in domestic children's law in the Children Act 1989 and safeguarding 'child trafficking' policy and yet, a child protective and welfare approach in 'child trafficking' practice appears to be circumscribed in an overriding immigration-led approach. Applying existing policy to *all* children, irrespective of immigration status or nationality is acutely positioned against the current political backdrop and a large public consensus of the need to restrict public resources to migrants.

The final, but not least important core concept I engaged with in this thesis, was children's agency. The concept of agency was examined to explore how and if children's agency is considered in 'child trafficking' policy and practice, given the importance attached to children's rights to participation and to be heard in the UNCRC, Children Act 1989 and children's social policy. I further explored how children's agency is exercised in their lived experiences of separation, migration and trafficking. I adopted the definition that agency is capacity, a state of acting, exerting power (Jary and Jary. 1995).

The findings revealed how interpretation of children's agency in 'child trafficking' practice can be problematic and inextricably linked to assumptions and judgements about children's choice, consent and volition. A complex picture emerged in 'child trafficking' practice whereby children being trafficked may seem to be acting of their own accord and making their own choices, acting independently. Children's lived 'realties' of these processes presented a deeper understanding of the actual context. Children's hopes were fuelled by traffickers' promises to them, in order to gain a child's trust to travel with unfamiliar adults.

Their 'consent' was exploited and children's cultural traditions of obedience was abused, for the future gain of the trafficker. When children encountered services, practitioners misconstrued their apparent 'consent' as a child being agential, deeming children as acting of their own volition. Children described how they were instructed to act by traffickers and obeyed. The position I take is that obedience is not the same as being agential, as children were not exerting their *own* power. That is not to say, children cannot be agential *within* such situations. For example, whilst obeying abusive adults in domestic servitude, children snatched some time to themselves for a break, eavesdropped on conversations or learnt English from other children. These are examples of children's agency, a child acting and bringing about change that *"can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives"* (Sen, 1999). Coping strategies were developed with children's own motivation, where they managed to exercise some power, albeit within very limiting and constrained situations.

I suggest that children's agency in 'child trafficking' practice can be misinterpreted and misconstrued as consent or volition, resting on an inadequate understanding of how children can be agential. This is perhaps not surprising, as the underpinning conceptualisation of childhood views children as absent of innate skills or capacities to reason, which also constructs separated migrant children dichotomously as passive innocent 'victims' or as culpable threats. Misrepresenting children's agency in 'child trafficking' practice was evidenced in this study as deeming children complicit in migration decisions and holding children criminally accountable for crimes associated with trafficking. Children were not however, agential in migration decisions or when involved in criminal activity. Misinterpretation of such acts as agential and at face value, only serves to blame children for their circumstances, and is therefore inadequate, as it fails to understand the subjective 'realties' of children's experiences. Reflecting this, young people advised that practitioners require more reasoning, to look beyond presenting situations, to question the reasons why a child is separated, migrating or involved in criminal activity.

The concept of agency, in the social constructivist view, counters constructs of childhood and the 'trafficked child' as deficit of adult competencies, defenceless,

weak and non-agential. The findings have informed my view that separated migrating children possess competencies, skills, strengths and can be agential. Listening to children's journeys and experiences shed light on children's agency as proactive and purposive, in family life at home, politically and economically. Children also managed to exercise degrees of agency in restrictive trafficking situations. I adopt the position that childhoods variably entail a mixture of qualities such as strengths, resilience and capacity, but *also* at times weakness, vulnerability and incapacity. Childhood and adolescence are phases of learning, as distinct periods in the human life course in which children's agency and autonomy evolves. Learning to be agential is shaped by experiences, development of skills with age, both positive and negative learning experiences and this necessarily includes making mistakes. Olana defied her parents' wishes and travelled abroad with strangers. In her perspective, she was agential, and in doing so, made an error of judgement, *"If willingly I don't see anything wrong it's just like an error"* (Olana). Maya identified how the way she was raised to not challenge adults around her contributed to her vulnerability*, "I never questioned them, you know, so I think it was the naivety"* (Maya). Yet over time, Maya started developing coping skills independently and exerting degrees of agency, having learnt and understood over time she would not be given any opportunities by adults around her.

The unexpected finding of the role other children and young people played in helping children in this study in their trafficking situations was moving, in hearing how children tried to alleviate suffering of their peers. The significance of this emergent aspect, beyond a Disneyesque reading, is how children and young people managed to mobilise support and resources within oppressive (adult) relations of power. Children and young people successfully navigated around abusive adults, in a clandestine manner in order to help children in less fortunate circumstances than their own. These findings support my position that children and young people have capacities, abilities and reasoning, to act on their own initiative and instigate change, especially in the absence of trusted adults. The findings revealed how other children and young people facilitated escape for children in this study, directly or indirectly, not without increased risk

to themselves, which can be interpreted as a critical expression of self-determinacy and agency.

Implications for policy and practice

A conclusion has been drawn in this thesis that the way in which 'child trafficking' policy and practice is presently constructed and experienced, appears to not reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of childhood, separation, migration and trafficking. In light of the study's findings and developed understanding around core concepts I have proposed, reflections are made upon the implications for current policy and practice.

Conceptual shift

The foundation of policy and practice that concerns children and young people is how childhood and adolescence is conceptualised and understood by adults. As this thesis has explored, children and young people's experiences of their childhood do not reflect normative, western and universalist conceptualisations of childhood. In order to reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people, a change is required in how childhood and adolescence are perceived and understood. A conceptual shift is necessary in understanding that experiences of childhood and adolescence are diverse, uniquely experienced and shaped by different contexts, individual, social and structural factors. Due to the multinational context of 'child trafficking', and policy and practice in England needing to engage with culturally diverse populations, recognising childhoods as socially constructed is an essential element in understanding different experiences of childhoods.

Separated migrating children's experiences do not reflect ideals of childhood as a period and state of innocence, dependency and security. Children and young people's experiences challenge notions of childhood as 'safe', at home, cared for, wholly adult dependant and settled. Recognising diverse childhoods requires understanding that children are not always protected as they can be

exposed to significant trauma and danger, they can be displaced, experience a loss of family ties for various reasons and not have a secure sense of 'home'. Separated children do not have a customary adult to look after them and experience dislocation from families, communities and countries of origin. An acceptance that these different subjective experiences constitute contemporary childhood and adolescence, in a globalised world, expands our understanding of children and young people's motivations, actions and ways of being. In this approach, the hegemony of ideals are side-lined, which are on fixed on narrow western and privileged notions of what childhood should be, and how it ought to be experienced. Childhoods are diverse, western and non-western, privileged and underprivileged and a plethora of experiences in-between. A conceptual shift is therefore, fundamental in understanding that childhood and adolescence are socially constructed and subjectively experienced, which provides a more nuanced and developed way of thinking about children and young people in how they negotiate and interact in the world.

Victimhood discourse, underpinned by binary concepts of childhood as a state of innocence without capacity or agency, or children perceived as complicit 'wrongdoers' with volition, is not sufficient in encompassing the 'realties' of children's lived experiences. This presents a strong case for victimhood discourse to be abandoned in existing 'child trafficking' policy and practice, as denying children any power, pathologising and categorising children by their experiences, and simultaneously maintaining and reinforcing notions of vulnerability and passivity of childhood. In its present construction, victimhood serves to protect the interests of the state rather than children and may in turn create new vulnerabilities and further harm. Separated migrating children and young people need to be recast as *neither* victims *nor* culpable, but as individuals, capable of representing their experiences. A different approach is required, one which recognises children as social actors in their own right, with capacity to reason, and importantly, able to communicate to others their needs when experiencing maltreatment.

Childhood and adolescence are distinct phases in the human life course in which intrinsic qualities need to be valued, with attention paid to evolving skills,

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abilities and exercising agency. Current 'child trafficking' policy and practice does not address adolescence as a distinct phase, which is highly problematic. Children and young people are assumed a homogenous category from birth to adulthood. Adolescence is highly relevant in the 'child trafficking' policy and practice context, as 'child trafficking' data and research indicates teenagers as the highest prevalent age group. Conceptualising childhood with an absence of adolescence as a time of increasing abilities, learning how to be agential, including making mistakes, presents a conceptual void in how we approach young people in policy and practice. This has wider applicability to other areas in children's policy. For example, existing child protection systems can deny young people any degree of agency and can infantilise young people's actual lived experiences, in turn denying them access to knowledge and power. Recognising adolescence as distinct period from earlier childhood is necessary to address current limitations in children's policy and practice.

Policy reorientation

The way in which 'child trafficking' policy has been orientated, structured and interpreted as a criminal justice issue has constructed the current 'child trafficking' policy and practice response as immigration-led and prosecution focused. This study has heard how 'child trafficking' practice was experienced by children as immigration-driven, including child welfare services, which failed to recognise child protection concerns, leaving children feeling unprotected. The construction of a legal category of 'the trafficked child' via Home Office agencies has been heavily critiqued for serving the states' political interests in pursuing anti-immigration policies and electioneering. 'Child trafficking' policy has been politicised to the detriment of individual children and young people requiring a welfare response to their needs.

This study supports the argument for 'child trafficking' policy to re-orientated and depoliticised away from a criminal justice approach. A re-orientation away from the Home Office towards those tasked in government responsible for children's welfare and protection is required to divorce 'child trafficking' policy from an overriding immigration focus. The criminal act of 'child trafficking' is not

solely an immigration problem. Trafficking involves legal and illegal forms of migration, inside a country's borders and across borders. Children experiencing trafficking abuse can be UK nationals or children migrating from abroad. Policy responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children already sits with the Department for Education, with existing expertise in development of policy for children and practice guidance for practitioners working with children. A reorientation of 'child trafficking' policy away from an immigration-led and prosecution-focused approach is suggested as absolutely necessary, towards an approach which centres on children and young people's needs and protection. Acknowledgement is made that such proposals have already been made (ATMG, 2010) and rejected by government (House of Commons Education Committee, 2013). However, the findings in this study bring fresh insight into having uniquely heard from children and young people directly affected by trafficking, and having personal experience of the existing framework. Children and young people's experiences in this study support the view that 'child trafficking' approached as an immigration-led and prosecution focused approach was incongruent with their needs and failed to offer them protection and recovery from abuse.

Depoliticising 'child trafficking' policy away from a criminal justice orientation is suggested as necessary to remove the political power in constructing identity and legal categories which at present form experiences that are exclusionary and do not assist separated migrating children. This calls for a removal of the legal categories and bureaucratic practices of labelling separated migrant children as a 'smuggled child' or a 'trafficked child'. The contested and problematic decision-making in front-line practice in establishing a child to be a 'consenting smuggled child' or 'coerced trafficked child' needs to be removed as key determinants, shown in this study to be built on face-value interpretations of children's circumstances that fail to address abusive contexts and welfare needs.

The existing definition of what constitutes 'child trafficking', resting on the UN Protocol definition, is suggested as being *solely* reserved for prosecution of the offence of trafficking. Legal actors formulated the UN Protocol as a law

enforcement tool, resulting in a legalistic definition. I suggest therefore, it remains in the legal arena but is removed from immigration agencies in determining a child's legal and social status under immigration processes, which presently determines (and limits) a child's ability to access support and services. Existing smuggling and trafficking definitions are both recommended as solely reserved for criminal justice agencies for the prosecution of offences, and not a child's status.

A new approach

Repositioning policy responsibility to the Department of Education of all separated migrating children and not just those suspected of having been trafficked, would allow child welfare practitioners to make their assessment and to determine levels of needs of individual children. Reframing 'trafficked children' and 'smuggled children' as 'Children in Need', as defined in current domestic legislation in the Children Act 1989, separated migrating children and young people would be recognised and approached in practice with their welfare needs as of primary concern. A key finding of this study was children's primary need for assistance and support when asking for help, an acknowledgement of their circumstances as a child welfare and child protection issue.

Children and young people advocate an individualised response from practitioners, centred on listening to them, with more reasoning and treated with dignity and equality. Separation, migration and trafficking abuse was not uniformly experienced and children require support at different stages of their journeys. Children's experiences were shown to have different contexts of separation, framed by family and structural factors, varying migration trajectories, and different experiences of trafficking abuse. Some children required recognition of experiencing trauma and abuse before migration, or during migration *en route* to the UK. Other children required immediate protection from further harm, experiencing trafficking abuse in the UK. An individualised response would require a departure from current practice, as existing guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (DfE,

2011*a*) reflects legal categories, the current immigration-led approaches, normative risk indicators and pathologises children's experiences into a special group. A new approach based on an individualised response, needs to be a culturally and politically competent one, situating children's experiences within social structural factors in reasons for migration. Individual, cultural, political and structural factors in shaping children's experiences of separation and migration need to be addressed to provide the more reasoned and empathetic response children require.

A significant finding in this study was children experiencing social work practice as also immigration-led. A divorce of 'child trafficking' policy away from Home Office agencies may serve to begin to address the concerns about social work complicity with immigration policy. However, I suggest further practice changes are required, for social work to realign its practice with migrant children as anti-discriminatory and reaffirm social work's role in upholding children's rights to equal access to protection. Specific practitioners could be trained to work with migrant children, with training centred on not only assessing individual needs, but also in how trafficking abuse is experienced in the broader understanding of the processes and acts of trafficking abuse as defined by children in this study. Anti-discriminatory training is paramount, to counter children's experiences of xenophobia in practice, with awareness that culturalism can occur, both within communities and in professional practice, and needs to be challenged by practitioners.

Children in this study experienced separation as dislocation, isolation and 'alienness' finding themselves in a foreign country with no connections to family or other adults to provide for them. Experiences of young people in this study indicated more interactions with the legal system, immigration and asylum system, and less so, with child welfare services or practitioners who addressed their lack of status and rights. What young people stated they needed as separated migrant children was exactly what they did not have due to being separated, someone to be caring, sympathetic, adults who treated them with dignity as *"a human being, as a normal person"* (Maya). These relational qualities were cited as an important feature of building trust with separated

migrating children, with more opportunities to have 'face time' with social workers, speaking to children alone and taking their concerns raised seriously. Being believed when disclosing abuse is of upmost importance to children and young people and being given the benefit of doubt, rather than the prosecution focus and evidence-dependent approach in current practice.

These changes in practice signal that more social work resources are required for an individualised response as Children in Need, rather than specialist 'child trafficking' services. In the present economic and political climate, with an increased pressure on social workers caseloads and a current mass scaling back of preventative services to support children and young people, social workers are faced with less time and limited resources to assist children. Statutory social work is pressurised with increasing thresholds, supporting children with the highest and most urgent needs, with less opportunities to deliver more general Children in Need services. This study supports that more, not less, social work time is required with separated migrating children and young people. Children and young people require more time with practitioners to develop trusted relationships and to gain an understanding of their support needs. Listening to children, seeing children alone and ascertaining their views of what is happening to them requires practitioners to be supported in time and resources for relational-based practice. Furthermore, children require practitioners to act as advocates in upholding their rights and facilitating access to services, with the knowledge that migrant children can experience discrimination and restricted access to resources based on asylum status or nationality.

The importance of peers to children and young people experiencing trafficking in this study was evident in *every* stage of the trafficking experience this thesis explored. The significant role of peers was revealed as not only helping children to escape, but also in acts of kindness, peer-to-peer, in helping children to cope in difficult circumstances whilst being trafficked. In practice, this indicates the importance of listening to children as to what is happening in their worlds, including other children in households where separated migrant children reside, as this could be an important factor in recognising abusive situations. Young

people also highlighted the salience of the role of peers as a key facet of positive support in recovery, after leaving trafficking situations. Being able to participate in peer-to-peer activities, share experiences and develop a social network with other children and young people was cited as going someway in filling a gap for children and young people who found themselves in an unfamiliar country, with no social connections and dislocated from their families. A new approach in practice with separated migrant children would recognise, support and fund children to help other children with similar experiences.

Chapter 9. Conclusions

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the main arguments and findings in relation to the research question and objectives. The chapter presents how the thesis makes a contribution in three areas. First, implications for policy and practice are considered in light of the study's findings. Second, theoretically, a social constructivist approach is highlighted as enabling a more nuanced understanding of childhood and 'child trafficking', attending to both children's unique experiences and the context within which these experiences are shaped. Third, it highlights the strengths in the methodology for successfully engaging young people in research and enabling their voices to be heard. The chapter concludes with future directions, identified as areas for further research.

The overall aim of this study was to listen to children and young people's own accounts of their lived experiences of 'child trafficking' alongside an examination of the current 'child trafficking' framework. The main research question was,

> *To what extent does 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England reflect the lived 'realties' of children and young people's experiences of trafficking?*

In order to answer this question, I set out to critically examine the construction of the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework through the experiences of children and young people, to explore if the current system meets their needs. The first research objective addressed the question, how do contemporary constructions of childhood shape and inform 'child trafficking' policy, practice and research? The development of the construction of childhood was traced in order to situate how contemporary constructions of childhood have been historically shaped by different ways of viewing children and childhoods. Despite more recent developments in conceptualising childhood as socially constructed, older constructions of childhood as 'authentic' (innocent and pure) and 'positive-scientific' perspectives (Ryan, 2008) continue to shape how childhood is perceived today in contemporary society.

This provided the context in how the victimhood discourse in 'child trafficking' narratives draws heavily on the concept of childhood innocence and vulnerability. Victimhood discourse was critically examined as appearing to be central in the political construction of 'child trafficking' within immigration discourse, which determines legal categories of 'the trafficked child' and 'the smuggled child'. Discourses of child abuse and exploitation in 'child trafficking' policy and practice were critiqued as based on white-middle class values and reinforcing conceptualisations of childhood as passive and wholly adult dependent. Both victimhood and child abuse discourses draw upon the romanticised concepts of innocence, children who do not conform to this construct can be stigmatised and denied access to knowledge and power. The discourse of criminality was also explored through a different perspective to that of prosecution of traffickers, as a neo-moralist approach in criminalising children for crimes associated with their trafficking situation. Underpinning criminality discourse, it was suggested that a positive-scientific approach objectifies and individualises children's presenting behaviour as criminal, and reflects an increasingly criminal justice response to children's social policy areas.

Reviewing existing 'child trafficking' research revealed how childhood and 'child trafficking' perceived alternatively, as socially constructed, presents an alternative rendering of 'child trafficking' from young people's own perspectives. Departing from romanticised and positive-scientific concepts underpinning current 'child trafficking' discourses, the studies highlight how children experience trafficking through specific social, cultural and economic contexts. Research informed by social constructionist approaches provides a more nuanced understanding of the child trafficking experience, indicating children's experiences can challenge assumptions underpinning present constructions of the 'trafficked child'.

I critically engaged with the construction of the 'child trafficking' framework in England in order to examine how 'child trafficking' has become defined and interpreted in policy and practice, the second research objective of this study. The UK government's adoption of the UN Trafficking Protocol as a law

enforcement tool orientated trafficking policy-making from a criminal justice approach, explicitly linking trafficking policy to illegal migration. I examined how 'child trafficking' policy development ran parallel to New Labour's neo-liberal agenda of restrictive immigration policies, whilst simultaneously promoting unrestrictive European migration. 'Child trafficking' was positioned as a concern synonymous with illegal migration, which served the government's interests in being seen to curb illegal migration, in the context of a significant increase in net migration to the UK.

Successive governments in the UK have politicised 'child trafficking' in continuing to conflate 'child trafficking' policy with immigration. An argument was presented that the rapid enactment of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 helped to secure the present Conservative government's election success, against a backdrop of increasing public concern about migration. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 has been critiqued as providing less focus on protecting 'victims', with 'modern slavery' discourse argued as serving the state's interests in pursuing an anti-immigration agenda and focus on illegality of 'economic' migrants.

The Home Office construction of 'child trafficking' policy, determining how 'the trafficked child' is defined in practice through an immigration approach, appears to be the stronger, defining account, despite 'child trafficking' also defined as child abuse within existing child protection systems. The Department of Education's espoused child welfare approach to 'child trafficking' appears to be circumscribed by an overall criminal justice approach. In practice, very few children are defined formally as a 'trafficked child' and children are more likely to experience a greater emphasis on immigration matters over child protection concerns. I presented an argument that in practice, key determinants in the identification of 'trafficked children' in front-line practice are based on contested notions of 'consent' and 'coercion', which invoke a dichotomous approach towards children. These concepts inform decision-making as to whether a child is defined as trafficked or smuggled and argued as not adequately reflecting the complexity of children's experiences.

The choice of a qualitative research design and methodology to explore

children's experiences of trafficking was appropriately aligned with the sensitive subject area being addressed directly with children and young people. Groupwork and reciprocity assisted accessing young people and engaging young people in the research, a key challenge in this study. My investment in time in delivering groupwork for the benefit of this group of young people served well in building relationships and trust. Individual interviews offered an opportunity for young people to convey their personal and lived experiences of being trafficked, whilst focus groups facilitated a safe space in which young people voiced their views on 'child trafficking' services. A visual aid aided a conceptual exploration of the construction of the 'child trafficking' framework.

Relational research practice was reflected upon as a particular aspect required in this type of research due to the sensitive nature of children's personal and traumatic experiences. Creating an emotionally safe space for young people to share difficult accounts of being trafficked was paramount, requiring skills of empathy and the ability to sit with distressing accounts of abuse. As a consequence of this emotional 'availability', I found that listening to many such painful accounts did cumulatively take its toll, particularly in later stages during analysis, which required a re-adjustment of my self-care.

The findings of the study in exploring young people's distinct and lived experiences of being trafficked as children, revealed the context of children's separation from their families. Children's experiences were framed by poverty and political upheaval and they experienced a loss of family ties and disconnection from communities. Young people's own accounts of their particular childhood cast light upon childhood perceived as obedience, deferent to all adult authority, cultural traditions exploited by traffickers. Many aspects of children's own perceptions of their childhood were shown to defy and challenge present constructions of childhood and 'the trafficked child' built on Western, privileged and ideological norms. Children's experiences of separation and dislocation, being engaged in productive and reproductive work, and possessing skills of independence were highlighted as contesting normative conceptions of childhood experienced at home, being cared for, dependent and settled. Children's experiences were shown to further challenge present

constructions of childhood as a time of peace and 'safe' due to being exposed to significant trauma of violence, death, destruction and persecution. Notably, children's accounts revealed how they were agential, engaged politically, and economically, further testing the boundaries of childhood perceived as passive, with no capacities or degrees of agency.

Lived experiences of being trafficked revealed how children underwent processes of dislocation, traffickers manipulating their hopes and desires and deceiving them. Children were mistreated and used, experiencing multiple and at times severe abuses of power over them, traffickers exerting power over their minds, bodies, space and systematically objectifying children for their own gain. The way in which children represented their understanding of child abuse and being trafficked was discussed as challenging both constructions of 'the trafficked child' and 'the smuggled child'. Children were not forcibly coerced (as an innocent 'victim' is perceived) and their 'consent' to migration (as an illegal migrant) was manipulated, arguably consensual, indicating a more complex process, which present constructions allow for.

In exploring interactions with front-line services within the 'child trafficking' framework in England, young people overwhelmingly experienced not being believed about their accounts of what had happened to them, and felt that professionals did not listen or act upon concerns children were conveying to them. Children experienced being prosecuted for crimes related to their trafficking situations and an onus to provide substantial evidence in order for their testimonies to be believed. In interventions that followed initial contacts with agencies, children experienced not having a voice due to poor quality of interpretation, variable social work contact and practitioners not speaking to children alone to enable them to express their views.

In positive experiences of professionals in 'child trafficking' practice, young people valued relational qualities of practitioners who demonstrated they listened and cared. These types of relationships enabled children to build trust in adults, identified as a key problem for children experiencing trafficking. The Refugee Council and specialist 'child trafficking' NGO's played a key role in

advocacy, securing children's rights to access statutory services and facilitating recovery and peer-to-peer support. Young people offered recommendations to improve existing services to reflect their needs and offered advice to other children and young people experiencing trafficking.

The findings revealed children's experiences of professional complicity and potential community protectionism, particularly when coming into contact with professionals from the same ethnic background. 'Culturalism' served to explore understanding children's experiences of these power relations in front-line practice relating to culture. Inter-culturalism, I argued is likely to arise in practice due to a climate of anxiety about being accused of racism, prohibiting addressing and challenging certain 'cultural practices' that constitute child abuse. I discussed the notion of intra-culturalism as explaining potential cultural protectionism within communities, as not wanting to implicate one's own culture or a member inside the community, or viewing cultural practices as transcending local laws and customs. Racial and cultural assumptions in practice were also addressed as contributing to inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism, perhaps explaining why young people in this study advised other children and young people to request a professional from a different ethnic background from their own.

The 'fit' between children's experiences of trafficking and 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England was explored in order to examine if the existing framework meets their needs. The findings revealed that young people experienced 'child trafficking' practice as immigration-led and prosecution focused, which appeared to be incongruent with their needs arising from having been trafficked and requiring support. Limited and conditional formal identification as a 'trafficked child' acted as a barrier in accessing help and protection. The findings revealed a failure in front-line practice in identifying or responding to child protection concerns. Furthermore, young people experienced discrimination in front-line practice and practitioners denied them access to services due to their nationality or immigration status. These findings revealed a disjuncture between young people's own accounts of their situation, what support they stated they required and how they were approached in 'child

trafficking' practice.

Young people suggested a different approach in front-line 'child trafficking' practice to meet their needs. This approach was envisioned as neither immigration-led and prosecution focused nor a 'victim' approach, as presently both appear not to encompass the complexity of the 'child trafficking' experience. Young people advocated an individualised response with more reasoning, rather than professionals taking situations at face value. A humanistic approach was suggested as being aligned with children and young people needing care, building trust with adults and professionals practicing 'benefit of doubt' in relation to disclosures. Due to experiences of discrimination and xenophobia in front-line 'child trafficking' practice, young people stressed the importance of equal access to support and assistance.

The final research objective considered the implications for children and young people experiencing trafficking, of a system built on current assumptions about childhood and 'child trafficking'. Drawing together the findings of this study, I presented an argument that the victimhood concept constructs an ideal type in 'child trafficking', an ideal that has high thresholds set in children being recognised as 'victims'. Children who do not conform to the ideal challenge the assumptions underpinning the construct of an ideal victimhood and can be treated as transgressors of social and moral norms. As transgressors, non-conforming children can be constructed as the binary opposite to innocent - guilty, experienced by the young people in this study as being disbelieved, blamed and held criminally accountable.

'Child trafficking' appears to be constructed and understood in policy and practice as an immigration problem. Hidden behind a rhetoric of assisting 'victims', the power of the state in constructing identities and legal categories through an illegal immigration lens, sets conditions of how 'child trafficking' is responded to in practice. A punitive approach towards non-conforming children, through state sanctioned exclusion, appears to mask the state's interests of implementing neo-liberal restrictive immigration policies. I presented an argument, based on the findings of children experiencing a lack of child

protection response, that the perception of 'child trafficking' as a child welfare issue is a less powerful construction in the 'child trafficking' framework. Social work practice was experienced as also immigration-led, suggesting 'child trafficking' practice appears to be circumscribed by an overall criminal justice approach with child protection needs overlooked and remaining unaddressed.

To answer the main research question, a conclusion was drawn that the way in which 'child trafficking' policy and practice in England is presently constructed, and experienced, appears to not reflect the lived 'realties' of young people in this study who experienced trafficking as children. Overall, children and young people's own perceptions of their childhood and experiences of being trafficked appear not to be reflected in current assumptions underpinning the 'child trafficking' framework.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on 'child trafficking' in three areas. Implications of the study's findings on existing 'child trafficking' policy and practice have been considered. Theoretically, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of childhood and 'child trafficking' as socially constructed, permitting alternative perspectives to be heard and represented. Methodologically, this study contributes in developing methods with a hard to reach population addressing a difficult subject area, promoting children and young people's participation in research.

There are limitations to policy and practice implications considered in this study as the findings are based on a small-scale study of a heterogeneous sample of young people with experiences of trafficking. That said, this research has made an important first step in listening to how children and young people experience 'child trafficking' policy and practice, and so has had a distinct applied focus, in two ways. Firstly, young people expressed their views how they experienced services in the 'child trafficking' framework offering insights into front-line practice and how current services could improve. These findings could therefore, potentially enhance practice in front-line services and be applicable to social workers in Children Services, the police, immigration officers, solicitors and other practitioners. Secondly, young people participated in a wider

exploration of approaches in 'child trafficking' practice, contributing to an understanding of the construction of the 'child trafficking' policy framework itself. The policy and practice implications are therefore, grounded in synthesising children and young people's experiences, views and suggestions for an improved approach to 'child trafficking' combined with the critical analysis of the construction of 'child trafficking' policy this thesis has addressed.

The implications for policy and practice have been considered, based on the new understanding I have proposed around core concepts informing the construction of existing 'child trafficking' policy and practice. Fundamentally, a conceptual shift in how we perceive childhood and adolescence is necessary. Universalist concepts of a normative childhood based on western values fail to sufficiently address different childhoods, in contemporary cross-cultural contexts of children's policy, and especially policy relating to separated migrant children. Childhoods are diverse, and a recognition is necessary that children and young people's experiences are shaped by different contexts, individual, social and structural factors. An absence of addressing adolescence in exiting 'child trafficking' policy and practice is problematic. As a distinct phase in life, adolescence needs to be acknowledged as a time of growing competencies, emerging agency and autonomy.

Victimhood discourse pathologises and categorises children's experiences, maintaining and reinforcing notions of vulnerability and passivity of childhood. Victimhood discourse needs to be abandoned as serving the interests of the state rather than separated migrating children, in turn creating new vulnerabilities and further harm. Separated migrating children and young people need to be recast as *neither* victims *nor* culpable, but as individuals, capable of representing their experiences. Both constructs of 'the trafficked child' and 'the smuggled child' have been rejected as constructing legal and identity categories and bureaucratic practices that do not reflect separated migrating children's experiences, nor assist children to get the support they require.

A reorientation of 'child trafficking' policy away from a criminal justice approach towards policy and practice that centres on children and young people's welfare

needs and protection has been argued as absolutely necessary. Existing immigration-led and prosecution focused 'child trafficking' policy and practice has been shown to be incongruent with children's needs and fails to offer children protection and recovery from abuse. Repositioning policy responsibility to the Department of Education and reframing 'trafficked children' and 'smuggled children' as Children in Need, is required to address the needs of children facing difficulties due to separation, migration and trafficking. This new approach needs to deliver an individualised response from practitioners with opportunities to develop trust, to listen to children and young people, believe separated migrant children's accounts of their experiences, and offer advocacy to uphold their rights to equal access to services and support.

This study has approached 'child trafficking' and young people's experiences of trafficking from a socially constructivist view, one which is built on assumptions that childhood is constructed and shaped by multiple perspectives, mediated by social, political, cultural and other contexts. This approach departed from assumptions underpinning present constructions of childhood in 'child trafficking' and facilitated an alternative perspective and understanding of the 'child trafficking' experience. A shift from assumptions based on deficit models of childhood and adult-only interpretations of children's problems was made possible through an approach that views children and young people as competent informers on issues affecting them directly. A social constructivist view of children's experiences permitted the unique experience to be heard and represented whilst casting light onto contexts within which those experiences are constructed. By addressing the social, cultural, political, legal and institutional contexts of the 'child trafficking' experience, a broader and more nuanced understanding can be reached of factors influencing, shaping and creating experiences.

Theoretically, a social constructivist approach enabled culturally and politically embedded discourses in 'child trafficking' policy and practice to be examined, and the interplay of power systems in constructing identities, forming a distinct set of experiences to be exposed. This study has addressed local and particular contexts, such as the critical role of children in helping in other children in

abusive situations. Attention has also been paid to structural contexts, not only in structural factors leading to positions of vulnerability to trafficking, but also in limitations of state-based rights when separated children's citizenship is in flux. Perhaps most importantly, and missing until now, an important contribution has been made in hearing from young people directly about their experiences of being trafficked and encountering the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework. A social constructivist approach to 'child trafficking' experiences facilitated children and young people's voice to be heard, by treating them as social actors with capacities to hold a view, represent their own experiences and contribute to the body of knowledge on 'child trafficking'.

Research with trafficked children as direct informants is very limited internationally, and in the UK, there are presently no peer-reviewed studies addressing children's experiences of being trafficked. The methods chosen in this study were therefore, exploratory and broke new ground in terms of successful engagement of a hard to reach population. Methodologically, this study makes a modest contribution in sharing what methods worked well in gaining access and building trust with young people who had personal experience of trafficking and 'child trafficking' front-line services. Groupwork, utilising interactive and creative methods was particularly effective as a methodological device to promote dialogue, allow young people to form a relationship with me as researcher and with each other, and constructed a sense of trust. Creative arts, specifically music and dance with young people, fostered openness and encouraged self and group expression through group collaboration. The energy that music and dance created was harnessed for engagement in more traditional qualitative methods of focus groups and interviews (Gearon, 2015*b*). Methods chosen were successful in attending to cultural differences of a diverse and minority population, overcoming language barriers and reducing power differentials between researcher and researched. Creative methods with this group of young people proved invaluable in both accessing a hard to reach population and establishing trust, two known key barriers in 'child trafficking' research.

In constructivist research the 'hermeneutic circle' (Rodwell, 1998) is a key aspect of the research process requiring a circle of information sharing be created so that perspectives are presented, evaluated, understood or incorporated into emerging understanding (p. 82). Rodwell (1989) notes, *"the hermeneutic circle of constructivism does not have to be a physical circle"* (p. 81). However, this study suggests that by adding the physical dimension, circles created through the embodiment of sharing music and dance with young people, the hermeneutic circle seems to be enriched (Gearon, 2015*b*). Music and dance in this study became *"embodied circles"* (Gearon, 2015*b*) and served as a vehicle in communicating epistemology, by allowing me to express in body and symbolic form, my approach towards young people. Young people could see how I interacted with them and received their ideas. Communicating epistemology and teleological orientation (what was intended by the research process) through 'embodied circles' seems to be a novel approach and there seems to be no other research at this time which considers this as a distinctive approach in research with children and young people.

The physical dimension of 'embodied circles' in enriching the hermeneutic circle and consequently the data produced would be an interesting subject of future study, as was not possible to explore in depth in the scope of this thesis. For example, the choice of music in this study and resonance (160+ beats per minutes) was specifically chosen to stimulate chakras Anahata (Heart centre) and Manipura (Naval centre), the former associated with alertness, compassion, love, sharing and the latter with self-assertion, dynamism and power (Saraswati, 1996). Resonance and yogic science combined with notions of rhythmic entrainment (Freeman 1998; Benzon, 2001) as promoting social bonding and self-actualisation (Clark-Rapley, 1999) warrants further exploration as research method and 'embodied circles' as sources (and sites) of data. The exploration of physical aspects of conducting interactive research with children and young people, the phenomenology of embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), interconnectedness of mind and body (Grosz, 1994) and multiple ways of knowing through lived *and* embodied experiences (Snowber, 2002) present an exciting opportunity to develop further links between creative arts and social science research.

Furthermore, participants in this study were willing to engage further in research and to participate in the dissemination of research findings to others, particularly to other young people. As Bryman (2004) notes, catalytic authenticity can occur as an outcome of research, if the research acts as an impetus to engage in action for change. This aspect is acknowledged as challenging, requiring additional resources to support participation, but signals an area of further research with this group of young people who are willing to engage in action for change. Moreover, some participants expressed a strong desire to share their experiences from this study to a wider audience, in order to develop understanding of trafficking amongst practitioners. This could be supported for example, through participation of these young people in social work education and other areas of 'child trafficking' practice. Young people's intentions of taking further action towards the betterment of others or contributing to change in the 'child trafficking' policy and practice context could be transformational. Tactical authenticity represents *"the greatest challenge for a time-bounded inquiry"* (Rodwell, 1998, p. 114), as qualitative change arising from the research needs to be effective from stakeholders' point of view *ex post facto.* Both catalytic and tactical authenticity are acknowledged as possibilities arising from this study but would require further research collaboration and funding with this group of young people.

Future directions in 'child trafficking' research are suggested as developing an understanding of the experiences of boys and young men, a group which is under-represented in 'child trafficking' policy and research. Further research would be necessary to understand the views and needs of boys and young men and their access (or lack of access) to existing services. Gender and intersectionality with other categories is also under-theorised (Collins, 2015) and unexplored in 'child trafficking' research. Vulnerability discourse in 'child trafficking' is inherently gendered with dominant perceptions of 'child trafficking victims' being mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation and female (Hynes, 2010). Boys and young men are more readily perceived as perpetrators, particularly of youth criminality (Pearce *et al.*, 2009). This raises an important

research agenda, to explore the experiences not only of boys, but also more broadly the 'gendering' of 'child trafficking' policy and practice.

Further research is also suggested as addressing a potential difference or division in how UK 'trafficked children' are responded to in practice. Research could explore if UK children are responded to in similar or different ways to separated migrant children experiencing trafficking, through sexual exploitation policy or through 'child trafficking' policy. A comparative study with UK children and young people addressing their experiences of being trafficked would be an interesting area of further research.

The issue of culturalism raised in this study, in relation to children's social policy areas, raises another area of future study, particularly in the diverse populations and cultures child welfare services need to respond to in practice. For example, further research exploring culturalism in more depth with child protection practitioners and community members could consider the ways in which the two themes developed in this thesis: inter-culturalism and intra-culturalism shape and inform practice with children and young people.

As 'child trafficking' policy and practice has focused almost exclusively on migrating children to the UK, children and young people trafficked out of the UK are another group under-researched. School-age children and young people have been reported to have been sexually exploited abroad, sold to men at 'parties' after being sold stories by agents of modelling contracts in France, Italy and New York (Brinkworth, 2015). Similarly, questions arise around recent media interest in 'schoolgirl jihadis', if they have been groomed via social media for the purpose of exploitation *"to bear children for the caliphate"* (Sherwood *et al.,* 2014). Bloom (2011) and more recently Amnesty International (2014) and United Nations (2014) report that many children find themselves trapped, raped, abused and sold into slavery by ISIS. Children trafficked out of the UK, or groomed/coerced to travel out of the UK (in circumstances not yet understood as 'child trafficking') warrants further research. An exploration of children and young people's experiences in such situations could provide valuable insight

into how young people's agency is exercised (and manipulated) into various forms of exploitation.

Additionally, the methodology developed in this thesis could be transferable to other research with hard to reach populations or groups considered to be 'vulnerable'. The methodology could be applied to research with other groups of children and young people where the subject to be explored is around experiences of sensitive topics, requiring a humanistic and ethical approach. The strength of 'embodied circles' in establishing research relationships and building trust has the potential to engage young people in other areas of social science research, promoting children and young people's active participation and collaboration in research.

In establishing the aim of hearing children's voices in a difficult and sensitive subject area, not studied academically before in the UK, there is no doubt that I set myself a very challenging task. Reflecting upon the choice of subject area for this study, I was fully aware from the onset that access to children and young people who had experienced trafficking was going to be very challenging, if at all possible. Partly due to service providers, as gatekeepers wary of research participation in impeding an individual's recovery by recalling traumatic experiences and partly due to young people's lack of trust in adults given the abuse of power experienced. For this reason, work committed to gaining access to this group of children and young people began very early in this study, taking 7 months from ethics approval to groupwork and interviews/focus groups commencing, which spanned 4 and 9 months respectively. Relationship building with key professionals and young people themselves was central to this project's success, but also required persistence and sitting with uncertainty.

The emergent nature of the study required quite a high degree of flexibility, especially in developing the methodology to respond to young people's differing stages of recovery and NGO's capacity to host the research. The project ebbed and flowed, especially in terms of recruitment, at one stage, I had many Vietnamese boys to interview and an interpreter at stand-by. These all fell through due to staffing issues at the NGO and precarious funding of their

project and I was almost back to square one! Constant re-evaluation of the methodology was necessary in fieldwork, to ensure that research methods were culturally appropriate and acceptable to young people in terms of research engagement, to enable their voices to be heard. As highlighted in this thesis, reciprocity worked well with young people and required not only my time to establish rapport and run groupwork sessions but also an emotional investment, expressing a genuine commitment to wanting to hear their views.

Furthermore, I set myself the task of exploring children's experiences within a contemporary, very topical and fast-moving policy context. Keeping up-to-date with media coverage of a plethora of trafficking cases, electioneering, and enactment of the Modern Slavery Act during this thesis and the current refugee exodus dubbed as the 'crises of our time' required constant engagement to follow developments. In one sense this has been reassuring, in terms of choosing a topical and relevant research area, however, the study has proved very challenging as a first significant piece of research conducted at this level.

Despite the challenges, overall, I believe this study has been very rewarding and worthwhile. The effort and commitment in listening to and hearing children's experiences of trafficking has been successful. Young people stated that they found participation to be therapeutic *"Well the time I saw you I enjoyed it like… I really, really enjoy it"* (Isabella) and *"It was really relaxing, what I mean by relaxing like is you don't feel like doing an interview or something, it's quite like more natural, yeah"* (Maya). Young people were keen to participate with the hope that their experiences can benefit other young people by informing and improving policy and practice. Reading back the representation of young people's journeys with them and how their quotes were used in this study to support key themes was re-assuring that I had accurately and faithfully conveyed the essence of their experiences,

> *"That's really good, the way that you captured my story…I'm quite impressed , the way you capture the, almost like the whole thing, you can say it's the whole thing, because if someone is reading it, even me looking at it, you feel like it's really in front of me, it's well grabbed"*
>
> (Maya).

One young person was keen to know, "*does it make any difference?"* (Hayley), which really pulls into sharp focus the applied aspect of this research. It is hoped that young people's voices will be listened to through this study and have some positive impact on policy and practice. For me personally, Hayley's concern acts as a motivator in taking these findings further, post submission of this thesis. Dissemination of the findings to various audiences with young people is suggested as a key future direction in the hope of making a difference.

The importance of listening to children has been a key driver in this thesis and advocated as an important feature in improving children's policy and practice, which has often omitted children and young people's views altogether. Reflecting this, what children and young people themselves say they need most is to be listened to, believed, and adults taking action upon concerns raised. This study has enabled the first step and provided space for children's voices to be heard. The next step is acting upon what has been said by children and young people in this study, which signals to them that they have been heard.

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Appendix 1 UN Trafficking Protocol definition of trafficking

The UN's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN, 2000), known as the '*Palermo Protocol*'. Article 3 states:

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

Appendix 2 Ethics Approval

This document comprises pages 1 and 2 both of which must be competed in full.
You must then attach:

- page 3 - a summary of the research proposal (including full referencing, if cited)
- page 4 - a series of headings from the Ethics Checklist below that have been ticked as noted, each heading being followed by a brief paragraph on how any issues have been addressed.

You should use A4 paper, 12pt type and normal margins.

If you are conducting research on a placement or in association with another body where ethical approval has to be granted through a professional body, for example the NHS, or another University department, it is sufficient to append only the first two pages to the front of the ethical approval granted by the other body.

In all other cases, ALL research must meet the Department's Ethics Committee requirements. To do this, consult your Department's guidance.

You should pass a draft copy of your completed ethics form to your lead supervisor for discussion before submitting a final copy to him/her. Once the form is ready and signed by you both, you should pass the form to the Department's Ethics Officer for his approval. The Ethics Officer for SPS is Professor Ian Butler and you may email him the form direct or pass him a signed hard copy. Once his approval has been obtained, you should submit the form to the PGR administrator for your file (either the signed hard copy or electronically with an email trail with each level of approval recorded).

Note
1. You should not begin work on your research until this approval is obtained
2. You are required to submit the signed off ethics approval form along with the other documentation required for the transfer to (or confirmation of) PhD status.

Ethics Checklist

Issue	Noted	Not applicable
A justification for the research	✓	
Avoidance of deception, presentation of purpose of study	✓	
Arrangements for debriefing, including access to support	✓	
Obtaining consent, including right to withdraw	✓	
Avoidance of distress or threats to self-esteem	✓	
Privacy and confidentiality	✓	
Special circumstances (eg respondents who cannot give consent, children under 16, unusual issues around privacy)	✓	
Additional general ethical issues	✓	

STUDENT TO COMPLETE

Student name (please print): ……ALINKA GEARON

Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk.   Tel:

Programme: MPhil/PhD, Department of Social & Policy Sciences

I hereby confirm that this document represents an accurate record of my proposed research.

Student's signature: ………………………………… Date: …………………

STAFF MEMBERS TO COMPLETE

You must show your supervisor your completed ethics form and obtain their agreement (evidenced through their signature below) that your proposal is of an appropriate academic standard to be forwarded to the Departmental Ethics Committee. Once your supervisor has signed off the ethics form, it should be passed to the Ethics Officer for his approval.

Supervisor

I hereby confirm that this proposal is of an appropriate academic standard to be forwarded to the Departmental Ethics Committee.

Supervisor name: Dr Louise Brown

Supervisor signature: ………………………………….   Date: …………………

Ethics Officer

I hereby confirm that this proposal is of an appropriate academic standard and is approved by the Departmental Ethics Committee.

Ethics Officer name: …Dr Jason Hart (in lieu of Professor Ian Butler)

Ethics Officer signature: …………………………………………Date: 18.7.13…….

Appendix 3 Memory box hand-out

My box

Maps or places

Special words

My thoughts

Songs or lyrics

Art

POETRY

Pictures

Objects

Crafts

memories

Appendix 4 Interview schedule

STAGE 1
Introduction
What we are going to talk about is your experiences of being separated from your family, moving to the UK/around the country and what happened to you. I'm really interested in how <u>you</u> experienced your situation.
Age?
Born where?
Where you live now?
What's it like?

Separation and moving
Do you have contact with your family?
Can you tell me how did you became separated from your family?
Whose idea was it for you to move away?
How did that happen?
What happened?

Services
Tell me a bit about which services you've come into contact with?
Did they do what you wanted?
What did you want to happen?
Did you feel punished/protected?
What could have been differently?
Who could you speak to?

Summarise
Advice to other young people?
Advice to services?

STAGE 2
Model
Reflecting on your experiences I would like to show you a model
[visual aid]
I've been speaking to a few young people in a similar situation to you, that have been separated from their families and have been on the move. It strikes me that there are two types of system, that young people have experienced: one is where young people are seen as victims, and the other type of system is where the focus is on criminal matters.

Do you, looking at the model, so you recognise those two ways that young people are dealt with?
Which one is closest to your experiences would you say?
Why do you say that?
By whom?
How?
How did you see <u>your</u> situation in relation to those two approaches?

From what you have described some people would say that you were
trafficked/exploited

Do you think you were trafficked? exploited?

Choice
How much choice do you think you had over what happened?
Are there examples when you were able to make your own decisions/choices?
[visual labels]
Prompt:
People think that young people have been forced, had no choice, but some
young people I've spoken to have said that they did make some choices at that
time…or felt they had some control

What do you think?

People also think that young people have 'agreed' , 'gone along with' things that
happened to them, had choice…
What do you think?

What could be different?
What system might work better for young people?

Reflection
How did you find it, talking about your experiences?
Were you comfortable?
What aspect did you like? Dislike?

Appendix 5 Visual aid

'On The Move'

A research project that wants to hear the views of young people

- **Are you under 21?**
- **Separated from your family?**
- **Moved to the UK from abroad?**
- **Moved *in* the UK? (foster care, been missing)**

Interested?

What it involves:

- Approx 1 hour of your time
- **£30 offered in gift vouchers**
- What you say will be <u>confidential</u>, your name will <u>not</u> be used
- This research is *not* part of any services you receive

Call, text or email:

Contact: Alinka Gearon, University of Bath

Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk   Mob: xxxxxxx

Appendix 7 Information sheet

UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

**A project that wants to listen to the experiences of young people
separated from their families.**

There have been projects that have asked social workers and other adults
about young people who live away from home. However, there have not been
many projects that speak and listen to young people. This project wants to
gather views directly from young people, separated from their family who have
moved countries or moved to other carers and have been in danger.

It is hoped that the project will find out important information about what it is like
for young people like you, what's important to you and what matters.

This leaflet gives you information about the project to help you decide if you
want to take part. It tells you what is planned and what it will involve for you.
Talk to your friends, family or carers if you want help to decide.

Who am I?

I am Alinka Gearon and I am a student
researcher at The University of Bath.

The university teaches, does lots of research
and it is also a place that trains researchers.

I have worked with young people for many
years.

What the research will involve.
I would like to come along and meet with you to talk about your experiences of
living away from home. If you agree I would record our conversation and then
after our meeting I will type up what was said (changing your name) and then
delete the recording.

What I will be asking you about.
I'd like to know about your journey leaving home and your experiences of
moving from place to place. This maybe moving to the UK, moving towns,
moving into care or being missing. I'd like to ask you about keeping safe, what
can help young people avoid being in danger and what you think of services
you have received. You can choose not to answer any of the questions and you
can stop and leave at anytime.

Is it confidential?
This project is not part of the services you receive. What you say is confidential,
I will not tell anyone what you told me, unless you tell me something that makes

me really worried about your safety and even then I would discuss this with you first. When I talk about my research and write reports I never use real names so you remain anonymous.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is up to you. I will ask you for your consent and then ask if you would sign a form. I will give you a copy of this information sheet and your signed form to keep. You are free to stop taking part at any time during the research without giving a reason. If you decide to stop, this will not affect any care or service you receive.

Will I see the report?
The report from the research will take a long time to finish, up to two years! So, after I have met all the young people I hope to send you a summary to let you know what I have found out so far. The final report will be published so people can learn from young people's experiences and improve the help available.

How I can benefit
If you decide to take part, I will give you up to £30 vouchers of your choosing (HMV, New Look or similar) after our meetings. Your views might help other young people in a similar situation and may help to improve the services and assistance offered to young people.

If you want to, you could be more involved in the research such as:

- letting other young people know about what the research finds out about young people's views
- putting together a bulletin of all young people's views, setting up a Facebook or web page
- taking pictures of drawings/artwork for uploading or arranging a display or
- presenting the findings to others

But it's entirely up to you! If you just want to give your views, that's fine too.

Contact details:

If you have any further questions you can email me at, ring me or send me a text.

Name: Alinka Gearon   Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk

Mobile:

I think it is important to learn directly from young people and I would really like you take part!

Appendix 8 Information sheet for social workers/caseworkers

INFORMATION SHEET

Study title:

'Child Trafficking': experiences of separated and moving children

For this PhD research project, the main focus is on young people's experiences of trafficking. The main purpose of this study is to give voice to children and young people's own accounts of their experiences of trafficking. The study will explore journeys leaving home, the experiences of moving and living away from home. This maybe moving to the UK from abroad, moving towns, moving into care or being missing. Young people will be asked about keeping safe, what can help young people avoid being in danger and their experiences of services.

I intend to undertake qualitative interviews directly with young people and possibly some group work. Group work will use interactive methods such as drawing, artwork or mapping children's social movement in order to generate discussion. Visual methods can be beneficial with young people who may find verbal expression difficult.

The research tools and the interview schedules are intended to be designed in an age-appropriate way that encourages young people's active involvement and participation in the project as well as being sensitive to their circumstances. For example young people may not recognise themselves as having been 'trafficked', exploited or abused or understand the terms in the same way adults do. So these terms and labels will be avoided in written and verbal communication with young people, unless certain terminology is used by the young person themselves.

Young people will be offered up to £30 gift vouchers of their choice for their time and participation in focus groups and/or interviews. Young people will also be given the opportunity and choice to be more involved in the research. This could be finding out what the research tells us about young people's views and letting other young people know. For example, this might be putting together a bulletin of all young people's views, setting up a Facebook or web page or taking pictures of drawings/artwork for uploading or arranging a display. Young people might also like to present the findings to other young people, students or services. This is entirely voluntary and further tokens of appreciation will be offered for further involvement.

The projects intends to benefit to young people by providing an opportunity to tell their story, share experiences to inform policy and practice and promote learning about their situation to others, including other children and young people. An inclusive research process which is 'child'-centred offers children

and young people a sensitive approach in facilitating a space for young people to be heard. This study aims to privilege the voice of young people and reciprocally offers potential personal therapeutic value in terms of young people having their story heard and disseminated to a wider audience.

This project has received ethical permission from the University of Bath to commence. However, ethics will also be viewed as an on-going process and the project will attempt to keep ethical practice at its core and minimise undue upset to the participants. The interviews will be digitally recorded; the recordings will be destroyed once transcribed and analysed. At the point of transcription the data will be fully anonymised and names will be changed.

Consent from the allocated social workers/key professionals supporting the young person will be obtained in the first instance before approaching young people. If appropriate, consent can be requested from the person with parental responsibility for the young person.

An information sheet describing the project has been designed for young people and at the beginning of the first interview the project will be fully explained again to ensure the young people are able to give their informed consent to participate. All participants will have the right to withdraw consent.

The research will be carried out by one person Alinka Gearon who is a registered social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council, holds a current enhanced Criminal Disclosure and Barring service disclosure (available upon request) and is experienced in child protection social work.

In Summary:

Participants:

Children and young people (up to 21 years old) who are separated from their usual carer (UK nationals or from abroad) and on the move. This could be:
> Unaccompanied migrant children
> EU migrants
> Private fostering
> Children at risk of commercial sexual exploitation
> Children who go missing and/or are in care
> Young people leaving residential/foster care (16+)
> Children sent abroad.

Methods:

Focus groups with interactive methods   and/or

Qualitative interviews with each young person.

The interviews will take place at a convenient and safe location and at a time suitable for the young people.

Further participation in the research process is offered, at a level decided by the young person.

Ethics:

Ethical permission from the University of Bath has been granted. The researcher holds a current enhanced CRB disclosure (Enhanced Certificate, Disclosure & barring Service, dated 28.8.13).

Contact for Further Information

Researcher:
Alinka Gearon
Postgraduate Research Student
Social & Policy Sciences
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY   Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk Mobile:

The research is supervised by:
Dr Louise Brown
Reader in Social Work
Social & Policy Sciences
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY   Email: L.Brown@bath.ac.uk Tel:

Appendix 9 Young people's consent form

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

This interview is part of a research project to explore young people's experiences living away from home

- **You do not have to agree to take part**

- **If you agree, you can change your mind at any time**

- **If you say no, you do not have to give a reason**

- **If you say no, you will not be punished in any way**

- **We can stop, or take a break when you want to**

- **If you do not want to answer any question you don't have to**

- **I keep recordings and notes of the interviews in a safe place**

- **Your real name will not be used (a made up name will be used instead)**

- **What you say is confidential. I will not tell anyone what you have told me, unless you tell me something that makes me really worried about your safety. If so, I would discuss this with you first.**

- **If you feel upset by any of the issues that come up in the interview, we can stop or talk about it. We can find extra support for you if you need it.**

- **I would like to use quotes in my report but without using your name**

I agree to take part in the research and understand the points above.

_____   ___321_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Name of Researcher:
Alinka Gearon
Social & Policy Sciences
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY

Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk   Mobile:

The research is supervised by:
Dr Louise Brown
Reader in Social Work
Social & Policy Sciences
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY   Email: L.Brown@bath.ac.uk Tel:

Appendix 10 Consent form social worker/parent

CONSENT FORM

SOCIAL WORKER OR PERSON WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Title of Project:

Experiences of children on the move

X has expressed an interest in participating in a research project that is being undertaken by a researcher from the University of Bath.

The project intends to explore the experiences of young people who have been separated from their usual carer/s and have moved. This will be done across one or two interviews using interactive methods such as drawing, artwork or maps in order to generate discussion.

The young people will receive vouchers of £10 as an incentive to participate and to recognise and value their time.

The project has been given clearance from the local authority and has been cleared by the University of Bath Ethics committee.

The project is being undertaken by one researcher from a child protection social work background who has enhanced DBS clearance.

I will ensure the young person provides informed consent to participate and recognise they may wish to withdraw this consent at any time.

I have attached an information sheet providing more details of the study. If you have any further questions about it please contact me directly, details below.

I am seeking your consent as their Social worker or person with parental responsibility for them to participate and enable them to have their say about their experiences.

I would really appreciate it if you would sign below indicating your consent for X to participate and return it in the envelope attached.

Signed…………………………………………………………

Position……PARENT…………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………

Appendix 11 Confidentiality agreement (interpreters)

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
Interpreter Services

Title of Project:

'Child trafficking': experiences of separated and moving children

Name, position and contact details of Researcher:

ALINKA GEARON
Social & Policy Sciences
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY

Email: ag290@bath.ac.uk   Mobile:

I, _____, as interpreter, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to all information shared in interviews conducted by Alinka Gearon related to her doctoral study on 'Child Trafficking: experiences of separated and moving children'.

I agree not to share any information from the interviews, with anyone except the Researcher of this project.

Any violation of this and the terms detailed above would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards and I confirm that I will adhere to the agreement in full.

Interpreter's name (printed) _____

Interpreter's signature _____

Date _____

Researcher's name (printed) _____

Researcher's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 12 Children's journeys

Jiao

Jiao is 21 years old, she left China when she was 16. Jiao was orphaned and raised by her grandmother in China. When her grandmother passed away her uncle took over the house. She was sent abroad by him to earn some money, stating she had no choice but to go otherwise *"I would have nowhere to live, as he would kick her me of the house"*. She was told that she would earn money abroad but didn't know how or what she was expected to do, she had no idea at all where she was going, the uncle organised her departure.

Jiao describes how she left China by boat with over 20 other people. The *"leader"* told them they had to hide in the bottom of a boat which was very dark and they had to keep quiet. Jiao remembers this as a *"horrible journey"*. Jiao continued her journey in a big lorry for part of the way and then changed to hide in a caravan. She was told to hide under the bed, it was very small and narrow so she couldn't breathe properly. Jiao describes hearing children playing outside but she had to stay under the bed and wasn't allowed out for a long time. Recalling this journey upsets Jiao, it is an unpleasant memory. Her whole journey to the UK took 6 weeks.

Jiao describes how, upon arrival to the UK she was taken to an empty house with another girl from China to hide. The 'owner' visited and gave them food every day, she remembers receiving chips to eat. Jiao was told she owed money to the people trafficker for her journey and could not leave until the debt was paid. Other people staying in the house were freed when relatives paid the fees owed to the traffickers. Jiao knew her uncle had no money and so she would not be released. Her friend, another girl being held, suggested Jiao escape by using her as an excuse. When her friend's debt was paid, Jiao pretended to say goodbye to her at the train station and then left with her. Even though she was held in the house, the door was unlocked so she used this *"chance to escape"*.

After her escape, Jiao describes continuing to hide in different places, staying with other Chinese people. Jiao had to move around as people couldn't afford to keep her. Jiao knew she was smuggled and here illegally, she was very scared of going outside and being seen by the police. A friend found her work in a restaurant but this did not transpire as the owner was afraid to use illegal workers. She explains how her friends hid her on the top floor of this restaurant and she needed to stay out of sight when the owner was on the premises for fear of being seen. She ate leftover food from the restaurant to survive.

The restaurant was raided by the Home Office and she was arrested. Jiao describes being held in a small, dark and cold room with just an offer of a blanket for a few days. She was scared about being sent back to China and what her uncle would do to her, having not earned any money. She was also very worried about the debt owed to the traffickers, if she was sent back to China they could find her, as they knew where she lived. A social worker saw her in custody and arranged for her release and took her to bed and breakfast accommodation.

Jiao states she had *"no hope"* during her whole journey until she met her social worker and then *"life started changing"*. Jiao said the social worker was helpful in finding her a family to stay with and getting a solicitor so that she could claim for asylum. The Home Office refused her first claim for asylum, Jiao describing this as *"unfair"* and felt *"helpless"* that the Home Office didn't believe her about her uncle sending her to the UK. As Jiao fell pregnant, social services helped her with finding her somewhere to live. She hopes that the Home Office will *"listen more"* and believe her so that she can stay in the UK. Jiao often thinks *"when can I go outside, get a job and be like normal people",* she feels *"isolated".*

Ammar

Ammar is 18 years old, he describes fleeing Syria with his younger brother at the age of 17, from a situation of *"disaster"*, *"chaos"* and war. In Syria Ammar lived in the city with his family when the Free Syrian Army occupied areas of the city and started killing people working for the government. When the

government started bombing raids, *"it started like crazy"*, people were *"completely scared"* wanting to run away but frightened of the Free Army on the ground. Ammar's home and surrounding buildings were bombed. Ammar describes how he joined his student friends to help others by setting up makeshift hospitals in schools, providing food and blankets for people and assisting doctors. Ammar tells of helping *"on the streets"* pulling the wounded out from bomb sites. Ammar witnessed the Free Army shooting a civilian,

> *"they shot him. And when I say okay you are Free Army, you come to ask for freedom for us and you, you kill him. He was going to save his family so I cannot stay with you."*

At this point Ammar made the decision to leave the city with his family to flee to their village in the countryside as the Free Army *"started to make it like criminal and kill"*.

In the family's village Ammar reports encountering more problems as islamist groups and the People's Protection Unit were fighting each other. The islamist groups were attacking Kurds treating them like *"animals"* and taking their land,

> *"And they cut the head off people. So they take my sister, they take my brother, I am working for the government, from them, no food, nothing, everything like disaster and every single day they try to come inside areas. And even [name town]. And they tried to take me and even my brother 15, to join, to put us in like army. 'Okay you are living here, you should protect your family'."*

His cousin was killed and Ammar's friends were made to join an islamist group to fight for their cause. Ammar stated that he himself was a target as *"the leader of [islamist] group they take my name"* as Ammar was seen helping to smuggle in and distribute food aid from a Christian organisation, forbidden by these groups in Syria.

Ammar's parents asked him to run away with his younger brother, his uncle had the money to pay an *"agent"* to smuggle Ammar out from Syria. This man had a gun and made Ammar very scared. Ammar and his brother travelled hidden in various vehicles and walking long distances. At one stage of his journey Ammar and his brother were amongst 130 others held by people traffickers with

automatic weapons in a cave. Young children were made to sleep to remain quiet,

> *"they push mummies to give this medicine to children. Even when this children is going to start to woke up, they give him again. To sleep again"*

and older children were threatened repeatedly to be killed if they made a noise. They were transferred by the traffickers to a boat to cross the Mediterranean sea. At this point Ammar realised the trafficker was lying, his uncle paid 15,000 euros for them to travel by plane, but they were taken by boat, a riskier and cheaper route. Ammar states the trafficker was *"keeping the money for himself"*. The first boat was very old and only 7 metres long with 132 people on board. The boat was at risk of capsizing as was very low in the water, the sea only 30 cm from the edge. In the sea the passengers were transferred to a bigger boat by a rope. They stayed at sea for 3 days and transferred back to a small boat. The crew had guns. All passengers were very frightened and crying due to water coming in the boat. The people traffickers *"mafia"* gave no food or water for 22 hours. Ammar's experience was very traumatic, stating his journey was worse than the war he left at home,

> *"if you, you have that experience in the middle of sea, it was old boat, and this woman die, after this woman to die, you feel bad things. And that storm we have it in big boat, it's completely like, we are dying… you can't control the children inside the boat and it was like very heavy, if you make like one mistake you are going to be responsible for like killing all people here… Again, and again and again it's like suffering a lot of time."*

The Italian government caught them at sea and he was imprisoned. Ammar and his brother were handcuffed and beaten by Italian government officials to give their fingerprints, after which *"they throw us out in the streets. Directly"*. The trafficker arranged for Ammar to be smuggled out of Italy in the boot of a car and then by lorry. After several hours in the back of the lorry, Ammar started *"knocking, the doors, to make like noise … I don't care… my brother is like suffering"*. The driver let them go, they had arrived in the UK. Ammar was given money by the local authority to go to the Home Office. When they arrived at the Home Office Ammar reports not being provided a translator and officials wanting to separate him from his brother,

> *"they say okay we can take your brother but you no. …they make like separated me from my brother because when I go out from Syria it's like very dangerous for us and I don't like leave my brother even one, one second. He's everyday with me, every one hour he was with me…*

This was upsetting for them both, Ammar being told by the Home Office that he couldn't take care of his brother. As Ammar refused to be separated from his brother, they were asked to leave and slept rough. After trying the Home Office again, Ammar was sent to a refugee accommodation centre and stayed there for over 3 months. Ammar described being treated as a *"person with no rights"* there, *"everyone was not a human in there, we were just numbers. And our numbers is [number] and [number]. Like prison, like a criminal"*. After this centre, he was transferred to other accommodation with his brother. Ammar and his brother are waiting to hear from the Home Office about their asylum claim, if they can stay in the UK temporarily.

Grace

Grace is 19 years old and was born in Eritrea. She lived with her father in Eritrea. Grace describes her country as having political problems and the government taking political prisoners. Her father was engaged in political activity working towards political independence, forbidden by the Eritrean government. Grace participated in distributing political leaflets with her father. Government forces caught them both and sent them to prison. Her father was sent to prison and she has not seen or heard from him since. Grace was sent to another prison, aged 16 at the time.

Her aunt in Eritrea managed to get her out of prison; due to corruption there she was able to pay the police to release Grace. The aunt told Grace that she could not stay in Eritrea *"if they catch me I will have to go to prison again so it's going to be worse"* as a bribe had been paid. Grace felt she had no choice, the aunt made arrangements for her to leave the country illegally, paying an agent to take Grace to the UK via France.

Grace left the prison at night and travelled a long way to a neighbouring country, from there she flew to France by plane. The agent travelled with her

until they reached the *"jungle",* the migrant camp in Calais. She was then transferred to another agent and instructed to *"follow him and do what he says".* Grace had to do what they told her to do, *"without them, their permission you can actually do nothing".* Grace found the experience hard, especially whilst living in the 'jungle'. She was frightened and it was *"so freezing".* There were a lot of different people there, she found it *"scary"* as there were *"a lot of boys there".* Grace was mistreated there but found it difficult to talk about,

> *"you don't have any choice, what you gonna do, nothing, you can't do nothing, …because it's like, if you are in that stress, you can do nothing, you have to follow their instruction, that's all that you can do."*

After a week she was instructed by the agent to board a lorry with 3 other people and arrived in the UK.

Grace didn't know what to do arriving so she went directly to the police station. She describes being worried because *"in my country you can't speak to the police, they are so hard, they can smack you... the police, they are so terrible".* But to her relief Grace was treated *"nicely"* by the police, they called Children Services who took Grace to shared accommodation. Grace was helped by a social worker to apply for asylum, attending the Home Office was a difficult experience for her *"it was so hard, like they don't believe you what you tell them".* Grace attends college and participates in a youth project, hoping to start voluntary work with them. Grace is waiting to hear about her asylum claim.

Olana

Olana is 18 years old and lives with her foster mum. Olana was born in Nigeria and lived with her family, both parents and siblings. There was no chance of employment at home so Olana appears to have made the decision herself to travel to the UK to get work, go to school and get money to support her family in Nigeria. She told her parents she wanted to go but they did not agree, they said she could not travel as she was still a child, Olana was 17 years old at the time. She tried to *"beg them"* them but they were not in agreement. Despite this, Olana went ahead and got her passport issued and travelled to the UK with a man she was introduced to in Nigeria without her parents knowing. The man

she travelled with paid for her plane ticket to the UK and Olana was told that she would pay this back *"little by little"* when he found work for her.

Whilst staying with this man in the UK, Olana describes being assured that *"very soon he was going to put me in school and was looking for work for me"*. But then *"he tried to sleep with me, then I said no… Then the man beat me, bang…then he banged my head onto a wall"*. This came as a shock to Olana *"it was really bad because I did not expect that from the man, it was really bad"*. The man did not allow Olana to speak to her family on the phone when they rang her and he locked her in the house. Olana explains she had no money, no phone or anybody to ask for help. Her parents were really worried about her with no contact for weeks. After a period of time the man was planning to re-traffick Olana to another country and bought her an international train ticket. Olana was told they were moving house, she didn't know at the time he was planning to take her out of the country. The police stopped Olana at the train station and she was arrested. She didn't know why or what she had done wrong. Olana went to court straight from the cells.

At court, Olana's trafficker attended, but the court decided to place Olana into foster care rather than allow her to leave with this man. Olana was really frightened, she didn't know what was happening at all. The foster carer was the first person to tell her what was going on, that the ID she was given by the man *"was fake"* and that was why she was in court. During Olana's next court appearance the trafficker did not turn up and Olana told her lawyer *"that the man is not my father, my mother is not here"*. Olana stayed in foster care and *"the man run away"*.

Olana was visited by several professionals seeing *"many different faces",* all asking lots of questions. Olana received help from a social worker who offered advice and undertook an age assessment to determine Olana's age. There were so many questions, Olana *"had a headache all the time"*. After 14 months, Olana was granted permission by the Home Office to stay in the UK for 5 years.

Hayley

Hayley came to the UK when she was 14 years old from the Ivory Coast. At home, Hayley explains that she lived with her father and siblings, she never knew her mother properly, and her mother passed away when she was 11 years old. Her *"dad had a lot of kids that he couldn't really look after"* so an uncle suggested Hayley comes to the UK to live with *"an apparent aunt that I have"* and *"that her life would be different"*. Hayley was very excited about the prospect of going to school in the UK, to travel, meet new people and *"just wanted to come"*. Hayley explains she was coached to travel on someone else's passport, told what to say and which way to look, they gave her the same hairstyle as in the photo. Hayley travelled with a man and another young girl who was dropped off in France *en route*. The man then took Hayley to her 'aunt' in the UK.

From day one Hayley describes that she was set to domestic work, cooking, cleaning and looking after the 'aunts' elderly husband who needed a lot of care. After a week Hayley asked her 'aunt' if the daily chores she was set to do was *"the main reason why I am here?"* as this was different to what her uncle had told her would happen. Hayley recounts being berated by the 'aunt' saying *"I didn't pay £2,000 for you to come and sleep and for you to have free reins"*. Hayley explains she could not say or do much about this situation as culturally as a child *"you are not really allowed to talk with a grown up unless they want to talk to you"*. Hayley's 'aunt' insulted her often, *"I was disturbed in that house because I felt like everyone was bullying me."* When the 'aunt' found out that her daughter was giving small gifts to Hayley she took them for herself saying Hayley didn't deserve them. When her 'aunt' got angry *"over anything, she'd hit me"*, sometimes with implements. Hayley recounts her 'aunt' throwing a cooking pot at her, burning her, because the 'aunt' used the wrong flour by mistake and the food didn't turn out right. Hayley describes being denied emergency treatment for this injury being told *"without papers how can you expect to go to the hospital?"*. Hayley reports she had other medical needs, these too were untreated, being told *"why should I waste money on you?"* when she needed medicine. Hayley reports being expected to continue with work in the house despite being quite unwell, being hit when she awoke late due to a lack of sleep because of being in pain.

As punishment for *"talking back to her"* Hayley was left outside by the 'aunt' in the garden, in winter, overnight with no shelter or clothing. The 'aunt' and her friends laughed at Hayley for not having the knowledge or wherewithal to run away or call the police. When the 'aunt's' husband passed away, *"she didn't really need me anymore"* and was planning to send her back to the Ivory Coast. Physical assaults continued and became severe,

> *"she came from nowhere, just punched me in the eye, really hard that my eyes*
> *just ache. For one of my vein just pop, there was blood all inside my eye, it was swollen like and, and she continue hitting me…"*

After this assault Hayley describes how she approached a priest to show him she was beaten and tell him that she was frightened to go back, he contacted Children Services. Hayley recalls telling a social worker exactly everything that had happened but despite this, they told Hayley she had to go back to the 'aunt's' house. *"All they did, they kind of bought a thing for her to sign, that she won't hit me any more"* and told Hayley *"if she touch you or anything, call 999 or call us".* Hayley describes expressing how frightened she was to go back and shocked at their response,

> *"…can't you see what she's doing?...You're bringing me, you're bringing me back in a place to get burning! If I get burnt I should call you, by the time I call you I will be dead by now!"*

Hayley returned to the 'aunt's' house and *"felt very isolated in the house a lot".* Plans continued to be made for Hayley to be sent back to the Ivory Coast as the 'aunt' feared the UK authorities. Hayley managed to make contact with a solicitor via the Refugee Council who advised her to leave the house. Although Hayley was very scared, thinking she would end up in prison for being in the UK illegally, she finally left the 'aunt' after two and a half years. This time, Children Services placed Hayley into foster care but only after *"my solicitor told them that because of what happened the first time, if they don't get, take care of me, she was going to sue them".*

Hayley describes that she was trafficked,

"from whatever she told me, from all these two and a half years I been in the house, I never went to school, I never had a medical examination or whatever, I never had any education or knowledge. I had to learn English from watching English programmes things like that…trafficking means, you know, people make a wish, wish for things, I mean dream about some things that they [traffickers] know is not going to be real. And that's exactly what happened. My aunt made me dream about things."

Isabella

Isabella was born in Nigeria. Her family was poor so Isabella was already working, doing housework in someone's home, aged 14. The woman who Isabella worked for offered her the opportunity to come to the UK to be employed by her daughter to do housework and to look after the children in the family. This woman offered Isabella education, accommodation and a monthly salary,

"I was so excited …because I never had someone that tells me before that she's going to send me to school, in my life. I haven't been to school, so excited because she promised me to come over here to go to school".

Isabella describes how this woman arranged her travel documents for her but because Isabella told the Nigerian embassy *"they want to take me as their family",* they refused to issue her a visa. Isabella was then instructed to say the second time *"I'm going to visit my grand mum"* in the UK and immigration officials accepted this story. Isabella travelled alone by plane to the UK.

Immediately upon arrival in the UK at the woman's house, the daughter of her former employer, Isabella was set to work cooking and cleaning. With little sleep she was woken to start work again early in the morning. The husband objected to Isabella starting work so early but the woman told him *"it wasn't his business for she is the one that spend money to bring me over"*, *"so she allowed to do anything she want".* Isabella describes being required to start work at 5 am every day. Isabella was frightened of this woman as she was always angry with her,

> *"No matter how tidy, no matter how hard job you did at it, she come start fighting, slapping and pulling your head, every day, fighting, fight every time."*

Isabella described not being allowed out except when the woman went shopping and locked Isabella in the car with her children. Isabella wanted to be sent back to Nigeria rather than stay with this woman but when she expressed this she was beaten and

> *"...she pushed me in the garden, and told me to sleep in the garden. So I am always, like four or five times a month, I am always there because she is always sending me inside the garden. When it's winter, when it's cold, sometime I would empty the bin bag, I use it to cover myself, and when she came and seen that bin bag on me, then she come and throw everything, tea everything…"*

Isabella was very distressed and *"so skinny".* She was only allowed to drink a thin porridge that poor people in Nigeria eat and sometimes she was allowed to *"pick"* at leftovers from the family's meals. Isabella was told to spy on the woman's husband, report details of any conversations he had in the house and scapegoated in arguments between them. Isabella describes being forced to pose as their daughter and *"lie to police… because she told the police that, that her husband beat her"*, when the woman alleged she was a victim of domestic abuse from her husband and wanted him arrested.

Isabella describes that *"every time there was something wrong"* in the house, Isabella would get beaten. Isabella sustained significant injuries physically and emotionally from being whipped regularly with very long cable, with wires exposed or other implements. Isabella has a lot of scars from the injuries caused. Isabella recalls how she actively looked for something *"to drink to kill myself".* Isabella describes being demonised, called *"evil"* and blamed for all arguments in the house. One occasion, Isabella describes how she experienced a prolonged and sustained attack by the woman using implements and *"fighting and the pinching and the cutting me with her nails, and using my head like, pulling my hair…oven and the fridge together, using my head to be banging on those two things".* After this incident, her trafficker threw her out onto the street

"you better get out now or I'm going to finish you. I'm going to kill you", after one and a half years in the house.

Isabella describes not knowing what to do, walking the streets with no shoes and wet clothes, her plan was to drown herself *"I was thinking that if I see any water or river, I will just jump".* A man offered her help and took her to Children Services. Isabella describes being really frightened of speaking to the police but was assured by them to tell the truth. Despite telling authorities her real name and details of her situation she was not believed for over one and a half years, as her details did not match the travel documents she arrived in the UK with, even though she explained she was given these documents by her traffickers. Isabella describes how she was asked to assist in the police investigation, when the police took her to a house to identify her trafficker, the woman already had another trafficked girl working for her. Isabella was one of many trafficked children this woman bought and sold on to others. Her trafficker was prosecuted and Isabella was assured by the police that she would not be sent back to Nigeria, they sent details of the case to the Home Office. Isabella explains after this she was granted leave to stay in the UK.

Jessie

Jessie is 18 years old, she was born in Nigeria. Jessie's mother died in childbirth, she never knew her father and so her grandmother raised her. When her grandmother passed away a woman from her village offered to take her in, to live in the city, in Nigeria. Jessie was 15 years old when she left her village to move with this woman, *"She promised me that she is taking me to city to continue my study"* but Jessie was not put in school. When the woman asked Jessie if she would like to come to the UK to continue her education there, she agreed. Jessie describes being very sad at the time, having just lost her grandmother and wasn't aware of any travel documents or arrangements,

> *"I didn't even know I am inside any plane, I don't know because I was, I don't know what I am doing, when I was travelling down to [city] …I wasn't myself."*

Jessie was told that the woman would answer any questions for her, if asked anything whilst travelling.

Jessie describes being brought to the UK and handed over to another woman and she *"met another story entirely"*. Jessie was not aware of what trafficking was until much later, but Jessie found out the people she had encountered were *"full of lies"*,

> *"I just know that they are selling me to men. Men.*
>
> *I started facing horrible life time, sleeping with the man, beating me, asking me to sleep on the floor, you know, I can't stand the life anymore."*

Jessie describes only being allowed out when she was taken out of the house by men and returned. Men threatened Jessie when she objected to having sex saying *"if you don't cooperate with me, I will kill you here. Because I've paid money"*. Her trafficker and abusers threatened her,

> *"if you don't sleep with me (frustrated sigh), that, oh my god, that police will catch me. If police catch me they will throw me, if they throw me…they would fling me… from that, from plane."*
>
> *"All I know is just that it's child abuse. Even I don't know that is child abuse because I'm thinking oh I don't mind for me to survive, that because, that person say if you don't allow us to sleep with you, you will be, you will be killed. You will be thrown away. Your corpse, you know my dead body…corpse will be thrown in the water, so I'm just doing the sex because I want to survive."*

Jessie explains that she was aided by a visitor to the house where she was held, to run away, as was told *"what they are planning for you is not nice"*. Jessie describes that she was given a note by this person to say she should find the Home Office, some cash and shown how to open the door. Jessie ran away after staying in that house for two years. Jessie was then *"on the road"* with nowhere to go and found this difficult to speak about. She describes crying, getting lost and even wanting going back to the traffickers' house. A *"good Samaritan"* helped her to find the Home Office.

At the Home Office, the first thing Jessie was asked was to show them the traffickers' house, but she didn't know where this was. Jessie describes how upset she was, crying and rolling on the floor, afraid of going back to the house.

Jessie recalls how she was then believed, and it was the Home Office who told her she was trafficked, she didn't know what was *"trafficking before".* Presently, Jessie describes being scared because of her immigration status, she has been granted just one year to stay in the UK temporarily. Jessie's greatest fear is that she will be deported back to Nigeria, but she has no one in Nigeria and she *"may fall into someone's hands again…mistreating me".* Despite the Home Office accepting she was trafficked, they are saying that she could return home.

Kayla

Kayla is 19 years old. She was born and grew up in Nigeria. Whilst still in Nigeria,   when Kayla was 14 years old, she describes how she received some upsetting news that the couple who raised her were not her birth parents. The man she knew as her father told her that they found her by the river crying and took her in to live with them. Kayla was really upset *"because I never expect this from my life. I thought, I know the woman, the man treats me, it's as a child".* Not long after this happened Kayla describes being told by her carer that people were coming to pick her up to take her to school. Strangers arrived and offered to take Kayla to the city to go to school and train her,

> *"Then I was so happy because I never go to school before, I was happy to go to school… No money to go to school…and I want to go to school. You know, go to farm every time, go to market, go to farm…I was so happy."*

Kayla did not know until she got to the city that she was taken there for other reasons,

> *"they put me in the house with other guests. There are some boys amongst us, you know, they was using us, they bring other boys, other men to the house, to use us".*

Kayla describes how her traffickers refused to take her back to her village threatening to kill her and the family she lived with. Kayla was frightened and helpless,

> *"I was afraid…nowhere to run to, fence [around the house]… so I can't run, I can't make call, I don't even have phone…no phone, even there's*

phone, there's no phone in the village, you know…to make the call. No phone, nothing. I can't write letter, people there can't write letter. Who I give it to? To send it to the people I live with? Nobody…"

Kayla describes how she was told one day she was going abroad. She was given another name and told what to say, she didn't know where she was being sent. Kayla and another boy were trafficked to the UK by a man who travelled with them. The boy was stopped and arrested at the airport but Kayla got through with the trafficker. In the UK, Kayla describes the trafficker *"really mistreating me,"* he brought other people to the house to abuse her, she was sold for sex. When she cried and refused, he poured water on her clothes, did what he wanted with her and put her outside in the garden, it was winter time,

> *"I was crying, crying where he put me, no heater…I was crying you know. And then he leave me there and bring other men to use me, you know."*

One day Kayla recalls how she was taken to the airport and given identification documents by the trafficker, he told her she was going abroad again. The police at the airport took her to one side, she could not answer their questions and was taken away to the police station, she didn't know what was happening. The police told her she was going back to Nigeria, she said she would be killed there, Kayla was distressed,

> *"I don't know where I am. I don't know who to call, I don't have no number to call, I don't know who to talk to, you know, I was just depressed, I was very sad."*

Kayla explains that she was presented at court the following day, no one could speak her language,

> *"they tell me to say guilty. I don't know what is guilty… I don't know what it mean. And I went there, and I said guilty. They say I should say it, so I say it. I don't know what the meaning."*

Kayla was imprisoned for 6 months in an adult prison, all the time not knowing where she was and why she was there. Kayla describes how she found out much later that she was given someone else's passport at the airport. When she managed to get a lawyer who could communicate in her language she explained her situation and was eventually released.

After Kayla's release from prison, the police started to investigate and Kayla helped with their enquiries. Kayla explains how this was possible because an interpreter was provided that *"was able to say to them"* and *"explained things"* about her situation, an interpreter was not used before. This resulted in one of the traffickers being sent to prison. At this time Kayla describes how she started to realise that she was trafficked, being sold to other men and being sold to other traffickers. Kayla describes how she lived in a refuge with other adults because people were still using the age on the false passport, which stated that Kayla was older than her age, she was 14 at the time. It was much later that Kayla was taken to foster care.

Maya

Maya is 21 years old. Maya describes living in rural Nigeria until she was 10 years old. Maya's parents separated and she came to live with her grandmother with her sisters. Maya describes how they were quite poor, *"food and everything, everything was very tight"*. Maya explains that she stopped going to primary school. A woman came from the city and offered Maya to live with her daughter in *"white people's land"*. Maya recalls how the offer was attractive, she was keen to *"leave the environment, the chaos"* as she experienced being *"beaten a lot"* at home and *"starved"* by an uncle, who singled her out from her siblings.

> *"I was quite happy to go. And when I heard all the good things, the education and all that, I was really really excited, yeah. I go back to school, you know like stuff that I wanted to do and think it's going to happen. So off I go!"*

Maya describes how she was taken to the city, aged 10, and travelled to the UK with the daughter, the person whom she was to live with, calling her *"madame"*. Two other children travelled with them but they joined other families in the UK. Maya describes how her job was *"taking care of madame's children"*, despite her own young age. At parties with other families she was depressed as other children were dancing and playing but she had no chance to do so herself,

minding madame's children constantly and fanning the madame due to the hot weather.

> *"I felt like I was, like a, like a product. A product… she owned me, so I have to do everything she said."*

Maya describes how she was a *"house girl"* taking the children to school, bathing them, cooking for the family, cleaning, *"everything they needed have to be provided by me"*. She looked after the madame's several children,

> *"every time they had a baby, it's like **I** had the baby. I would sleep in the same room together, waking and making food in the night, everything."*

Maya described how she was instructed to stay indoors to not be seen in public, particularly as she was taking care of small children, and being young herself may arise suspicion. The madame received payment from other parents and brought other children into the house for Maya to babysit, in addition to her role as a *"house girl"*. Maya describes how the madame also expected her to look after even more children when relatives moved in with their own. Maya recalls how she was still hoping to get an education,

> *"maybe tomorrow I'll start school, maybe next week, you know the days just keep passing by."*

Despite being denied access to school, Maya explains how she learnt English from interacting with the children, keeping this hidden from adults, *"the madame don't think I understand English properly"*. Learning English in this way enabled Maya to overhear plans that were being made for her to be re-trafficked, *"that one was really terrible. It was a process of me being sent to America, to a man"*. Maya recalls how she heard her trafficker making arrangements and receiving expensive designer goods as a 'down payment' for her to be resold sometime in the future, to a male abroad. Maya describes how she was also *"being beaten for no reason"* by the husband, she had facial injuries. She stayed with the trafficker for six years not having the courage to run away due to the power exerted over her, threats to kill her and believing in their use of ju-ju.

Maya explains how she saw herself develop, she saw other children were in school, had nice clothes, and started realising that for her,

> *"…nothing is developing with me. Everybody can read, they can write. I said me! Like, what is my life been? Is my life just to be just taking care of her family?"*

Maya recalls how at this time she decided to ask the madame, *"I need to know. Was I sold to her?"* The madame confirmed she paid £3,000 to bring Maya over to the UK and told her *"and this is just the beginning!"* Maya describes how there were opportunities, which were missed, to help her to leave the house. Maya recalls how she was looking after five children at the time, she was instructed to leave them alone, to cover a cleaning shift in a supermarket for a relative of the madame. When she returned, the children were missing and there was a note on the table from the police. The neighbour helped to read the note which explained the children were taken to safety by the police. The neighbour asked Maya to talk to the police and tell them the truth about her situation. The madame's husband returned home and was so angry Maya describes how she thought she would be killed. Maya phoned the police in fear of her life. When the police attended, they did not speak to Maya at all, accepting the husband's story that she was his daughter and *"I'm just upset because of what happened today, that my siblings have been taken away"*. Maya describes how she was disturbed and felt let down by the police who left her with him. Maya explains how she was then asked to lie to the social worker who visited to see why the children were left alone, but Maya was not spotted in the house during the visit. After the police and social worker came to the home Maya describes how she believed more in the madame's use of ju-ju as Maya was *"forgotten"* and *"completely ignored"*.

Maya describes how she felt alone, depressed, like no one wanted her and she wanted to kill herself. Maya realised that her work was never ending, that she would continue to be owned, *"to be their slave forever"*. At this point Maya recounts how she finally plucked up enough courage to approach Connexions, who called the police. Maya described how she was extremely frightened but realised that in police custody, she felt safe from the madame for the first time. Maya was then taken into foster care, although Maya describes how she continued to be in fear believing that the madame could *"claim her back"* at any point.

Ethan

Ethan is 19 years old. He was born in Guinea and lived with his parents and sisters before arriving in the UK. Ethan describes how he came to the UK when he was 17 years old, travelling with his father to visit his uncle residing here. Ethan explains that they travelled on a visitor's visa expecting to return home to their family. Ethan recalls how he and his father found out some distressing news about home almost as soon as they arrived in the UK. Ethan describes how he learnt that security forces in Guinea had attacked and destroyed the family shop and were looking for his father to arrest him. Ethan's mother and sisters were at home when this happened and security forces arrested his mother. His mother was questioned for several days as to Ethan's and his father's whereabouts.

Ethan describes how security forces targeted his family as they belonged to a political party in opposition to the government. Ethan explains how he was a youth activist in this party, engaged in *"actions for the reconciliation, like playing football, organising events for youth reconciliation"* and was therefore, also wanted by the government. Ethan explains how his father made the decision for them to not return home, deeming it not safe. In Guinea Ethan's mother was released when security forces could confirm that Ethan was no longer in Guinea, his mother has since fled Guinea. Ethan explains how he has no contact with her or his sisters.

Ethan describes how his father claimed for political asylum for both of them due not being able to return home, but this was denied by the Home Office. Ethan explains how he was advised that he had to submit a claim for asylum independently but had to wait until he was 18 years old. Ethan waited and made this claim for asylum in his own right, but this was also turned down. He has since re-applied to the Home Office and is waiting for the outcome. As Ethan is required to accept accommodation provided for him, pending his claim to be decided, he is separated from his father, who is in a different town.

Ethan describes that his experience of the Home Office was not being believed and he was accused of not telling the truth about the situation back home. The Home Office thought he made up the story and lied in order to stay in the UK. Ethan explains how the Home Office were asking him for evidence, for *"real proof"* of what he was saying, that he could not provide. Ethan describes how he finds language a barrier to understanding letters but asks for help from a refugee project. Despite this, Ethan describes that he is very grateful for the support that he has received in the UK, as *"if I hadn't had this support I wouldn't have support at all"*.