'The Best of Both Worlds': Lagos Private Schools as Engaged Strategists of Transnational Child-Raising

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Abstract

Schools in migrant-sending contexts often educate many children whose parents live abroad and decide to 'leave' or 'send' their children to be raised 'back home'. Yet there has been little attention to how transnational child-raising is enacted by non-kin actors within educational institutions. This paper addresses this absence, exploring Lagos private schools as crucial sites of care for children with parents in the diaspora. Examining educators' perspectives on schooling children 'sent back' to Nigeria from the UK and USA, the paper argues that they undertake intensive and strategic projects of transnational child-raising. They act as defacto guardians and position their educational offerings as highly moral in ways that draw on endogenous notions of 'training' good character, but are not driven by reproducing tradition. Rather, they play intermediary roles in transnational families: they aim to realise parents' desires for respectful, disciplined children who excel academically, yet are also attuned to young people's struggles. They are conscious of diaspora realities and understand their schools' roles as portals facing both ways in the transnational social field, preparing young people for multiple possible futures. The paper demonstrates that exploring education as a site of social reproduction can be richly revealing of the dynamics of transnationalism.

1. Introduction

The Lagos private school was in a festive mood on the day of the education fair. Staff warmly welcomed visitors at the gate and pointed them towards the marquee on the sports field. Inside, in front of glossy banners, representatives from elite Nigerian international schools rubbed shoulders with representatives from boarding schools and universities from the UK, USA, Canada and Europe. Smartly dressed parents and their uniformed children milled among the stands, considering the benefits of different locations for their onward education. In the refreshments area, I spoke to a mother who was planning to send her daughter to finish schooling in the UK, but feeling torn about whether it should be at age 14 or 16. She wanted her daughter to be well-prepared to thrive in university there, but also feared a lack of 'real monitoring' of behaviour and work ethic in UK schools. Later, I was introduced to a mother visiting from London. Two years ago she had sent her daughter in the opposite direction: from south London to board at this Lagos school. She had been unhappy that her daughter had been neglecting her homework and been 'distracted' by peers and social media, and felt 'too much

licence is given to kids'. The mother was delighted with her decision: her daughter had settled in, was applying herself, and she felt that the school had helped her 'really get' the values that she had unsuccessfully tried to foster in London. The school counsellor explained that each year they educate several such young people 'sent back' by concerned parents. She asserted that their strict, high-aspiration environment tends to successfully instil a strong work ethic, respect and confidence in diaspora students. The mother expressed her happiness that her daughter was in an environment that offered both 'proper discipline' and rigorous preparation for the international examinations needed to enter the world's 'top' universities.

This anecdote makes several things clear. Despite an overarching hierarchy which privileges education outside of Nigeria, Lagos private schools play a particular and significant role in the transnational circulations within the Nigerian diaspora. Specifically, they make claims to be better environments to foster a 'good child' - respectful, resilient, hardworking - than 'the west' – and many parents clearly agree, choosing to 'leave' or 'send' their children to Nigeria for key years of schooling. Yet for parents and schools, inculcating these valued traits in children is not primarily framed through the logic of reproducing 'tradition', but rather is attuned to the aim of (re)producing status through transnational migration. Furthermore, the conscious manner in which Lagos private schools educate children whose parents live abroad also points to the fact that they are engaged and strategic actors of transnational care and child-raising.

This paper considers Lagos schools' roles in raising children of 'diaspora families'. In particular, it explores educators' perspectives on what we might term 'homeland' education - the 'reverse' mobilities of the children of migrants from the diaspora to Nigeria – and what this tells us about contemporary dynamics of transnationalism within the Nigerian diaspora. Though there is danger in using the term 'homeland' given its links to ethno-nationalist notions of belonging, I use it at various points in this paper as a shorthand for the practice, and also as reflective of emic understandings in the Nigerian diaspora about Nigeria as one of *multiple* 'homes' (Waite and Cook, 2011). A direct focus on educators' perspectives redresses a curious absence in existing scholarship on transnational families – views from schools. A lack of understanding how transnational child-raising plays out in and through schools is particularly notable given that in many settings children are 'sent' or 'left' in boarding schools (Abotsi, 2019; Erdal et al., 2015; Lee, 2016; Kea and Maier, 2017; Qureshi, 2014). For instance, in the research this paper draws on, 16 out of 22 young people 'sent back' from the diaspora to school in Nigeria were boarders. Schools' roles did not *replace* transnational family arrangements: all of the children had kin guardians, but schools were children's primary daily carers in material, embodied terms, as well as important sources of emotional care, with guardians primarily valued as holiday carers and 'eyes and ears on-the-ground'. Yet the care of children with transnational parents has almost exclusively been examined in the family sphere. Though the emerging literature on 'homeland' education brings transnational educational choice into the spotlight, and richly examines parents' motivations and children's experiences, it has thus far contained limited exploration of the internal dynamics of schools (see Hoechner, 2020a; and Kea, 2020 for exceptions).

By centring Lagos schools as sites of transnational child-raising, this paper not only addresses empirical gaps, but at a broader level responds to longstanding (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004) and recent (Chan, 2017) critiques of migration studies' tendency to focus on 'migrants' and cast all else as a backdrop of the 'left behind', rather than trace the way migration enrols diverse actors, institutions and spaces in imaginary and material networks. The paper continues as follows. The literature review situates the paper in scholarship calling for more diverse

discussions of transnational care, and gives a detailed, historicised framing of Lagos schools as transnational sites. It goes on argue Lagos educators make intense efforts as intergenerational intermediaries in transnational families. Their educational visions of raising 'the total child' to 'excel globally' claim a moral superiority for 'Nigerian' education but in ways highly attuned to contemporary global geographies of opportunity and risk. The paper demonstrates that looking beyond the family sphere can greatly add to our understanding of how transnational dynamics are being negotiated via the work of social reproduction.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualising Lagos Schools as Sites of Transnational Care and Child-Raising

Whilst Nigerian schools have a reputation - inherited in large part from the strictures of their colonial histories - as disciplinary institutions, we can see them as under-explored spaces of transnational care on the basis of understandings that caring *work* is much broader than culturally-specific notions of 'being caring' (Yeates, 2012). This framing – of Lagos schools' as key sites of social reproductive work in transnational context - responds to Raghuram's (2012) call to take more seriously the diverse genealogies and architectures of transnational care. She argues that although pioneering work on 'global care chains' - the outsourcing of domestic work through feminised South-North migration - drew valuable attention to the global and gendered inequities surrounding care, the way these particular flows have dominated discussions of transnational care is limiting. Rather, she and others advocate broadening analysis in several ways: considering not just South-North 'chains' but reciprocal (though uneven) *circulations* of care (Baldassar and Merla, 2013); looking beyond domestic work to include caregiving via institutions (Yeates, 2012); and moving beyond the overwhelming focus on the mother-child dyad in discussing care, which reproduces a Eurocentric idealisation of the nuclear, co-present family.

Work under the broad banner of 'transnational families' has included valuable explorations of care in the global South, but has tended to focus on the negotiation of kinship and gendered relations with the involvement of fathers, grandmothers and other kin in caring for 'left behind' children and how this reflects transnational 'moral economies' of reciprocity and debt (Akesson et al., 2012; Yarris, 2017). Exploration of institutions has tended to focus on the enabling or disabling role of immigration, welfare and employment regimes in 'destination' contexts (Kilkey and Merla, 2014). Much of this work is rich, but cumulatively an unfortunate effect emerges: 'Southern' actors are re-embedded in the family, and 'Northern' in state and market contexts (Raghuram, 2012). In-depth focus on *non-kin* caregivers of children remains sparse. Here, framing Lagos private schools as actors in global care circulations opens up questions about how transnational child-raising is (in part) organised through educational markets and enacted by non-kin actors within educational institutions.

The claim that schools are a notable absence in work on transnational child-raising is not to say that there has been a lack of attention to transnational families and education more broadly. There have been explorations of middle-class and elite attempts to (re)produce privilege via educational migration to 'the west' (Ayling, 2017; Waters, 2006), explorations of the potential vulnerabilities for 'left behind' children in education (Cebotari and Mazzucato, 2016; Poeze et al., 2017), and increasing attention to education as a motivation for family 'return' or sending

children for 'homeland' sojourns (Erdal et al., 2015). Such literature richly explores how child-raising is a 'moral marker' in negotiating belonging, and provides insight into the structural and labour-market contexts of migrant lives (Coe, 2013; McGregor, 2008). Decisions to school children 'back home' are often motivated by inculcating religious grounding or other facets of moral personhood such as grit, discipline, and elder respect (Abotsi, 2019; Hoechner, 2020; Qureshi, 2014), valued for their own sake, but also linked to ensuring intergenerational reciprocity and realising migration as a project of social mobility (Coe and Shani, 2015; Tiilikainen, 2011). Scholars underscore that seemingly essentialist discourses about a corrupt(ing) diaspora and virtuous 'homeland' are in fact the product of moralities around the family, education and 'culture' which are syncretic, dynamic and emerge from political and economic context (Fechter, 2014; Qureshi, 2014). However, highlighting parents' desires to inculcate 'homeland values' without looking directly at what goes on in 'homeland' schools can imply 'homeland' schools are merely vehicles for reproducing 'traditional' cultural norms rather than equally embedded in contemporary transnational dynamics (Hoechner, 2020a).

Work which takes a closer look at schools in migrant-sending contexts clearly highlights how schools are part of dynamic transnational social fields. For instance, Hoechner (2020a) discusses the rise of private bilingual English-French Islamic schools in Senegal, attracting both 'returnee' and future migrant children. Kufakurinani et al. (2014) explore how attitudes towards 'diaspora orphans' (encompassing both 'left behind' and 'sent back' children) in Zimbabwean private schools as delinquent, spoiled, but also emotionally deprived, reflect ambivalent feelings towards the diaspora. Kea and Maier (2017) read 'homeland' education among middle-class Nigerians as a means to protect and enhance classed status, by immersing their children in ordered environments and privileged networks (Kea 2020). A small but excellent emerging literature centring on young people as active agents finds they respond to their sojourns by appropriating discourses of grit and academic improvement, and express gains of confidence in their racialised, religious and classed identities, though they also struggle with material constraints, strict discipline, stigma, and the 'mistranslations' of multiple re-emplacements (Abotsi, 2019; Hoechner, 2020b; Lee, 2016; Kea, 2020).

Clearly, schools which cater for the children of migrants who 'leave' or 'send' their children 'at home' are important sites in the circulations of transnational care and child-raising. Whilst there is much valuable work on transnational families and education, it has tended to explore what educational *choices* reveal about status-making projects and the moral economies of migration, and there is need for closer engagement with the actually occurring educational projects and the views of those tasked with actualising the transnational raising of a 'good child'. The absence of educators' perspectives reflects a pernicious re-centring of family (particularly mother-child) relations in questions about care (Schwiter et al. 2020). Neglecting analysis of school spaces can also play into binaries of 'dynamic diaspora' vs 'traditional homeland'. Instead, closer exploration of schools can show us how institutions in 'sending' countries are deeply involved constructing the imaginaries and materialities of transnationalism (Chan, 2017).

2.2. Contemporary Transnational Education in the Nigerian Diaspora in Context

It is impossible to properly understand the contemporary transnational dynamics around education in Lagos without historical context. Western education in southwest Nigeria was introduced via Christian missions in the 1830s, alongside the violent British expansionism which

led to the annexation of Lagos in 1861, and remained driven by the missions for a long time; the colonial administration initiating co-financing and oversight in the 1880s, and direct provision in the twentieth century (Olutayo, 2017). The spread of western education in Yorubaland was also influenced by the return of formerly enslaved people from Sierra Leone, Brazil and Cuba, who, already exposed to Christianity and schooling, formed an early political and intellectual elite. Western education was embraced in Yorubaland as a passport into the colonial administration and commerce, and at the turn of the century Nigerian demands for higher quality educational institutions were met with resistance from colonial powers who saw this as a political danger (Ogunlade, 1974). From the 1930s-50s educational provision greatly increased, out of shifts in the colonial policies but also the huge efforts of indigenous leadership, and in the 1950s the western regional government was the first to institute free primary education (Usman and Falola, 2019). Schooling in Lagos is thus at its very foundation a product of transnationalism – with its origins in colonial domination, but also something that became fundamental to Yoruba and Nigerian efforts at self-determination.

Since independence, political and economic instability and the rapid yet underfunded expansion of provision has weakened public education. Currently Nigeria faces large regional inequalities in enrolment and literacy, and public schools beset by infrastructural issues, poor student-teacher ratios, and inconsistent standards (Ogunsanya and Thomas, 2004). In this context, there has been rapid expansion of private education. This is particularly true in Lagos, where public capacity cannot keep pace with demographic pressure: the city is estimated to have grown from 1.4 million in 1970 to 15-22 million at present. In 2011, a thorough census found around 12,000 private schools (in total, primary and secondary) catering to 57% of Lagos' enrolled students (Härmä, 2013). 'Private' does not necessarily mean elite - many of the poorest families in Lagos send their children to low-cost private schools, often unregistered and of dubious quality (Härmä, 2013). The schools in this research are thus at the far upper echelons of the private school sector. Whilst this review cannot fully cover the complexities of higher education, enrolment capacity and strikes in public universities, and the comparatively high cost of private universities make migration for higher education very popular for those able to afford it, with the UK and Ghana the top destinations, as well as the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Ukraine, and South Africa (Olutayo, 2017).

As well as this institutional history, we can also situate the work of Lagos private schools in changing ideas of what it means to be educated (Newman et al. 2019). Literacy, religious enlightenment and principles of rationality were central pillars of colonial education, though endogenous notions of character development were not necessarily seen as at odds with it (White, 1996). Education prior to colonialism in Nigeria has been described as focussed across ethnic groups on holistic 'training' of 'good character' for the social context, as well including oral literary traditions and numeracy systems (Fafunwa, 1974). More specifically, Yoruba scholars write that the word for education - *eko* - has a broader meaning than terms such as *imo* (knowledge) and *iwe* (literacy), connoting the goal of becoming a person of good character – *omoluwabi*. Olajubu (1978) describes *omoluwabi* as encompassing moral standing, worldly attainment, and competence. Moral behaviours - honesty, respect for elders, hard work, loyalty to community, and self-control - are essential but insufficient to make one an *omoluwabi*: one also needs wisdom, knowledge and a measure of success (material and social). Equally, qualifications alone can never win one the accolade of *omoluwabi* - good character is needed. Though of course Yoruba culture is not static, nor is Lagos reducible to 'Yoruba culture' given its international, multi-ethnic character, commentators note that *omoluwabi* and associated Yoruba

notions of character remain influential in ideas about what it means to be a good person, even becoming a 'moral watchword' for those diagnosing Nigeria's political and social problems (Usman and Falola, 2019).

Furthermore, accounts of endogenous cultures across West Africa highlight the importance of 'social' or 'distributed' parenting: that 'training' (correcting, guiding and influencing) a child in good character is the responsibility not only of parents but all adults and older siblings, including through child-fostering arrangements (Coe, 2013; Fafunwa, 1974). Fosterage, as well as being a means to share the costs and the assets which children represent and strengthen ties of reciprocity in extended families, was also an educational tool as children were often fostered to adults of higher social status as apprentices. Parents often desired strict guardians, in the belief there is 'no success without struggle' (Bledsoe, 1990). Internal and regional migration in West Africa has long been a context for fostering, and contemporary decision to 'leave behind' children can be read as an iteration of social parenting influenced by economic constraint and desires for cultural reproduction (Coe, 2013). In terms of long-distance migration from Nigeria, where elite movements to the colonial 'metropole' of the UK used to dominate, since the 1980s there has been an acceleration and diversification of emigration in the context of the shrinking spaces for social mobility. In the UK and the USA, the diaspora contexts of this study, most Nigerian immigrants come from fairly well-resourced backgrounds in southern Nigeria, and are highly educated, with >60% of over-25s having at least a bachelor's degree, double the national average in both countries (Imoagene, 2017).

All of this serves to help us understand spaces of education in Lagos as deeply transnational. They cannot be understood without reference to colonial history (Raghuram, 2012), which established not only schooling forms, but also hierarchies which feed local and global education markets which prize Anglo-American education as the route to status - in ways internalised by elites (Ayling, 2015), and accepted by middle-classes who desire the power of foreign credentials (Adeyanju, 2017). From this angle, Lagos private schools are one space in a polycentric, but western-oriented 'international educational' landscape - through which Nigerian middle-classes prepare their children to leave Nigeria for higher education (Harriss and Osella 2010; Newman et al., 2019). Yet context also shows us that Yoruba communities have long embraced western education as a route to power whilst continuing to prize endogenous values around good character (Usman and Falola, 2019), and Lagos private schools are not just replicas of western schools, but also spaces that reflect this. Migration to the UK or USA can be accompanied by downward social mobility (compounded by and racism) for families across the social spectrum which Imoagene (2017) argues leads Nigerians abroad to frame education as a key marker of ethnicised distinction, and parents certainly deeply fear their children's educational failure (Kea, 2020). Thus, we can see Lagos schools' selling points emerge from Nigeria's postcolonial transnationalism: as 'international' spaces oriented towards children's long term 'global competitiveness', *and* spaces to inculcate 'Nigerian values', including of high attainment, threatened abroad (Abotsi 2019; Kea and Maier, 2017). Looking more closely at the projects of social reproduction occurring within schools can thus tell us much about how transnational belonging, orientation, and moralities are being negotiated.

3. Context and Methods

This paper is based on a multi-sited qualitative research project on 'homeland' education in the Nigerian diaspora. The core research was conducted in Lagos schools over two visits in 2019. Across 16 schools, I interviewed 24 educators and 33 secondary school students, and conducted 4 focus groups with a further 26 students. The young interviewees included 12 young people 'sent back' for educational sojourns without their parents, and the remainder were part of 'returning' or 'circulating' families. 20 interviews were also undertaken in London (UK) and Newark (USA) gathering retrospective accounts of those who had experienced 'homeland' education in their youth and community views. Some event-based ethnography at educational fairs in Lagos and in a Nigerian-headed Pentecostal church in Newark was also conducted. Informed consent processes were followed throughout, with particular care to creating trusting space for young people to assert their boundaries.

This fragmentary sample reflects the challenges of multi-sited research on an issue of some sensitivity. Whilst ethnographic and participatory work would have elicited rich data about material and social contexts and youth experiences, gatekeepers preferred to grant access via the more 'contained' time-space of discursive methods, a position I respected given my 'outsider' position as a non-Nigerian, 'white-ish'[1] researcher. Interviews were still highly generative sources, eliciting insight into variously positioned understandings of 'homeland' education in social context. With Lagos educators, interviews explored educators' understandings of the meaning of education and their specific past and present experiences schooling children with parents in the diaspora, as well as factual information.

As introduced in the prior section, the private education sector in Lagos is huge and heterogeneous. Schools likely to be educating diaspora children were identified by working with an associate in the Lagos State Government Ministry of Education and other key informants. Long days were spent in Lagos traffic delivering formal letters of introduction and having meetings. This led to interviews with educators in 16 institutions: 13 private secondary schools, 2 private 'sixth-form colleges' offering A-Levels and other preparation for entry to university outside Nigeria, and 1 public school, a historically prestigious 'federal college' (not included in this paper). As outlined, the private schools in this research were at the 'top end' of the sector. However there was still huge variation between them, with annual fees ranging from ~$2000 (~750,000 NGN) to ~$15,000 (~6 million NGN) for full boarding and tuition (with day pupil fees at around half or two-thirds of this)[2]. The differences within this spectrum are fascinating, but must be explored elsewhere (Author, in progress). However, throughout I indicate the broad school status with the terms 'mid-range' ($2000-$4000/p.a.), 'upper-range' ($4000-$9000/p.a.) and 'elite' (>$9000/p.a.).

The distinguishing feature of all schools in this study is that they bear their 'internationalism' as a mark of status - in all of them students could prepare for and sit international examinations (usually IGCSEs), with schools offering exclusively international curricula at the 'elite' end. They have low student-teacher ratios (10-25:1), and push pupils hard to achieve results. Across the range of schools there tended to be only a handful (1-5) pupils 'sent back' from the diaspora in

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[1] I am of mixed-race white and East Asian heritage, but am predominantly 'read' as white, have lived a life of 'white privilege' and have a middle-class habitus. So although I personally see myself as mixed-race, 'white' is the most accurate descriptor of how my intersectional class-race positioning predominantly functions to socially place me.

[2] I obtained precise fees for many schools, however some schools (particularly at the top end) were more coy about specific figures, giving me rough indications which I supplemented with online research. The fluctuating value of the Naira also makes the figures approximate, as well as influencing the cost of 'homeland' education for diaspora parents.

the school at any one year, as well as many more diaspora children from 'returning' or 'circulating' families in elite schools, and many more children with one or both parents working abroad in mid-range schools. In the elite schools nearly all students would migrate for higher education or even to finish secondary school abroad (Ayling, 2017), where in the mid-range schools a small proportion would attend university abroad, the majority going onto some form of higher education in Nigeria.

Interviews were predominantly conducted with senior school authorities, but also school counsellors and teachers who were 'mentors' to diaspora students. Though in many interviews there was a degree of rapport built through prior visits and meetings, they were all still essentially presentations to an 'outsider' and as such err toward silences around 'messy' stories and areas of reputational risk. Furthermore, this paper does not focus on young people's perspectives, explored elsewhere (Author, in progress) and adult statements about child-raising are often less about children themselves than about adults' power negotiations (Bledsoe, 1990). Thus, educator's perspectives should be read as performative claims and moral articulations around transnationalism rather than uncontested truths.

4. Findings

4.1. 'Much Encouragement and Persuasion': Labours of Care for Diaspora Children

The school counsellor sighed when I asked about her experience of working with diaspora students. She explained that despite the reputational benefits, schooling students from abroad was an intense effort, saying, *'you have to work, work, overwork yourself in order to make sure this child settles down…. the aim is that – ah, no, we must get it right with this child!'* (Upper-Range School). This indicates the great sense of responsibility educators felt in working with diaspora students (Abotsi, 2019), which as well as being shaped by a competitive private education market, also reflects notions of education as a holistic 'training' and raising of the child. For instance, 'vision statements' of the schools in this research include phrases such as 'educating the whole person', and promises of a 'disciplined and caring' environment producing 'academic excellence and good character'. Such notions were also reflected in the 2016 'Top Nigerian Secondary Schools UK Education Fair', held in East London, where representatives of Nigerian boarding schools came to market their services to parents who might feel that *'proper and quality education, moral training, and adult monitoring'* were better found 'back home' than in the UK (African Voice, 2016).

Lagos private schools' all-encompassing approaches to education are illustrated well by their accounts of 'counselling' and 'mentoring', which all schools in the study offered, and advocated as key to working with diaspora students. These labels encompassed multiple dynamics, at times referring to: a 'safe space' for young people to discuss struggles; top-down elder-advice, used alongside punitive measures, to steer children towards adherence to 'good behaviour'; and discussions akin to 'performance coaching' or 'careers counselling'. Discourses tended to be more professionalised in elite schools, but several educators in mid-range schools likened 'counselling' and 'mentoring' to parenting. In this Principal's view, close monitoring of a child's embodied behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and academic work is a form of 'surrogate parenting' which notably extends beyond the school and into the sphere of the biological family:

Cite as: Cheung Judge, R. (2021) 'The Best of Both Worlds': Lagos private schools as engaged strategists of transnational child-raising', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*

> Students will be assigned to a teacher to be his 'surrogate parent'. So that mentor […] [ensures] the monitoring of the children in academics, in character, in emotional development, in the spiritual and in the general conduct of the child. It's just like… you have a child at home, and your parent is very concerned about every area. Even how you greet, how you take care of yourself, how you interact, how you bathe in the morning, and ensuring that you are happy and you have confidence… These teachers they phone, they make calls during the holidays - to the students and [biological] parents to find out: 'how are you feeling?', 'I hope you are doing your assignment?', 'I hope you are helping your parents at home?' and all the rest. So all those things make children to be more comfortable in school. And make them learn better… when they see their teachers as if they are their uncles, brothers, or fathers or mothers. [3]
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> <div align="right">(Principal, Mid-Range School)</div>

This account of teachers playing a quasi-parental role to bring a child into line with the social norm of a 'good child' speaks of the way in which 'homeland' education is not only driven by academic and economic concerns, but is a practice in which parents entrust schools with a role in raising their children (Abotsi, 2019). The way the Principal describes educator's roles is clearly in line with West African notions of social parenting. Furthermore, the account underscores that strict monitoring is what *proper care* for children looks like to both Nigerian educators and many diaspora parents. Whilst close embodied surveillance can be read as a legacy of colonial educational institutions (Kea and Maier, 2017; Newman et al., 2019), it also reflects emphases on strict adult authority in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974) and that (foster) parents' 'toughness' has been perceived as good for ensuring children's long-term success and ability to fulfil intergenerational social responsibilities (Bledsoe and Sow, 2011; Coe and Shani, 2015; Maier and Coleman, 2011).

However, it would not be accurate to characterise this 'surrogate parenting' as something undertaken in a spirit of 'traditionalist strictness'. Rather, educators, tasked with (attempting to) actualise diaspora parents' desires for 'good children', undertake significant emotional labour as 'intermediaries' between generations. Educators often had to explain and represent parents' perspectives to both 'sent back' and 'left behind' children. In particular, children 'sent back' for schooling often have little say in the initial decision[4], and can understandably struggle with the drastic change in material and social environment initially. One of educators' key complaints about working with transnational families was the fact that they had to work to reassure young people that their parents' decisions had their best interests in mind:

> The child most of the time is very, very angry, and then you have to counsel and counsel and tell - for instance… 'look, you'll end up being a premature father', and things like that…
>
> <div align="right">(Director, Mid-Range School)</div>

> [We] sit them down many times, and you know, talk to them, and make them realise that their parents love them and want the best for them, and they are coming here - actually not to punish them, but to give them a sense of, uh - 'Africanism.'
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> <div align="right">(Mentor Teacher, Mid-Range School)</div>

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[3] The extent to which young people feel these familial bonds is debatable, but most of the young people in the research did discuss forging close relationships with certain teachers, often younger staff who were not their official mentors.

[4] In the 12 contemporary cases in this study, 2 young people had been enthusiastic about schooling in Nigeria, 7 had accepted with ambivalence, and 3 had been tricked into their educational sojourn when already in-country for a 'holiday'. In the retrospective cases, 6 were discussed, and 4 were 'surprises'.

Educators also talked about parallel forms of explanatory and emotional labour they undertook with children whose parent(s) had migrated but left them to be raised in Nigeria, reassuring children who feel literally and figuratively 'left behind':

> You have to be talking to them over and over: 'They [your parents] are working out [abroad] for you to pay your fee, to make sure you are the best, that is why you are in a school like this.'

> (Principal, Mid-Range School)

Beyond representing parents' views, educators also talked about the broader work of helping diaspora students settle in, by providing extra leeway and special provisions to diaspora students when they first arrived. Schools recognise that weather, food, accents, languages other than English, teaching styles, and norms of 'appropriate' comportment were often unfamiliar for students from abroad and that *'you can't bombard them suddenly with this, they need to gradually stabilise'* (Vice-Principal, Elite School). For instance, schools cited examples of providing extra fans in the heat, and giving leeway around rules for dress, hair, and food (e.g. allowing being 'picky' or eating snacks from abroad). As well as the aforementioned 'counselling', they also often paired new students with 'buddies', briefed teachers that students need to ease into class norms and workloads, and provided extra 'catch-up' classes and special timetables tailored to individual needs. Educators' undertook frequent communication with the parents of 'sent back' children, stating that they would call daily during the child's first week or two in school, then weekly when the child had settled.

Alongside these practical provisions were more qualitative efforts. Educators claimed that the majority of diaspora students 'adapt' and 'succeed'[5] *'after much encouragement and persuasion'* (Mentor, Mid-Range School): where educators try to forge positive relationships and initially explain rather than enforce norms and rules. For instance, one Director talked about a diaspora student from the USA who got into a physical fight with other students who he felt had insulted America, but that rather than enact punitive measures, the school had chosen to debrief the incident with him on the basis of an understanding *'he sees himself as American'* and that he was '*feel[ing] abandoned or defensive - if mum sent you because she can't handle you, you feel angry and excommunicated, and fight back'* (Mid-Range school). It is not that Lagos private schools are 'soft' spaces, but educators do exercise efforts with diaspora students characterised by patience, attention and responsiveness. This is evident in the Vice Principal's account, below, of using affirmation, reasoning, and humour rather than disciplinary approaches with a student from the UK:

> At first, you could feel that discontentment, but […] I made efforts to be her friend, was always joking with her. She struggled with Maths and I took her case up... She was only going to do 'core' maths, in which case the highest level she would achieve would be a C. I said, 'you can do better than that, you're intelligent'. That began to have an effect. She would come in to my office for lessons and talks. It [her behaviour] was *hard* to tolerate sometimes - people would think she was rude - she was not greeting, would give funny looks, was not cheerful… but I realised she wasn't really so rude on purpose - she was a touchy person. When you openly talked to her [told

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[5] The complex outcomes of homeland education are hard to comprehensively assess. In this research, young people's perspectives also spoke of some 'success' in that they mostly adapted relatively quickly and made positive meaning around their sojourns. However, my sampling and access pathways meant I was unlikely to come across difficult cases, though they were acknowledged and discussed by educators. For youth experiences in other contexts see Hoechner (2020), Abotsi (2019) and Lee (2016).

> her off] in front of people she would react badly, but I realised you could discuss well with her in private. Sometimes she would do something wrong, I would leave it, and then address it later - tell her why it's a rule, and it's wrong. We would argue, joke about it - and I would patiently go through until her arguments were finished. It affected her. We broke that mindset and she came out of it gradually. She got an A in Maths.
>
> (Vice-Principal, Elite School)

Whilst the phrase 'broke the mindset' and the overarching narrative reflects a desire to bring the 'morally suspect' diaspora child into adherence to cultural norms (Kufakurinani et al., 2014, Tiilikainen, 2011) as well as foster academic success*,* the degree of understanding in the process is significant. Declarations made by educators that it is important to *'take time'* to *'try and understand'*, *'observe what they require'* and *'you have to change your style'* are a far cry from a simplistic idea of 'homeland' education as a factory churning out 'good Nigerian children'. Rather, educators act as defacto guardians tasked with raising diaspora children in a holistic manner, work as intergenerational intermediaries in transnational families, and strive to 'get it right' with diaspora children. Thus, Nigerian educators cannot merely be seen as service providers of academic instruction or as a subsidiary factor to transnational parenting, but are central, influential actors in the work of transnational child-rearing.

4.2. Raising 'The Total Child' to 'Excel Globally': Education Facing Two Directions

In this research, 'homeland' educational choices in the Nigerian diaspora were often expressed in terms of moral geographies: western nations as risky spaces in which to raise children (McGregor, 2008). Anxieties about child-raising in the diaspora were expressed through idioms of loss - children 'losing the culture', which would make more likely the feared outcome of parents 'losing the child' (Bledsoe and Sow, 2011; Coe and Shani, 2015). The notion of 'losing the child' encompasses several fears: in extreme cases the literal endangerment of life or liberty, but more frequently of children going 'off track' and not fulfilling their potential, heightened by collective sacrifices made around migration (Tillikainen, 2011). Amid this moral imaginary Nigerian educators advocated their schools as providing the foundation necessary to handle the 'risks' of 'the international environment'. Educators applauded those who chose, even if they could afford otherwise, to leave a child in Nigeria until the end of secondary school, where the *'easily moulded, tender'* child (School Counsellor, Upper-Range school) would be strongly rooted in values before migrating (Ayling, 2017; Maier and Coleman, 2011), but also praised 'homeland' sojourns as a means to prevent or correct 'loss':

> They [parents who 'leave behind' children] want them to develop to a standard whereby they can cope with the international environment […] Because if you don't train your child early enough, and you don't get the values and the virtues that we expect them to have before they go out, they just borrow foreign culture… and they are lost, over there.
>
> (Principal, Mid-Range School)

> They [parents who 'send back' children] still want their kids to have a little bit of our culture. So they don't get 'missing' … some of them just get lost.
>
> (Administrator, Upper-Range School)

When the need for diaspora children to 'learn the culture', as part of this grounding, was expanded upon, it was not seen primarily as about gaining knowledge or linguistic skills - but rather as gaining certain dispositions, particularly of respect and obedience to elders, and

becoming self-disciplined and hardworking. Educational attainment was seen as the natural outflowing of 'learning the culture'. This combination of character and academics is at the core of the ideal product of education, the 'total child', one of *'academic excellence and good character'*, suggesting an ongoing influence of Yoruba ideals of *omoluwabi* (see 2.2., and Olajubu, 1978). Once again, this underlines that 'homeland' schools are playing a significant role in raising children beyond mere academic instruction.

Educators' discussions of their work as 'training', 'raising', 'instilling', 'inculcating', 'moulding' and 'reforming' young people to *'bring out the total child, a complete child that you will be proud of'* (Director, Mid-Range School), represented the ways in which the boundaries of 'Nigerian' identity in the context of migration are being negotiated – not only within family, but within 'homeland' schools. For instance, educators emphasised the fact their schools fulfilled diaspora parents' wishes for an environment with proper 'discipline': in terms of high expectations, strict rules, all elders having the authority to advise, steer, and punish children, but also positioned themselves as modern institutions which did not use corporal punishment, staking a transnationally-oriented 'middle ground' in this area (Abotsi, 2019; Onwujuba and Nesterek, 2015)[6]. Similarly, 'greeting' – the embodied and verbal traditions of how to address others, especially elders, is emblematic of 'Nigerian' values around intergenerational relations, and children 'talking back' commonly causes clashes in diaspora families (Onwujuba and Nesterek, 2015; Fanfunwa, 1974). Lagos private schools did not teach the specificities of full ethnic traditions of greeting, but emphasised a version of the practice (formal, specific salutation: 'good morning, Sir' and a bow or head dip), and spoke proudly about successfully delivering respectful children back to diaspora parents: *'we have parents that have come back and say 'I can't believe my ears! My daughter got home and was saying "good morning sir, ma"!''* (Principal, Mid-Range School). In this way, they were working mediate the often painful intergenerational gulf in the diaspora around what a 'good child' looks like (Fechter, 2014), as one educator put it, fulfilling parents' *'burning yearning'* for their children to *'glimpse… those Nigerian values'* (Director, Mid-Range School).

However, a focus on such 'boundary' discourses can give a false impression of schools work as driven by the replication of 'tradition'. Rather, a closer look at educators' discussions of 'Nigerian education' as about fostering respectful, disciplined 'Nigerian culture' in children, show that these were, paradoxically, by no means nationally-oriented or encapsulated visions. In fact, when educators expounded on the ideal of the 'total child', they discussed *'the total child who can fit into any society, any community'* (School Counsellor, Upper-Range School) – a foundation for futures beyond Nigeria. For instance, one educator gave a series anecdotes about hard-working, high-achieving students who had thrived abroad, summing up that his school had provided the 'foundation' for them to 'cope' and 'excel' globally. This is moral education oriented towards migration:

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[6] The complexity of this issue cannot be fully addressed here. However, the illegality of corporal punishment in western countries is disliked by many Nigerians who see it as state interference in the sphere of the family, and as representing a twisted order in which Black families are subject to intense state scrutiny around child abuse, yet the carceral state gives no second chances to 'ill-disciplined' youth (Bledsoe and Sow, 2011; Maier and Coleman, 2011). In Nigeria, corporal punishment is widespread (in considering this, it is essential to note the influence of punitive discipline under colonialism), but is has recently been non-legally 'banned' in schools by the Lagos State Government. Private schools in this study all emphasised that they adhered to this ban and as far as I could verify this was true.

> The total personality of the child […] will make them to excel in anywhere they find themselves. They will not see themselves as if they are inferior to their colleagues whether - the white or black or whatever. […] When the foundation was properly laid, what do you expect? They can cope. […] All the academic skill, social skill… necessary for them to be able to cope globally.

> (Principal, Mid-Range School)

The Principal's reference to need to inculcate young people's confidence in their worth in racialised terms demonstrates that educators' notions of producing 'the total child' were not divorced from the realities of life in the diaspora, but were aware of the factors that affect young people's outcomes there. Another Principal (below) explained her take on 'sanctions' and the need for 'reform' not in terms of wanting to enforce strictness for its own sake, but rather that this would redress the effects of the intersectional profiling that affects young black men in the UK in explicit and insidious ways:

> We will sanction you if you misbehave, but we will listen and be fair. In the UK, often the system is overcompensating with political correctness or it is in the favour of others. Here, it is easier to find the balance, it's not about 'because I'm a Black boy'. And then you have the self-esteem returning, and they can take responsibility for their actions. Over there, they develop the ability to lie […] to stay out of trouble or get revenge, because no-one believes them. … So it's when we break down those walls and they reform. And seeing other Black boys working hard, that it's not unusual, you are not a nerd - here, everyone has something they want to do with their life.

> (Principal, Elite Sixth-Form College)

Thus, Lagos private schools' cultural constructions of a 'well-educated Nigerian child' as hardworking, respectful, morally-upstanding and academically excellent should not be considered simplistically 'traditionalist', but rather are oriented towards the opportunities and risks of migration: producing 'the total child' who will 'excel in global society'. Complementing work that argues that 'homeland' educational choices are a 'moral mirror against which [Nigerian parents] judge and provincialize British society and its deficiencies' (Kea and Maier, 2017: 830), it is clear that Lagos educators have a sharp vision of what they offer in contrast.

The way in which educators were not trying to reclaim 'diaspora children' and turn them into 'Nigerian children' was encapsulated by one educator who said the aim of 'homeland' education was to help diaspora students '*understand enough to enjoy dual citizenship*' and then send them back to the diaspora (Principal, Mid-Range School). In this sense, educating 'sent home' or 'left behind' children was seen as a means to create diasporans who do not waste the privilege of migration. Educators espoused the idea that their content-packed academics, expectations of taking extensive notes and independent learning, and emphasis on moral character and embodied discipline (via keeping dorms tidy, hand-washing clothes) would make university and life in the diaspora seem 'easy'. The belief that the grit and work ethic, which can reap the rewards available in 'the west', are better inculcated 'at home' (see also Coe and Shani, 2015) was vividly expressed by this Principal:

> There are more opportunities in the west, but to make the best of both worlds you need the resilience - that is what helps you take advantage of the opportunities: resilience and determination, […] going there with a bag of resilience. 'You left your bag of resilience behind, go back and get it!' - that is what is happening [when children are 'sent back'].

(Principal, Elite Sixth-Form College)

The phrase 'the best of both worlds' points to the fact educators were consciously playing a balancing act by preparing young people to thrive both abroad and in Nigeria. It is clear that Lagos private secondary schools are strongly focussed on preparing students for higher education abroad in the context of post- and neo-colonial global politics which privilege 'the west' symbolically and materially as the locus of advancement (Ayling, 2017; Newman et al. 2019). However, educators also saw their work as important to build a foundation for diaspora children to be able to circulate or return in future. In this light, we can read the emphasis on bringing children into cultural norms partially as a form of hedging bets as to where students may end up living. As well as reflecting strong traditions of circulation rather than permanent emigration in West Africa (Whitehouse, 2009), schools were aware that having options is key in a world where migration a risky, costly endeavour which may or may not result in the successful (re)production of social status. As one educator stated, reflecting on his own biography of circulation between Nigeria and the UK, they understand their work as giving the children of migrants the cultural capital to have the *option* 'make Nigeria home':

> A number of people who have experience across both sides… have decided to make Nigeria more of a home, like I have. And I think often the deciding factor is - did they go to school here at some stage?… Without that, I think there's often a link missing […] if ever you're going to be able to - not be like a fish out of water, you need to have experienced it.

(Director, Elite Sixth-Form College)

In summary, Lagos educators position their private schools as morally-superior sites of child-raising in ways shaped by endogenous notions of good character and holistic training, but are also highly oriented to migration. They are far from the locus of reproducing 'Nigerian' norms, and nor are their educational projects reducible to their 'westwards' orientation. Rather they undertake highly informed projects of transnational child-raising and sell a combination of 'modern international' education and 'homeland' values for a resolutely globally-oriented Nigerian middle-class (Harriss and Osella, 2010). They play a conscious role as portals facing both ways in the transnational social field: aiming to inculcate in both 'future migrant' and 'sent back' children the dispositions that will enable success in both Nigeria and its diaspora.

5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that Lagos private sector educators are engaged strategists of transnational child-raising. This highlights that schools in migrant-sending contexts are understudied sites of transnational care, and that looking beyond the family to how educational markets, institutions, and actors are enrolled in raising transnational children is revealing of how identities, belongings, and orientations are being negotiated in transnational social fields. The paper showed that high-end Lagos private schools' work with the children of diaspora parents is tailored, attentive, and understanding, and often plays a mediating role in transnational families. Though they assert their education is morally-superior to that in the diaspora, they are far from reproducers of Nigerian tradition. Rather, their moralities are globally oriented, and their approaches are knowingly responsive to the realities of diaspora contexts. 'Ideas about education are being constantly negotiated with reference to multiple frameworks of a transnational social field' (Abotsi, 2019: 11), and Lagos private schools' educational projects syncretise durable Nigerian ideologies around character education with a strong orientation

Cite as: Cheung Judge, R. (2021) 'The Best of Both Worlds': Lagos private schools as engaged strategists of transnational child-raising', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*

towards 'westwards' migration, and consciously prepare young people for multiple possible futures in an uncertain global landscape.

The paper demonstrates the potential in continuing to widen out studies of 'global care' to new sites, and that examining how the work of social reproduction is understood and organised (Raghuram, 2012), is fruitful for understanding the dynamics of transnationalism in particular contexts. The findings raise questions for further research in several areas. Firstly, although the paper is not situated in debates around how transnational familyhood affects wellbeing and educational outcomes (Cebotari and Mazzucatto, 2016; Poeze et al. 2017), it highlights that greater attention to schools' roles, as well as kinship care arrangements, may be due. Secondly, the paper raises questions about how relations between states, markets and family forms are evolving in West African diasporas. For instance, practices of 'homeland education' speak to renewed reworkings of 'social parenting' traditions in the face of weakening state support for social reproduction, and the intensified responsibilisation of parenting in the west (Rosen and Faircloth, 2020). However, the delegation of social parenting to paid-for sources over extended family perhaps also indicates shifts in moral economies of 'homeland reciprocities' from kin to markets in African middle-class diasporas (Fesenmeyer, 2016; Kufakurinani et al., 2014). Thirdly, the fact that private schools in the global South are so central in transnational strategies to (re)produce status (Hoechner, 2020a; Kea, 2020; Kea and Maier, 2017) highlights the potential for greater exploration of education in debates about the African middle classes, explored in another paper from this project (Author, in progress).

Finally, analysing educators' articulate accounts of their work with diaspora youth underscores the inadequacy of studies of migration which cast those who do not migrate as 'outside' the sphere of enquiry and often implicitly encapsulated in a realm of an unchanging 'homeland', rather than as part of a coeval transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Instead, their work in educating transnational children demonstrate that Lagos schools are neither simply cost-effective service providers, nor reproducers of 'tradition', but key mediators, facilitators and shapers of the discourses around migration and transnational subjectivities. They are articulators of a 'reverse gaze' from Africa towards the west which is more complex than narratives of superiority or inferiority (Nyamnjoh and Page, 2002) and testify to the often-overlooked dynamism of African transnationalism (Page et al., 2009).

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