



Understanding the Experience of Mixed Race

Families and Young People:

Improving Services

making mixed race matter



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PEOPLE IN HARMONY

People in Harmony is a well established organisation for mixed race people, couples and families. Whilst we have been active for some 36 years, what really keeps us young is the need to respond to constant social change and new challenges to people in mixed race situations.

We organise high quality annual conferences with themes such as education, health and social care and in 2008 worked with Central Conference Consultants to host an all day conference in central London. This conference, 'Understanding the experience of mixed race families and young people: improving services' was organised for professional groups such as social services, education and the police on developing mixed race sensibilities across public services and consolidated our regular ones by aiming across a wide range of public service interests.

In the 1970s, when the charity was established, there were deliberate political moves to emphasise the disadvantages of racial mixing and its perceived potential for disruption. Misguided perceptions of race mixing had been a spark in the widespread unrest in areas such as Notting Hill and there was a general disapproval of all things mixed race. At this time mixed race families got together for support and to share ways of dealing with problems of racism, isolation and general lack of resources. An important early function of People in Harmony was to bring about contact with others in similar situations and establish a community of like-minded people. For many early members this was a lifeline.

Over the years different problems have become apparent through the membership. Hostile criticism of trans-racial adoption affected some families. The continuing over representation of mixed race children in the public care system remains a serious and unresolved issue. Rejection by family members has been an issue for some. The difficulties in reuniting with an absent parent has been the experience of others. The Census debate around 'racial' classification continues to be a question of importance to the mixed race community, which is, in some ways, linked to questions of identity and self-identification for mixed race people. There are many areas of interest and concern within the mixed race community that People in Harmony has been, and continues to be, in a unique position to debate and support. Research by Bristol University in association with Birmingham LEA¹ showed that mixed race children are still disadvantaged in the school system and we were involved in campaigning for LEAs and politicians to take note of the research and to investigate ways of improving the education of mixed race pupils. Our 2005 annual conference focussed on this very point, with leading researchers and educationists speaking to an enthusiastic audience in Ealing.

We offer a telephone support line, information service, publications for sale, a website and e-group discussion list for members and a quarterly newsletter. We arrange annual conferences on topics of current interest and occasional stand-alone conferences. We also participate in training and discussion events organised by other organisations and would like to develop further work with schools.

At present we are looking for volunteers to take this work forward and to participate in a variety of ways. We are also looking to recruit more trustees for the management committee. People in Harmony has changed over the years both in response to the social trends that have affected mixed race people and their families and because of the skills and interests of volunteers. Whilst the core beliefs in the value of diversity and opposition to mixed-racism have remained constant, activities and the topic focus of our work has been responsive and flexible.

Anyone who is supportive of our aims is welcome to join the membership and participate in discussions and activities. Volunteers to share in the work of the organisation are particularly welcome and anyone wishing to volunteer as a trustee or in any other capacity should make contact with us. There is great scope for using all sorts of skills such as creative work, practical help, project management, office work and other abilities so there is room for us all. We are a very diverse organisation with members from different ethnic and social backgrounds and no one should feel excluded – that would miss the point completely.

¹ *Understanding the Educational Needs of Mixed Heritage Pupils* by L Tickly, C Caballero, J Haynes & J Hill, University of Bristol in association with Birmingham LEA DfES RR549 2004

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I. WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT MIXED RACE:

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

Louise Barker, People in Harmony

To open the day's proceedings, Louise Barker from People Harmony expressed the need for respecting people's complex identities and how they choose to express these identities. Terminology often dominates the debates around the subject of 'mixed race' (the term used by People in Harmony) which enriches the dialogue we have on identity. Although this focus can divert attention away from the needs of people who identify as coming from more than one ethnic, racial, or faith background. Louise also stressed that when using the term mixed race, we must not forget the identities of less talked about 'mixes', such as mixed white or mixed faith backgrounds.

People in Harmony is interested in making the wider public more aware of the experiences of its members and others identifying as mixed race, and how these experiences alter over time. Further effort to raise awareness of the group and its work is needed and one of the aims of the conference is to generate a constructive debate with solutions to meet the challenges which would be addressed during the conference. Louise made an appeal to the delegates for more people to come forward as volunteers and trustees in order to ensure that mixed race issues and debates remain in public consciousness.

Research indicates that there are many issues which pose challenges for mixed race people in particular. This conference was aimed at service providers to explore these challenges, in such areas as educational underachievement, mental health, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Louise cautioned the delegates against generalising the experiences of mixed race people; the issues that would be discussed during the conference were not only to be thought in terms of 'black and white'. Self-identification is impacted by gender, social class, and locality and so not everyone will have similar experiences despite similar ethnic backgrounds.

Although debates surrounding mixed race have centred on people of mixed black and white backgrounds, emerging research is indicating that the population of other mixed groups are growing. For example, it is speculated that the second most common 'mix' are people of Chinese and white descent. She hoped that the delegates would keep in mind that a one-size fits all approach to service delivery would be not be appropriate when engaging with people and families who identify as mixed. □

II. SPEAKERS' PRESENTATIONS

Crossing the colour and faith line: challenging assumptions about families from mixed racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds

Dr. Chamion Caballero, London South Bank University

In her presentation, Chamion Caballero asserted that the focus on people of mixed backgrounds is not new, but rather that there has been a re-emergence of new debates on the topic. Throughout history, people of mixed racial backgrounds have been seen in two extremes – as exquisitely beautiful and the answer to racial harmony, or as genetically weak and suffering from identity confusion. There has been few positive images that speak to the realities of mixed families and mixed people.

Her research, with Ros Edwards and Shuby Puthussery, attempted to address the empirical information gap about mixed families and mixed people. The research participants were drawn across England and Wales, representing 30 couples self-identifying as mixed and living in small towns, city centres and suburbs. Because the sample was modelled on Census data, Scotland was not included in the research.

The researchers sought to discover how parents pass on a sense of identity to their children, and if they do pass on their heritage, which aspects are chosen, the reasons behind this choice, and what relationships and resources they use. It was found that couples (and partners within couples) adopted different strategies in promoting their children's identities. Some adopted an individual strategy, where parents did not encourage their children to see their identity as based on race. Instead, they stressed identities as cosmopolitan where children were able to chose their own individual identities, which could transcend colour or race. Others adopted a mixed strategy, where the parents encouraged

the children to engage with all parts of their heritage. A third strategy that many also adopted was a single strategy, where only one aspect of the child's identity was focused on, and for some parents this was religion and for others it was culture or ethnicity. Each of these approaches seemed to work for the family concerned.

The research showed that the participants' lives were not a continuous culture clash; most couples found that other issues were more important than identity, such as work life balance, education, health and finances. In fact, many of the identity-related challenges families faced had stemmed from external factors such as stereotypes by others, rather than internal conflicts within the family. Some of the commonly held assumptions about families from mixed racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds were also refuted by the research findings. For example, the sample was more likely to be married or cohabiting and middle class with professional qualifications.

Chamion concluded her presentation with the recommendation that addressing the challenges mixed families face include a more nuanced understanding of race and diversity in the wider public consciousness and more positive images of people and families identifying as mixed . □

Parenting 'Mixed' Children: Negotiating Difference and Belonging, by Chamion Caballero, Rosalind Edwards and Shuby Puthussery was published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and is available for download at <http://www.jrf.org.uk>

Improving the educational environment for mixed race children

Professor Leon Tikly, University of Bristol

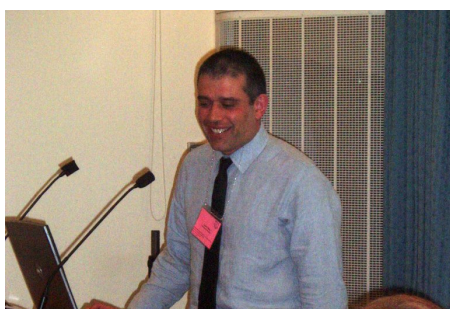
Leon Tikly' began his presentation by outlining the following three questions: 'who are mixed race children', 'how do we define their educational needs', and 'how can we address the key barriers to mixed race children's achievement'.

To contextualise these questions, Leon presented information which focused on the underachievement of white and Black Caribbean pupils (specifically boys). Leon outlined the concept of achievement as not only measured in examination scores, but also the affective outcomes of education, namely, emotional well-being and the creation of good citizens. He then went on to identify two underlying barriers to achievement: that their identities are not being acknowledged in school and the existence of institutional racism. He then presented the example of the 'culturally learning school' which would aim to build positive identities for young people and address these barriers to achievement.

Leon presented data on deprivation (as judged by free school meals (FSM)) in relation to achievement rates of pupils of different ethnic minority backgrounds. Analysing these variables, he showed that there is an inconclusive relationship between the receipt of FSM and the achievement of different ethnic groups. Thus, there are other factors beyond deprivation which contribute to underachievement.

He posits that experience of mixed white and black Caribbean pupils in schools may be similar to those pupils of black Caribbean origin—they are more likely to come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, experience forms of institutional racism in the form of low teacher expectations, and are more likely to be excluded from school. Further, the low expectations pupils face may be based on the assumption that they come from fragmented homes or the assumption that they have confused identities, which could then lead to rebellious and challenging forms of behaviour.

Compounding the situation is the invisibility of the mixed group in terms of policy, which makes it more difficult to effectively address underachievement. Often mixed heritage identities are not recognised in the curriculum, in schools or in the policies of local education authorities. In order to address the underachievement of mixed white and black Caribbean pupils, Leon suggested new thinking in schools that break previous stereotypes and assumptions about race, and that recognises smaller ethnic minority groups. This might be led by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Likewise, there is a need for race equality to be mainstreamed in schools, instead being delegated to the sidelines or to black members of staff. □



Leon Tikly presents his findings on the educational needs and barriers to achievement of mixed heritage children [left]; Delegates in the morning panel session [right]

The Multiple Heritage Project: raising the profile of mixed race issues through focused services

Bradley Lincoln, founder of the Multiple Heritage Project, Manchester

Bradley began his presentation by relating to the audience his own experience growing up, and then went on to describe the purpose of his project: to provide opportunities for mixed race youth to express their identities in a positive way. He felt that the current debates on terminology and current schools' curriculum were not allowing the space for young people to participate in a topic that was directly affecting their lives. He modelled the Multiple Heritage Project from his own journey of going from a place of 'nowhereness' to 'somewhereness', to enable young people the tools to express their personal identities in ways meaningful to them.

The Multiple Heritage Project first started its work by holding youth conferences in Manchester, Trafford, Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The aim of the conferences is to get young people together to talk about their identities. He felt that mixed race young people were invisible in society, and that the project could help them to articulate their feelings and opinions on self-identification in order to have a better understanding about themselves. It was hoped that this work, conducted in a safe and positive environment amongst peers, would enhance the self-confidence of the young people.

Bradley stated that the feedback he has received from the young people has been overwhelmingly positive; the young people have enjoyed being in a space where they are in the majority. He stated that it was important that the ideas raised in the conferences stayed within the areas the participants live in. He recruits and trains youth facilitators to ensure that the young people can further reflect and build on their experiences at the conferences. He described a few of the successes from the project: raising confidence of young people, keeping the knowledge generated from the discussions in

the areas, and that recommendations on the issue have been generated by the young people themselves. In each of the conferences, the young people create recommendations on issues that directly affect their lives, such as the school curriculum, stereotypes, and terminology. The recommendations are intended to represent an action plan for schools. One result from the conferences is the term *mix-d* which is meant to reflect different aspects of identity without privileging the term 'race'.

Bradley believes that providing these opportunities for young people to meet others who may identify as mixed has broader implications for inclusion work. He focuses on what the young people have in common while still enabling them to discuss and reflect on their individuality.

Despite the successes of the project, Bradley feels that there are still more challenges to be met. He felt that it was also pressing to raise the awareness of smaller ethnic and faith groups and be responsive to future changes in the needs of young people. □



Multiple Heritage Project

...addressing mixed-race issues

For more information on the Multiple Heritage Project, see:

<http://www.multipleheritage.co.uk>

Questions from the Floor

A question session followed the presentations, where the delegates sought the panel's opinions on race equality in schools and areas for future work.

Leon felt that the commitment to race equality needed to be mainstreamed in school action and policy, again stressing that anti-racism work is not only the responsibility of black and minority ethnic staff. Further elaborating on the comparison of FSM uptake and achievement, Leon felt that racism was not the only cause for underachievement: despite experiencing racism, Indian and Chinese pupils have high academic achievement. He felt that it is the pathologisation of 'blackness' which amounts to low teacher expectations and pupils' low academic self-esteem. Black Caribbean parents have high aspirations from their children, but their children still may be affected by institutional racism.

One delegate asked the panel on their thoughts on how to communicate the diversity of the category in terms of different perspectives, such as gender and sexual orientation. Chamion commented in the case of her research, the inclusion of only one same-sex couple in the sample meant that their experiences were combined with the rest of the couples. Chamion

stressed that overall there is a need to open up the family definition, such as with the case of lone parents.

Bradley felt that his work was pressing for changes in education, which would affect the way that mainstream society views these issues. He has also worked in mental health service education and has held parents and teacher conferences to challenge outdated views. With the help of young people, the project is working on an education booklet for wider circulation, and is planning a national conference to bring together people working with young people from a number of local education authorities.

Addressing delegates who called for more politically focused activities, Chamion stated that a conference at London South Bank University in September 2007 was organised through a collaboration of the former Commission for Racial Equality, Department of Communities and Local Government and the Runnymede Trust. She felt that this collaboration demonstrated the growing interest in the issue, how more organisations are working on the subject, and that government is willing to support this work financially. □



Main speakers and chair, including Bradley Lincoln, Louise Barker, Chamion Caballero, and Leon Tikly [left - right]; Bradley Lincoln presenting his Multiple Heritage Project [right]

III. STUDY SESSIONS

The afternoon session offered opportunities for delegates to select two of the following workshops to attend:

- Working with and providing services to mixed race families
Annabel Goodyer: Principal Lecturer in Social Work, London South Bank University
- Making mixed race children visible in the education system
Esther Fleary: the Black Pupils Achievement Project, Nottingham City Children's Services
- Creating a strong sense of self in mixed race young people
Bradley Lincoln: Multiple Heritage Project, Manchester
- Mixed race young people: over-representation in the criminal justice system
Uzo Iwobi: Principal Equality & Diversity Officer, South Wales Police
- Complex family systems: working with mixed race service users
Yvonne Ayo: Tavistock Centre, London

Working with and providing services to mixed race families

Annabel Goodyer, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, London South Bank University

In the study session, Annabel Goodyer discussed some things she has found useful for her work. For example, she has found the term mixed race descriptive and useful for conceptualising identities, because it represents the visible colour difference between children and their parents. She then passed around pencils coloured in various shades of browns as an example of a resource for children to draw themselves. She stated that often children will associate their identity with their physical appearance, and can become confused when practitioners tell them they are 'black' as opposed to 'brown'.

Annabel then had delegates discuss their perceptions of the history of adoption and fostering policy, such as the difference between the 'colour blind' approach of the 60s-70s, to later policies of same-race placements. She felt that often there was a tendency to treat mixed race children as black, which ignored the prior family experience of the child, for example it denies the experience of those with one white parent. She

questioned whether same-race placements, in this case placing mixed race children with black families, was adequate in meeting the needs of children. She then suggested that if there was a case where a mixed race child was living with their white single mother, the best care option may not be to only consider a black family. She encouraged that social workers be open to using a range of culturally appropriate resources to support children in developing positive sense of self that incorporates their backgrounds.

During the morning discussion, one delegate shared that in East Sussex there is evidence of an overrepresentation of mixed heritage young people in care, and there is a challenge to find carers of diverse backgrounds. In response to the comment, the delegates discussed the merits of using an individual approach; in making placements, social workers should take in account characteristics of the child's life, such as proximity to their school, their family background, and the child's preference. These

points - as opposed to basing placement solely on skin colour - affect the needs of the child over the long-term.

The delegates felt that environmental factors will influence the success of placements and that

social workers and carers should be made aware of resources that can help to promote positive and diverse identities for the children concerned. □

Making mixed race children visible in the education system

Esther Fleary, the Black Pupils Achievement Project, Nottingham City Council

Esther Fleary's presentation focused on her work in Nottingham City Council school. She began with their area's statistics on the population change of mixed race people and on academic achievement by ethnic group. Recounting the local authority's experience, Esther stated the academic achievement of mixed white and black Caribbean pupils improved after they created tailored training materials, and targeted new projects for the group.

To demonstrate an example of teaching materials they have used, she asked the delegates to guess the famous individuals from the clues of her 'Mixed Heritage Quiz'. The exercise provided many examples of individuals who could be included within the curriculum. She explained that these examples of famous people could illustrate successful historical role models for young people, and help to foster a greater sense of inclusion for mixed heritage young people. Making these historical figures visible in the curriculum also serves as inspiration for the young people.

Esther provided the group other ideas of resources to facilitate the incorporation of mixed heritage people and experience into the curriculum. The book *Remember Me: Achievements of Mixed Race People, Past and Present* by Asher and Martin Hoyles, includes prominent people of mixed heritage throughout history. Delegates then discussed strategies for the inclusion of less heard stories in the curriculum by comparing Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale. The final resource Esther introduced was the film, *Grey Area*. Esther showed a segment

that featured two young adults talking about their experiences of being mixed heritage. At the close of the study session, each delegate was given a CD to take home from the conference with the information Esther presented, as well as additional information and resources on this topic.

These resources can inspire pupils to learn more about history through learning about famous people of mixed race, and also present pupils with information to help support their choices on self-identification. She recommended that teachers be careful to develop a safe environment for discussions on identity by monitoring the language that young people use to describe each other, emphasising the importance of intervening when the language used is negative.

In response to this point, one delegate remarked how BME and mixed race children are often excluded from school for being 'physical', and suggested that violence may be a response to inappropriate language. After discussing the point raised, the delegates in the study session felt that schools should be encouraged to engage all young people in topics of diversity and provide staff the skills and confidence to address issues of identity to ensure that they are able to confidently challenge negative stereotypes and discrimination. □

Remember Me: Achievements of Mixed Race People, Past and Present by Asher and Martin Hoyles is available to order from People in Harmony. For more information please go to:

<http://www.pih.org.uk/files/orderform.pdf>

Creating a strong sense of self in mixed race young people

Bradley Lincoln, Multiple Heritage Project, Manchester

In his study session, Bradley had the delegates break out into small groups to share their past personal and professional experiences. First, the groups discussed the terms and descriptions they found acceptable for mixed race people. Bradley then compared these terms with those young people have found unacceptable. Overall, the terms deemed most acceptable were mixed race, mixed heritage, and multiple heritage.

In some parts of the country, young people were comfortable with the term half-caste, which the delegates felt was unacceptable. Bradley explained to the groups how he has tended to take a flexible approach with terminology, altering his work depending on his audience. He stated that he has tried to use the names that young people have chosen for themselves, but in academic circles he has often used the term 'multiple heritage', the term used for his project and website. He introduced the website to the delegates; its contents include the proceedings of past conferences, testimonials of young people, and images from the different conferences.

He explained how the website is aimed to act as a resource for other young people and schools that are unfamiliar with his work. Throughout the website he has adopted the term 'mix-d' in a reflection of the way young people describe themselves, but also to exclude the word 'race' from the identity. He has tried to include smaller and less visible groups that consider themselves as mix-d (though perhaps not in terms of race), and further, he did not see the need for have race dominate in future discussions of the mix-d experience.

In groups, the delegates then shared their responses to the question, "When did you first realise what colour you were?" Bradley has used this question in the past with teachers to begin exercises that aim to broaden their thinking about the experiences of children. He has found that young people who struggle with their self-

esteem tend to think of their identity in terms of their 'packaging' (their appearance) rather than their 'content' (who they think are). As he explained through the example of his own upbringing, confusing messages of identity can even be formed within the family unit. As children often develop a sense of their identity and colour from people and experiences external to the family, but family is also an influential factor.

Through the youth conferences, Bradley has recognised themes concerning how young people make sense of their identities, such as:

- Identity choice is personal, not political;
- Identities are shaped by how and where people live;
- Identities are shaped by the perceptions and pressure of others;
- Appearance can play a large part in identification; however, this can be an indication of having an 'urban identity' which can create confusing messages for teachers; and
- Even when young people feel comfortable with their identity, they may still want to be included in discussions on identity and being mix-d.

The last exercise for the groups was to discuss the 5 C's of Awareness: Colour, Context, Characteristics, Culture and Class. Bradley has used this exercise to communicate how these concepts affect identification. One example he presented was how two individuals might have similar colour but differ on the other aspects, such as class background or cultural heritage.

Concluding the study session, Bradley stressed that his work is not a substitute for activities and debates that should be occurring in the schools. Further, he stressed the importance of involving young people on policies dealing with behaviour and language used in schools and hopes that his work will inspire teachers to take responsibility for future work in the area. □

Mixed race young people: over-representation in the criminal justice system

Uzo Iwobi, Principal Equality & Diversity Officer, South Wales Police

Working in an open discussion and brainstorming format, this study session centred on potential reasons that mixed race young people find themselves in the criminal justice system. Uzo asked the delegates to think of their own experiences and then identify possible reasons for the overrepresentation. From this, two themes were discussed in the first half of the study session, family attitudes and circumstances and the interaction between individuals and institutions. In the second half of the study session the delegates were then asked to focus on developing solutions.

In terms of individual and family attitudes and circumstances, the delegates discussed how an individual's sense of self or family life can impact on the ways that they in turn relate to others. The delegates shared their experiences in the area, relating such examples as: having a lack of positive identity leading to disruptive behaviour in schools; the possible absence of one parent causing emotional distress; and in one parent families the primary carer may be unprepared to work through a combination of issues with their child. One delegate related a case where a parent had been in the criminal justice system, and had not encouraged or discouraged their child's criminality.

The delegates also shared their experiences of how people and families of mixed race were treated by social workers and institutions. Many of the cases were negative, and thought to have added more stress to already challenging situations. The delegates felt that in general there is confusion amongst colleagues on the appropriate terms for people, what are needs and what are stereotypes, and the lack of knowledge of what constitutes as appropriate resources for these young people. The delegates also felt that often the youth who find themselves in the criminal justice system are in

situations of poverty, institutional racism and an absence of preventative services and positive role models. These structural factors were seen as challenging circumstances to work through.

Even though the discussion centred around young people of mixed race, the delegates agreed that these structural pressures can equally be applied to other young people, regardless of their ethnic group, and also that people of similar ethnic backgrounds will not necessarily have the same life experiences or circumstances. They then concluded that it is important to stress to service providers the importance of making individualised responses.

During the second half of the session, Uzo steered the discussion towards finding solutions to the issues they raised. Many of the delegates' solutions centred around resources to enable young people to develop strong and positive identities, such as promoting positive role models and challenging stereotypes through positive images. In the afternoon study session, one delegate suggested activities that incorporate the opinions of young people and give them the opportunity to become involved in politics in their local community, such as through a youth parliament.

As the study session drew to a close, the delegates agreed that schools need resources to combat disaffection amongst underachieving pupils, and that there is a need for respect and understanding of difference in schools to prevent negative attitudes. □

Complex family systems: working with mixed race service users

Yvonne Ayo, Tavistock Centre

Yvonne began the study session by explaining her work with individuals at the Tavistock Centre to promote mental health. She described the flexible approach that they use which attempts to accommodate for individual experience. She then went on to explain the examples of good mental health that would be discussed further – the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships, to play and learn, to develop a sense of right and wrong and to resolve problems and setbacks and learn from them.

From her work and experience, Yvonne stated that 1 in 5 children and adolescents will experience and give signs and symptoms of a recognised disorder. The most common and frequent symptoms are conduct disorders (antisocial behaviour), depression and anxiety disorders (phobias, panic attacks). Referrals to their service have come for a variety of reasons, and they approach each problem systemically by looking at relationships and communication between people, looking at the relevant belief systems and meanings and thinking about contextual issues and life cycle stages.

For example, in a case where a young person is disruptive at school, staff would compare the young person's behaviour at home and school and identify the reasons behind any inconsistent behaviour. Yvonne stated that the work is an evolving process, informed through interviews and observation, which provides the therapist with a framework for further relevant questions such as illness, class, relationships, and conflicts.

Yvonne then explained how the client's information used to produce a cultural genogram, which she described as similar to a family tree but maps cultural identities that may influence the family system – a model that accommodates people and families of multiple heritage. The

practitioners will use the genogram as a tool to then discuss and challenge culturally based assumptions and to identify culturally based emotional triggers (for example, unresolved culturally based conflicts).

The family life cycle model was also introduced to the delegates as a method of understanding how mental health can be influenced by unexpected factors, such as unemployment. Focusing on the family life style can be useful in determining families' responses to challenges, and how those responses impact the individual. For example, authoritarian parenting can be sensible when the children are young but will not work with adolescents who need more negotiation.

Yvonne finished the study session by listing some risk factors for family mental health such as but not limited to, overt parental conflict, family breakdown, hostile and rejecting relationships, failure to adapt to a child changing developmental needs, child abuse or neglect, and death and loss (which includes the loss of friends). Environmental risk factors include significant life events such as socio-economic disadvantage, homelessness, and discrimination. Yvonne pointed out that where the number of risk factors accumulates, resilience factors become important, allowing individuals to cope with stressful life events by balancing them with positive support (affection, education, supportive long-term relationships). Thus, Yvonne believes that understanding individuals' resilience factors will help to promote good mental health. □

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKING AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Overall the day offered a range of implications for policy making and service provision. According to the presentations, the most pressing concerns were the recognition of mixed identities, the need to challenge negative assumptions and stereotypes about the group, and the need to raise awareness of current research and work. The study sessions then allowed the delegates the opportunity to discuss particular policy themes further and share experiences and good practice.

Considering the demographic shift of the category, one important finding of the day was the need to incorporate the experiences of smaller groups. Presenters frequently stated the caveat that mixed heritage identities are not just ‘black and white’, but in discussions the terms mixed race and mixed heritage were often used as shorthand to refer to people of mixed white and black Caribbean heritage. The mixed race category is very broad and there is a risk of generalising for the group. As much of the work presented on the day made reference to the experience of people of mixed white and black Caribbean heritage, it is important to keep in mind that issues may effect groups differently. In his presentation, Leon Tikly indicated that unlike mixed white and black Caribbean pupils, mixed white and Asian pupils are found to be high academic achievers.

The past emphasis on ‘racial identity’ may not be useful when considering families of mixed ethnic, racial or faith backgrounds, and so prompts a rethink on the assumed value of race as a source of identity. The message from the work of the Multiple Heritage Project is that listening is key to providing acceptable and authentic services for ‘mix-d’ young people. Perhaps the most important message to the delegates then was to stress the understanding of needs of individuals and their families as well as groups to target service and policy effectively. □



Louise Barker [left] summarised the days’ proceedings, which was followed by spoken word performances by Aeon and Evoke [right]

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Yvonne Ayo has developed an interest in mixed heritage families and has undertaken a small research project which explored the extent to which therapists consider the mixed ethnicities of clients. Yvonne also has an interest in community based work and currently works in a secondary school and a pupil referral unit with students who have been permanently excluded from school, and provides training in a range of systemic theories and provide consultations to organisations and teams.

Louise Barker has worked in public sector research and policy development roles for a number of years and has served as trustee for People in Harmony. She has conducted research into the representation of mixed identities in individuals and families, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Louise is currently a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics, under the supervision of Dr. Suki Ali.

Dr. Chamion Caballero is a research fellow at London South Bank University. She has a long-standing research interest in issues around mixed identities, particularly around the theorisation of mixedness, and was one of the authors of the DfES report 'Understanding the Educational Needs of Mixed Heritage Children', published in 2004.

Esther Fleary qualified as teacher of Modern Foreign Languages in 1998 and taught in Nottingham City Schools for several years. She has also worked in the field of Behaviour and Attendance until joining the Local Authority's Ethnic Minority Services as a cross phase EMA Consultant. The service aims to provide support and guidance to schools within the City of Nottingham in order to enhance provision for BME children and young people.

Uzo Iwobi is the Principal Equality and Diversity Officer for South Wales Police. She served with the Commission for Racial Equality as a Commissioner until it merged with the Equality and Human Rights Commission in October 2007. She delivers diversity training to a variety of public and private sector organisations on all equality stands, as well as multicultural diversity.

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Bradley Lincoln is the Founder and Director of the Multiple Heritage Project based in Manchester. For the last three years the Multiple Heritage Project has run school conferences, engaged in training for professionals and engaged with communities, academics and politicians on the evolving debates surrounding mixed race.

Dr. Leon Tikly is Director of a DfID funded Research Programme Consortium (RPC) on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries (EdQual). He is also currently directing an evaluation of the UK government's Aiming High: Raising African Caribbean Achievement project; is involved in a state of the art literature review on globalisation and education with colleagues in the GSoE; and, on a project looking at leadership and the management of change in rural and township schools in South Africa.

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