'That queue is just for white people. Is that one for black ones? Where do I go then?

Mixed heritage children's experiences of school

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ABSTRACT

In inner London 7.5% of the school population is of mixed heritage, yet little is known about their experiences in the education system. Data from the 2001 Census shows that over half of mixed heritage children under the age of 16 have social backgrounds that suggest a strong middle class dimension yet, as a group, they have persistently underachieved at school. This challenges associations between social class and success at school suggesting that other factors might well influence school experience. This thesis explores how mixed heritage children's school experiences are shaped by the ways in which others perceive their identities and make assumptions about their lives, based mainly on the colour of their skin. It examines why some children are more able to develop the resilience to cope with these experiences than others.

An inductive approach to data gathering was used. Exploratory interviews were conducted with an opportunity sample, semi structured interviews with education professionals and focus groups with a small-scale sample of mixed heritage children in an inner London Borough. Themes that emerged challenge suggestions that we have moved to a point where ethnic and racial groupings are less relevant than data on children's social backgrounds, suggesting that all mixed heritage children, regardless of social background, experienced racial discrimination, teachers' inaccurate perceptions about their identities and backgrounds and low expectations of their abilities and aptitude for learning. Whilst educational professionals explained that they knew little about these children and were unaware of any issues they faced, children appeared to be 'invisible' at school, absent from policies and curriculum materials. Many lacked opportunities to discuss their identities both at home and school. These issues particularly influenced boys' school experiences. Whilst this research enabled many mixed heritage children's voices to be heard for the first time, it argues that the challenges many face present a threat to their capacity to fulfil their potential and their sense of belonging in the school community.

DECLARATION OF WORD COUNT

The exact number of words in this thesis is 70,728. The references and appendices are excluded from the word count.

DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Growth in the mixed heritage population in the UK

As the population in the United Kingdom becomes increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, religion and national identity (Song 2007), one of the fastest growing groups is people of mixed heritage. The mixed population was officially represented in the UK Census 2001 for the first time and it was estimated that there were 661,034 people who identified as mixed heritage. The largest of the mixed groups was the mixed white/ black Caribbean group, numbering 237,000, or 35.9% of the people who defined themselves as 'mixed'. The mixed white/ Asian group numbered 189,000 or 28.6% and the white/ black African group were 79,000 or 11.9% (Owen 2007). The exact figures are set out in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Census 2001: England and Wales: Numbers in categories of mixed people.

Categories of mixed heritage people Census 2001	Numbers
Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	237,420
Mixed White/ Asian	189,015
Other mixed	155,688
Mixed White/ Black African	78,911
Total	**661,034**

Yet despite its growing importance in demographic terms and its entry into 'official' data collection, Song (2007) suggests that relatively little is known about the life experiences of so-called 'mixed' people whilst Sims (2007) suggests that the growth of different mixed groups over time will add pressure on our understanding of the diversity of culture and experience within them.

Aims of the thesis

This thesis considers the experiences of mixed heritage children in the education system. It highlights a gap in existing research about the subject, and explores whether the

experiences that mixed heritage children have at school are understood through an overt focus on their skin colour. It examines whether this renders them vulnerable to a set of assumptions about their lived experiences, which bear little resemblance to the reality of their lives. It explores how these assumptions, and the ways in which children deal with them, shape their school experiences.

Ali (2003) suggests that multiple affiliations of 'mixedness' make it difficult to define mixed heritage as one category. Similarly Wardle (2004) describes many different ways in which children's mixed identities are developed through a range of ecological components which include their social class, family backgrounds, their peers, their schools and the areas in which they live. Such a variety of lived experiences cannot be represented by a narrow focus on their phenotype and the associated assumptions about their lives. Song (2007) suggests that for many, mixed heritage may not be central to their sense of identity, being secondary to a sense of nation, locality, religion or language. Yet it is within the context of an assumed 'race', based on their physical appearance, that mixed heritage children attempt to find a space for the reality of these experiences (Ali 2003).

Such a focus on 'race' might also lead to assumptions that mixed heritage children are victims of a 'culture-clash' between two supposedly different 'races' with distinct lived experiences. Edwards et al. (2008) highlight how such assumptions are portrayed in the media where attempts to cross cultural barriers lead to emotionally difficult, and therefore short lived, relationships and lifestyles. In 2007, Trevor Phillips, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality referred to children from 'mixed' relationships as 'marooned between communities'. Yet such an emphasis on their 'racial identity' detracts from the role that social processes might play in children's lives, suggesting that any challenges that children face in schools are a consequence of their mixed heritage, rather than the ways in which they are treated by others.

The overall aim of this thesis is to challenge an argument gaining currency 'that we are moving to a post race environment where ethnic and racial groupings become far less relevant than data on people's social backgrounds' (Easton 2008: BBC News website November 5th) by exploring the experiences that mixed heritage children have at school. These might well be shaped by the assumptions that others make about their 'racial

identities' based mainly on their phenotype, or their status as victims of a 'culture clash' positioned between two 'races' with distinct cultures. We are indeed said to be living in an increasingly post race environment where 'race' is not biologically defined but involves a system of socially constructed practices that change over time and across social contexts, where post race positions deconstruct notions of simple racialised categories and adopt cultural and ethnic plurality (Edwards et al. 2008). Yet Gillborn (2010) suggests that, despite a widely accepted notion that there are no such things as fixed and separate human races in the traditional biological sense, there are still powerful voices that maintain the falsehood of separate, fixed and deterministic human races. Song and Aspinall (2012) too highlight the limitations of a public's racial imaginary that considers the ways in which white and black people continue to be seen, or people's narrow understanding of what someone of a particular ancestry is supposed to look like. Despite the introduction of 'mixed 'categories to the official Census in 2001, these categories still impose a biological and ethnic interpretation on identifications that preserve the 'disparate social distance between specific groups and the values and meanings associated with them' (Ali 2003). The differences assigned to specific groups assume that their experiences are the same. They also assume that identities remain the same; yet the very fact that mixed heritage identities are constructed within social contexts suggests that they will change over time.

This thesis will argue that in a modern post race environment the experiences that mixed heritage children have at school are still understood through an overt focus on their 'racial identities' in ways that pay little regard to the varied ways in which they live their lives, the impact this has on their experiences at school. The thesis asks a number of questions: How are mixed heritage children's identities constructed by the different social contexts in which they operate? Do the ways in which others racially assign them represent the various ways in which these identities are constructed? What are the assumptions made about children's identities and experiences as a result of the ways in which they are racially assigned? In what ways do mixed heritage children deal with the assumptions that are made about them? In what ways do these assumptions shape their experiences at school?

My three research questions:

- In what ways are mixed heritage children's identities shaped by their social contexts; are these identities recognised by the ways in which others perceive them?

- In what ways do mixed heritage children deal with the assumptions that others make about their identities; can these indicate the development of resilience?

- What experiences do mixed heritage children have at school and how are these shaped by the assumptions that others make about their identities?

Reasons for conducting the research

One reason for undertaking this research was to understand why, although data from the 2001 Census showed that over half of dependent mixed heritage children under the age of 16 had married or co-habiting parents whose socio-economic circumstances denoted a strong middle class dimension (Caballero et al. 2008), national school achievement data revealed a pattern of underachievement amongst some 'mixed' groups. Whilst mixed white /black Caribbean children were below average in primary and secondary schools, mixed white/ black African children were close to average in primary schools and slightly below average in secondary schools (Tikly 2007). This suggested to me a need to challenge the 'association between social class and successful achievement in education' (Department for Education and Skills 2006:7) and explore other factors that might prove influential in mixed heritage children's schooling. There seemed to be a need to look beyond the notion that social class a priori negates the influence of racial and ethnic categorisation. My aim in doing so was purely to provide a starting point to this topic by exploring what experiences children had at school and the ways that these were shaped by the range of identity options open to them.

Other reasons for conducting the research were more personal. In May 2005, when we were at Victoria Coach station in London, my own daughter (white mother/ black African father) aged five, stated, *'that queue is just for white people. Is that one for black ones?*

Where do I go then? I want to go with you!' This, I felt, demonstrated a perception that there existed separate queues for white and black people, and a concern at where she might therefore belong. This triggered our process of negotiating her sense of 'difference and belonging' (Caballero et al. 2008:21). Since she was an early age I have adopted a British middle class post race 'open' approach to negotiating this sense of difference and belonging using a range of resources including foreign travel, choice of school and neighbourhood in which to live, to offer her a range of identity options and life choices (Caballero et al. 2008). She has embraced these options and flourished in a range of learning pursuits, which might suggest that being of mixed heritage is simply just another part of her identity and life. Yet her regular need to seek reassurance regarding her difference and her belonging has challenged my presumption that with the resources she has at her disposal she will retain high self-esteem and fulfil her potential in a variety of contexts, for example at school, where her experiences have necessitated numerous discussions. These have often related to her perceived 'difference' and the way in which others might view her, based upon her phenotype, and the impact that this had, at times, on her participation in school life.

I had also already developed an interest in the experiences of mixed heritage children as a teacher in an inner London primary school ten years ago. I remember boys who had no contact with their Caribbean fathers and lived in a world of 'white women'. One such boy was Matthew, (white mother/ black Jamaican father). When Matthew was eight years old, his mother established a relationship with a new partner who was white. Searching to belong, Matthew, who had never had contact with his biological father, soon began to ask his mother why he was a different colour from her and his 'new dad'. His mother, who suggested to me that she had 'finally got her life back on track' after a 'difficult few years', although keen to give Matthew support with learning, was reluctant to 'open another can of worms' and answer Matthew's questions honestly. She preferred to tell him that he had 'eaten too much chocolate'. Song (2007) suggests that it may be that some parents simply do not talk with their children about 'race' or about the fact that their family is 'different'. Matthew's mother's refusal to answer his questions honestly, led to a confusion and anger. His confusion about his 'belonging' and developing sense of personal identity, exacerbated by a lack of opportunity to talk about it with supportive adults, undermined Matthew's resilience and impacted on his ability to learn. Both instances suggest that although we may be moving to a post race environment, mixed

heritage experiences are still shaped by attention to 'racial difference', largely based on their phenotype. The experiences of both Freya and Matthew suggest that this has the capacity to shape children's school experience.

Importance of the research

This research is important because, despite a growth in the mixed heritage population, there has been little academic exploration of issues relating to mixed heritage children's experience in UK schools. Indeed the main focus to date of existing academic research has been on the categorisation and social construction of mixed heritage identity (see Tizard and Phoenix 2002; Parker and Song 2001; Olumide 2002).

Out of the total mixed population in the UK Census 2001, 17% were children under five years old, with the mixed white/ black Caribbean and mixed white/ black African groups constituting the largest mixed groups (Owen 2007). Recent school census data confirms that 2.5% of the school population are of mixed heritage and Platt (2009) states that now when looking across generations, there are indications of change which include 9% of children living in families which contain mixed or multiple heritage, and that change is taking place more rapidly in London where more than one in four children in inner city primary schools is of mixed heritage. She suggests that the number of children of mixed Caribbean heritage in the UK is about to overtake the numbers of solely Caribbean heritage and will go on to dominate, according to the data. Furthermore whilst there will be an increasing number of children with some Caribbean origin, fewer will be categorically Caribbean and this group is likely almost to disappear. Owen (2007) suggests that the mixed white/ black Caribbean group is 42.11% of the black Caribbean group, and that of all the children with at least one black Caribbean parent, there were more where the second parent was white than where the second parent was also black Caribbean.

This research was conducted in an inner London borough where there has been a steady rise in the numbers of mixed heritage children, especially those of mixed white and black Caribbean and white and black African. Due to the growing numbers of children identified as mixed white and black Caribbean and white and black African heritage in the borough's schools, and the small numbers of other mixed groups, I decided to focus on the

experiences of the two groups for the purposes of this research. In 2009, 4.6% (931) of the pupils in primary schools in the borough, and 4.1% (386) of the pupils in secondary schools were mixed white and black Caribbean, whilst 1.6% (316) of the primary population and 1.3% (120) of the secondary population were mixed white/ black African. The rise in these figures since 2003, when the data on these groups was first collected, is depicted in tables 1.2 and 1.3 below.

1.2 Percentages and numbers of mixed heritage pupils in the inner London Borough's Primary schools

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mixed White/ Black African	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%
	264	283	290	306	292	302	316
Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	5.0%	4.8%	4.7%	4.6%
	976	980	976	991	977	946	931

1.3 Percentages and numbers of mixed heritage pupils in the inner London Borough's Secondary schools

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mixed White/ Black African	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%	1.0%	1.1%	1.3%
	41	54	62	60	83	99	120
Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	2.5%	2.7%	2.9%	3.4%	3.7%	3.9%	4.1%
	183	211	235	274	324	352	386

In his 2008 newspaper article 'Race and Identity in 21st Century Britain' (*The Independent* newspaper), Ian Burrell suggests that mixed heritage people are a section of society that have been invigorated not just by Obama but by the success of Lewis Hamilton, the captaining of the English football team by Rio Ferdinand and the success of prize winning authors, Monica Ali and Zadie Smith. He states that glass ceilings have been shattered and that the sky would appear to be the limit for this group. Yet, underachievement persists amongst mixed heritage children in both primary and secondary education in the UK and there is little academic research to suggest how their experiences at school might contribute to this. At the time of beginning this research in 2009 mixed heritage children

had an inconsistent pattern of achievement, at borough and national level. This is depicted in Tables 1.4 and 1.5 below.

Table 1.4 Key Stage 2 Performance of mixed heritage pupils in the inner London Borough

Pupils' ethnic background	2007 average %	Number of children	2008 average %	Number of children	2009 average %	Number of children
Mixed White/ Black African	71%	42	91%	27	86%	36
Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	85%	121	66%	143	79%	123

Table 1.5 Percentage gaining 5 GCSE A*- C Performance of mixed heritage pupils in the inner London Borough and nationally

Pupils' ethnic background	2007 Inner London Borough	2007 National	2008 Inner London Borough	2008 National	2009 Inner London Borough	2009 National
Mixed white/ black Caribbean	42%	50%	76%	64%	41%	38%
Mixed white/ black African	77%	58%	80%	56%	61%	46%

Furthermore when I started this research I learnt that other mixed heritage children, many of them Matthew's peers at school, did not fulfil the potential they demonstrated earlier in their primary school careers. Was this a consequence of their school experience? Haynes et al. (2006) suggest that the achievement of mixed white/ black Caribbean children in school is negatively affected by three key barriers; low socio-economic status, low teacher expectations linked to misunderstandings of mixed heritage identities and backgrounds and behavioural issues and attitudes to achievement linked to peer group pressures. In addition, Tikly et al. (2004) state that:

> *The focus of many teachers on socio-economic disadvantage as the **sole** explanation for underachievement obscured the more complex picture of how socio-economic background, ethnicity and gender interact, in this case to determine educational outcomes.* (2004:46)

The focus that some teachers might place upon socio economic disadvantage at the expense of other factors raises concerns about the influence this perception might have on the school experience of many mixed heritage children. Certainly in relation to children of mixed white/ black Caribbean heritage, Tikly (2007) states that when analysing achievement data, even when socio economic factors are controlled for, there remain issues of underachievement amongst children of white/ black Caribbean origin. These, he suggests, are irreducible simply to socio economic background and need to be addressed by schools. It is therefore clear that other factors are influential in the achievement of mixed heritage children.

Feminist writers (Stanley 1992; Skeggs 1997) have suggested that research interests are invariably shaped by life experiences and so it was not purely an academic interest or gaps in the literature that motivated me to carry out this research. My experience of negotiating my own mixed heritage daughter's 'difference and belonging' (Caballero et al. 2008:21) through primary school, and in other areas of her life, has been influential. Our discussions have heightened my sense of the possible marginalisation of certain groups in society and the education system, based on their perceived 'difference' and assumptions that some others might hold about their lives, most often based upon the colour of their skin. As the mixed group grows in the UK I felt compelled to probe this issue further to investigate whether the issues of 'difference and belonging' experienced by my own daughter are pertinent to other mixed heritage children and how this might shape their school experience. I wondered about the children who lack the opportunity to negotiate 'difference and belonging' with supportive adults in their lives, the subsequent impact on their resilience and the possible consequences this might have for their experiences at school. I hoped that the research would strengthen my understanding of the subject and furthermore challenge any assumptions I might hold about the experiences of mixed heritage children, based on experiential knowledge of the subject.

Methodological approach and methods adopted

In order to build a greater understanding of a topic that was not adequately addressed in the literature, I adopted an exploratory approach to data collection in order to achieve the set of aims outlined above. I drew on the accounts of a small sample of mixed heritage

adults and children, parents with mixed heritage children and educational professionals involved in their schooling, in order to gain rich insights into the phenomena. Due to the size of the sample I could not claim to generalise from the data, since small samples are better suited to explaining the subjective meanings for the participants involved.

Adopting a three-stage approach to data gathering I primarily conducted in depth exploratory interviews with mixed heritage adults and parents with mixed heritage children, in order to explore how participants perceived the experiences that mixed heritage children had at school. I then conducted semi structured interviews to explore the perceptions held by educational professionals involved in mixed heritage children's schooling and then focus group interviews with mixed heritage children themselves in order to understand how they perceived their experiences at school. To ensure that the conclusions drawn from the study reflected the concerns expressed by the participants during interviews, a form of iterative thematic analysis was applied to interview data based on a process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), where unfolding themes were constantly tested and refined to take account of relevant data.

In order to explore various ways in which mixed heritage children dealt with the assumptions that others made about their lives, I analysed interview data using a model developed by Ungar et al. (2007), to explain their qualitative findings of a 14-site, 11-country study of resilience among young people aged 12- 23. This model analysed how young people's capacity to cope with adversity, reflected their different degrees of access to seven mental health-enhancing experiences. These, described as tensions, included young people's access to personal relationships and material resources, and their adherence to cultural traditions. Young people, who were able to navigate their way through these tensions, and find a way to resolve all seven according to the strengths and resources available to them individually, within their families and their communities, were described as developing the resilience required to cope with adversity. I used this model to understand how mixed heritage individuals in my research might navigate their way to a range of psychological, cultural and social resources in order to develop a positive sense of their mixed heritage identity and to experience school in a positive manner. This I hoped would demonstrate ways in which individuals develop the resilience to deal with the assumptions that others make about their lives. In Chapter 6, I isolate the experiences of six mixed heritage individuals from the data into separate case studies. In each, I use the

model developed by Ungar et al. (2007) to assess to what extent the individuals are able to navigate through the seven tensions, to develop the resilience necessary to deal with the many assumptions that others make about them, and the ways in which this might shape their school experience.

The research strategy was guided by the BERA (British Educational Research Association) Revised Ethical guidelines 2004 which informed the ethical issues during the development of the strategy and initial access stages and during the data collection and analysis and reporting stages.

Keith (2005) suggests that race, ethnicity and identity cannot be taken for granted as objects to be studied, precisely because their meanings are context dependent and so vary according to the location being studied. In keeping with this Song (2007) argues that it would be erroneous to presume certain commonalities of experience across the mixed heritage population. Premdas (1996) too suggests that Caribbean identities suggest a diverse polyglot of peoples with a combination of race, religion, language and culture. The trans Caribbean identity he suggests is a new identity combining myths of the Caribbean region with new facts and experiences of the Caribbean Diasporas. These multifaceted identities are all pertinent to the groups in my research sample. I therefore do not anticipate commonalities amongst them and remain sensitive to their diverse identities and lived experiences.

A note on language

Berkeley (2007) suggests that it is a marker of how far from consensus we are on dealing with issues of 'mixedness' that there is a collective inability to agree a common language to describe this identity. The purpose of this thesis is not to debate the terminology used to describe identity, but to challenge the notion that racial and ethnic categories are no longer important in the context of children's school experiences.

Although research participants used different definitions, 'mixed race' was the most common, and was used by the majority of young people involved. These definitions have been represented in quotation throughout. For the purpose of writing this thesis I have used the term 'mixed heritage', a term I believe best represents the manner in which

mixed heritage identities are shaped by a range of ecological factors including children's families, communities and schools. This suggests that different attributes are inherited from past generations. I also used the term 'mixed families' to describe families containing mixed heritage children and/ or adults in this research.

Yet I am aware that there are many ways in which people might describe a 'mixed' identity. Hall (2007), for example, suggests that we need to reach an agreement on the most acceptable term to describe people who are 'racially mixed', but acknowledges that some dislike the terms 'racially mixed' and 'mixed race'. She cites, for example, Bellos (2007) who has difficulty recognising race, either pure or mixed, suggesting that because we do not define people with combinations of European countries in their identities as mixed, that mixed race is confined to visible mixtures that include European and Non European heritage. Phoenix and Husain (2007) claim that although some people argue that 'race' is a social construct, it has real effects because it continues to be treated as socially significant and because profound and pervasive inequalities are produced through practices of racism. However, Hall (2007) suggests that she and others would object to the term mixed heritage because it does not describe how the racial element affects identity and because the word heritage is associated with property (Hall 2007). Throughout this thesis a number of terms are referred to in relation to children's mixed heritage status and their families. These are taken either directly from the literature or are direct representations of what those who have taken part in the research have said. Terms such as dual heritage; mixed race; biracial; transracial and multiracial are used throughout.

The structure of the thesis

Chapter Two reviews the body of literature in this field. The purpose is twofold; to develop a good understanding and insight into the relevant research and current trends that have emerged in the field to date, and to analyse how far the existing research goes towards answering my research questions. There is a paucity of literature relating to the experiences that mixed heritage have in the education system and how this is shaped by their identities, which suggests a gap in the research. This informs the research strategy which is explained in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three outlines the research strategy used to answer the research questions. The research approach and plan of how the research was carried out, a three-stage approach to collecting data to answer the research questions, is described. A detailed account of what methods were used and the context within which this took place are outlined. The suitability of the strategy to collect data relevant to the topic is considered and the disadvantages to the research strategy and threat of bias are also considered.

Chapters Four and Five present findings from exploratory, semi-structured and focus group interviews that aim to answer the research questions. They suggest explanatory theories of how personal identity was formed in mixed heritage children but how these experiences cannot always be reflected in the ways that other people categorise them. They also investigate the experiences that mixed heritage children had at school and how these are shaped by the way in which others perceive them.

Chapter Six uses a theoretical model to analyse data from the interviews. It explores the varying degrees of success to which six of the mixed heritage individuals navigated a path to resilience in order to lead a healthy and happy life, develop a positive identity and in some cases have a positive school experience. Their different experiences are described in six separate case studies.

In Chapter Seven research findings are discussed in light of previous research and conclusions drawn. Consideration is given to the limitations of the research design and suggestions made for future areas of research. The chapter outlines the contribution of this thesis to the research field and suggests a series of recommendations for schools and teachers working with mixed heritage children.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This thesis considers the experiences that mixed heritage children have in school and how these are influenced by the assumptions that are made about them because of the colour of their skin and as victims of a 'culture-clash' between two supposedly different 'races' with distinct lived experiences. The purpose of the literature review is twofold; to develop a deep understanding and insight into the relevant research and current trends that emerged in the field and to analyse how far the existing research goes towards answering my research questions. I hoped a critical review would 'create a firm foundation for advancing knowledge…facilitate theory development, close areas where a plethora of research exists and uncover areas where research is needed (Webster and Watson 2002:13).

A search for existing academic literature about the school experiences of mixed heritage children revealed little previous research. I began with general searches in the Education databases using the Institute of Education Library catalogue. These included the British Education Index using key words such as mixed heritage/ race/ multi racial/ dual heritage. However the majority of research pertained to students of ethnic minorities in the UK such as black Caribbean and black African. I also used Google Scholar, an Internet search engine in a similar way. When I did find research relevant to my topic, I used these sources to locate literature referenced by the authors I read. Indeed Caballero et al. (2007) found that very little work on the educational experiences of pupils from mixed heritage backgrounds had been conducted in the UK. They suggested that the two most specific studies to date were Ali's research into mixed heritage families, which highlighted conceptualisations of race and mixed heritage in primary schools (Ali 2003) and Cline et al.'s (2002) reference to mixed heritage children in writing about the experiences of minority ethnic pupils in mainly White schools. Both studies are referenced in this thesis. In an attempt to redress the gap, Caballero et al. (2007) conducted a study aiming to explore the educational attainment and experiences of mixed heritage pupils (white/ black Caribbean). In a recent review of literature, Williams (2009) too, suggests that despite the growing number of mixed heritage children in US schools, little research exists which explores the school experiences of these pupils. Furthermore education researchers who consider race as a factor in school-related issues do not consider the experiences of mixed

heritage children in their studies and are yet to, '*uncover the factors that influence the academic achievement of these pupils*' (2009: 777). I was able to use references in Williams' review that considered the school experiences of mixed heritage children in the US and articles and references on websites designed for mixed heritage people. These were usually newspaper articles and e–lectures. In addition, I have drawn upon a variety of literature including newspapers, contemporary fiction and the popular press as well as academic literature for the purposes of this review. The key points in the literature, which provide a context for my topic and/ or uncover gaps in the existing research, are presented.

Introduction

Race as Identity

Writers today discuss racial identity in terms of social construction rather than in biological terms, suggesting that identities are constantly recreated and modified by interaction (Renn 2000; Zack 1993; Helms 1995; Gillborn 2010). Indeed a growing body of research on questions of mixed heritage identity emphasises the important influence of social variables on identity development (Tikly et al. 2004). Root (1996) developed a model specifically about mixed heritage identities acknowledging the intersectional and situational nature of identity, which does not separate race as a phenomenon outside of other variables such as gender and class. She suggests that identities are formed within the context of individual, family and community relationships, all of which Wardle (2004) claims contribute to the ways in which mixed heritage children construct their own views of the world, whilst taking in and processing information in a unique view of their own identities.

The manner in which mixed heritage individuals' social contexts shape their identities therefore suggests a focus on wholeness and a move away from viewing identities as made up of separate 'races'. Yet Wardle (2004) suggests that mixed heritage children face a unique challenge in developing comfortable, empowered and self-affirming racial and ethnic identities, which enable them to celebrate their 'entire heritage' and move at ease in 'single race groups' (2004: 103). This, he suggests, is a different and more challenging process than for single race children. This focus on their need to recognise, and feel at ease with the separate 'races' that contribute to their identities, suggests that mixed

heritage children are somehow separate from existing mono-racial minorities and white communities, despite the many influences in their social contexts. This appears to conflict with Wardle's suggestion that mixed identities are shaped by a range of social variables which do not separate race as a phenomenon outside of other variables such as their family contexts, their gender and their social class.

Such a focus on racial identity also implies that children of mixed heritage might embody the disparate social distance assumed to exist between 'single race' groups, which Appiah (1992) suggests can be attributed with 'heritable characteristics', which not only divide them, but attribute them with certain traits and tendencies that they do not share with members of any other race. These might refer to, 'physical features, gene pools and character qualities' (Spickard 1992:14). Yet it is using these features that many suppose informal classifications, attribute essential behaviours and make assumptions about individuals' lived experiences.

Neither does Wardle's (2004) suggestion that mixed heritage children need to embrace their entire heritage and move at ease within 'single race' groups recognise that some children might choose not to embrace their 'entire heritage' or that they may lack the opportunity to do so at various points in their lives, but still retain a positive sense of their identities. Neither is it sensitive to the 'misrecognition' (Song and Aspinall 2012) of children's identities by some members of the wider public, usually based on their physical characteristics, which might negate feelings of ease and a healthy self-esteem, whether children are raised to 'celebrate' their 'entire heritage' or not.

Furthermore this focus on racial identity leads writers (Edwards et al. 2004; Ali 2003) to suggest that two different discourses exist in the media and public institutions, both of which suggest that mixed heritage individuals are somehow different from mono racial individuals. They claim that mixed heritage individuals are portrayed as having two experiences- in one they demonstrate a brave and beautiful new potential of the 'exotic' mixed heritage individual (Edwards et al. 2004) and in the other they have difficulties because their identities fall between two worlds, leading to psychological maladjustment, feelings of isolation, alienation and non-belonging (Stonequist 1937). Yet in many respects mixed heritage people's experiences might not differ considerably

from those of many mono-racial minorities, which suggests that we should not isolate them as one distinct group in society.

Mixed categorisation and Census data

Ali (2007) suggests that there is a misplaced faith in Census data collection that reflects the way in which people to seek to identify and form groups. Whilst multiple affiliations of mixedness make it difficult to define as a category, it should not be assumed that this group of individuals share their mixed identity as the overriding feature of their life. Neither, she suggests, should it be understood as a fixed category of identity or being. Indeed Song (2001) describes identity as a cyclical journey where there is no end point of maturation or commitment to one race, and multifaceted and fluid ideas of identity are practised. Identity development models with a specific trajectory, such as Eriksson's eight-stage identity model (1980), are therefore alien to identities that are fluid, multifaceted and situational.

Song (2007) too suggests that whilst the status of mixed heritage may be central to one person's sense of self, to another it may be secondary to their religion, hobbies, social background and gender. Individuals may well share more in common with others 'across race' than they do within their mixed category. So whilst Census data may provide a useful analysis of how certain Britons racially identify themselves, it is also possible that people identify themselves differently on official forms, than in real life interactions (Song 2007). The mixed experience will therefore differ according to who we are talking about, and the specific influences in their lives.

Similarly Banks (2001) suggests that whilst 'ethnic' groups are defined homogeneously, thrown together for convenience by government, they too may remain internally differentiated. Whilst there is an assumption that ethnicity refers to an individual's identification with a, 'segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture' (Yinger 1976 p. 200), their 'group membership', may well lead to stereotypes about, and prejudice towards them. In political and everyday language the terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic minority' are frequently equated with groups who are physically distinct from the 'white' (European) majority but Phoenix and Tizard (2002) suggest whilst members of

many 'ethnic groups' will generally have the same skin colour it should not be assumed that they share the same culture.

'Misrecognition' and group membership

Wardle (2004) suggests that 'group membership' might cause problems for mixed heritage children who seek to operate in groups that they might closely look like, yet have little experiential connection with. Song and Aspinall's (2012) research is useful here. They explored the disjuncture between how mixed heritage young people (aged 18-25) made choices about and described their 'racial and ethnic identifications', and how others perceived them, based on their phenotypes. This was often used as a reason to deny young people 'membership' of certain groups.

Eriksson's (1980) eight stage model of identity development states that adolescents become so secure in their identities that by adulthood their identity is understood to the extent that they are unlikely to experience affronts that damage self esteem or lead to confusion or distress. Yet Song and Aspinall (2012) describe the confusion and stress experienced by young people in their study resulting from the 'misrecognition' (Song and Aspinall 2012) of their identities by others. Many experienced stress at being forcibly assigned into racial categories, denied membership in minority communities or being reduced to 'racial types'. It was the 'white and black mix' that were most likely to be pigeon holed into racial categories in their study. Whilst some of this group self categorised as 'white' and/ or mixed heritage, others categorised them as black and ascribed them negative social values relating to their 'blackness'. Some experienced pressure from their peers to act 'more black' and adopt a particular set of behavioural traits that this racial assignment entailed. Conversely others, who were recognised as 'white', experienced stress and confusion because their ties to their white family members were weaker than to black family members; they therefore felt uncomfortable operating in white groups. Ali (2003) too highlights that whilst some mixed heritage children adopt white middle class cultural practices and are therefore excluded from black groups on the basis of authenticity, they still might suffer racism from whites, based not on their culture but on the colour of their skin.

Dewan (2008) suggests that the discrimination young women of mixed heritage in her study faced led to non acceptance within peer groups, rejection within families, and ostracism from one or others cultural heritage. The fact that young women's identities were recognised in mono racial terms by others and that they suffered discrimination as a result, suggested that society is still thinking in race essentialist ways. This chapter reviews tensions explored in the literature. Section 1 explores the disjuncture between ways in which mixed heritage children's identities are constructed through their various social contexts and how they are recognised by others, often in mono racial terms. The assumptions that are therefore made about them and the subsequent impact on their school experience will be considered in Section 2.

Section 1: The influence of social variables on the development of identity in mixed heritage children; the family

Johnson (1990) suggests that the family is the child's first cultural context, providing the mixed heritage child with a sense of belonging, security, and protection. It functions as a mechanism for synthesizing the different identity contexts in the child's life, helping her/ him to develop a unique sense of being mixed heritage. In his 2007 lecture, 'On being mixed race' Sir Keith Ajegbo, an ex head teacher in an inner city school, suggests that a crucial component to mixed heritage children's belonging at school is the attitude of their parents. If parents are sensitive to their child's mixed heritage and are prepared to work together on the issues that might arise in terms of identity and belonging, it will make a considerable difference to children's experience. Although this is his 'unresearched' opinion, existing research suggests several themes that explore the role of the family in developing identity in mixed heritage children:

  - Parental approaches to developing identity in mixed heritage children
  - The role of the mother in developing identity in mixed heritage children.
  - Family as a source of support against negative perceptions held about its ability to develop identity in its mixed heritage children.
  - The lack of opportunity for some mixed heritage children to explore issues of identity in family settings

Parental approaches to developing identity in mixed heritage identity

The qualitative approach adopted by Edwards et al. (2008), with 65 parents in 35 couples from different areas of England and Wales, was a useful starting point in explaining parental approaches to identity development. All parents had at least one child aged between eight and twelve years old and were in the process of negotiating their children's difference and belonging. Tensions between children's 'internal' (the way they viewed themselves) and 'external identities' (the ways in which their identity was described by outsiders) (Harris and Sim 2002) were central to these negotiations.

Caballero (2005) argues that belonging and identity for 'mixed' children are described as either 'pro race' or 'post race'. The 'pro race' argument has two strands; firstly, that children of black and white parentage should identify and be raised as black, since this is how they will be perceived by society and secondly, that 'mixedness' is a legitimate racial identity where parents raise their children to keep in touch with both heritages (Crippen and Brew 2007). In both cases white parents are seen to need to develop their 'racial literacy' in order to manage their children's identity (Twine 2004). In post race theory a cultural ethnic plurality is favoured over a simple racialised identity, 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1992: 257) in which mixed people become free from racial categorisation. Parents adopted three typical approaches to negotiating their children's difference and sense of belonging, which researchers identified as: 'individual', 'mixed' and 'single'.

An 'individual' approach

In an 'individual approach' (Edwards et al. 2008) parents encouraged their children to think beyond 'racial' categories and explore a range of identity options. A variety of resources including foreign travel and school choice were adopted to facilitate this. Root (2001), focusing on parenting, ethnic legitimacy, stereotypes and generational differences within 175 multiracial families identified a similar approach which was to dismantle concepts of race and consider all people as members of the human race. Morrison and Rodgers (1996) too refer to the human approach where parents neither view their children as black or white but as members of the human race.

A 'mixed' approach

Adopting a 'mixed approach' (Edwards et al. 2008) children's racial and ethnic background is understood as a rooted and factual part of their identity. In her research Olumide (2002) spoke to parents drawn from a small English research population. Whilst parents offered support to their children they had divergent views on what that might be. Two views prevailed, the first, that children should be taught that colour should not act as a barrier between people and the second that children should regard each of the parental cultures as valuable and viable. However there tended to be little stress on the features of 'white' culture and families with links outside Britain appeared to be more conscious of maintaining their specific cultural details. However, she suggests that representing two cultures to children was sometimes portrayed as ideally requiring two parents as well as access to, or associations with two 'communities' or 'both sides'. For single parents and maybe those with hostile families, the view of heritage becomes more problematic, especially so where grandparents and the local community are unable to help. She states that the mixed heritage child may not know her culture, culture often being associated with the black or minority parent. She also highlights the difference between knowing something, and living it day to day.

A 'single' approach

The third, 'single approach', has been recognized by different researchers. Here only one aspect of a child's background is stressed, usually a black identity from which a sense of belonging is promoted. Kerwin et al. (1993) and Morrison and Rodgers (1996) highlight the 'single approach' taken by many black parents due to their concern about racial discrimination; parents were particular about actively preparing their children for the possibility of racial discrimination due to their own experiences of discrimination. Phoenix and Husain (2007) too suggest that 'arguments that people of mixed parentage have to identify as black are often based on awareness that they are likely to experience racism' (2007:3).

Whilst an understanding of parental approaches to developing 'identity' is useful to the thesis, it failed to suggest how particular approaches shape children's school experience. Xu (2004)'s ethnographic study however adds this dimension, albeit a study of only one

mixed heritage family in the US. He describes how multiple voices within the family, originating from different parental experiences, fluid in nature and influenced by situational complexities, embrace both pro and post race approaches. These shaped his son's school experience. He suggests that multiple voices also existed within individual family members, which led the black father to; project his son as black in specific situations to make him aware of racism but to also want his son to embrace both cultures and ultimately to be a human being.

Both parents' racial consciousness influences their expectations of their son's school experience. Whilst the history of segregation and experience of immigration shaped the way that both parents viewed education as the only way for their child to succeed, racial consciousness also differed for both parents. The Chinese mother, part of the 'voluntary minority', emphasised her son's need to fit in and get the best possible education including extra study after school. The father, part of the 'involuntary minority', emphasised preparing his son, both physically and emotionally, for potential racism. This involved a push for activities at school such as karate rather than extra study. Ali (2003) too suggests that in the process of communication between parents and children about identity, their location, parental history and parental connections to the diaspora or an imagined home, play a crucial role in the negotiation of ethnic identification.

The role of the mother in developing identity

Existing theory (Edwards et al. 2008; Ali 2003; Mirza 2008; Twine 2010; Mckenzie 2009) references a wide appreciation of the ways in which mothers shape personal identity in mixed heritage children, their 'motherwork' (Hill Collins 1994:62). Edwards et al. (2008) argue that when negotiating difference and belonging for 'mixed' children and putting it in to practice, it was mothers who largely took the primary responsibility for and carried out the daily practice of their children's upbringing.

Ali's (2003) research too demonstrates that everyday cultural practices that produce dynamic and evolving cultural forms in modern homes are overwhelmingly the responsibility of the mother in negotiation with the child with mothers maintaining family links on behalf of the whole family in order that children might understand both sides of their heritage. Where parents had separated, the mother would maintain relationships with

the father's family 'for the sake of the children' and facilitate children spending time with black people generally in order to establish their 'racial' identification (Ali 2003). Children in her research suggested that these links developed their family histories and mixed heritage identities.

Twine (2010), suggests that white women with mixed heritage children, have a 'dual consciousness' enabling them to both empathise with, and protect their children from certain forms of institutionalised racism. These may well be targeted at children and families based on racial assignment and a subsequent set of assumed behaviours (Song and Aspinall 2012; Edwards et al.2008; Ali 2003). 25% of the white women in her study articulated an understanding of the forms of racism encountered by their children and husbands and had experienced racism in similar situations, such as education and employment as they were part of mixed families. Her 'dual consciousness' enabled her to move between seeing her position as a white, university-educated, women with advantages over black women in certain structural institutions, to sharing struggles with black women. In order to protect her daughter from prejudice she employed her whiteness as a resource to guarantee that her daughter had access to, for example, specific educational resources that she felt would not be accessible to a child that society viewed as 'black'.

Existing research (Edwards et al. 2008) suggests a 'culture clash' exacerbated by notions of separate races, is used to explain the problematic nature of mixed relationships, which are viewed as 'short lived'. Mckenzie (2009) contrasts the view that white women on the St Ann's estate in Nottingham have of themselves and their children with an 'outsider's' view of them. White women, in relationships with black men and with mixed heritage children, felt proud at being 'more than just white'. And valued their 'mixed race identities', as part of mixed families, despite understanding their class position to be viewed as 'at the bottom' by outsiders. The women placed a high value on all things Jamaican because the pecking order in St Ann's placed black (Jamaican men) at the top, black women second, mixed heritage people third, white women fourth and white men last.

However Katz (1996) highlights the importance of the father's race in the 'racial identity' of children with mixed parentage suggesting that children with white mothers often

racially identify with their black fathers, even when their fathers are absent. Ali (2003) too suggests that although young children may first think through gendered identities, they are also aware of the importance of 'racial identities'. Children in her research imagined themselves to be like the parent of the same gender but they also read race as colour and might claim to 'look like' the parent they perceived as 'racially other', regardless of gender. In the newspaper article, 'Brave New World', Alibhai Brown's (The Independent, August 2009), discussion of children in mixed heritage stepfamilies, suggests that Louis's biological link with his father was above reproach, although he saw him intermittently. When quite young, Louis had asserted; *'Yes, I'm French, Scottish, Italian, English, but mostly I'm Dominican'.*

In some cases mixed heritage individuals consider racial identity less important than others. This might render the effects of racial assignment by others less potent (Song and Aspinall 2012). In the autobiography, 'The Colour of Water', a black man's tribute to his white mother, McBride (1996) describes how his mother brought up her 12 mixed heritage children, without the support of their African American fathers. He suggests that she raised '*twelve extraordinary people, creative and talented*' (McBride 1996), yet her role left little time for discussions around identity. Despite the confusion surrounding their mother's racial identity and therefore their own, the twelve children all went to college and became doctors, teachers, professors and chemists (McBride 1996). This was based upon their mother's deep belief that education tempered with religion was the way to climb out of poverty in America; little else mattered.

Furthermore research suggests that many issues important to families with mixed heritage children were not inherently to do with children's 'mixedness' (Edwards et al. 2008). Other issues that cut across both race and ethnicity for mixed families in terms of their resources and expectations were as important. Indeed Olumide's (2002) research with a range of mixed heritage families highlights the concerns they might have regarding their children growing up as having little to do with their colour, but more to do with the 'world itself'.

The family as a source of support in the face of negative perceptions

Existing research alludes to the negative perceptions held by 'outsiders' about mixed families in general. Olumide (1996) suggests that families that others might categorise as racially different do not so much damage each other, but suffer damaging attacks from others. Tikly et al. (2004), investigating barriers to achievement for mixed white and black Caribbean children in secondary schools, refer to negative perceptions held by teachers about a lack of parental attention to their children's mixed heritage identities. Yet they state that it was clear from speaking to the mixed heritage children and their parents, that a positive image of their identities was reinforced in the home.

Olumide (2002) states that white women with mixed heritage children were located in a very awkward social space since the rhetoric made clear that their capacity to fulfil certain 'racial duties', such as nurturing positive identities in their children, were virtually absent. She suggests their vulnerability as mothers might well have contributed to the disproportionate numbers of their children under state care. She suggests that mixed couples 'further down the social order' and single mothers with mixed heritage children are more likely to come to the attention of social workers, particularly if there are other factors suggesting vulnerability such as extended families withdrawing support.

Whilst existing literature *(*Stonequist 1937; Crippen and Brew 2007*)* refers to the mixed heritage child as 'marginal' and 'confused', other studies children found the expectation of a 'divided self' to be unfounded. Whilst Caballero et al. (2007) suggest 'new wave' accounts of mixedness demonstrate that people of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds generally perceive their identities as fluid and multiple, yet stable, other studies (Bagley and Young 1979; Wilson 1987) cast doubt on the 'marginal' theory that mixed heritage children are rejected by black and white people. Bagley and Young for example found that 64 children in their study aged four to seven years showed high levels of self-esteem and little evidence of identity confusion.

 Ali (2003) suggests there is writing on ethnicity and families that positions 'the family' as a support in hostile cultural environments. Hill Collins (1994:62) alludes to the potential strength of ethnic certainty within families as a need for survival in a racist society, a support when other's perceptions of that family are at odds with their own, stating:

The locus of conflict lies outside of the household, as women and their families engage in a collective effort to create and maintain a family life in the face of factors that undermine family integrity (Hill Collins 1994:47).

The lack of opportunity for some mixed heritage children to explore issues of identity in the family setting.

Given the 'irritation and stress', resulting from outsiders' perceptions about young people in Song and Aspinall's (2012) study, the lack of opportunity for some mixed heritage children to explore issues of identity in family settings seems of particular concern. Previous research suggests that many mixed heritage children and adults have been unable to explore a full range of options for developing selfhood (Olumide 2002; Song 2007). Both express concern at the lack of opportunity for some mixed heritage children to explore issues of identity in the family setting. Song states that sometimes families, as well as professionals and institutions, are a source of oppression to their mixed heritage children. Absent parents denied contact, rejecting parents who refuse contact with partners and their mixed heritage children and families in outright opposition who wish to prevent marriages or liaisons from taking place, all cause a weakening in the defence of mixed families. In Dewan's (2008) research with mixed heritage women, one quarter talked about discrimination within their families. Whilst some were abused others were ridiculed for looking different from other family members and others were kept in ignorance about their family heritage. Song (2007) suggests that all parties, but particularly the children, have therefore to pause at a suitable moment in their lives, to recoup the 'lost' aspects of themselves and to examine meanings of suppression.

Existing scholarly research suggests a lack of preparation on the part of some parents to raise mixed heritage children. Of particular interest is the qualitative research by Root (2001) in the US who focused on issues that were significant to 175 mixed families including parenting, ethnic legitimacy, stereotypes and generational differences. She found that most students did not feel that their parents were adequately prepared to raise mixed heritage children and that ethnic legitimacy which took the form of, for example family celebrations was often hard to establish. Root further noted that whilst parents,

recognising the changing politics surrounding racial identity, raised their children to identify as black, not all of their children chose the same racial identity.

Two particular issues in the literature emerged:

- Children's ethnic identifications being at odds with their racial identifications (Ali 2003);
- Particular issues specific to mixed heritage stepfamilies;

Children's ethnic identifications being at odds with their racial identification

Ali (2003) explains how the absence of a parent in a family can lead to children's 'ethnic identifications' as being at odds with their 'racial identifications'. Discussing her own cultural identification as 'white English' because there was no input from her Trinidadian Indian father, she describes how she and her siblings, 'questioned cultural absences and ethnic belonging' throughout their lives. Her sister viewed herself as 'white English' and had 'felt extremely confused about her identity before reaching her present understanding'.

In a newspaper report, 'Colour Blind' (The Observer, October 2006) Anna Kessel reports that some mixed heritage professional footballers that have been brought up in 'white households' and have lacked exposure to their 'black side', feel alienated by the urban black culture in their London football clubs. Whilst Ashley Cole describes being 'torn apart' and 'confused' because 'in football' you are just seen as either 'black or white', Jobi McAnuff states that his, *white friends at Palace (Crystal Palace football Club) still see me as black. People only see skin deep and society says I look more black than white.'*

Similarly footballer Rachel Yankey (white English mother and black Ghanaian father), who grew up in West London with her mother, also says she feels uncomfortable when people assume things about her because of the way she looks:

> *When you go into 'the white room' you know you're different looking, but I've grown up with white people so that's probably where I'd feel most comfortable. When you go into the black room you look similar but you don't feel as comfortable inside.' (*Kessel 2006).

Issues specific to mixed heritage step-families

In a recent news article highlighting the rise in mixed heritage step households, Yasmin Alibhai Brown (Brave New World: The Independent: August 2009) suggests the UK has more mixed heritage households than any other in Europe; one in ten young Britons lives in a mixed heritage household and the high rate of divorce and increase in '*mixed-race families*' has '*led to a newish phenomenon; the rise of the mixed race step-family*'. She describes how her own family reformed when her Ugandan Asian husband left her and her young son in 1998 and the impact this had on her son's identity. After her husband left she met Colin, a blue eyed Englishman, who;

'*Learnt to eat Indian food with his hands- a sweet gesture- but our reformed family inevitably became anglicised. I wonder whether my son would have been more Asian if his dad had not left us?*'(2009)

She also suggests that as mixed heritage step-families become less conscious of difference, their children become more aware of their own hybrid identities and as a child's racial self-identification becomes more important to them, they might well express feelings of loss of the 'real' parent through self imposed distance from the step-parent, even if that relationship has been sound and nurturing.

Existing research then suggests that children may therefore have to recoup the 'lost' aspects of themselves (Song 2007) at later stages in their lives. However no reference was made in the literature to the subsequent impact on mixed heritage children's school experience.

Section 2: The experiences that mixed heritage children have at school

Little scholarly research exists regarding the schooling experience of 'multi racial students' (Schwartz 1998). Writing about the experiences of mixed heritage children in the US, Williams (2009) suggests that this is due to a lack of data and the fact that mixed heritage children, however they choose to perceive themselves, are often categorised as black in schools. Few empirical studies address the concerns of mixed heritage children's schooling directly and Williams (2009) believes that this highlights the need for more

effective racial categorisation methods in schools to help identify and address the specific concerns of mixed heritage students.

Tikly et al. (2004) suggest that as a result of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) schools were expected to promote racial equality through policy and to monitor the impact of this policy on the attainment levels of different racial groups. Yet there is a relative invisibility of mixed heritage children in school, local and national policy and that even when there was awareness of potential underachievement, mixed heritage children were not referenced in School Improvement Plans and school targets. Thus it proves difficult for their underachievement to be challenged. These include:

- The invisibility of mixed heritage children at school
- Teachers' perceptions about mixed heritage children and their lack of knowledge about how to support them at school
- Teachers' and parents' expectations of mixed heritage children's schooling and achievement
- The impact of social class, gender and race on children's educational attainment
- The influence of peer groups upon mixed heritage children's experiences at school
- Racism in mixed heritage children's lives
- The influence of the community on identity and school experience: the triangle of family, church and school.

The invisibility of mixed heritage children at school

Wardle (1999) suggests that mixed heritage students are invisible in the classroom. They are absent from school policy and curriculum and their needs ignored in schools. This, he suggests, is largely to do with the inaccurate racial categorisation of many mixed heritage children. The racial identity you choose matters less than how others perceive you. Alvin Poussaint, who has specialised in the development of black children (in Norment 1995), states that educational professionals have shown little interest in the needs of mixed heritage children because they have accepted a culturally accepted notion that children must select the identity of one parent, usually the minority parent.

Williams (2009) too suggests existing research indicates that mixed heritage children face challenges with their perceived racial categorisation. Chiong (1998) describes the process by which US society comes to categorise mixed heritage children as being filled with illogical and inconsistent ideas. Her research explores the racial categorisation of mixed heritage students by peers, teachers, and administrators as well as the role of schools in fostering or obstructing their positive ethnic identity. Focusing on teacher perceptions about the classification of mixed heritage students amongst thirty public school teachers from two towns in Massachusetts, she highlights how teachers often used a mixed heritage child's physical characteristics to identify race and generally perceived them as belonging to a minority group, often choosing to identity them with the race that was the 'underdog', how they believed society would perceive them. Brown (1991) too found that in 'White schools' in the US, some teachers failed to differentiate between black and mixed heritage children, having a low opinion of black children anyway but an even lower opinion of mixed heritage children.

In the UK, Tizard and Phoenix (2002), state that most studies focusing on 'insider accounts,' generally found that people of mixed heritage viewed themselves as neither black nor white. Dewan (2008) researching the relationship between mixed heritage women and the further education sector, suggests, '*my study showed a discrepancy between self-perception as mixed race and how respondents believed they were seen by others as either black or mono-racial.*' (2008:64). Whilst Ifekwunigwe (1999) argues that simply referring to someone as 'black' reduces the complexities of family stories and identification, Coard (1971) referring to the low self-image and low self-expectation amongst black Caribbean children as a result of their experience in the British education system in 1971, argues:

> *Through the belittling, ignoring or denial of a person's identity, one can destroy perhaps the most important aspect of a person's personality – his sense of identity, of who he is. Without this he will get nowhere.* (2005: 47).

Tikly et al. (2004) suggest that tackling the underachievement of minority ethnic groups at risk of underachieving is a government (Labour government 1997-2010) priority. They suggest that a range of Government initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant in 1998; the Home Secretary's Action plan to respond to the McPherson Enquiry, the introduction of categories in the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) in 1999

and the recent 'Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project' (2003), reflect a growing concern in the Department for Education and Science about the performance of this group of children. Yet existing research highlights a lack of attention to mixed heritage identity in national and school policy and the curriculum.

Although, Tikly et al. (2004) highlighted that mixed white/ black Caribbean children may benefit from positive strategies directed at the achievement of black children including mentoring, supplementary education and initiatives that seek to affirm black history and experience in the curriculum, those in 'mainly white schools' (Cline et al. 2002), where there are few black children and maybe no such strategies to support them, will not benefit.

Teachers' perceptions of mixed heritage children and their lack of knowledge about how to support them at school

In his 'Review of Diversity and Citizenship' in British schools, Ajegbo (2007) describes a complex and sensitive history surrounding discussions about diversity in schools suggesting that although the UK has 'moved on' in terms of racism, myths and stereotypes exist. These are not supportive of children's achievement.

Tikly et al. (2004) report that many teachers interviewed during their research perceived mixed white and black Caribbean children to have 'identity issues'. Yet these children, as supported by the findings of other studies (Wilson 1987) claimed that any 'issues' they displayed regarding their mixed heritage identities, were not due to their own negative and confused feelings, but because they were frustrated at how their mixed background was sometimes perceived.

Because mixed heritage children were perceived as black by teachers, they like their black Caribbean peers were perceived to have behavioural problems at school. When asked if they knew the typical household structure of the mixed white and black Caribbean children in the schools, many teachers said that their impression was that most children resided solely with white mothers who found it difficult to raise racial self-esteem amongst their children, and that boys lacked positive role models when fathers were 'off site.' Some children in the research were living in single parent households but they were

not in the majority. Moreover Phoenix and Husain (2007), suggest that the notion that fathers are simply 'absent' from their children's lives if they are non-resident is no longer assumed as readily as it was in the past, and that there are a range of ways that fathers can, and do contribute to their children's lives.

In her ethnographic study, Mckenzie (2009) describes the pride that white mothers on the St Ann's estate in Nottingham took in their mixed heritage children, placing great importance on their children's 'looks' and giving their children exotic names such as 'Ymani' and 'Shanelle'. Although these names symbolised the value attributed to mixed heritage children inside the estate, she suggests that the names had low status outside of the estate where such taste for the exotic was ridiculed. She refers to a BBC report (23/09/05), 'Children's names spell trouble' that suggests teachers make 'snap judgements' about children from their names. Whilst teachers were wary of children who had exotic or 'chav' sounding names, such as 'Charmaine' or 'Jordan', they perceived children with names such as, 'Charlotte', to be delightful (Mckenzie 2009).

Lack of knowledge about how to support mixed heritage children in school

Both Edwards et al. (2008) and Cline et al. (2002) suggest that parents rely on schools as a potential resource to support the diversity of their children's 'mixed' backgrounds. Many were concerned about the 'additional difficulties' that existed for their mixed heritage children. Yet, when researchers spoke to teachers in the schools, teachers:

> *Rarely showed that they were aware of parental concerns and suggested that their uncertainty about the treatment of all minority ethnic children were most acute with mixed heritage children (2002:3).*

Ajegbo's 'Review of Diversity and Citizenship' (2007) suggests that some teachers lacked confidence in engaging with diversity issues and training opportunities to improve in this area.

Meanwhile some teachers were aware that mixed heritage students faced challenges but chose not to address them unless raised in the context of a racial theme (Cline et al. 2002). Tikly (2007) suggests that many teachers continue to struggle to come to terms with issues of mono heritage minority ethnic groups, let alone possible future ones targeted at mixed

heritage children. Some described an over emphasis on the achievement of minority groups at the expense of major achievement issues related to low socio economic backgrounds and in particular white working class boys.

In attempting to access a sample of mixed heritage women to interview about their experiences in further education, Dewan (2008) had 'informal conversations' with college staff that suggested race was a sensitive issue which she argued might be a reflection of Britain's politically correct discourse around race. Discussions revealed that using the terms mixed race and mixed heritage could make people who are unfamiliar with racial terms and concepts feel concerned about 'putting their foot in it' and that whilst some lecturers gave the impression that they wanted to talk about issues relating to race they were 'not sure how to do it'. Discussions revealed that some lecturers had given mixed heritage identity little thought. She suggests that black and mixed heritage lecturers were less anxious talking about race issues than many white lecturers who appeared to look beyond colour and possibly culture and were concerned with the person per se. They had an, 'abstract awareness' of racial and cultural difference but little understanding of what that meant (Dewan 2008). Caballero et al. (2007) too, highlight that teachers in their study demonstrated, '*hesitancy, uncertainty and erroneous judgements on their (mixed heritage children's) identities'* (2007: 355) when they were discussing children's school experiences which suggests that there is a real need for policy to be developed in order to help staff, parents and pupils communicate on what is clearly a sensitive and complex area. They suggested that because teachers were, '*less confident in proffering terms to describe mixedness'* (2007:356), it was unlikely that schools were conducting discussions about the needs of this group.

Teachers' and parents' expectations of mixed heritage children at school

Writing in 1971, Coard suggests that the black child labours under three crucial handicaps in the British education system; low teacher expectations, low expectations on his/ her own part and low motivation to succeed academically because he/ she feels the cards are stacked against him/ her. Coard suggests that in this context, the very bright black child does averagely, and the average child does poorly. In their evaluation of 'Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project', Tikly et al. (2006) suggest that '*an overwhelming majority of both high and low achieving African Caribbean pupils*

indicated that they were aware of the lower academic expectations that some teachers had of them.' (2006:9)

Teachers assumed that parents had low expectations, which they attributed to their household structures, socio economic backgrounds and levels of education. Some also indicated that they thought cultural background influenced parental attitudes towards education and future aspirations for their children, and highlighted the lower aspirations or lesser involvement of parents of white/ black Caribbean children (Tikly et al.2004). Furthermore Mckenzie (2009) referring to the attitudes 'outsiders' held towards personal relationships between working class black men and white women on the St Ann's estate in Nottingham, suggests that despite the value that is placed upon these relationships within the estate, it seemed to 'outsiders' that white women, who chose black partners, had no desire to become socially mobile and no ambition to transcend their situation. She also suggested that their non-white children diminished women's social positions and in some parts of the UK they had become a short hand marker of how Britain's underclass looks.

Yet both Ali (2003) and Tikly et al. (2004), suggest that mothers invested in academic achievement as the way out of 'working classness'. Whilst Ali (2003) describes the positive influence of 'the intricacies of lives that had such diverse cultural and ethnic inputs, as well as classed positions' upon parents' expectations of their children, Mirza (2008) links the black and Asian community's struggle for humanity to their struggle for education, 'the transformative mantle', a golden fleece, the journey that transforms your life. She suggests that for second-generation African Caribbean working class women, their 'educational urgency' is linked to job opportunities, a desire to achieve against the odds, a refusal to be failures, what The Sunday Times has referred to as the Ms Dynamite phenomenon (2008:11).

Assumptions that black and Asian underachievement have been based on low intelligence, cultural confusion, negative self-esteem, alienation and bad behaviour (Mirza 2008) led to black parents and professionals taking responsibility for their children's education. John (2005) suggests that for at least four decades black parents and communities have been actively concerned about the quality of education on offer to black children, their levels of educational attainment and rates of exclusions. Voluntary and community education projects, including the Supplementary schools movement, have attempted since the 1960s

to make meaningful interventions in response to these concerns. Demie et al. (2006) highlight high expectations amongst African parents, many of whom had received a good education and gained professional qualifications. Parents were in agreement that: *Without knowledge you are nothing. Even if you get money you wouldn't be able to manage it without wisdom' (2006:48)*.

However such aspiration was not always recognised by schools. Olumide (2002) suggested that conflicting views regarding children's education have repercussions for schools and parents. Parents may feel more alienated from schools and this only serves to make it harder for schools to maintain constructive relationships with parents. In their evaluation of 'Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project', Tikly et al. (2006) state that, '*the majority of the parents interviewed identified inconsistent and poor communication with schools as frustrating their attempts to get involved with their children's schooling'* (2006:9).

Although the literature in this section does not focus on the role of parental expectations in mixed families specifically, it reflects '*the intricacies of lives that had such diverse cultural and ethnic inputs'* (Ali 2003: 176), in mixed families. The literature is therefore useful as it challenges perceptions that many teachers hold about parents' low expectations.

The impact of social class, gender and race on children's educational attainment

Existing research (Demie et al. 2010; Reay 2009; Babb 2005) has brought to attention the 'association between social class and successful achievement in education' (Department for Education and Skills 2006:7). It suggests that life chances for today's children are overwhelmingly linked to parental income, occupations and educational qualifications. Gillborn and Mirza (2000), suggest that there are problems inherent in categorising social class in education and reflect that although almost all measures include information about parents' employment status, there are differences in how occupations are categorised and disputes about additional factors that are sometimes included (e.g. parental education). They suggest that many academic writers draw a simple distinction between 'manual', and

'non manual' taking this as roughly equivalent to working and middle class. Although education frequently uses the free school meal indicator of social disadvantage, which is advantageous because the necessary raw data are routinely available within the education system, it is not necessarily a measure of social class in the sense that the term is generally understood.

Data from the Youth Cohort study (YCS) of England and Wales reveals that social class is strongly associated with achievement, highlighting differences in attainment between pupils with a professional and a working class background (Demie et al. 2010). It confirms previous findings that pupils with parents with a higher and lower professional occupation do significantly better than those with parents in a manual occupation at GCSE. The proportion of pupils with 5+ A*-C in the highest social class was at least twice as great as pupils with a manual working class background. Although trend YCS data showed a rise in the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSEs amongst all family backgrounds (the percentage of 16 year olds with parents in routine occupations achieving this level has more than doubled between 1999 and 2006), there remained large differences in 2006, with nearly 81% of higher professional occupations gaining 5+ A*-C, compared to 42% in routine occupations.

Reay (2009) highlights that the working class continue to have access to relatively low levels of the kind of material, cultural and psychological resources that aid educational success. She suggests that they lack enriching cultural activities and the sense of entitlement that the middle classes possess in their interactions with schooling. Yet Gillborn and Mirza (2000) suggest that statistics which reveal an association between certain factors, as these do, do not always indicate a causal relationship. They stress, for example, that it might be assumed that because working class pupils have always lagged behind their more economically advantaged peers that the explanation somehow lays within the pupils themselves, their families and communities. Yet it should not be assumed that all/ most of the reasons for differences in attainment lie outside the school. Teacher expectations and the over representation of working class children in lower ranked teaching sets, for example, may well play their part.

Gillborn et al. (2012) state that in recent years a moral panic around white working class educational failure, particularly amongst boys, has become part of a mainstream, widely accepted, deficit discourse of low working class aspirations. Furthermore they suggest that this is being used to minimise, and even obscure, the continued impact of systemic racism on the educational experiences and outcomes of particularly African Caribbean children. Drawing on data from over one hundred different Local Education Authorities, which offered a comprehensive picture of differences in attainment across the country, Gillborn and Mirza (2000) found that ethnic inequalities in attainment persisted even when simultaneously controlling for gender and class. When comparing like with like, in terms of gender, class and ethnic origin, consistent ethnic inequalities of attainment remained clear and African Caribbean pupils, together with their Pakistani peers, had drawn least benefit from rising levels of attainment with the gap between them, and their white peers, growing bigger than a decade before.

Their suggestion that social class factors do not override the influence of ethnic inequalities is particularly useful when considering the focus of this thesis. Gillborn et al. (2012) suggest that for black children in the education system, being middle class and having social and cultural capital offers scant protection against 'racist stereotyping and exclusion'. Although issues of class and attainment operated within each of the main ethnic groups (as defined by the last census Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) with pupils from non-manual backgrounds having higher attainment, they suggest that for African Caribbean pupils the social class difference was much less pronounced. Inequalities of attainment are therefore evident for this group regardless of their class background. Indeed, whilst working class African Caribbean children fell behind working class children from other ethnic groups in the 90s, middle class African Caribbean pupils were the lowest attaining of all the middle class groups and in some cases barely matched the attainment of working class groups in other ethnic groups. African Caribbean pupils from middle class families are therefore little better placed, as a group, than white peers from working class backgrounds.

Research in the 1980s gave a good deal of attention to the underachievement of black Caribbean children in the education system. Two reports; The Interim Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from ethnic minority groups, West

Indian children in our schools under the chairmanship of Sir Anthony Rampton, and the report, Education for All, four years later under the chairmanship of Lord Swann, detailed the underachievement of this group. The Swann report concludes, 'there is no doubt that the West Indian children, as a group, and on average, are underachieving, both by comparison with their school fellows in the white majority, as well as in terms of their potential. (Swann 1985: 81). In the 90s too Gillborn and Gipps (1996) suggested that black Caribbean and African children were falling further behind the average achievement of the majority of their peers.

Furthermore Demie et al. (2006) report that in 2004 amongst those ending their compulsory education in the UK, black Caribbean and black African children were least successful academically with only 36% of black Caribbean and 43% of black African children achieving 5 or more GCSEs at 5 A* to C. This is in contrast to 76% of Chinese, 63% of Indian and 56% of white British (Demie et al. 2006). Concerns persist and previous reports such as 'Black Caribbean underachievement' (Demie et al. 2003) concluded that whilst there are examples of sound practice, many schools are not nearly as effective as they need to be in tackling the underachievement of black Caribbean and black African children. When issuing a rallying cry for a 'high class education for all' Coard (2004) claimed that if race equality was to become a reality, it would require a monumental and united effort by everyone connected with schools, colleges and the education system.

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) also highlighted a gender gap between the average attainment between boys and girls (a ten point gap with 43.8% of boys and 53.4% of girls attaining higher GCSE passes in 1999) attributing it in part to new forms of school assessment, teaching and learning styles and changes notions of masculinity. Yet they noted that boys' underachievement was not consistent across all subjects and in some cases boys reversed the trend at 'A' level. Feminist researchers have been critical of the way that boys are often viewed as a single homogenous group, ignoring the key differences in social class and ethnic origin (Archer and Francis 2007). Yet despite a focus that is often given to the gender gap it is still considerably smaller than those associated with 'race' and class. Within the African Caribbean groups although girls attained higher than their male peers, the gender gaps within their groups was insufficient to close the pronounced inequality of

attainment associated with their ethnic group as a whole (Gillborn and Mirza 2000). The gap between black and white pupils remained twice the size of the gender gap with black pupils from manual homes experiencing the greatest disadvantage. So when considering the inequalities of race, class and gender, gender represented the lowest disparity in the study.

In a recent study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, School Exclusions and Transition Into Adulthood in African Caribbean Communities, German et al. (2005) suggest that Caribbean boys are between four and 15 times more likely to be excluded than their white peers. In the last five years the Youth Justice Board has highlighted the correlation between school exclusion, youth offending and the high number of black young people in youth custody (John 2005).

Strand and Lindsay (2008) suggest that the disproportionate representation of minority ethnic students in special education has been a cause for concern for over 30 years in both the United States and the UK (Coard 1971). Studies in the UK have focused on attempts to investigate the reasons for disproportinality, in particular the classroom practices of teachers and organisational factors concerned with schools and Local Authorities. A lack of awareness of cultural variations and socio economic disadvantage, among minority ethnic groups has also been identified (Strand 1999). Strand and Lindsay (2008) state that there is now substantial evidence in the US for ethnic disproportionality with respect to Special Educational Needs. The greatest levels of overrepresentation are in the categories of mental retardation and emotional disturbance and with respect to ethnic groups for African American and American Indian students with black Americans up to 2.5 more likely than white students to be identified among those with mental retardation and 1.6 times more likely to be identified in relation to emotional disturbance. Studies have suggested the importance of direct and indirect bias, including teacher attitudes and behaviours, as key factors in underachievement with a low expectation of black students in particular being suggested. Strand (2007) suggests that, independent of prior achievement levels, black students are more likely to be placed in lower mathematics and science classes which has the effect of lowering the grades achievable in GCSE examinations at 16 years. Furthermore, an evaluation of the 2003 'Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project' (Tikly et al. 2006) suggests that although:

many teachers in the case study schools believed setting to be based purely on ability; data indicated that African Caribbean pupils were often relegated to lower sets due to their behaviour, rather than their ability'. (2006:8)

The influence of the peer group on the school experience of mixed heritage children

Song (2007) suggests:

> *While common sense tells us that parents do influence their children's sense of identity, we do not know how much difference this may make, for instance, compared with peer influence as children grow into adolescence and young people.' (2007:6)*

Referring to white/ black Caribbean children in their study, Tikly et al. (2004) suggest that peer group pressure and youth sub cultures may constitute barriers to their achievement at school. Both Song and Aspinall (2012) and Edwards et al. (2008) suggest that white/ black Caribbean children experience contradictory pressures with regards to their identity. On the one hand, they are viewed as being caught between two worlds in the sense that they are neither black nor white. On the other, there is a tendency for them to be viewed as 'black'. Song and Aspinall (2012) further suggest that when viewed as 'black' they may also be attributed with associated negative social values. These wider societal pressures have significant implications for the behaviour and achievement attitudes of white/ black Caribbean children. As the dominant sub culture in many schools was perceived as 'Black Street culture' children of all ethnic groups were subject to its influence, to varying degrees. According to a Local Authority adviser who had worked closely with mixed heritage children over a number of years, these factors together contributed to the phenomenon of white/ black Caribbean children tending to act out particularly extreme and rebellious black identities.

Goffman (1959) suggests that individuals attempt to control the impression that others have of them by changing their 'setting', 'appearance' and 'manner' to suit the context. To create an impression for the benefit of the peer group, individuals might adopt expressive equipment in the form of clothing, posture, speech patterns and bodily gestures. In their study about style consumption and social exclusion amongst young people, Croghan et al. (2006) describe the manner in which young people use style as a vehicle of status and self

expression and that in identifying themselves within some groups and maintaining their distinction from others on the basis of group membership, the young people were engaging in a process of identification and differentiation (2006: 475). The adoption of particularly extreme and rebellious black identities, referenced above, enables mixed white/ black Caribbean children to assume power through being viewed as part of the dominant sub culture, Black street culture. Root (1996) too suggests that many mixed heritage people identify themselves differently in different situations, depending on what aspects of identity are most salient; 'situational ethnicity' is a natural strategy in response to the social demands of a situation for mixed heritage people.

Ajegbo (2007) in his lecture 'On Being mixed race' states that 'a purely personal observation is seeing working class mixed heritage children moving towards black youth cultures and middle class mixed heritage children moving towards white. In terms of schooling and neighbourhoods, working class children often come into far greater contact with children from other cultures. This is exacerbated by white middle class flight. In a qualitative study exploring the racialised identities of young people of mixed heritage, Phoenix and Tizard (2002) too found that the young people with the strongest allegiance to black youth culture were significantly more often those who attended multiracial and state schools, and came from working class families.

Sewell (1997) reflects that black Caribbean children, particularly boys, may experience considerable pressure from their peers to adopt norms of 'urban' or 'street' subculture in which academic interest and success are seen as undesirable and useless. High achievement or efforts to succeed were viewed as contrary to the values of black street culture and credence given to unruly behaviour. Often high achievement attitudes and co-operative behaviour were more associated with a particular class based notion of 'whiteness' as posh and geeky. Dewan (2008) refers to the impact of internalized race and class barriers on the educational opportunities people felt were available to them in her research. Mixed heritage women in her study make connections between internalized barriers to learning and assimilation. One interviewee referred to her belief that many black people she knew had been socialized into believing that being educated was tantamount to capitulation to whiteness. Such resistance to whiteness was a dominant theme in her own education. In her opinion, the pressure for black and mixed heritage

people to both assimilate and keep themselves separate from white people meant a constant search for the middle ground between these two positions.

Keith Ajegbo's insights in his 2007 lecture, 'On Being Mixed Race', support an understanding of the position of many children. Reflecting upon his experience as a head teacher in South East London, he suggests that mixed heritage sons have particular issues of identity and belonging when their family is essentially a white mother. In the inner city cultures of South East London mixed heritage children are often casually classified as black and, like he did, can feel outside two worlds if they do not prove their blackness. However in Warner's (2008) study of a group of high achieving black boys in a London secondary school, a sample of boys explained how family was the overriding aspect of their identity, which impacted on their behaviour, attitude, and motivation at school. Several boys commented that their behaviour at school was an extension of the behaviour that was expected of them at home and a wish to impress their parents featured highly on the list of factors contributing their motivation. Peers were of lesser influence in the boys' lives and the fact that some of their peers were not necessarily focused on their learning had no sway over their own attitudes to learning. They regarded their learning journey through school as a private one, involving namely themselves and their parents. This raises questions about whether having strong family ties neutralises any potentially negative peer influence and whether by extension, a lack of family presence renders one more vulnerable to negative peer influence (Warner 2008).

Racism in mixed heritage children's lives

Referring to the terminology used to categorise mixed people, writers (Ifekwunigwe 2004; Dewan 2008) argue that it is important to retain the concept of 'race' in order to understand its significance in society. They suggest that to deflect attention away from the concept of 'race' to other forms of identification diminishes the significant function that racism still plays in the maintenance of privilege and power for some and disadvantage and discrimination for others.

Notions of power, privilege and disadvantage were apparent in racist name-calling amongst primary school children in two studies exploring mixed heritage children's experiences (Phoenix, Ali 2002; Ali 2003). It was used by some children in an attempt

to exclude their peers from particular social groups, either friendship or 'black or white' groups, in order to assert their difference and gain social status and power over them. During this process children were engaged in developing particular identities and mixed heritage children in particular were making choices about their friendship groups based on a need to identify with particular groups, which had a predominance of one 'ethnic or racial' type and therefore might hold some 'power'.

Interestingly whilst children's acceptance into friendship groups was often based on shared cultural experiences, their exclusion was based on their physical appearances. This often led to racist name- calling about aspects of children's appearance, often their skin colour. Being called a 'Paki' was a term that applied to anyone of an indeterminate 'racial type'; for children of mixed heritage it was often used in the absence of being able to place them in a singular 'correct' racial category (Ali 2003). Dewan (2008) suggests that the discrimination experienced by mixed heritage individuals has been recognised as different from that experienced by people with two black or two white parents because they might experience it from both black and white people. Indeed in Phoenix and Tizard's (2002) research, mixed heritage children experienced the same kinds of insults levelled at black children as well as more specific names related to their skin tone and appearance such as, 'yellow belly', 'half breed.'

From their research Ali (2003) and Phoenix and Tizard (2002) suggest that racism is a set of social practices that changes over time and across social contexts; their research in schools would certainly suggest that it affected different children in different ways, depending on their gender, social class and ethnicity. Social class is a very important feature in relation to experiences of racism in schools; in her research the amount of racism that young people reported was often in relation to their social class. Phoenix and Tizard (2002) too, suggest that more working class than middle class young people reported racist experiences. Experiences of racism were also, they suggest, significantly related to the extent that families discussed racism and influenced their young people's attitudes towards it. The extent to which colour was central in the lives of young people, and the extent to which they viewed the lived experiences of black and white people as different, seemed to sensitise young people to racism in all its forms. Other children however, might dismiss name-calling, for example, as a joke. Interestingly in Phoenix

and Tizard's (2002) study children were more likely to experience racist name-calling in primary school, and when they were older, in the street.

Furthermore Ali (2003) suggests that some schools in her research did little about name-calling. She cites teachers who, by treating 'the whole class as individuals', eradicate 'race' from classroom practice thus becoming 'colour blind'. By doing so, she suggests they lacked awareness of the specific difficulties that might arise in relation to the 'race' of the child. Research (Ali 2003; Phoenix and Tizard 2002) suggests that although some children found racist name-calling deeply distressing, they reported that teachers did nothing about it, suggesting that it was simply a part of playground life and childish repartee (Phoenix and Tizard 2002).

Existing research highlights the promotion of a lighter skin complexion by the media and how this influences the attitudes of young people towards each other. Hochschild and Weaver (2007) suggest that filmmakers, novelists, advertisers and modelling agencies all demonstrate how much the power of a fair complexion, along with straight hair and Eurocentric facial features appeal to Americans. In their research, with mixed heritage young people, Phoenix and Tizard (2002) suggest that gender worked to the advantage of girls, with boys more regularly reporting being called names, often in the context of 'duelling play', where boundaries between practise and hostile interactions are ambiguous. Yet a recent newspaper article, Whiter Shades of Pale That Provoke Black Racism, (Johns 2010: The London Evening Standard, October 4th), describes how many dark skinned black girls, out of jealously or insecurity fed by the white media, denigrate their mixed heritage girlfriends because they are thought to be prettier thanks to their lighter complexions. Hochschild and Weaver (2007) refer to this as the, 'skin colour paradox', as 'dark skinned blacks' who have wide spread experience of harm, have no outlet for their anger as inter racial differences are given no public attention. Furthermore Gillborn (1996) suggests that although black people may be said to be powerless in the macro context, in a micro context such as the school, they may exercise power and act in racist ways to their peers.

Golden (2004) too, refers to the distribution of power and privilege in the black community in the US, as the 'ten-ton elephant' in the room. She describes a sister-girl networking party where only ten of the seventy-five women, top in their professions, were

brown to black and not, *'light, bright or damn near white'* (2004:16). Furthermore she recalls how her mother would constantly warn her not to play out in the sun as a child, suggesting, '*You're going to have to get a light skinned husband for the sake of your children as it is.' (2004:4)*

Hochschild and Weaver (2007) refer to seven academic surveys since 1960 in the US measuring skin tone along with other relevant variables. All are consistent in showing a relationship between a lighter skin colour and material well being, and dark skin and disadvantage. Hunter (2007) suggests a process that privileges light skinned people of colour over dark in areas such as income, education and housing. Inniss (2010) too uses the lens of stratification theory to examine gradations of skin colour suggesting that lighter skinned people have more access to wealth and power as they assimilate more easily into the dominant, white, group. This theme is also evident in contemporary fiction. A daughter of a Jamaican immigrant to London in Andrea Levy's 1996 novel, 'Never far from nowhere' suggests:

> *My mother didn't believe in black people…she liked to think that because they were fair skinned they were the only decent people who came. The only ones with a,'bit of class'. And she believed that the English would recognise this…they are the truly acceptable face of other people from the Commonwealth.'* (1996: 7)

The influence of the community on identity and school experience: the triangle of family, church and school.

Bronfenbrenner (1989) suggests that a child's school; peer groups, church and social clubs represent the most important ecological impact on a child after that of their family. Wardle (2004) suggests that the impact of their community will vary according to how dependent the family is upon the neighbourhood. He recognises the fluidity of communities, as children get older as young people move out of their neighbourhoods to find different peer groups.

Submissions to The Cambridge Review (2010) recognised the way in which the global community, in the shape of new media is unquestionably a part of children's lives. New media can for some equate 'mixed' with the inner city underclass race–mixing

stereotypes which feature in the mainstream media (Edwards et al. 2008). Mckenzie (2009) suggests that white mothers of mixed heritage children on the St Ann's estate in Nottingham were only too aware of the markers of disrespect; the white mother with 'the black baby in the pram', that they viewed on TV programmes such as Eastenders, ITV's Benidorm and Little Britain which used white women with mixed heritage babies to show quickly and easily 'how rough someone was'. Burr (2003) suggests that such constructs of mixed families have consequences for the way society and their schools might treat them.

The Cambridge Review (2010) suggests faith groups argue that the triangle of home, school and places of worship have traditionally held communities together and brought a common purpose and understanding. This was discussed in 'The Achievement of African Heritage children in Lambeth Schools' (Demie et al. 2006) where researchers found that the relationship between family, church and school was integral to the high academic achievement of many African heritage children, because it kept African children 'on track'. African families went to church together and children joined in with church activities, which kept them away from 'street culture' and crime. African parents chose schools for their children that had links to the church; many members of the school staff attended the churches, which created a sense of family. Teachers welcomed the shared values and aspirations of church, home and school and acknowledged the positive impact on African children's school experience. In contrast, schools in the same area reported barriers to achievement for Caribbean children often due to the many pressures existing within the communities in which they lived (Demie et al. 2003). Schools serving 'disadvantaged areas' reported that many Jamaican children and their families were coming to escape the 'drug wars' in Kingston, Jamaica. Staff had an acute awareness of the impact of family breakdown and poverty compounded by racism and discrimination on members of the communities that they served. Demie et al. (2006) suggest that schools acknowledge the impact of street culture in the community upon Lambeth children, citing one teacher:

> *The school is fighting the anti education cultures of 'the street' and 'the estate'*
> *which is a strong pull even for Black African children with strong backgrounds.*
> (2006: 152)

Summary and implications for future research

The purpose of the literature review was to develop an in depth understanding of and insight into relevant research and current trends that have emerged in the field as well as analysing how far existing research goes towards answering the research questions. The review revealed that the main focus of the literature to date has been on the categorisation and social construction of mixed heritage identity (see Tizard and Phoenix 2002; Parker and Song 2001; Olumide 2002) with little attention to the subsequent impact on school experience.

There were limitations in the coverage of the literature. Much existing research related to mixed white/ black Caribbean children and therefore is not representative of a range of mixed backgrounds. Because in some instances the context and racial background of the family were not discussed this limits the extent to which the two research questions could be answered. Yet what was apparent was the tension between the lived experiences of many mixed heritage children, shaped by a range of social variables, and the ways that assumptions were made by 'outsiders' (Tizard and Phoenix 2002) about these lived experiences based on the colour of children's skin. Because these 'outsiders' might well be teachers, such perceptions would appear to influence the experience of mixed heritage children in schools.

It is important to appreciate that due to the inaccurate racial categorisation of mixed heritage children, both in the US and UK, children are often invisible in the classroom and their identities and needs are therefore overlooked. There were low expectations about their abilities and aspirations amongst teachers and other staff in schools. The body of knowledge relating to the black Caribbean and African experience in the British education system was useful because it supported an understanding of some of the themes relating to the possible experience of mixed heritage children in schools, based on the colour of their skin.

The review of the literature revealed gaps in existing knowledge about the school experience of mixed heritage children. Williams (2009) suggests that further educational research needs to focus specifically on the home and family factors influencing the schooling of mixed heritage children to help provide educators with a better understanding

of how these children experience school. An aim of my thesis is therefore to further explore the experiences that mixed heritage children have in school by interviewing their parents, education professionals involved in their education, and most importantly the mixed heritage children themselves.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research strategy used to answer the three research questions. Section One introduces a research approach deemed suitable to this relatively unexplored topic. Section Two then outlines the research strategy, the general plan of how the research was carried out. It outlines the three-stage approach to collecting primary data to answer the research questions. Section Three provides a detailed account of what methods were used and the context within which this took place. The suitability of this strategy to collect data relevant to the topic is considered and the disadvantages to the research strategy are noted including the threat of bias to the research findings.

Throughout, the chapter provides details of strategies that were used to ensure research findings were both reliable and valid. The research strategy was guided by the BERA (British Educational Research Association) Revised Ethical guidelines 2004. Section Four explores the ethical issues considered in the four stages which are outlined in this chapter; those that affect the research process generally; ethical issues during the development of the strategy and initial access stages; ethical issues during the data collection stages and ethical issues related to the analysis and reporting stages (Saunders et al. 2003).

The chapter concludes in Section Five with a description of the process by which the data were analysed.

In order to explore how the research participants made sense of their personal and social worlds I adopted an interpretive approach to the research; I wished to discover the meanings particular experiences held for the participants. As I believe all knowledge about the world to be open to interpretation, I adopted qualitative methods for data collection with a small number of parents, mixed heritage children and educational professionals in order to understand the subjective meanings they associated with the phenomena within the particular research context. I wanted to identify participants' experiences through their own perspectives, to be able to make their voices heard and thus challenge any normative assumptions about the subject.

Because the research approach was exploratory in nature it seemed unlikely that a precise measure could be achieved and I felt that rich insights would have been lost if reduced to a series of law like generalisations. I was wary of an approach that enabled a cause effect link to be made between particular variables without an understanding of the way in which the research participants interpreted their experiences within their context. Yet the approach lent itself to the rich and detailed theory related to participants' perceptions of that phenomena that emerged. The changing nature of the social world meant that it was only possible to explore the perspectives at a particular time and place because there were so many complex variables, which were hard to control. Therefore this approach was used at the cost of being able to generalise the findings of the research beyond the scope of my study. I am therefore tentative in claiming that my findings relate to the mixed heritage population as a whole.

I had an active role in the research process and acknowledged the impact on my findings. I could not assume the role of objective analyst in making interpretations of data, which were in turn not collected in a value free manner. I was, of course, affected by the subject of the research, as a mother of a mixed heritage child with my own experiential knowledge of the subject and was therefore aware of potential bias in my approach. I could not assume a value-neutral stance, as I was implicated in the phenomena being studied. My position was value laden with inherent biasness reflected by my background, status, beliefs, values and resources (Hunt 1993). I was aware that my own experiential knowledge of the subject informed my actions, decisions and research trajectory, including the questions and themes that I became interested in. Therefore findings were not impartial, they were a product of my interview questions, which were a product of my own assumptions about the world.

This said I felt that my own subjectivity proved an advantage within the research process in terms of access and rapport, as well as constituting an additional resource that could be utilised to enhance the quality of the eventual understandings produced. Although I felt my capacity for empathy to be a useful tool in revealing how research participants understood mixed heritage children's lived experiences, I understood the potential impact on the findings, and that my position offered subjective interpretations of the topic and were my constructions of the participants' constructions of their experiences.

The following section outlines the approach taken to the research topic.

Section One: A research approach

This section outlines the approach taken to the research topic. Because the research was innovative and there was little existing literature the initial research approach was 'exploratory' (Robson 1993). I hoped that initial discussions with experts, namely parents of school aged mixed heritage children and mixed heritage adults themselves regarding the social context of their worlds, would enable me to understand '*what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions: and to assess phenomena in a new light*' (Robson 1993: 42).

The initial enquiry was general and there were few clues as to where the data would lead. I adopted an interpretive approach where I began the enquiry broadly and remained open to what the data might yield.

In order to gain rich insights into the experiences of mixed heritage adults and families of mixed heritage an inductive approach to data gathering was adopted. This approach lends itself to a small-scale sample of individual experiences and a close understanding of the research context in order to get a feel for what was going on and why. Detailed comments about individual perspectives and experiences relating to mixed heritage adults' personal journeys and those in mixed families were made. An inductive approach was used, as there is less concern with the need to generalise from the data. Data gathered through discussion with mixed heritage families would only explain what was happening and why in individual cases. Their personal journeys were unique and their social worlds ever changing. This said common themes and shared experiences, what Bateson (1979) refers to as the 'patterns that connect' (1979:10) emerged through exploratory enquiry. They were noted and tested as the research progressed. Such themes proved a useful device for structuring new data. The focus became progressively narrow.

An exploratory approach to the research through discussion with members of the mixed heritage community would also, it was hoped, 'give them a voice' (Conteh et al. 1995: ix). In an initial interview a young person had stated,

'Nobody has ever talked to me about being mixed race before. Can we talk about this again?' (Year 10 mixed heritage girl)

Other mixed heritage people had also welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of being mixed heritage. This was judged to affirm exploratory discussion and its opportunity for detailed discussion and reflection as an appropriate and just approach to the research topic. However, this approach was not without its disadvantages. It was a relatively unexplored area. Initial discussions suggested that the research field was potentially data rich but there was always uncertainty that patterns would emerge as the research progressed. However, I felt that in order to develop a detailed understanding of the individual experiences of mixed heritage young people an exploratory approach to data generation was necessary. Having established an overall approach to the research, the next section outlines the research design.

Section Two: The research design

Robson (1993) suggests that design is concerned with turning research questions into projects. This section outlines the general plan of how the research was carried out; what kind of evidence was collected, from where and when and *'how such evidence is interpreted in order to give good answers to the research questions'* (Easterby- Smith et al. 1991: 21). The research was cross sectional, the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular time (Robson 1993). The findings derived were not intended to be replicable since they reflected reality at the time they were collected. I recognised that the social contexts within which mixed heritage people find themselves are complex and subject to change.

A three-stage approach to the research design

I adopted a three-stage approach to the design. I hoped that the first stage would give me a greater understanding of a topic that was not adequately addressed in the literature. I wanted discussions to be open ended and all data emerging at this stage to be considered important for an understanding of the topic. The second stage I hoped would enable me to take a more structured approach to find out about the experiences that mixed heritage children had in school and the third I hoped would best facilitate an understanding from

the perspective of the children themselves. Each stage is considered in detail throughout this chapter. The methods I used were:

1.   Exploratory work: In depth interviews with 'experts' i.e. mixed heritage adults and parents with mixed heritage children in order to gain familiarity with the research field

2.   Semi-structured interviews with a range of education professionals in order to explore the experiences of mixed heritage children in schools

3.   Focus group interviews with children of mixed heritage in order to explore their experiences at school in detail from their own perspective

The use of interview in the research design

It was decided that face-to-face qualitative interviews would be the most appropriate approach to data collection. This was because it was necessary to understand the opinions and attitudes of the research participants. Robson (1993) suggests that interviews offer the researcher a flexible and an adaptable way of seeking out these attitudes and opinions. Interview discussions offered me opportunities to modify the line of enquiry, follow up interesting responses, and 'probe' answers where it might be necessary for participants to explain or build on their responses (Saunders et al. 2003). Tuckman (1972) also states that interviews are flexible enough to provide an opportunity for probing beneath the surface of information to provide precise meanings and access to what is 'inside a person's head'. Interview discussions therefore aimed to reveal the 'what' and 'how' but also place more emphasis on understanding 'why' interviewees adopted particular attitudes and opinions. Face to face discussion also allowed the interviewee time to 'think aloud'. This proved important as the interview discussions progressed and many interviewees stated that they didn't usually have the opportunity to discuss/ reflect on this issue because they, '*just got on with their lives*'. Saunders et al. (2003) state that such reflection adds significance and depth to the data obtained.

Furthermore, I discovered that exploratory discussions were often sensitive. All participants shared personal experiences resulting from their mixed heritage and for some these involved issues of racism and family rejection. A face-to-face interview enabled a sense of trust to be built during discussion. Therefore, participants were willing to share their experiences, some expressing enjoyment about the opportunity to reflect. As the

research progressed I judged that participants might have been reluctant to spend time providing written explanations or providing sensitive information in an anonymous questionnaire. One teacher for example expressed reluctance at the beginning of her interview to speak about what she saw as a need to differentiate the experiences of mixed heritage children from others in her school. However, the interview process gave her the opportunity to listen to the rationale and for rapport to develop with the interviewer. At the end of the discussion she acknowledged that mixed heritage children might have a more positive school experience without the many issues that they had to deal with and that it might be useful for other staff members to be more aware of these issues. As the research progressed the suitability of the face–to-face interview as the most appropriate method of data collection was affirmed on a number of occasions. A Youth worker concluded his interview with an acknowledgement that it had been useful to talk about issues relating to mixed heritage children's experiences and that he wished to hold discussion groups with clients about the issues discussed.

In total 39 interviews (exploratory, semi-structured and focus groups) were conducted over the period, January 2010- July 2010. I judged it necessary to only interview participants once in order to investigate their experiences, and in the case of mixed heritage adults, their reflections. This provided sufficient data to answer the research questions. The quantity of interviews was determined by the fact that each interview became less revealing of new material and fresh insights, what Bunce et al. (2006) refer to as 'saturation'.

However, I was aware of disadvantages with the interview as a method of data collection. These are explored below.

Disadvantages of interviews

The previous section demonstrates that exploratory interviews and semi–structured interviews were the most appropriate methods of data collection for this research topic. However I was aware of disadvantages with the interview process, namely the threat of interviewer bias due to the non-standardised nature of the face–to-face situation. This was augmented by my own status as a parent of a mixed heritage child bringing to the interview my own attitudes and opinions regarding the research questions. I aimed to

reduce bias in a number of ways. These included my own credibility and the nature of questioning and discussion throughout the interview process. These are detailed below.

Great care was taken to act as a professional researcher. I had extensive experience of interviewing in a professional capacity and used a number of strategies to overcome various forms of bias during the interview process. Credibility was established through my knowledge of the research topic. This knowledge arose from; exploratory enquiry, on going data analysis, familiarity with the available literature and professional and personal experience of some of the issues facing mixed heritage children. Knowledge of the research field enabled me to encourage the interviewee to offer more detailed accounts and to assess the accuracy of information offered (Saunders et al. 2003). The approach to questioning in interviews aimed to reduce bias and add to the reliability of data gathered. Each interviewee was provided with a list of themes before the interview in order to familiarise themselves with potential areas for discussion. Questions were phrased clearly in a neutral tone and jargon avoided to maximise understanding. More sensitive questions were left until the end of the interview so that the maximum time was given to build interviewee trust. I summarised interviewee responses in order to avoid a biased interpretation.

Throughout the interviews open questions were asked to ensure themes emerging from the data actually did so and were not imposed upon them (Crotty 2003). My aim was to reduce any threat to the validity of the data and to ensure the subjective nature of the research experience was not prejudiced (Crotty 2003). I made every effort to allow participants to lead the discussion through careful listening and minimum intervention on my part. Furthermore I was willing to adapt the enquiry to the issues that emerged.

Detailed handwritten notes were taken during the majority of interviews; others were recorded. All were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. This reduced the potential for mixing up data from several interviews and ensured that the exact nature of explanations, were recorded. This enhanced trustworthiness. Great care was taken to record verbatim quotes. Every effort was made to ensure that there was transparency in how sense was made from the raw data as the research progressed. Few of the interviews in this research lasted less than one hour. Careful preparation was needed to establish credibility and trust with interviewees as well as transcribe and analyse data accurately.

I also acknowledge the potential lack of representative sampling during the interview process. Woods (2006) states that this cannot always be achieved in qualitative research because of the largely exploratory nature of the research and the problems of negotiating access to a sample. I was certainly reliant on school personnel to select a sample of children and for those that acted in guardianship of children to give permission for their children to be interviewed. I also accepted that there were young people who did not want to talk to me about their experiences. Having acknowledged that my sample was not truly representative of mixed heritage children's experiences I therefore did not seek to make generalisations from the data.

The next section outlines the three types of interview adopted; initial exploratory interviews, the semi-structured interview and the focus group interview.

Section Three: The three-stage interview process

Stage One: Initial exploratory enquiry

Introduction

Initially I conducted nine in depth exploratory interviews with a range of mixed heritage adults and parents of mixed heritage children. Their purpose was to generate data regarding the mixed heritage experience that would redress the paucity of literature on this subject and ensure a greater understanding of the topic. As Robson (1993) states, there was a genuine lack of clarity regarding the field of research and engagement was needed before the 'fog could be cleared'.

The interviews were in-depth in nature. As their nature was exploratory, tight pre-structuring was not possible (Robson 1993). At this stage of the research anything discussed in relation to mixed heritage was deemed to be of importance. It was anticipated that open ended discussion would lead into areas that I had not previously considered might be significant for an understanding of the field; I hoped that this would help to address the research questions (Saunders et al. 2003). Exploratory interviews resembled in-depth case studies as interviewees discussed personal journeys in relation to being of

mixed heritage or in mixed heritage families. Robson (1993) suggests that such case studies are appropriate for exploratory work as they promote a discussion that will explore ideas, attitudes, opinions and perspectives, important for a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted. I hoped that they would enable a deeper understanding of the experiences of mixed heritage people from the perspective of the range of those involved, and would assess, '*why must things be the way they are?'* (Conteh et al. 1995:x). Initial discussion revealed the complexities of the research area. Any researcher bias became less of an issue as the interviews went on as any preconceptions were dismantled and issues assumed to be of importance proved less relevant to the research questions as other alternative explanations emerged.

In order to build trust and rapport, time was taken at the beginning of each interview to explain the purpose and background to the research. I also declared a familiarity with the phenomenon (Robson 1993), as I was a parent of a mixed heritage child myself. In order that participants might feel relaxed, exploratory interviews were conducted in a variety of settings, usually the interviewee's choice; these included a café and a staff canteen and the interviewee's home. The interviews generally lasted an hour, sometimes longer. Some interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone, some not; this was subject to interviewee preference. I was aware that some respondents may feel inhibited by being recorded and that this might reduce reliability. However, when/ if permission was granted, I did explain why I preferred to tape interviews, stating that I would be able to re-listen to discussions and have an accurate record of the interview. This proved an advantage with the nature of the open-ended discussions. However detailed notes were taken in each instance, whether interviews were taped or not, and typed later.

Sample for exploratory interviewees

Exploratory interviews were conducted with an opportunity sample (Woods 2006) that was willing to talk about their experiences and perspectives regarding mixed heritage. Others were then recommended as 'useful people to see.' Later, I selected some participants because of the emerging areas of interest in the data. For example I approached the black Caribbean husband of a colleague who it was suggested would be able to enhance my understanding of issues relating to skin shade amongst the black community, a recurring theme of many interviews with mixed heritage people, including

pupil focus groups. The issues he and other interviewees raised in relation to this theme are explored in Chapter Four.

Participants were generally willing to take part and were generous with their time. Every participant expressed enjoyment at the end of the discussion and told me how important it was to have had the discussion. The majority of these interviews had been arranged by email or in one case a letter to the participant. Participants were all willing to take part. However one young man of fifteen years old declined a request to be interviewed. An older male participant expressed empathy with this decision suggesting that he might not have wanted to speak to me about such issues at a younger age.

Adults were asked to talk about their experiences growing up as a mixed heritage young person and parents were asked to talk about the general issues:

- *What is your child's experience of being mixed heritage in the 21st century? Can you explain?*

- *How does the home, school, community impact on this?*

Through open-ended discussion, areas of interest relevant to the research questions emerged. These areas would inform questions to be explored through semi-structured interviews with education professionals and young people in schools. This process is described in the next section.

Table 3.1 Sample: In depth exploratory interviews with opportunity sample

Interviewee	Self-identification	Role	Gender/ Age	Class identification	Interview recorded
Nina	'Mixed race': white Irish mother/ black Nigerian father	Education Adviser	Female adult	Described a 'middle class' upbringing	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up
Mark	White father of three 'mixed race': white/ black Caribbean children	Education Adviser	Male adult	Did not refer to social background (he and partner in professional roles)	This interview was recorded and written up
Amy	White mother of two 'mixed race': white/ black Jamaican children	Education consultant	Female adult	Described a 'professional home'	This interview was recorded and transcribed
Reuben	'Mixed race': white father/ black Kenyan mother	A mixed heritage male	Male/ 22 years old	Did not refer to social background	This interview was recorded and transcribed
Carl	Black Trinidadian	Charity/ community worker	Male adult	Did not refer to social background	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up
Alice	White American mother of four white American/ black Ethiopian children	Advisory teacher	Female adult	Referred to her 'professional home'	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up
Tina	Maltese mother/ black Guyanese father	Teaching Assistant in a primary school	Female adult	Referred to a working class background	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up
Joan	Mixed race: White Irish/ black Caribbean	Advisory teacher	Female adult	Did not refer to social background	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up
Lisa	White/ black Barbadian	Learning Mentor	Female adult	Described her mother as white working class and father as working class Barbadian	This interview was not recorded, notes taken and written up

Stage Two: Semi-structured interviews with education professionals in the London Borough

Introduction to semi-structured interviews

In the second stage of the research process the format of semi-structured interviews appeared most suitable as a tool to explore the research questions. In the exploratory stage, interviews had provided valuable insights into personal experiences, but it was felt that responses would prove easier to compare, code and categorise with a more structured approach. I had a list of areas of interest originating from the exploratory enquiry; these were used to design an interview schedule. The aim was to use the schedule in a flexible manner where the order of questions was dictated by the flow of the conversation. The open-ended approach to gathering data used in exploratory work had proved successful; therefore a greater freedom in sequencing questions and the amount of time given to different areas of interest was adopted for the semi-structured interviews. Areas explored relating to mixed heritage children included:

- School outcomes
- Identity
- Heritage
- Friendship groups
- Gender
- School curriculum

The interview schedule included several introductory comments, intended to take no more than several minutes. Here I thanked the interviewee for attending the interview and outlined the purpose of my research. I reassured the interviewee that responses were anonymous and reinforced the confidentiality of the discussion. I summarised the themes that would be covered in the interview, clarified that I would be taking detailed notes and I offered each participant a written record of the discussion, to be sent to them once I had typed it up. The schedule also included a list of the above areas of interest; these were laid out as headings with some possible key questions to ask in relation to these areas and a set of related prompts. There were also some closing comments including my thanks to the

interviewee and an invitation to add any points that they might not have had a chance to contribute. A copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix 3.

Location of interviews

Interviews took place in four schools in an inner London Borough where there were a growing number of mixed heritage children in the school population in 2008 (4.4% mixed white/ black Caribbean and 1.4% mixed white/ black African). It is one of the most ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse boroughs in Britain. Indeed 33% of the population as a whole is of an ethnic minority and 67% white British. It has the second highest population of black Caribbean residents of any UK Local Authority and the fourth highest black African population. About 10% of the ethnic minority population is from a mix of white and other ethnic minority groups.

I visited two secondary schools and two primary schools; all had a wide range of ethnicities. In School A (Cheverell School), the majority of pupils were from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds, mainly black African, black Caribbean and Portuguese and in School B (Caldecote School), 65% of the students were from black Caribbean and black Caribbean backgrounds. In School C six out of ten children were from minority ethnic backgrounds and in School D, three quarters of the children were from minority ethnic backgrounds with the majority from black Caribbean backgrounds. Table 4.1 outlines the school mixed heritage population in each of the schools where research took place. Because Schools A and B, the two secondary schools, are referred to frequently throughout the thesis, I have named both schools to provide clarity for the reader. Names have been changed to Cheverell School (A) and Caldecote School (B).

Table 3.2 School mixed heritage population 2009- 2010

School	Number of children on roll	Mixed ethnicity %	Mixed ethnicity number
A (Cheverell)	619	4%	25
B (Caldecote)	1163	7%	77
C	238	8%	19
D	426	9%	39

I considered four school visits (two primary and two secondary), as well as a range of exploratory interviews, to be a reasonable compromise between what was necessary to yield rich and valid data and the practicalities of time available and organisational access. I therefore visited Schools B, C and D once, but Cheverell School twice as I went once to introduce myself to the children, and then once to interview them in a focus group. I did not see the necessity for an introductory visit at Caldecote as I was able to gather a wealth of data in the introductory visit at Cheverell, as the children were keen to talk about their experiences straight away.

Sample for semi-structured interviews

To produce valid data a range of perspectives was collected in research settings from a total of 12 members of staff, including head teachers, teachers, learning mentors and teaching assistants. In the schools each head teacher, having seen the research questions and the interview headings, provided a schedule of 'useful people to see'.

In two schools, Cheverell and School D, staff members were selected for interview because they expressed an, 'interest in the subject' or were, in fact, of mixed heritage themselves. This meant that not only did they offer a perspective on the experiences of mixed heritage children in the school but compared it to their own or in some cases their children's experiences.

The interviews divided into two categories. These were:

- Interviews with school headteachers and other staff members
- Interviews with Local Authority officers who worked in some capacity within the schools

There were twenty individual interviews. Table 3.3 sets out the categories of how many headteachers and Local Authority officers were interviewed during semi-structured interviews.

Table 3.3 Semi structured interviews in school and Local Authorities

Interviewees	Number conducted	Identification (Self or description of their children's identity)	Data collection
Headteachers/ senior managers	9	2 white/ 1 black Caribbean teacher who had 'mixed race' children 6 N/A (i.e. did not self identify)	Notes taken during interview and soon afterwards (Asked by headteachers not to record interviews in school)
Teachers	4	N/A	Notes taken during interview and fully written up soon afterwards
Other school staff	4	3 'mixed race': -mixed white Portuguese/ black Angolan; -white German/ black Dominican; white/ Caribbean 1 N/A	Notes taken during interview and fully written up soon afterwards
Local Authority officers	3	1 'Canadian mixed race'/ 1 mixed white/ black Nigerian/ 1 white with 'mixed children'	Notes taken during interview and fully written up afterwards

Focus group interviews with children in four Borough schools

Pilot work: The focus group interviews.

Robson (1993) claims that there is a great deal of benefit in piloting any empirical research stating that there is no substitute for involvement with the 'real' situation. Two primary schools (Schools C and D, see table 3.2) were visited for exploratory pilot work with children of mixed heritage. Ten mixed heritage children in Key Stage Two (all of the mixed heritage children in the Key Stage) were interviewed in School C and eight were interviewed in School D. I asked children general questions about their experiences at school. Due to the age of the children I decided not to ask them directly about their experiences of being mixed heritage at school in an attempt not to put words into their mouths. The disadvantages stated in relation to gender and friendship groups, described on page 74, did not appear to apply in these focus group interviews. All of the children were

keen to talk about school but little or no data evolved that were relevant to the research topic.

In order to test further whether their mixed heritage was of relevance to their school experience I interviewed one child, aged ten, individually. This was to test a different approach to the research and to gain the trust and rapport of a 1 to 1 situation. I asked her to draw a picture of 'herself at school' and I then asked her to 'tell me about your picture'. Again no direct questions were asked about her experiences as a mixed heritage child. This enabled her to set the agenda, describe her own reality, rather than being limited by answering questions from my agenda, or trying to give 'correct' or 'best' answers (Christensen and James 2002). Again, no data pertinent to the research topic evolved, so I decided not continue this approach. This might suggest that it is not an issue amongst primary school children. I therefore decided to focus on secondary school aged mixed heritage children for the purpose of this research.

In order to pilot the research I carried out an introductory visit to Cheverell School to explain to mixed heritage children the purposes of the research and that I wished to interview them about their experiences. No topics emerged as sensitive from the visit. Indeed children began to tell me about issues which I had intended to ask them about because they were covered on my interview schedule. The discussion also proved an opportunity to gather ideas that would help to refine questions on the interview guide. However there were issues related to the gender mix in the group. These are detailed on page 69. I therefore decided to carry on with my interview schedule at the next visit but to address the issues related to gender in the group. As many of the children were so keen to tell me about their experiences at this initial visit the data were used in the analysis.

I intended to interview children in groups for two reasons. Firstly both headteachers stated that they would prefer me to interview children in groups. They viewed this as a more efficient way to interview a large number of individuals than would be possible through 1 to 1 interviews in the time allowing. Secondly I had prior experience of interviewing children in groups in a professional capacity. On these occasions I found that children were relaxed, were willing to initiate discussion and willing to challenge each other's views, thus leading to a rich flow of data (Saunders et al. 2003). Indeed focus group interviews in both Cheverell School and Caldecote School proved to be the same. There

were however some disadvantages in relation to gender balance and management of the groups; these are considered below on page 74.

I did however decide to interview one Year 10 girl, who had been very vocal in the introductory session at Cheverell School, in a 1 to 1 situation. I wanted to see whether this might prove a valuable approach in comparison to the group interview situation. As she was willing, and permission was obtained from her guardian, I conducted this interview at the beginning of my next visit. However in a 1 to 1 session she seemed distracted and not particularly willing to talk. When she then came with me to talk with her friends in the focus group after our 1 to 1 session she was both animated and vocal. I therefore decided to pursue the focus group as a method to interview children at both secondary schools.

The two secondary schools were selected, as I wanted to carry out research in co-educational schools, to find out about the experiences of both boys and girls. Of the four co-educational secondary schools that existed in the borough, Cheverell and Caldecote schools had the highest numbers of mixed heritage children. I selected the two primary schools because they contained the highest numbers of mixed heritage pupils in primary schools in the borough.

Sample schools

Cheverell School

Cheverell School is a smaller than average comprehensive mixed community school specialising in technology. At the time of the research, two thirds of the students at the school were boys. Three quarters of the students were eligible for a free school meal and in each year group one in ten students started school at times other than at the start of the school year. One in five students was a refugee or asylum seeker, about half of the students required English as an additional language support and half of students had a learning difficulty or disability. The vast majority were ethnic minority children; the largest groups were black African, black Caribbean and Portuguese. The students at the school spoke fifty languages, other than English. A significant number of students lived in very challenging circumstances and experienced interrupted periods of schooling. The school was described as 'good with outstanding features' by a 2008 Ofsted inspection. It

referred to 'an exemplary pastoral system' with 'outstanding personal development and well-being for all children'. Both staff and students celebrated the diversity that the school had to offer and Ofsted (2008) described the school as 'a cohesive, welcoming community,' where, 'students are proud of their school and know that they are valued and appreciate all that the school can offer them.' (2008:4)

(Figures taken from Ofsted report 16-17 January 2008)

Caldecote School

Caldecote School is an above average mixed comprehensive foundation school that specialises in technology, mathematics and computing. At the time of the research, students came from a wide and varied catchment area. The proportion of children entitled to a free school meal and those that had a statement of Special Educational Need was above average and 65 % of the student body was from a black Caribbean or black African background. Nearly a third spoke English as an additional language. Students entered school with levels of attainment that were broadly average and overall attainment in the school was above average. Ofsted described the school as 'a good school with a significant amount of outstanding features'. (2009:4)

(Figures taken from Ofsted report May 12-13 2009)

Procedure in Cheverell School

In early 2010, whilst I was conducting semi-structured interviews with members of staff in School A, I was able to meet a group of mixed heritage children. The group included five girls from Year 11 and four boys, two from Year 10 and two from Year 8. The purpose was to introduce myself, explain my research interest and express a desire to return at a later date in order to interview children regarding their experiences at school. I spoke to the children in one group. Some of the children were excited and began to talk about the topic to me straight away. Two girls told me that nobody had ever spoken to them before about being mixed heritage and were keen to know why I was interested in this topic. I explained that I would come back to interview the children in focus groups. This would allow me access to more students than would have been possible with one to one

interviews. Furthermore, Schumm et al. (1996) suggest that focus group interviews are best used when conducting exploratory research. They refer to the 'loosening effect' promoted by a relaxed group setting where the conversation flows easily, nurtured by the moderator. This was evident already within this introductory session with the children at Cheverell School.

In an interview a staff member had described the group of five Year 10 and Year 11 mixed heritage girls whom I met in this introductory session as, 'dominant' and 'powerful'. The girls were extremely vocal in the introductory group discussion, and despite attempts on my part to create rapport with and assess the boys' willingness to be interviewed at a later date, the boys said little. The girls themselves subsequently told me that the boys were younger than them and were therefore reluctant to talk to me about their experiences in front of them. Wirsing (2008) argues that although being acquainted with each other can help children feel more relaxed in a focus group, friendships might involve ingrained interactional patterns that may lead to overlooking or hiding personal information. He refers to the 'superior-subordinate' relationships between group members that have already been formed and may well hinder the contribution of some in front of the more dominant children. Furthermore he notes that gender becomes increasingly important for older children in focus groups and that an age difference of even two years can have a significant impact on the communicative dynamics of the group. Both proved significant in Cheverell School, even in the brief introductory session. Due to these particular dynamics I felt it necessary to give thought to how students would be interviewed on my return to conduct the focus groups. This initial visit had been an opportunity for me to introduce myself, and the topic, to the children. Some had already expressed excitement about my expected return to interview them.

Cheverell School sample

When I returned, seven out of nine young people had obtained parental permission for a focus group interview. This process had been co-ordinated by a Learning Support Assistant within the school. I decided that the children should be interviewed in two groups, a focus group of five Years 10 and 11 girls who knew each other very well and had asked to be interviewed together, and a pair of Year 8 boys who stated, '*we are friends, we are the only mixed race boys in Year 8.*' It was hoped that, based on the

experience of the introductory session, separate gender groups would be more appropriate. In the event these proved successful. Two sample members, two Year 10 boys, who were at the introductory session, were lost to the research. One had been recently excluded from school; the other had not obtained parental permission to be interviewed. He said that because he had 'no issues with being mixed race', it was unnecessary for him to be interviewed. Interviews were not recorded at the headteacher's request.

Table 3.4 Cheverell School Sample

Name	Self Identification	Gender	Age
Kim	White mother / black Jamaican father	Female	15
Jade	White mother/ black Jamaican father	Female	14
Lucy	White/ black Nigerian/ Jamaican father (father identified her as black).	Female	15
Mandy	White mother/ black father	Female	16
Clare	White mother/ black Jamaican father	Female	15
Liam	Black Caribbean father/ white mother	Male	12
Aaron	Black Jamaican mother/ white father	Male	13

Cheverell School focus groups

The two focus group interviews were conducted in the school library, a place familiar to the students. Sofas were arranged in a circle so that children were able to maintain eye contact with each other throughout the interview. I reminded the children about the purpose of the research and assured them of the confidentiality of the discussion. I reminded them that my interest lay in exploring their experiences at school as mixed heritage children. I told the children that I would be taking notes as they spoke which I would later transcribe, but that all comments would be anonymous. The interview schedule was used as a basis for the interview and all key topics were covered. Both focus group interviews lasted an hour. Children were asked at the end of the interview if they had any questions for me; the girls all asked if I would come in again so that they could talk more about the same topic.

Morgan, King and Krueger (1998) argue that focus groups afford the opportunity for multiple interactions, not only between the interviewer and the respondent but also amongst all participants in the group. Indeed in the girls' focus group especially, some of the most useful data were gathered through listening to interactions amongst the girls and not through their responses to me. Girls were in agreement with each other over many aspects of the discussion but were not afraid to contradict each other where they felt it was appropriate. Issues were raised that dominated the discussion; these were explored in subsequent focus groups in Caldecote School. These are referred to on page 74.

Saunders et al. (2003) note that the potential wealth of ideas that may flow from group discussions mean that it is likely to be difficult to manage the process and note key points at the same time. This was especially true of the group discussions with girls at Cheverell School. On previous occasions, when I had interviewed groups of children in a professional capacity, there had been two interviewers, one to facilitate the discussion and one to take notes. However I aimed to overcome the problem at Cheverell School by reviewing my notes immediately after the session so as not to lose data; this was possible as I had a short break before I interviewed the two boys. I therefore anticipated this issue in Caldecote School and asked if it would be possible to have a short break, in between groups, in order to review my notes.

Procedure in Caldecote School

Due to children's eagerness to talk about the research topic in the introductory session in Cheverell School, I combined the introduction with the interview at Caldecote School. The head of Year 9 selected seven children for the interview and obtained parental permission. Because of my previous experience in Cheverell School regarding the advantages of gender and friendship for focus groups, I advised her to select groups accordingly.

Caldecote School sample

The head of Year 9 approached seven children from Year 9 to talk to me. They were described as 'children from a variety of socio economic backgrounds that would be

willing to talk'. Indeed, all were willing to talk. The children were interviewed in two gender groups (four boys and three girls). As with Cheverell School, a certain amount of discussion was generated between children themselves especially in the girls' groups. Interviews were not recorded at the headteacher's request; notes were taken and transcribed afterwards

Table 3.5 Caldecote School Sample

Name	Self- identification	Gender	Age
Anna	Mother's parents are Nigerian/ white Italian father	Female	14
Jenny	Egyptian/ Syrian father/white mother	Female	14
Linda	White mother/ black Jamaican father	Female	13
Ben	Egyptian/ Jamaican and a quarter Irish	Male	13
Carl	White Italian father/ Jamaican mother	Male	13
Leon	White Irish mother/ black Jamaican father	Male	14
Tim	White mother/ black Jamaican father	Male	13

Caldecote School focus group

The arrangements for the focus groups in Caldecote School were based on those in Cheverell. They were conducted in a separate room in the school, a place familiar to the students. Once again I reminded the children about the purpose of the research and assured them of the confidentially of the discussion. I stated that I would be taking notes as they spoke which I would later transcribe but that all comments would be anonymous. The interview schedule was used as a basis for the interview and all key topics were covered. The interview guide was revised slightly in light of the focus group discussions in Cheverell School. Based on the emphasis on the discrimination children faced in focus group discussion in Cheverell School, I was keen to know about any discrimination children faced at Caldecote School due to their mixed heritage. Both focus group interviews lasted an hour.

Threats to validity

In both schools it was important to be aware of threats to the validity of data. It might well have been the case that student participants said what they thought was expected of them as they were being interviewed within their school setting. However both secondary schools have a strong culture of 'student voice' and students were willing to 'have their say' regarding what could be changed about their experiences in school. Furthermore having met some of the students twice, through an introductory session and a focus group, the same data emerged both times.

I was also aware, that the particular point in the school day in which I interviewed children might pose a threat to the validity of data. I had conducted a 1 to 1 interview with a Year 10 girl at the end of her lunchtime break; as noted on page 67 she was both distracted and not particularly willing to talk due to an unresolved disagreement with another child at lunchtime. She was also distracted by the movement in the corridor caused by children moving to their afternoon lessons. However, when she then later joined me in the focus group with her friends in the library she was focused and willing to talk.

I also considered the selection of children in Caldecote School especially, a potential threat to validity. Because the head of Year 9 selected seven children who she described as 'children from a variety of socio economic backgrounds that would be willing to talk', I was unaware of how representative their views would be. I wondered if those she considered too 'shy' or unwilling to talk might have had some interesting views to share. I therefore cannot claim that data gathered is generalisable to the views or experiences of mixed heritage in the two schools. Table 3.6 sets out the details of the focus group interviews.

Table 3.6: Focus group interviews with students

School	Introduction focus group	Focus group	Pilot focus group	Number of students
Cheverell School	1	2 (group 1- girls/ group 2- boys)		9 (introductory group)- 5 Years 10 and 11 girls/ 4 Years 8 and 10 boys 7 (focus group-5 Years 10 and 11 girls and 2 Year 8 boys)
Caldecote School		2 (group 1- girls/ group 2 boys		7 (3 Year 9 girls/ 4 Year 9 boys)
School C			2	10 Key Stage 2 children
School D			1	8 Key Stage 2 children
	Individual interviews			1 Year 10 girl

At the request of the headteacher focus group interviews were not recorded; handwritten notes were taken and transcribed in full as soon as possible after the interview.

The next section details the ethical considerations involved in interviewing adults and young people in the research process.

Ethical considerations

The need to consider ethical issues was paramount as the research progressed. It was necessary to be sensitive to the impact of the work on those researched, those who provided access and cooperation. The research was guided throughout by BERA Revised ethical guidelines 2004. Ethical issues were considered in four stages; those that affected the research process generally; ethical issues during the design and initial access stages; ethical issues during the data collection stages and ethical issues related to the analysis and reporting stages (Saunders et al 2003).

Ethical issues that affect the research process generally

At all times during the research process participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of the research. They were reminded at the beginning of each interview that they may withdraw at any time during the process. Each interviewee was informed that data arising from the interview would remain confidential and would be anonymous in the reporting process. It was hoped that this would make it easier for participants to respond without anxiety.

Ethical issues during the design and initial access stages

Interviewees in the exploratory stage of the enquiry were approached by email, telephone or in one case a letter. An email was sent to the headteacher to seek permission for semi–structured interviews with school staff and to conduct focus group interviews with children. I already knew the four headteachers in a professional capacity. The email informed them about the research, stressing the confidentiality of the responses given and the anonymity of the school. Headteachers were willing for their staff to be involved in the research through semi-structured interviews; staff were approached by the headteacher who requested an interview on my behalf. In the primary schools, as children were talked to generally about their experiences in school, rather than their experiences as mixed heritage children, both headteachers informed me that the permission of guardians was not sought.

In the two secondary schools, head teachers delegated a member of staff to approach children for focus group interviews. If children agreed, further permission was sought from those who acted in guardianship. I wrote a letter in which I introduced myself and outlined the purpose of the research. I outlined the type of data required from participants, how it would be collected and who would have access to it. Anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time were stressed. Guardians were also told that their children would be interviewed in friendship groups and that they would be spoken to during the school day for no more than an hour in a familiar environment within the

school. Guardians were asked to sign the letter to show their consent. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix 1.

Ethical issues during the data collection stages

Interviews were arranged at a time to suit the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews in schools were flexible to suit the needs of the school timetable and focus groups with children to cause as little disruption as possible to their education. I was sensitive to the busy schedules of interviewees.

Every effort was made to ensure that participants understood the process in which they were engaged. I explained the purpose of the research as well as my personal interest in the research topic at the start of every interview. The aims of the research, how the research would be used and how and to whom it would be reported were also explained. Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any point. I explained that if they wanted to stop the interview at any point, or in the case of the children, if they wanted to leave the group at any time, they were welcome to do so. I offered to send interviewees written documentation of the interview when it had been typed. Only one headteacher expressed a desire to see the research findings when the research was complete.

Some of the exploratory interviews with Local Authority colleagues and the opportunity sample were tape recorded, some not; this was guided by participant preference. At the request of the headteachers interviews in the schools were not tape-recorded. Detailed notes were therefore taken. I worked hard to maintain objectivity throughout the data collection process. Every effort was made to record data accurately and fully, thus avoiding subjective selectivity in what was recorded. This also impacted on my ability to analyse and report work accurately.

Ethical issues related to the analysis and reporting stages

Every effort was made to analyse data honestly. Two independent researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London, verified themes arising from the data. The

names of all individuals and schools have been kept anonymous throughout the report. The following section outlines how the data were analysed.

Analysis of the data

In total 39 interviews were carried out. These included 9 in depth exploratory interviews with the opportunity sample, 20 semi-structured interviews with education professionals and 8 focus group interviews with students in four schools. Out of a total of 65 participants, 29 were adults and 36 children.

A phenomenological approach to data analysis brought to the fore the different perceptions that research participants held about their experiences. I approached the data with an open mind to whatever meanings emerged. It was therefore not possible to make objective statements as the social phenomena described by participants were constructed through their own interpretations. Marsh and Furlong (2002) suggest that the world is 'interpreted by actors…. and their interpretation is interpreted by the observer'. Although it was important for me to attempt to suspend my own meanings and interpretations and enter into the unique world of the research participants the data were still observed through my own interpretations.

A phenomenological approach to analysis involved a detailed examination of the research participants' perceptions of their experiences. I developed an interpretative relationship with the transcripts (Smith and Osborne 2007) examining the participants' meanings through a sustained engagement with the data. I therefore conducted data analysis throughout the data collection process. To ensure that the conclusions drawn from the study reflected the concerns expressed by the participants during interviews, a form of iterative analysis was applied to interview data; unfolding themes were constantly tested and refined to take account of relevant data. This involved a six-phase process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Familiarising yourself with the data
- Generating initial codes
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes

- Defining and naming themes

- Producing the report

By following this six-stage process ten key themes were identified in relation to the two research questions. The six phases are described in more detail below.

As stated previously in this chapter, some of the 39 interviews were recorded and some not. As interviews progressed, recorded interviews were transcribed fully and hand written notes, made in the field, were typed in detail. This proved an excellent way to familiarise myself with the data. As the interviews progressed I immersed myself in the data; a 'repeated reading' of the transcripts and field notes ensured that I was familiar with the breadth and depth of its content (Braun and Clarke 2006). Initial analysis was inductive. Identified patterns and shared experiences were data driven and data were coded without trying to fit them into any predetermined categories or codes to direct the analysis (Saunders et al 2003). Analysis was also at a semantic level, with themes identified within explicit meanings of the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Whilst data were organised to show patterns in the semantic content, they would subsequently be interpreted to suggest broader meanings and implications.

I coded the data manually. Saunders et al. (2003) describe codes as units of data; a number of words, a sentence or a number of sentences, a complete paragraph or some other chunk of textual data that fits the category. A careful analysis and annotation of interview notes began to reveal common patterns and shared experiences in the data. Hand written lists of common patterns and experiences thus became initial codes. As the interviews progressed I worked through the entire data set giving full and equal attention to each data item (Braun and Clarke 2006). Subsequently all data were initially coded, sorted and added to the list of different codes that had been identified and copied into separate computer word files. I coded extracts inclusively (Braun and Clarke 2006) keeping a little of the surrounding data to provide a context for the extract. An example of coding is included in Appendix 4.

Codes were then sorted into potential themes; these served as a useful device to structure existing codes and new data as it was collected. At this stage of the process a two-dimensional matrix format was devised in Microsoft word outlining the list of 'candidate

themes' (Braun and Clarke 2006). All extracts of the coded data were copied from their word files into the matrix in relation to the themes. An extract from the matrix is included in Appendix 6. In this way data were collected in one place to see more readily what they were telling me. Themes were then reviewed and refined as the interviews progressed. Some initial codes went on to form main themes, others sub-themes. It was important to ensure that themes worked in relation to the whole data set, that they reflected the meanings evident in the data set. The entire data set was read again at this stage; additional data were coded and included in the themes; very little data were discarded. Example transcripts were given to two independent researchers to establish if similar themes emerged from the analysis.

As a result of this process ten themes were identified and named; this was to clarify what each theme was about, to identify the story that each theme told and consider how each theme fitted into the overall broader story. It was evident that some themes contained sub themes, which demonstrated the hierarchy of data within the theme. An example is included in Appendix 5.

Further analysis of data using Ungar et al. (2007)

In order to test existing conclusions arising from the data, I decided to further analyse data using a model developed by Ungar et al. (2007) to explain their qualitative findings of a 14-site, 11-country study of resilience among young people aged 12- 23. My aim was to understand the reasons why some mixed heritage individuals were able to navigate their way to a range of protective factors that sustained their well-being and a positive sense of their mixed heritage identity, and others were not. Therefore I isolated the experiences of six mixed heritage individuals from the data into six separate case studies in Chapter 7. The rationale for their selection is outlined in Chapter 7, page 129. The case studies presented detailed accounts of how their personal identities shaped their school experiences and also described the different experiences that they had at school, and in the wider community. Applying Ungar et al.'s (2007) model to the six mixed heritage individuals supported a deeper understanding of how and why the individuals developed, or did not develop, the resilience necessary to deal with the challenges they faced, and the possible impact on their school experience.

A note on language

Throughout Chapters Five, Six and Seven the exact language used by the interviewees was used within quotations. Where I felt that this language needed clarifying I provided brackets within the quotation itself. Names within quotations have also been anonymised.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research strategy used to answer the two research questions. It detailed the three-stage approach to collecting primary data and outlined the methods used and the context within which the research took place. The advantages and disadvantages of the particular strategy, including the threat of bias to the research findings and the time consuming nature of the methods adopted, were discussed. Strategies used to ensure research findings were both reliable and valid were described, as were the ethical issues involved. A brief description of the process by which the data were analysed was also presented. Chapters Four and Five, present an analysis of the data collected in response to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present findings from the research interviews in relation to the first research question:

- In what ways are mixed heritage children's identities shaped by their social contexts; are these identities recognised by the ways in which others perceive them?

When presenting the findings it is important to recall that interviews were divided into three types: exploratory interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with mixed heritage young people. Findings have been constructed from the data analysed and are presented principally by theme rather than interview for reasons of clarity. These themes include:

- Mixed heritage children and social class
- Mixed heritage children and personal circumstances
- Mixed heritage children and family heritage
- Mixed heritage children and gender
- Mixed heritage children and age
- The role of the mother in shaping identity in mixed heritage children

Mixed heritage children and social class

The role of social class in school experience has been commented on by various writers (Reay 1998; Demie and Lewis 2010). Indeed a number of adult interviewees discussed the role of social class in shaping personal identity in mixed heritage children suggesting that this influenced their school experience. One interviewed teacher stated: *'It has to be a class issue-the single most significant factor is class.'*

Many educational professionals held the view that the mixed heritage children with whom they worked fitted into what was described as the 'white working class profile' on nearby Estates. One primary head teacher stated:

> *The mixed race children (in this school) fit into the profile of the white working class families on the estates; they face the same backgrounds I'd say. I'd say the barriers for our mixed children are; lack of aspirations and resources, social deprivation; this undercuts everything. With a chaotic life, school becomes a dumping ground for them rather than a priority for them.*

It was reported that many mixed heritage children were indeed living in white working class families on nearby estates. This situation was reported to have arisen from because relationships between black Caribbean and white people in the area were common. One primary head teacher described the estate in which her school was situated as a '*melting pot'* where there had been an inevitable rise in mixed heritage families; five per cent of her primary school population was now of mixed white/ black Caribbean heritage. One white teaching assistant at the primary school, who had lived on the estate her whole life, described this suggesting: *When I was growing up people were all the same… black and white. My mum and me, we used to go in their (Caribbean) houses and eat their food all the time.'*

Another interviewed Local Authority Education adviser suggested that the majority of Caribbean people that came to post war London were, *'Poor and looking for work',* and therefore might historically have lived in districts with the white working class families. She suggested this too led to an integration of the two communities. One primary headteacher referred to this as a *'commonality around class'* where, '*race is ignored*.'

Three themes arose during discussion, each providing insight into how social class shaped the identity and indeed the school experience of mixed heritage children. These included:

- The impact of poverty and a range of associated factors
- The impact of living in families where school and education were given low priority
- The impact of a lack of parental attention to their children's mixed heritage.

The impact of poverty and a range of associated factors

In the semi-structured interviews with educational professionals, most interviewees held the opinion that many mixed heritage children in their schools lived in working class families. Often these were described as white working class families. It was suggested that these families claimed benefits or had low incomes and that the pressure of having little money led to a range of associated factors such as domestic violence, lack of parenting skills and mental health issues. Furthermore some interviewees had observed what they described as a general feeling of hopelessness within such families. A primary school headteacher suggested that many of these families were:

> *Living in temporary accommodation. They come from families that struggle, they are at the bottom of the pecking order'.*

Discussing mixed heritage children in her school, a senior manager in a primary school suggested that families with mixed heritage children were living with:

> *Domestic Violence, adult mental health and parents in prison, bereavement is another issue – we have 12 families with this. Its inner city bereavement, one child's father was shot'.*

Another primary headteacher said:

> *One thing I have noticed with the parents is that they are so young. Poor and struggling. Many of them will have had questionable parenting themselves. For example one single mum, her son is white/ black Caribbean and he's just had a week out of school having all his teeth out. He'd been drinking coke from a baby bottle. They live in a one bedroom flat, with damp; there is domestic violence in the family. She can't get the buggy down the steps.*

The manner in which poverty shaped school experience emerged through the interviews. A senior teacher in a primary school reflecting on the mixed heritage children in her school suggested that: '*One reason why they might underachieve is their economic situation'.* One reason for this appeared to be the amount of mixed heritage children in secondary schools who were carers to younger siblings; this distracted them from their schoolwork. Many of their parents were working shift work, '*in order to make ends meet.'* Parents were rarely at home at the same time as their children. These children were often

late to school because they were taking younger siblings to school and would leave school early to pick them up and cook for them. Furthermore parents were rarely at home to support with their children's homework. It was suggested that these issues, *'brought from home'*, shaped school experience.

Another reason was the behaviour exhibited as a result of poverty by some mixed heritage children at school. One senior manager in a secondary school reported that several of the mixed heritage children in her school had:

> *Single white mothers, and no fathers. They come from homes where there has been domestic violence and dads are in prison. This has an impact on their friendships in school. It's poverty. One boy has domestic violence in family and constantly makes racist comments to other mixed race children, maybe to make himself feel better. Another boy, his mum blames him for the break up of her relationship. All these issues from home affect achievement at school.*

The impact of living in families where school and education are given low priority

A Local Authority officer suggested that because of out dated perceptions about secondary schools in the area, many aspirant parents chose to send their children to schools elsewhere. She claimed: *It's a class issue. At primary school there's a mix but at secondary- anybody who has aspirations for their kids will take them elsewhere.* She therefore believed that the mixed heritage children in many secondary schools in which she worked were from less aspirant families. Reflecting on the parents of white and mixed heritage children in his secondary school, a senior teacher said:

> *It's the parental view of education- we know that some elements of the white working class have never taken education seriously. It's the fall out from the 70s/ early 80s when there was a mass recruitment of teachers- there were huge class sizes and bad teaching. I can remember being in a class of 50 at primary school. These children would probably be the right age to be parents now. They didn't have a good experience.*

His colleague agreed, stressing that: *'It's about what sorts of role models are at home. Are they on income support? Do they* (parents of mixed heritage children) *value education?'* He suggested that if their families lack aspiration that this could have a detrimental affect on children's school experience.

A lack of parental attention to their children's mixed heritage identity.

Some interviewees suggested that some children lacked the opportunity to discuss their mixed heritage identity and/ or skin colour within their family context. They suggested that many were confused and angry as a result and had a tendency to, '*lash out*'. This led to fixed term exclusions from school. One teacher recalled a secondary school child's confusion during a lesson: '*He said, 'I'm Jamaican,' but the other children laughed, 'No, you're mixed race.' He asked, 'What am I miss?*'

A Local Authority adviser suggested that although many mixed heritage children were subjected to name calling at school, '*Class makes a difference; middle class children come from educated homes where explanations are given; there is less confusion*'.

She also felt that: '*Middle class mothers, even if they are white, might create better access to black culture*', for their children. She suggested that these children might have a better understanding of, and indeed pride in, their mixed heritage identity, which might enable them to deal better with such issues at school. A Local Authority School Improvement Adviser agreed that pressures resulting from poverty of resources and aspiration faced by many families led to confusion for mixed heritage children. He claimed:

> *I had a wide scale encounter with many black and mixed families when teaching in South London. Many (mothers) were white females with low self-esteem, low education and a low understanding of the needs of their (mixed heritage) children. When these children were naughty, they would say, 'it's the black in them. With confusing mixed messages these children would act up more to their stereotype.* (Local Authority School Improvement Adviser)

When asked what this stereotype might be, he suggested it was:

> *Their black side; their speech, their hair but without any confidence in their mixed identity; just shallowness and pain. This would fulfil their mothers' and their own expectations of themselves. This can result in mental illness, low attainment and low engagement in dual background.* (Local Authority School Improvement Adviser)

Several interviewees discussed mixed heritage children who lived in extended white families. These children lacked access to black 'culture'. Furthermore it was rarely

mentioned that they were a different colour to other family members. By some it was suggested that they were just seen as *'accidentally darker'*. Some family members used racist language in front of and about their mixed heritage children; this exacerbated confusion and anger amongst the children. One interviewed Learning Mentor reported that:

> *There are real issues for some children with extended families…granny saying about the child's father, 'that black bastard'. Extended families can also love the child but hold racist views; they would die for the child but basically are racist. Such mixed messages for the child.*

Another interviewed Local Authority Education consultant witnessed a situation where, *'Granny used to bounce her mixed race grand child lovingly on her knee but call her 'my little nigger' in an endearing way'.*

However she also said: '*I know of mixed race children who are seen as a bit of a disappointment in their families; they may not be treated so specially; they might not be invited to family events'.*

A teacher, herself of mixed heritage, recognised the pressures that many mixed heritage children experienced from poverty and issues relating to their identity and suggested that: '*Being mixed is working class with knobs on.'* She went on to suggest that:

> *If you're middle class you can explore your identity, you don't have to choose. It's (mixed) not such an issue. You might define yourself as a feminist, a teacher, but if you're from an impoverished background then you have limited definitions. The people around them can give them the definition. The BNP* (British National Party) *can. What happens if you are on an estate and your mum's relations come around and they say they say they voting BNP? How do you define yourself in the middle of this?* (Teacher)

Similarly, a teaching assistant suggested:

> '*If you have no financial opportunities it's hard to be mixed, and if it's not talked about, yes, it's confusing. If your opportunities are more open, it's easier.'*

Many interviewees described the pressures that families with a lack of resources and aspiration faced. The impact for many children was exacerbated by a lack of opportunity

to discuss their mixed heritage identity. For some this led to confusion and anger that shaped their experiences at school. However several interviewees suggested that mixed heritage children were subject to a range of influences that might benefit their identity and school experience, regardless of their social background and familial experience. One interviewee who recognised the isolation of many white mothers with white children on some estates, suggested that a white mother of a mixed heritage child would be less isolated because she would have some link, however small, to the black community and extended family. She believed that this would offer some support, both practical and emotional for mixed heritage children, which in turn might benefit their school experience.

Another interviewee argued that the diversity of race and religion in schools might, '*raise educational aspiration*' amongst mixed heritage children from white working class families. He suggested that exposure to the aspirant immigrant community might, '*widen horizons*' for the mixed heritage child. Indeed in focus groups children talked of countries represented by family members; Italy, Jamaica, Ireland and although few appeared to have left London there was a sense of wider horizons than their local area. A Local Authority adviser suggested that: '*If you add diversity to the gene pool it has to have benefits*'. He continued:

> *I worked in schools in London with benefit bound families, white inbred families. They said that all they wanted for their kids was to be able to learn how to sign their names for the benefit forms. Yet in some areas it was easy to raise standards because the aspiration was there. There were lots of single black parents who wanted their children to be successful even though they were tired and working all hours. I could have a dialogue; open up the systems, show them what would work. Some of this will have an impact for mixed race children.* (Local Authority Education Adviser)

Another interviewed primary teacher agreed that the influence of an aspirant community might benefit many mixed heritage children's experiences at school:

> *I think the mixed white/black Caribbean children might do better than the white because, well, it depends on the role of the paternal family- if the father's family are involved, interested in education whether dad is there or not. Historically there is a culture of migrant populations working hard and valuing education.* (Primary teacher)

During focus group discussion the majority of mixed heritage children from both Cheverell and Caldecote Schools did indeed demonstrate aspiration for their futures. Many of these children were said by staff to be living in extended white working class families on the estates, families who were reported to lack aspiration for their children's futures. When asked about thoughts on their future plans children's comments included:

> *I want to be a lawyer* (girl)
> *A sports therapist* (girl)
> *Something with children* (girl)
> *I want to go to Richmond College* (girl)
> *A formula 1 driver* (boy)
> *College, then zoology and travelling* (boy)
> *A diploma, then photography* (boy)
> *Sports science* (boy)
> *An actor* (girl)

The impact of personal circumstances on personal identity amongst mixed heritage children

One interviewee exemplified the views of many suggesting that: '*If you have set of circumstances where you can grow up feeling good about yourself',* it can be more powerful in shaping a positive identity than social class. These circumstances were reported to include:

- Children having access to and an understanding of all sides of their heritage
- Supportive family networks
- The geographical context in which children live and go to school

Children having access to and an understanding of all sides of their heritage

During the interviews, a question was repeatedly asked: '*Who is contributing to their (mixed heritage children's) identity?*' This was seen to be of upmost importance to the experience of mixed heritage children. Interviewees suggested that there were a range of influences on a child's identity. One Local Authority Education consultant asked, '*who do the children live with; is the parent black or white; what culture is the parent from? Which grandparents are children accessing?* He suggested that a positive experience at school was dependent on such questions.

There were conflicting opinions about whether children needed to live with, or see, both parents in order to access and understand their entire heritage. Some interviewees suggested that to grow up in a family with both parents had given them a positive sense of their mixed heritage identity. One mixed heritage teacher, of white Irish and black Nigerian heritage suggested that an exposure to both cultures, through holidays *'home'* and living with both parents, supported her positive mixed heritage identity and enabled her to 'flourish' at school:

> *We were a Nigerian family but my mum happened to be white...end of. I suppose we were a family though, that made a difference to me- there were examples of all of us within the family. My Nigerian grandma accepted whomever my dad married. There was acceptance and strength in the family. It is about individual circumstances you know. So, now I like me, I'm witty, I don't have problems with my three identities- my Irish family, my Nigerian half brother, my mixed race self working here. They are all comfortable for me.* (Primary teacher)

Another interviewed primary teaching assistant, herself a mixed heritage adult, with a Maltese mother and Guyanese father, also alluded to the significance of having had both parents in her life, despite the family having few material resources:

> *My dad was always there- he shared his culture with us. We didn't have much money but we went to Guyana when we could and Malta. We were a strong family.* (Primary teaching assistant)

Yet interviewees also discussed mixed heritage children growing up in families with only one parent, often the mother. Nonetheless these children developed a positive sense of their heritage because the parent they lived with was nurturing their entire heritage. One teacher explained:

> *There were some mixed children with two parents together who had a secure sense of identity and an understanding of their heritage that went beyond the MTV stereotypes, but I remember one girl whose white mother was living without dad, a black comedian who left when she was young. Mum created a secure identity for the girl because of her efforts to mix in the black community; she even took her on her own to see her grandparents, parents of her absent father, in St Lucia I think it was. She was a secure child who grew up with a well-balanced attitude to life, a good mixed identity; mum did everything she could, supported her at school, she worked hard at it.* (Primary teacher)

It appeared that when children were growing up with a set of circumstances where they felt positive about themselves, the colour of their skin became simply another physical characteristic; other matters were as, or more, important as they grew up. Several mixed heritage interviewees, all adults, spoke about this:

> *Also too much can be made of it. It's a physical characteristic, like height. I was more self-conscious about my height when I was growing up and at school.* (Young adult)

> *I was more concerned about being called 'specky four eyes'. Colour needs to be taken account of when it matters.* (Primary teacher)

> *It wasn't such a big issue for our family- other things seemed more important. I think too much emphasis is placed on skin colour. We had a strong German and Dominican identity. There was a sense of who cares?* (Primary teaching assistant)

> *I know a family, mum is from Barbados and dad is white. The kids are all really well balanced. All have done well at school. None of those kids have connected with the black disaffected group. They are just friends with everyone. I don't think mum has gone out of her way to expose them to a mixed image. They go to Barbados, but they are just an ordinary family with the kids growing up in a healthy environment.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

As suggested some children with an absent parent were still exposed to all elements of their mixed heritage and this had a positive impact. However there were numerous examples of children who had circumstances that denied them access to their full heritage and one teacher suggested that: *'Underperformance in education can be put down to badly managed situations, identity issues, how these experiences impact on you.* (Primary teacher)

One teacher discussed an example of a child who lived separately with each of his parents, and at these times had little or no exposure to the other side of his heritage. He suggested:

> *It's about circumstances. I remember a young man when I was teaching in London. His dad was black Caribbean and mum white. His parents split up when he was young and he was living with his white mum and two white older sisters from her previous marriage. Then, for some reason, he moved in with his black Caribbean dad and a black Caribbean sister. Around the age of 13-15 years he became really troubled, he was in trouble at school, with the police etc. When we sat down and talked he broke down and what came out was the fact that he didn't*

know who he was, he didn't know what to wear, what music to listen to, what to eat even. This was ten years ago but could still be the case now. (Primary teacher)

A colleague discussed a mixed heritage friend, who, through being fostered was denied access to his heritage. This has led to resentment and confusion in adulthood:

He (mixed white/ black Caribbean) was placed in foster care with an African family- it was assumed that was what he knew. He didn't understand them; he didn't like the food and had to wear clothes he didn't like. He doesn't think there should be intermarriage. He was left feeling confused. He hates the term mixed race- he uses half -caste. His views are rooted in his experience. (Primary teacher)

Family support networks

Extended family and friendship networks influenced the identity and school experience of many mixed heritage children in the research. Interviewees suggested that families and their friends passed on cultural practices and offered practical and emotional support to mixed heritage children and their parents which enabled children to better negotiate some experiences that they faced at school. One interviewed Local Authority Education adviser discussed the ease his children felt in a range of different situations, because they had learnt to cope with experiences in both sides of their family. He suggested:

My children identify strongly with my parents (white); they see them regularly. My parents are very kind but they would send them out without a coat on and never put grease in their hair. S's mum (Trinidadian) would put about 55 layers on them, you'll get flu, you'll get ill and she cooks constantly. Whether the kids would know that some of these things are cultural, or that's just the way they are…I don't know but they live comfortably in both environments. They might go to a Golden wedding thing and be the only mixed people there and S the only black person. Or go to S's side's parties and I'll be the only white person there. They never feel or express concern. They've never yet been embarrassed by us. On the whole they're pretty comfortable. (Local Authority Education adviser)

Siblings were also important to some mixed heritage children. Some interviewees described how the second child was less inquisitive about their 'difference and belonging' in the family (Edwards et al. 2008). In each case the second child chose friendships at school that reflected their interests rather than to fit into a group that would affirm their identity. This was seen to be because there was already a child in the family unit that:

'*looked like them.*' One interviewee discussed the benefits of a common identity between his three children:

> *My daughter is very comfortable with herself. The four year old never asks questions but I suppose he sees the older two. At his age N, the eldest, was asking questions-why don't I look like you or mum; N is better about it since the three of them are together. There is a common identity for the three of them. The family unit looks the same. N, the first child, he wanted to be pink, white to fit in at school. 'I wish you were white then I wouldn't have to be mixed race'. Maybe it's more difficult to comprehend if one child is growing up alone? Then you can't see any person that looks like you.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

Friends that reflected the mix of heritage in a family were important too. Two white mothers of mixed heritage girls discussed the emotional and practical support their black and mixed heritage friends had given them and their daughters. Both talked about the importance of having black women in their daughter's life, as role models and as giving practical support and advice with managing their hair. This was imperative to a positive self-image for both girls at school.

The geographical context in which children live and go to school

Most children agreed that where you live and go to school made a difference to your experience as a mixed heritage child at school and in the community. If you lived in a, '*mainly white area*' you were less likely to feel comfortable than if you lived in a, '*mixed area*'. In Cheverell School (profile described in Chapter Three), a secondary school visited for the purpose of carrying out focus groups with mixed heritage children, few of the children had been outside of London so had little experience of anything but a '*mixed area*'. Nonetheless some spoke about '*posh white areas*', and the discomfort that they might feel in them, or their perceived inability to fit into a school with mostly white children. An extract of their dialogue in the focus group follows:

> *It's about where you live too*
> *Oh yeah- old white people stare at me*
> *If you're going to a posh white area then people stare- like Selfridges*
> *And Kingston*
> *Tooting- no, not there, it's all Indians*
> *We wouldn't fit in a white area- you should go to talk to people there (*about their experiences of being mixed race)
> *I haven't been out of London*

> *I've been to Newcastle- it's black, white, mixed…*
> *I prefer to live here- it doesn't matter here.*
> *It's easier in a mixed environment. Everywhere I've been to is mixed*

A senior teacher later said: '*I think it's all about the context- context dependent. And we're in London; it might be a different issue out of here where there are lots more white people but here…*' (Secondary senior teacher)

In Caldecote School (profile described in Chapter Three), children had been to different geographical locations and could talk about them in relation to their own mixed heritage identity. Two of the children had Italian fathers; one talked of experiencing prejudice there:

> *In Italy, if I'm with my dad I can see them looking, wondering what the relationship is. Are they dating? (He's 40!!!), sometimes I've been asked if I'm adopted when I'm with him, especially in Italy.* (Mixed heritage Year 9 girl)

Another child suggested:

> *My cousins are white and live in the country- its weird to see a black person there, it sounds a bit racist but we were counting black people…'*
> (Mixed heritage Year 9 girl)

A younger child recalled that when she had been to a campsite outside of London with her white mother and her white partner; '*I didn't want to go out and play with the other children because they might think I was adopted'.* (Mixed heritage Year 6 girl)

As suggested, a range of circumstances appeared influential in shaping identity. Not all would seem dependent on social class. A set of circumstances where mixed heritage children felt good about themselves appeared to equate with access to their entire heritage, supportive friendships for themselves and their parents, as well as a, '*mixed environment'* within which to live and go to school. It was suggested that such a set of circumstances enabled children to have a 'positive' experience at school. Where this was denied, children could feel resentment and confusion.

Personal identity and mixed family heritage

'Shadism' and mixed heritage identity

High on the agenda of interviewees was the issue referred to by one secondary school headteacher as '*shadism*', a form of skin tone bias that identifies individuals based on the degree of pigmentation in their skin. This colour preference (Hochschild and Weaver 2007) appeared to manifest itself in two ways. The first was a perception held by many interviewees in this research that black girls were jealous of the lighter skin and 'looks' of mixed heritage girls. The second was name calling directed at mixed heritage girls and boys, again based on their skin colour. In both secondary schools, mixed heritage girls suggested that black girls were jealous of their hair and skin colour. Their comments included:

> *Black people have grudges against us- they are jealous; we've got better quality hair. The colour of our skin is better.*
> (Mixed heritage Year 10 girl at Cheverell School)
>
> *They're jealous- boys like lighties (black people with lighter complexions).*
> (Mixed heritage Year 10 girl at Cheverell School)
>
> *If you walk past a group of black girls they stare…they give me the evils (look at me in an evil way)- I don't care though, they are probably just jealous.*
> (Mixed heritage Year 9 girl at Caldecote School)
>
> *Everybody wants a mixed race girlfriend because they all want light skin babies.*
> (Mixed heritage Year 10 girl at Cheverell School)
>
> *There are no issues at school but there are on the buses, these black girls make comments about my hair (long and red), my shoes, how short my skirt is. I can hear them talking about me.* (Mixed heritage Year 9 girl at Cheverell School)

A male Youth worker, himself of mixed heritage suggested:

> *Black girls say about mixed race girls…they think they're too nice…the hair, the school girl plaits, the complexion, the shining copper complexion, if they go out in the sun they still go a nice colour. The black girls have to keep out of the sun.*

The way in which this shaped school experience was discussed. A Learning mentor, who had worked at one secondary school, recalled the: '*Bullying of pretty light skin mixed race*

girls…she thinks she's special because she's got light skin…. because of her hair,' and suggested that sometimes the mixed heritage girls would have to become *'tough to survive'*. A senior manager in another school suggested that the mixed heritage girls had power, influence and confidence because they were perceived to be beautiful. Another teacher described the scenario in a girls' secondary school where she had taught. She described the tensions between black and mixed heritage girls:

> *It's all about who can attract the boys. There is the politics around beauty;*
> *you think you're so great because your skin's lighter. Yes it's all about the boys*
> *having the power to decide who is beautiful and what is beauty'.*
> (Secondary teacher)

Media and celebrity influence on the attitudes of young people were also reported to be particularly influential in this respect. A teacher bemoaned:

> *That they (mixed heritage children) think they are picked on because they*
> *are too beautiful. The media, R and B* (contemporary rhythm and blues) *music,*
> *MTV all influences this. This whole debate about skin shade; it leads to a lot of*
> *cussing about darkness.'* (Secondary teacher)

Another teacher agreed that:

> *Their role models- Beyonce, Leona Lewis, Michael Jackson- they get lighter*
> *by the day. What are the messages for children here?'* (Secondary teacher)

Mixed heritage children reported that black children often called them 'names' related to their skin colour. A short dialogue from a focus group with Year 10 girls in Cheverell School revealed:

> *People look at us because we are a different colour. They call us orio,*
> *coconut, mongrel, muffins, yellow. And grey or elephant*
> *They say confused.com about us like the advert*
> *This Chinese boy called me a rich tea biscuit in ICT.*
> *We get called bounty sometimes but everybody calls each other names.*
> *Black people say stuff to each other too.*

During this discussion a black boy, from Year 9, came over to the group and asked why all the *'miggers'* were talking in a *'special group'*.

Mixed heritage children viewed name calling in different ways. In Cheverell School , most suggested that they found it funny amongst themselves but that: '*Black people took it a step too far*'. They claimed that teachers did not take it seriously and that it was, '*laughed off.*' When told about this the headteacher agreed that he did let it pass, suggesting that it was: '*Just part of the vernacular*'. However several mixed heritage children were regularly excluded from school because they reacted in an aggressive manner to such name-calling. A teacher suggested that it certainly had a negative impact on their school performance. The mixed heritage children argued that by comparison, name calling of black children was taken seriously and that this was not fair. However in Caldecote School there was a sense of ambivalence towards name calling, although it did appear to occur far less frequently. Children suggested that teachers took it more seriously than was necessary. One boy suggested:

> *Yeah, we get called orio, bounty sometimes but everybody calls each other names. People get cussed (teased) about their traditions- like a weave and everyone laughs or Indians eating curry- jokes. Teachers see it as racism but the kids see it as funny.* (Mixed heritage boy, Year 9)

Nonetheless there still appeared to be a discrepancy in the type of name-calling that was dealt with. One boy suggested:

> *If a white person says nigger to a black person they are in big trouble but if a black person says it to a black person it's not a problem for the teachers, if I said it I don't know what would happen because I'm half black, half white. If white people do it it's more of an issue, nobody should do it, it sets a bad example to white people.* (Mixed heritage boy, Year 9)

Two adult interviewees, both mixed heritage, described name-calling as, '*insider fun*'. They suggested it was similar to children teasing each other about other physical characteristics. Both said that a general frustration at e.g. societal prejudice and identity confusion caused children to 'lash out' at name-calling, not the name-calling itself.

Children themselves did not appear to fully understand the reasons behind tensions about skin colour, although one boy suggested: '*It's because a white man raped a slave.*' Nonetheless it was a dominant theme within three of the exploratory interviews. One interviewee explained, '*in the black community there's this hierarchy of colour…fair skin complexions. It's to do with in house slaves and dark skin slaves.*' (Youth worker, male)

Another interviewee explained this in more detail, describing the advantages bestowed on the offspring of white planters and black slaves in the West Indian plantations during slavery. He suggested that the male offspring would have better life chances, living in the houses of white men although as 'poor relations'. Although this would not give them equality they might have opportunities to work indoors doing for example, accounting or book keeping and would have a better education and better manners because they were mixing in the house and in society. Similarly:

> *The daughters too were house slaves; they could be more intimate with the women in the household, doing their hair. They were more acceptable to society. For the white men if it was a black girl it was purely a sexual encounter but a mixed girl it could be a friendship, a mistress.* (Caribbean male)

He suggests that the legacy continues; that lighter skin still carries more advantage*:*

> *There is more choice for leadership, job opportunities, and leniency with the police.*
> *You will notice over the last years that the black man is presented with lighter skin in magazines'.* (Caribbean male)

One mixed white Canadian/ black Trinidadian interviewee referred to the support she had given her black friends whilst flat hunting:

> *I had the privilege of skin colour. I used to help out my black friends with flat hunting; they were more likely to secure a flat if I was with them because I was lighter. I would do the talking.* (Local Authority Education consultant)

Another interviewee described her grandfather's desire to lighten up the race (Golden 2004). She described how:

> *Granddad thought about the future- he talked of 'marrying up your colour.' He was light and deliberately married my grandmother because she was light. This was for economic reasons, although the love of his life was dark skinned.* (Secondary teacher)

Interviews revealed a contrast between Caribbean and African heritage identities and the impact this would have on school experience. The implications for children of a mixed

white and black Caribbean or African heritage were discussed. The following section explores this.

African and Caribbean identities

A recurring theme in interview discussion was the strong sense of identity that interviewees attributed to many African families. Pride in their African identity was summed up in the statements:

> *In a school a child will say, first I am an African, then I am a Ghanaian, then I am British…*

> *I describe myself as Nigerian but born in Britain.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

One teacher suggested that:

> *Parents take them (African children) back home, so they know their roots, how to behave, how to appreciate their education here. This all strengthens their identity here.* (Primary teacher)

Several interviewees also suggested the importance of a language to a strong sense of identity and community belonging. One argued:

> *The African identity is important- the language, the family. Africans might have a more distinctive cultural anchor- their own languages.* (Primary teacher)

Furthermore the '*African view of education*' was reported to shape children's identities and experiences at school. One interviewee (mixed white Irish/ black Nigerian) spoke about the aspiration of many African families who come to the UK:

> *If you've come from 4, 000 miles in order for your kids to have something different the parental influence is strong. There's a strong middle class dimension to the aspiration too. When I was growing up in Nigeria the gardener's son came home with a bad school report and got an ear full just as the son of the Chief Executive motors two doors down the road did. This attitude is brought here* (to the UK). (Local Authority Education Consultant)

Interviewees believed that mixed heritage children with an African parent reaped the benefits of a strong identity based on family bonds '*back home*', language, church and investment in education. One suggested that:

> *If in a mixed child's life and academic achievement the parents are the strongest influential factor, so of course it's not just about the kids, it's who are the parents. Is one of them African?'* (Local Authority Education Consultant)

It was suggested by several interviewees that the union of white and black African parents might have a middle class, educated, dimension because:

> *African people are here to get educated; they have come here for a specific reason so white British and black Africans have often got together at university or are professionals.* (Local Authority Education Consultant)

One Learning mentor had observed that: '*African dads might be more likely to be around…those mixed children might get an early foundation- it's stronger.'* Indeed African fathers were seen to be heavily involved in their children's education, motivating children to '*work hard*' at school. Even when a father was absent from the family home, the role of African grandparents, investing in their grandchild's education was evident. A girl of mixed white and black African heritage stated:

> *My dad doesn't live with me and I don't see my grandparents very often; they mostly live in Sierra Leone but when I see them they always ask if I'm in the top sets at school and want to see my homework.* (Mixed heritage girl, Year 6)

The majority of interviewees discussed how African families keep their children on the '*straight and narrow*' and focused on education, yet one teacher reflected:

> *I'd be interested to see though what happens to the second, third generations of Africans that are settled here- I'm already seeing African names creeping into reports of gang violence. And this'll impact on the mixed children in these families too.* (Local Authority Education consultant)

The black Caribbean identity

The experience of black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean children and their families was perceived quite differently. Interviewees spoke about how injustice and rejection had shaped Caribbean peoples' experience since their arrival as part of a recruitment drive to rebuild British society following the war. One interviewee claimed:

> *The mother country rejected them. Everything in the Caribbean was British, the systems, pictures of the queen in the houses etc. They got here and they weren't wanted.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

Interviewees returned to this theme again and again, suggesting that the post war rejection had left a legacy which still influences the experiences of third generation Caribbean people today. They described how children have seen their grandparents and their parents rejected and that: *'This goes on down the line,'* into their experience at school and in the community. Many mixed heritage young people in the focus groups explained how the police assume that they are Caribbean and how they too feel rejected in school, the community and by the media:

> *The police, they judge me; they already have a perception of me. I'm black to them.* (Mixed heritage boy, Year 9 Caldecote School)
>
> *The police asked me what I was doing when I was just sat on my wall outside my house. I'd forgotten my keys.* (Mixed heritage boy, Year 9 Caldecote School)
>
> *Mixed race boys go towards black friends- the police all assume we're black anyway.* (Mixed heritage boy, Year 9 Caldecote School)
>
> *With the police, they may stop me and give me an IC3* (police ethnicity code to describe an African/ African Caribbean person) *black thing receipt. They see it as all the same, hooded, brown complexion- only once did one say to me, are you full black?* (Youth worker, male, mixed heritage)

Young people also described how when, *'West Indians talk at decibels it's seen as aggressive'.* They were concerned about the media's influence on society's view of the Caribbean identity, with visual representations of black boys in *'hoodies'* and the allocation of: *'The bad boy parts to the black and mixed race characters- like Billy in EastEnders.'* Indeed one teacher noticed that:

> *Even going to the Globe yesterday. We saw Macbeth. Lady Macbeth was played by a strong white character, whilst a black woman played the role of the witches, the darker side, then she went on to play the maid later in the play. The thing was all the children noticed it. They need to be careful of the messages they send out.* (Secondary English teacher)

Another teacher noted that black actors always had the role of '*minor characters.*' This didn't motivate black children and sent out the message, '*we are not good enough.*' (Secondary teacher)

Teachers referred to the: '*Endless talk of underachievement in schools in the headlines, the lack of 'success stories'.* One suggested that this fed into the: '*Uncomfortable relationship that still exists with Caribbeans in this country*' and had an impact on teachers' expectations of Caribbean children at school. (Secondary teacher)

Interviewees alluded to the different reasons for Caribbean and African immigration to Britain suggesting that this made a difference to children's school experience. It was said that whilst African families come to the UK to seek an education for themselves and their children, Caribbeans arrived in Britain in order to seek work rather than education. One interviewee (mixed black Nigerian and white Irish) suggested:

> *There's a lot of antagonism and resentment between the Black Caribbeans and Black Africans. They're worlds apart; they have different reasons for coming here as well as different aspirations and life histories. At a subliminal level this gets passed down and handed on. They came here on the Windrush; I think they had more of a 'streets paved with gold' attitude.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

Many interviewees were concerned about '*a lack of males in Caribbean families*': this was seen to have an impact on the identity and experience of children of both black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean descent. An interviewee suggested that:

> *Caribbeans are bereft; there is a culture of broken families- but who broke them? The legacy of slavery- a lot of our culture has been lost. The elders can't pass it on. Boys don't have a good model of masculinity- there is no anchor there, a lack of role models.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

Another interviewee suggested that:

Caribbean culture is patriarchal- the macho Jamaican culture. Men almost become irrelevant, they are like sperm donors; there are no expectations that they will stay around. This is true of the out of church circles. It's all down to mum. It's hard on mum but it makes mums, and girls, hard. (Secondary teacher)

If you look at the Caribbean culture there is a history of having children out of marriage, not in the African culture, that's a taboo, but also there is a history of that here now since the 30s- so there's a meeting of that history in Caribbean and white families. (Secondary teacher)

Many teachers suggested that the majority of mixed white and black Caribbean children in their school were without a black male role model in their lives and in many cases had no access to their 'black side'. The way this shapes their school experience is referred to throughout Chapters Four and Five and suggests a less than positive experience at school.

Personal identity and gender of the mixed heritage children

This section explores a range of opinions about the role of gender in the experience of mixed heritage children. Respondents suggested that boys and girls experienced their mixed heritage differently which in turn influenced their experiences at school. This was often attributed to the relative difficulties for each in growing up in their particular contexts in London. Every young person interviewed had views in relation to gender and mixed heritage experience.

Many interviewees discussed what they thought were the relative advantages of being a boy or a girl of mixed heritage. Interviewees suggested that many mixed heritage boys experienced disadvantages; these included a lack of male role models in their lives as well as the stereotyping of their identities and behaviours within society. One mixed heritage adult male interviewee discussed the advantage that he perceived mixed heritage girls to have over boys, because boys lacked role models:

Mixed race girls are far more confident than mixed race boys. I think it all starts with young white girls, they want to date black men- they end up being mums- they think mixed babies are so cute even though they know that the dad won't stick around. The daughters are nurtured, played with, admired but the boys once they are a bit older go off and play football on their own in the street- there is no man there to play with them. (Young adult, mixed heritage)

A mixed white and black Jamaican adult male noted the disadvantage of not having a role model because:

> *It's hard, mum can only do so much, the father's not there and the boy needs a black role model. With girls it's different, they have their mum and it's all about how to be a female. They learn.* (Youth worker, male, mixed heritage).

Similarly he suggests:

> *It is hard for mixed race boys, it's a fashion thing; having a mixed race child, problem is if you're (white female) just linking (dating) this guy then he won't be around and then you won't be able to bring the child up culturally. There will be young black guys that can't bring white girls home because they worry about the shame in the community, so they would never admit to having a mixed race child; the child never knows its family on dad's side.* (Young adult, mixed heritage)

Another male suggested:

> *Girls do everything with their mum. Mum's friends might get involved but when the child is a bit older, it's not so cute, the interest dies down. Mum gets alienated. The girls have their mum throughout their whole upbringing; they can talk, about boys and stuff. But the boys have to figure it all out on their own- they have no one.* (Young adult, mixed heritage)

Male interviewees generally said that they preferred to talk about issues at school or in the community to their friends rather than their mothers; this was generally to protect their mothers from worrying about the issues they faced although one boy, in Year 9, suggested: *'If name- calling happened all the time, like mongrel, half-breed I might tell her.'*

A Year 10 mixed heritage girl, referring to '*cussing*' about skin colour in her school, suggested that whilst girls talked about the issue, boys had a tendency to, '*brush it under the carpet.*' She felt that this was the wrong way to deal with it because it would, '*come out in other ways later,*' often through aggression at school. Other interviewees suggested that it was difficult for mothers to understand, especially if they were white. Without a male role model it was suggested that boys might seek another way of affirming their identity. This was usually from a friendship group at school. The implications for the ways

in which boys are treated at school as a result of this are explored later in this thesis. A male interviewee suggested:

> *It's a double whammy for boys- if they are mixed with a black mum or a matriarchal white mum, there's a tug about whom they identify with and who do you mix with?* (Youth worker, male, mixed heritage)

Many interviewees recognised that boys experienced negative attention from a range of sources. Three boys said:

> *It's hard for boys, it happens to them more. When I went to the cinema with my friends- the woman said she was watching you on the camera to see if you are silly.*
> (Year 9 mixed heritage boy)

> *When I was younger they (people) would look at me when I went into shops, I think they thought I was going to shoplift.* (Young adult, mixed heritage)

> *In the corner shop the Indian watches you, he wouldn't do that if we white…yeah, the security guard follows you around.* (Year 9 mixed heritage boy)

Similarly one white mother described how:

> *I was walking to the tube with B (mixed white/ black Jamaican) in Wimbledon week- I looked around to say something to him and he wasn't there- he'd been stopped by the police because they 'wanted to be careful as it was the tennis!' He was with me, his mum!* (White mother, mixed heritage son)

However there was a belief that it was hard for girls too. This was generally believed to be because black girls were jealous of mixed heritage girls (see section on shadism above) because: *'Black men preferred mixed race girls.'* This did not appear to be an issue relevant to boys. There wasn't the: *'Same attitude from black boys towards mixed race boys- it's different from girls- pale mixed boys and black are tight together.'* One interviewee suggested:

> *It's harder for the mixed race girls- the boys; they have football bringing them together. Growing up on an estate, you're a part of something. The police all assume you're black anyway so all the boys move towards being black.*
> (Youth worker, male, mixed heritage)

A Local Authority officer also stressed:

> *There are mixed heritage girls with white mums that are angry; they do not feel rejected as they're in a loving relationship with mum but the issue of their mixed race is not talked about.*

Furthermore she argued that:

> *There is a potential for insecurity for those mixed girls based on their identity. If the parent they identify with is a different colour and it's not talked about there are difficulties and deep insecurities? I think there's a big issue about personality too, if the daughter lives with the mum, is a different colour but has personality traits like the dad who is absent this is difficult- and isolating for the child.*
> (Local Authority adviser)

Age and personal identity of mixed heritage children

Some interviewees suggested that the age of mixed heritage children appeared to influence their identity and experience in school. There was an overwhelming sense from discussion that primary school children's mixed heritage held little significance for them and was rarely mentioned at school. However this appeared to change once they entered secondary school where it became a more significant feature in their school experience. By Years 9 and 10 it would appear to shape identity; it influenced friendship groups and school experience. When asked about their experiences at primary school a group of two Year 9 mixed heritage boys explained:

> *There were no issues at primary school- no racism- no language, name-calling. No one says anything at primary school but at secondary school you are more conscious of how you look and what people think.*

One interviewee described two benchmarks he believed existed for young people; the first was at 11 years old and the second when young people entered the workplace. He reflected:

> *Up to 11 years old children can demonstrate the potential they were born with, society at large has little impact on them. Then the macro society starts to impact on them, before this it doesn't so much. The codes of behaviour are put into place. Once they are 11 plus the race issues start to have a heavy impact, police are more likely to get involved/ security men come over to them in supermarkets – they observe the codes of colour in society- they understand their place in society.*
> (Caribbean male)

Two teaching assistants, both working in a primary school, suggested that it would: '*Never enter their heads*' that there would be issues for mixed heritage children in primary school in terms of their achievement or for any other reasons. One also suggested that there were enough of them in her school to have, '*their own group,*' and to therefore not feel different.

During discussion there appeared to be a general consensus that once children entered Years 9 and 10 they began to separate into friendships based on *'racial groupings'.* One respondent commented:

> *I have noticed that in Years 7, 8 and 9 the friendship groups are very mixed, race wise. By Years 10 and 11 they tend to hang out more in their racial groups.'* (Secondary teacher)

Many mixed heritage children in the focus groups confirmed this. Comments included:

> *When you join Year 7 you hang out with everybody but then you build up your reputation; then you start to be friends with whoever's in your group.*
> (Year 9 mixed heritage boy)

> *In Years 7/8- everybody's friends with anyone- then in year 10 and 11 you start splitting up along racial lines.* (Year 9 mixed heritage boy)

Reflecting upon this issue, one mixed heritage boy in Year 8 suggested, '*I think it's good though for people to be in their groups- it's comfortable for them.*

Indeed another mixed white/ black Trinidadian interviewee recalls being forced to choose at secondary school whether to be friends with the white girls or the black. She explained that she was not '*allowed both'.* The movement of children towards racial groups at a certain age had implications for some mixed heritage children. Some felt left out and confused. One Year 9 boy said that:

> *Sometimes I feel left out- I don't know who to be friends with- (there are) not many mixed race here. I just feel different'.*

Indeed a teaching assistant in his secondary school observed that some mixed heritage children seemed:

> *Marginalised. The school is very diverse but when I see mixed race students they sometimes don't know where to place themselves. Some look very subdued or quiet or they are the alpha male or female- doesn't seem to be anything in between. If it's not talked about they can be subdued.* (Teaching assistant, secondary school)

When mixed heritage children gravitated towards particular groups this seemed to influence the way they were perceived in school. One head teacher argued:

> *The problem is that they (mixed heritage and black) get labelled with stereotypes. People might say to me of the black boy group- 'they're hanging around outside the toilet'. I have to say, 'They're just talking, leave them.* (Secondary head teacher)

A mother discussed the consequence of her son's (mixed white and black Jamaican) gravitation to a particular racial group in Year 8:

> *At primary school, there were no concerns. He went off to secondary School with his tutor group who were mainly white middle class kids- he was in the top sets. Then in Years 8 and 9 he became friendly with the black boys- he started to go down the groups. His grades went down; he slipped to the ...well not quite the bottom groups.*

When asked why her son might become friends with black boys at this age, she suggests:

> *He wanted to explore his black side, he was at that age; he had his white side at home but not the black- his dad told me it would happen, he turned his back on his whiteness to explore his black identity. His white friends have always been there but he sees his black friends separately.*

A teacher suggested that she had observed her own mixed heritage son moving between different groups at different ages. She suggests that: '*Culturally, mixed race children might find difficulty defining themselves and in different phases get drawn in different directions'.* She argued that going through these different phases might prevent mixed heritage children from their studies. Another interviewee agreed with her, suggesting that his own son had experienced the same transitions but at 19 years old was now: '*Secure with his mixed white Irish and Ethiopian identity'.* Indeed one mixed heritage young man suggested that he had been through different stages and had only '*found himself*' in the last

two years. He was 22 years old when interviewed. He explained how his schoolwork had suffered.

Yet at Caldecote School mixed heritage girls were surprised that children moved towards certain friendship groups based on race. One girl in Year 9 stated: '*I just chose my friends because they were interested in the same things as me. I didn't even think about their colour.*'

Another mixed heritage girl in Year 9 agreed with her:

> *I'm just friends with all the girls in my class- we don't think about colour but I think guys are more territorial. They shout out where they are from in class, I know the heritage of all the guys in my class, where they are from- they play on it- put on accents. Maybe they are just more aggressive.*

The work of the mother in shaping personal identity in mixed heritage children

Many interviewees recognised the mother's role in shaping personal identity in mixed heritage children. Some described their personal experience as a mother of mixed heritage children; others who were themselves mixed heritage, discussed their mother's role in their upbringing. Several themes emerged during discussion. These included:

-The identity of the mother within mixed families and how this influences her children's identities

-Prejudice experienced by mothers of mixed heritage children; the consequences for their children

-Mothers' influence on their children's school experience.

The identity of the mother within mixed families and how this influences her children's identities and school experience

The majority of the mothers, either spoken to, or spoken of, were white British. Some mothers had reshaped their identities when they entered relationships with black partners and/ or when they became white mothers of mixed heritage children. This in turn influenced the way they shaped their children's identities. One interviewee referred to

what he describes as a paradigm shift that white mothers of mixed heritage children might experience; their white racial identity changes as a result of being part of a mixed family. Other mothers appeared to maintain their own separate racial identity within the family. All demonstrated resilience in the face of prejudice. The impact on their children's mixed identity was evident.

One mixed heritage Teaching Assistant stated that her own white Maltese mother had adapted to the: '*Black, Trinidadian way of life',* when she met her husband, a Trinidadian immigrant to London. Her daughter claims:

> *I knew both my cultures, although my mum did adapt more to the black side. My dad came here in the 50s. My mum and dad didn't have it easy- they would go to dances and black women would ignore my mum and talk to my dad. My mum was seen to be stealing the black men. She gave a lot of herself to my dad, her identity.*

She therefore decided to raise her children 'as black' telling them:

> *'You're not white you're black- that's what people will see you as.* Her daughter recalls*, 'we were happy with ourselves.'*

Other mothers maintained a strong sense of their own racial identity within the family. This again shaped the identity of their children. One mixed heritage teaching assistant (black Dominican father and white German mother) suggested:

> *My mother's resilience kept my family together. When I was growing up you tended to move toward the black group. We didn't though, my mum was very strong on the fact that we were half German and mixed race. I think it's the European strong identity- we've all got German names- we've all done well in life. I've been to Germany 3 times and I've been to Dominica. It wasn't such a big issue for us.* (Primary Teaching assistant)

Both women suggested that their positive identities, either as 'black', or mixed heritage women had helped them to deal with discrimination at school when necessary.

Prejudice experienced by mothers of mixed heritage children; the consequences for their children

There were numerous examples of mothers facing prejudice. This could be from society, their partner's family or from their own families as a result of having a mixed heritage child. Prejudice generally had an impact on the children. One mixed heritage youth worker spoke about the prejudice in his family and the choice he made as a result:

> *I had both of my cultures, my Nan making roast and my grandma rice and peas, but it was still hard. There was a certain vibe from family members. My mum (white) had my oldest brother in 1973. Some of the family rejected her because she had a mixed child growing up in the Midlands. She was strong; she was 17 so my Nan helped with the parenting. It was hard for Nan because she had the World War 2 link and was popular in the area. It was very old school though, she would be walking around with my brother and people didn't like it. They'd call him a black bastard. Because the black side was more accepting...my dad's side, I warmed to that side naturally. But a couple of my white family members talked to me…*(Mixed heritage Youth worker)

Two women talked about their white mothers' struggle against racism in the wider community. Prejudice came from black women in their fathers' families being resentful of them, *'taking their men.'* It also came from the wider white community. Both daughters recall '*the fight*' that their mothers went through to retain a positive sense of their own identities and to protect their children from discrimination. This '*fight*' influenced one daughter's determination to forge a better life for her own family. Although both daughters are now adults, one suggested that attitudes are slow to change. She described the experience of one family she knew where prejudice towards the mother had shaped the daughter's school experience:

> *One girl I taught used to stay home from school and smoke dope with her mother to keep her company. She had problems with attendance and her schoolwork. Mum and dad weren't together; mum's family had rejected her because she had a mixed race baby. They were so isolated.* (Local Authority Education consultant)

Mothers' influences on their children's school experiences.

Numerous interviewees suggested that mothers are the biggest influence on their children's identity and on their school experience. A Learning mentor referred to a

member of staff at her school, who has worked hard to cultivate her son's identity, despite the prejudice she experienced from her husband's family. She explained:

> *She's white; she's married to S who is Indian- he's a very charming, cultured man. They have a son but the Indian community, rejected M (the mother). They haven't moved on in the same way but its M who's mentored the son about the Indian culture, his mix, not his dad.*

She suggests that although both parents value education it is the mother that has driven it. She has looked for scholarships, taken him to clubs and, '*Made the sacrifices- because that's the word. Even if you're with the father and he values education it's the mum that's making the sacrifices, driving it.*

When asked if she thought that the mother takes the main role in identity formation, she states:

> *Yes, I really am saying that. M's done stuff to better herself; she's got a job with qualifications- put herself in circles where she might not necessarily have been, all to better herself for her son.*

Three black mothers were interviewed or discussed by partners or their children. Each nurtured their child's identity as 'mixed', even when they assumed that society would perceive them as black. One mother, who described herself as Barbadian, explained how, although raising her mixed heritage children as black, she nurtured the links with both sides of their heritage:

> *I do raise them as black because that is how society will see them. I took them to Barbados; they knew their extended family. I took them to Ireland; they were also comfortable there. They had strong ties to both their cultures.*

This appeared to have a positive influence on the way that her daughter dealt with prejudice at school. She describes her as:

> *Very strong in who she is- she would come home from school and say, 'mum, they're calling me browning'. But she told them she didn't care. She was clear about who she was so could stick up for herself.*

A white male interviewee described how his black Nigerian/ Trinidadian wife, took the lead in nurturing their children's mixed heritage identity. He suggested that his wife had worked hard to ensure that the children had a good understanding of their heritage:

> *We have the family history photos around the house. We talk to them, have books, friends that are reflective of their backgrounds. She's worked hard at this.*

Summary

The voices of mixed heritage children and adults, parents with mixed heritage children and a range of educational professionals involved in the education of mixed heritage children are represented throughout this chapter. Many argued that a child's social class was particularly influential in shaping their identity. For many children there were associated factors that were hugely influential in their school experience: poverty, their family's lack of engagement with school and a lack of parental attention to their child's mixed heritage. However others recognised the role of social class but claimed that children's individual circumstances also played a significant role. These, not always determined by class, included their family context, support networks and the geographical context within which they lived.

Most young people agreed that girls and boys of mixed heritage had different experiences that shaped their identity and others explained how a child's age had a significant impact on their identity and experiences at school. Interviewees suggested that a range of familial influences shaped mixed heritage identity, suggesting that the experiences and the influences of African and Caribbean families were quite different. Many discussed the influence of the mother and how her own identity and the prejudice she encountered appeared significant to her child's experiences. The following chapter looks specifically at the experiences that children have at school and how these are shaped by the ways in which others perceive them.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from the exploratory, semi-structured and focus group interviews that answer the second research question:

- What experiences do mixed heritage children have at school and how are these shaped by the assumptions that others make about their identities?

Data gathered suggest that three major themes affected children's experiences at school:

- Mixed heritage children can be 'invisible' at school
- Teachers may have perceptions and certain expectations of mixed heritage children
- Mixed heritage children's friendship groups influence their experience

The 'invisibility' of mixed heritage children at school

A range of interviewees suggested that mixed heritage children were 'invisible' at school. There was a lack of attention to mixed heritage identities in school policy, achievement monitoring and the school curriculum. Interviewees spoke of a confusion surrounding the classification of mixed heritage children as well as a lack of awareness about the needs and issues relating to mixed heritage identity in schools. Education professionals and parents were concerned about a tendency to assume that mixed heritage children were 'black'; this often meant that assumptions were made about their experiences and that they were included in programmes at school tailored towards e.g. the needs of black Caribbean children. For some children there was a similar lack of awareness about their needs and issues within their own families. It appeared that for many children, their mixed heritage identity was not recognised at school and for some it was not recognised at home either.

School: A lack of classification

It was common for mixed heritage children to have a range of classifications. As one primary school head teacher suggested: '*It's about how you choose to define yourself.*'

Another interviewee asked: *'what do you mean by mixed race anyway? There's black mixes, white mixes…it depends on how you identify yourself'.*

A primary head teacher described the complexities of classifying identity, suggesting that:

> *When we looked at our mixed group, it threw up all sorts of issues. We have some mixed children where grandma is white, mum is mixed and in a relationship with a Caribbean man. We also have Asian/ Spanish, Black African/ Black Caribbean, Eritrean/ German, Algerian/ Spanish. We have an Eritrean mum who was brought up in Germany and is with a German guy. She wouldn't define herself as Black African.*

Some parents chose to classify their children in such a way that it denied their mixed heritage. One interviewee for example spoke about mothers who classified their children as white because they had, *'had a bad experience with dad.'*

Due to these complexities some teachers were reluctant to make*: 'Assumptions from the colour of their skin whether they are mixed race'.* Other interviewees also reported:

> *It is often difficult to see who the mixed race kids are. They just fit in whatever. Some come here and find friends based on interests, rather than race. You might not know as a member of staff whether they are mixed race.* (Secondary teacher)

Others felt it inappropriate to make assumptions about the experiences of mixed heritage children because they came from such a range of backgrounds. One teacher argued:

> *White working class families here have certain cultural norms- what this family do, what they are like. You cannot make any of these assumptions for mixed race children- there can be any number of mix of influences- its hard to pin down who they are and what their background might be. They are such a disparate group.* (Secondary teacher)

A colleague agreed, expressing concern that some schools may be classifying children as mixed heritage because of the colour of their skin, and therefore including them in particular interventions, especially those targeted at black students. Similarly, an Education Adviser feared that teachers often, *'lump together black and mixed race children in the same sentence'.* Indeed some parents reported that teachers had assumed

that their mixed heritage children were black and *'confused children with their comments'*. One parent reported:

> *There's the issue that sometimes teachers view mixed race children as black. N came home and said that his teacher had said, 'I'm not very good at swimming because black people can't swim very well'. You know when you think, did I really hear that? We asked him to ask his teacher what she meant by it and he said it was because black people hadn't a long history of success in the Olympics in swimming. I did say well how is this applicable to you?* (Local Authority Education Adviser)

An Education Consultant had suggested these assumptions on the part of teachers stemmed from a, *'desire to put children into categories at school'*. She said that because of the dominance in South London of Jamaicans there is a tendency for: *'Any West Indian here to be described as Jamaican'*. She goes on to suggest that:

> *Not all Trinidadians for example are of African descent. I had a boy at a school; he looked Bangladeshi as many of the children were- I later found out that his parents were a Trinidadian mix. My (Trinidadian) husband's granddaughter, she looks Chinese. It's about putting people into groups/ categories- well, that's who you are.*

Indeed young people in the focus groups mentioned a tendency to want to categorise people in groups too. Some Year 10 girls mentioned teachers who, *'think I'm black.'*

Teachers spoke about the difficulties in monitoring the academic progress of mixed heritage children at school. This is because they are such a small group and therefore don't show in the *'data streams'*. A secondary headteacher who suspected that mixed heritage children might be '*underachieving'* in his school, stated:

> *It's not clear from the data that they are underachieving. The definition is fuzzy. Black African is different- we know where they are from in Africa etc. There is not a clear definition of mixed race. The group isn't easily defined. I suppose we are waiting for someone to come up with the term. I think the numbers in the school are relatively small. It's not obvious by looking at them. Parents don't say much about them.*

A deputy headteacher in the same secondary school suggested that:

> *We do look at their previous attainment all the time, but not their race. We do try to reflect on ethnicity though- why are our black boys underachieving? But to make sure they are not all in the bottom set- making sure we reflect ability not race.*

A Local Authority adviser claimed that in her authority: *Our mixed race middle class boys are underachieving. But they don't really show in the data'.*

Lack of awareness of the needs of and issues faced by mixed heritage children

A senior member of staff in one secondary school suggested:

> *I'm not sure that all staff are aware of these issues (those related to the identity of the mixed heritage children in the school). We had a chat about it two days ago because you were coming to talk to us, I wouldn't have singled these individuals out before.*

Indeed a recurrent theme in the focus groups of young people was a concern that there was little recognition of mixed heritage identities in their schools. Some of the girls in Year 10 suggested that their identities and needs were not discussed and that instead much attention is focused on the Portuguese and Somali children who, *'get everything- group meetings and stuff; this school pays more attention to them. We don't get treated equally.'*

Their headteacher said:

> *We don't have any initiatives particularly for mixed race children. We don't do anything to help mixed race identity. We do a lot about identity but this is the next layer- the dual identity.*

A Local Authority Black and Ethnic Minority achievement adviser suggested that many teachers did not have an awareness of issues relating to racial identity.

> *When I do training the first thing I ask is for teachers to define 'black'- they find that really hard. One of the issues for me is a teacher not wanting to talk about their racial identity- they say, 'I don't have a racial identity because I'm white.' They see themselves as the norm so it's not even an issue.*

When asked if she thought the teachers were aware of who the mixed heritage children were and whether they differentiated them from the black, she suggested that many did

but; *'I think it's just that they don't want to get into issues of race or identity with children.'*

Her concern was the impact on the children:

> *Trouble is, I think the children I come across are ill equipped to talk about racism and things like that- they might say that 'my school only talks about positive things. They are aware of it- that all the cleaners are black for example but won't talk about it. The schools don't talk about it. They need to be able to talk about their identity. It's well-being.* (Local Authority Black and Ethnic Minority achievement adviser)

An adviser from another local authority similarly described how teachers were not engaged in the:

> *Race issues in their schools. J and I did a BPAP (Black Pupil Achievement Project) and it was mostly the black teachers who came but it's not such an issue for them.*

Many teachers suggested there was little attention to mixed heritage identity in the school curriculum. One said:

> *We don't do much for them- they all read the John Agard poem (Half Caste) I suppose. There aren't many images of mixed race people in the curriculum, it's just not talked about in school.* (Secondary teacher)

Another secondary teacher highlighted potential difficulties in representing mixed heritage experience in the curriculum:

> *One strategy that helped Caribbean students was to ensure their syllabus contained topics that were of interest to them- there is an issue with doing the same for the white working class – if there is talk of doing something for British history then it gets hijacked by the far right- it takes the possibility away. This is also more complicated for mixed race students- where do they fit in?*

Children in the focus groups from Years 8 and 9 recalled celebrating different cultures in their primary schools, through International days for example, but reported that this was not replicated in their secondary schools. Some suggested that they had learnt little about the history of mixed heritage at school. Comments included:

> *We've learnt a bit about history- slaves and slave owners but not really to do with mixed race.* (Year 9 boy)

> *We don't learn about how mixed race people have developed- we know all about white and black history- the only history I know is about white slave owners that rape black people- we didn't talk about this in relation to mixed race people.* (Year 9 girl)

> *We did about Rabbit Proof Fence in English- the half-castes got put in camps and the white people went to rich families. We wrote a film review about it.* (Year 9 boy)

Indeed every child in Cheverell School, with the exception of one, said that mixed heritage people did not have a history prior to slavery. One Year 10 girl commented: *'I tried to research it on the computer but we don't go that far back- it's just about raping slaves.'*

Some school staff recognised that not enough was done in schools to support identity amongst mixed heritage children. One argued:

> *It's not enough just having a mixed race writer come into school. Footballers don't help because they aren't recognised as mixed race; Ashley Cole is just talked about as black.* (Secondary teacher)

Nonetheless one Year 10 girl wanted a 'celebrity' to come into school for the mixed heritage children:

> *I'd like someone like when Levi Roots came in, but for the mixed kids to meet him first so he's like ours.*

Her friends in the focus group were ambivalent about this but were very clear about what they did want:

> *We should have an assembly or something to talk about everybody cussing us.* (Year 10 girl)

> *We could have a meeting once a month- a mixed race room, to say 'how's your month been, anybody called you anything this month?'* (Year 10 girl)

One girl described how the first focus group had brought the mixed heritage children closer together and suggested that she wanted this to continue:

> *When you came before, for that mixed race group, it brought us all together. This boy from Year 9 contacted me on Face book and said, 'that mixed race group was fun wasn't it?' We didn't know the boys before, they're younger, but we all know each other now.* (Year 10 girl)

Their secondary head teacher realised the important role that adults who are integrated into the life of the school, rather than visitors, play:

> *We had a teacher who was doing some group work here. He was mixed race. We noticed that more and more mixed race children, especially boys were flocking to his sessions. Many had a similar personality to him. He'd never thought of himself as a role model for mixed race children. It was the first time we'd thought about it as a staff.*

A parent also alluded to the importance of school staff as role models to children. She recalled her mixed heritage children's excitement when their head teacher brought in his white mother to school. They came home excited: *'Mr H's mum is white!!!' It's so important to the children.'*

As a result of these discussions various education professionals recognised that there should be more done to support mixed heritage children if necessary. A Learning mentor in a secondary school suggested that:

> *There needs to be a session around mixed race- in our schools- what it means to be mixed. I think there should be growth in support for mixed kids…discussion groups…a chance to chat to each other in a safe space.*

A Youth worker suggested that:

> *It's been really good to have this discussion- I've never really talked much about this before. The more I talked the more I realised how important it is to have these conversations. I'm going to chat with some of the young people about this in some of our sessions- what it means to be mixed. I hadn't really thought of this before but it's an on-going issue.*

Several teachers suggested that it was important to talk about these issues at school because some children do not get the opportunity at home. One secondary teacher believed that:

> *We need to do more on identity for these children. If they are not being spoken to at home it's important. The children won't know who they are. Some of these parents can't raise their children in a way that society sees them.*

She added:

> *Actually, this group of students are bright- they could do a lot better if they didn't have to contend with all these issues we've talked about. You know, we actually need to be supporting them with their issues…we need to talk as a staff and then talk with them about their dual identities.*

Another teacher suggested that there needed to be an intervention with parents of mixed heritage children as many were unaware of the issues that their children faced.

Invisibility within the family

Some interviewees suggested that mixed heritage identity was also 'invisible' in many families. One Local Authority adviser reported that in many white families:

> *The mixed children are just darker versions of white in the family. Not seen as different. There is no recognition of culture, heritage. The kids are loved, adored, cuddled but where is the cultural recognition? This is mostly in working class families.*

A Youth worker recognised that, '*A lot of mixed race families it's just a white mum…similar with the black families but at least mum can share her culture with the child…if you're black, you know you're black'.*

Two education professionals spoke of a deliberate denial of mixed heritage identity in some mixed families. A Learning mentor in a secondary school suggested that:

> *Step dads can reject the mixed race child- we know from research that step-children can be vulnerable, a risk factor, but this can be augmented for mixed race children. One family I worked with, step-dad was black, the girl was fair, (like mum) and mixed. He came into the family and objected to her being called mixed,*

she had to be black –the girl who identified with mum (white) had huge issues around her identity.

Children in the focus groups were concerned about how their identities were perceived at home as well as at school. Some described how family members/ friends would tell them that they were black. One boy in Year 9 said that:

My uncle is black and he said to me when I was little 'don't worry, you're black'; I was confused because my dad is very proud of his Italian roots so doesn't see me as black.

A mixed heritage teaching assistant (Portuguese and black Angolan) in a secondary school, brought up in Lisbon empathised with children's confusion and lack of opportunity to talk about these issues at home. She described how she too grew up with confusion surrounding her identity:

I was brought up in the world thinking it would make no difference- this was naive- it wasn't talked about- it was taboo. I think it's good to talk about your identity. I didn't have any feelings of pride- I couldn't pinpoint my background even.

She recognised that:

Maybe it would be good practice to talk about these things. It would be good for their (the children's) self-esteem. Maybe it's this that underpins their underachievement.

Teacher perceptions and expectations shape mixed heritage children's experiences at school

Parents, children and education professionals suggested that many teachers held perceptions about the lives of mixed heritage children that did not match the experiences of the children themselves. A Local Authority Black and Ethnic Minority achievement adviser suggested that:

The image of the white single mother on a council estate with the mixed race child; this is the deficit model, the fall-back position for underachievement- teachers say they (mixed heritage children) are poor children; they've got identity confusion; they've not got a strong identity but I don't talk to many mixed race children who have particular issues with their identity. What might come out of

this research is that it's the schools and systems that need to reflect on their practice.

Indeed various comments that were made illuminated particular perceptions of mixed heritage children, appearing to reflect the deficit model she suggests. A secondary head teacher commented:

> *Our mixed race children are far more likely to have white mothers. You can tell the colour of their mother by the state of their hair* (dry/ messy/ not braided). *Class is a big issue here with this group.*

In a primary school both of the mixed heritage teaching assistants that were interviewed referred to the strong sense of identity amongst the mixed heritage children in the school. Yet the Year 6 teacher said:

> *I feel the mixed children here struggle with two identities; who they actually are. Parents from two different cultures, grandparents- I'm quarter this, quarter that- if they want to celebrate all of their identity- where does this place them? Our children want to celebrate who they are. They need an identity.*

A secondary senior teacher discussing a group of mixed heritage children in Years 9, 10 and 11 described how they had little knowledge of their mixed heritage identity because they lived with their white mothers and had no access to their *'black side'*. Yet when they were interviewed, all of these children described some knowledge of Jamaica; some mothers cooked Jamaican food, they listened to Jamaican music and some had support from the extended family on their father's side.

Parents of mixed heritage children discussed perceptions that teachers held about their children. In most cases these led to low expectations of them at school. A primary headteacher recalled a comment that he felt stereotyped his son at school:

> *I remember one parents' evening there was an Australian agency teacher. She said that she had put N on a table on his own, 'he talks a lot, he's difficult; there aren't many children like him in the school. What did this mean? What many mixed race children? It was his year 2 year. He got Level 3 in reading and math but she marked him down in writing, Level 2A.*

Similarly a Local Authority adviser suggested that one reason for the underachievement of a group of secondary school mixed heritage boys from middle class families in her Local Authority might be:

> *Teacher expectation…they don't differentiate between the black and mixed race kids. I think the teachers might see J, for example, as Caribbean. They don't really engage with the mixed thing, they make assumptions. Their parents are getting distressed about their boys' underachievement. These boys all got Level 4s and 5s at primary school. Teachers make assumptions.*

She argued that the focus of school support for mixed heritage and black Caribbean boys in her authority was on their pastoral care which took preference over 'academic learning conversations' with individual students about their progress in school. She states:

> *They are very focused on the whole stop and search thing here, two or more black boys together, boys like J. They (black and mixed race) identify together, it's fuelled by shared anger. We talk to schools about the achievement gap being unacceptable but they focus instead on the pastoral mentoring. At one school they have a dad in who is a mentor and does work around 'what it means to be a black man'- but he isn't a teacher and does he understand the deadlines they are working with? This needs to be coupled with academic learning conversations.* (Local Authority adviser)

She suggested that it is also the school's responsibility to be proactive, to, '*Undermine the friendships amongst some groups of black and mixed heritage boys by looking to see who is being put with whom in the sets for English, maths.*

She suggested that this would encourage teachers to see children as individuals, to support their achievement at school and would tackle the tendency to stereotype children and their '*home experiences'.*

Two teachers at a secondary school highlighted the influence that national headlines might have on teacher perceptions about and expectations of Caribbean and mixed heritage (especially white and black Caribbean) children:

> *We had all the support for black Caribbean boys. They're doing better here (in this school) but we don't hear about how well they are doing in the press. We know it in this school but nationally negative messages linger. Anything we do for them- it's like they don't feel like they are intelligent, they don't feel*

like they are doing well. For the teaching profession there is never a sense of closure with these projects. There is no declaration about this to say they're doing well. (Secondary English teacher)

His colleague suggested:

Naturally there are low expectations, probably more the case with long serving teachers. They have low expectations having lived through the underachievement debate. This is conveyed to the students, of course it is. As teachers, do we have low expectations of black Caribbean students as low achievers? Do parents? The media doesn't help here- the headlines- they don't publish the success stories.' (Secondary English teacher)

During focus group discussion, mixed heritage children themselves recalled instances of teachers' perceptions of them at school. One girl, now in Year 9, recalled:

When I was at primary school I was on the lowest table for maths- my mum kept complaining because she had me tested and I was like a 14 year old or something with maths…she was a white teacher and I think she just put me with all the black kids on the bottom table.

Mixed heritage children, their friendship groups and school experience

Interviewees referred to the different ways that mixed heritage children, and indeed adults, change their identity at different times and in different contexts. The ways in which this shaped their school experience was discussed. Different themes arose during discussion:

-Mixed heritage children might change their identity to suit the context they are in
-Mixed heritage children might wish to identify with the dominant group at their school in order to 'fit in', sometimes denying their own identity in the process
-Mixed heritage children might over identify with a particular group, often the dominant one
-Due to a lack of role models in their families, some mixed heritage children find their identity within a friendship group

Mixed heritage children might change their identity to suit the context they are in

Several interviewees stressed the advantage of being of mixed heritage:

There are advantages. They can deal with all sorts of people and fit in. My friend who is mixed and grew up with his white mum in London, he fits in everywhere, when he's on holiday etc. Maya Angelou says, 'you don't fit in anywhere, you fit in everywhere. (White mother of mixed heritage children)

There were numerous examples of children assuming different roles to fit into different contexts, both in school and in the community. A Local Authority Adviser suggested that his son had been confused when he was growing up constantly asking: *'What am I?'* He has now noticed that:

His identity changes according to who he's with. When I take him to East London for the school football team- when he's with the Year 6 team there are a lot of Black African and Caribbean boys and he changes the way he speaks and behaves- whether he feels that he needs to fit in, into a different identity. He might feel more comfortable that way. The Year 5 team is more balanced; two mixed, four white boys, the rest African Caribbean so he doesn't behave in that way. His speech patterns change with the Year 6- the slang chatting. (Local Authority Adviser)

Another senior secondary teacher commenting on the same subject said:

In the 60s/ 70s mixed race people only mixed with black people, now it's broader. My son moves around; he's in a black football team where he assumes a role but then he has other friends where he's something else.

Two interviewees described how their mixed heritage children spent time with their black friends separately from their white friends. One said:

My youngest daughter loved G School from day one - it's so diverse. The other day they had a half - day and she rang me to say her 'black' and mixed race friends were coming around to eat lunch in the garden. Another time she goes out with her white friends- but not together. They do different things together. (Primary teaching assistant)

Another mixed heritage young adult said: *I'm going out with my black friends tonight. Yeah, I do see them separately. We do different stuff.*

Fitting in with the majority

Two interviewees spoke of the advantage of being of mixed heritage:

> *If you are mixed race you can have the best of both worlds…you can understand both cultures. There is a positive aspect.* (Year 9 boy)

> *I like being mixed race, I can just blend in.* (Year 9 boy)

Nonetheless many children appeared to need to fit into just one group, usually the majority group in the school. Both parents and school staff commented on this. A primary teaching assistant described how her partner's two mixed heritage sons had moved with their mother to an area which she described as: '*Very white'*. She described how:

> *The little one, L, he's only 14 and he's relaxing his hair- it looks ridiculous but he can't 'find himself'- he wants to fit in. B is 17; he doesn't even realize that they are trying to fit in. Mum doesn't realize the issues. They were with their dad the other weekend. A pretty mixed race girl walked past and dad said, 'did you see that pretty girl?' They hadn't even noticed her because she wasn't white and blonde.*

An ex primary headteacher talked about his son's desire to fit in to his Nursery school. He described how he would only refer to himself as '*pink.*' He describes how:

> *My wife (black) used to get very anxious about this. I used to say, he's just exploring his identity, but we moved in a circle that was predominantly white. I took him to Nursery outside London where I was head. There were mostly white children; it's possible he just wanted to conform.*

He reflected on what might happen to his son as he gets older and whether a desire to fit in with the majority, and their assumed behaviours, becomes even more of a need for a mixed heritage teenager:

> *Are you forced into liking a particular type of music? MTV? Just to fit in? I try to give N a broad understanding of everything, try not to fulfil stereotypes, but what does he like? He likes football, athletics, loves cricket and musically he likes hip-hop and R and B (Rhythm and Blues). Is that what he likes or what he feels he should like? I don't know.* (Local Authority Adviser/ ex headteacher)

Some parents discussed their young daughters' desire to have long straight hair in order to 'fit in' with the majority. One parent referred to this as the 'princess syndrome' exacerbated by the amount of fairy tales and Disney stories her daughter read; she also recognised her daughter's desire to want to look like her friends.

One interviewee asked why some mixed heritage children, in South London:

> *See themselves as black? Maybe…because of television, the adolescents, they need to belong, they'd rather be one of the 80%, rather than the 20%. But then why is there a need to belong to the 80%?* (Local Authority Education adviser)

She went on to talk about the different identities that she and her two sisters had chosen to adapt to their different environments. In her opinion her two sisters had wanted to fit in with the majority group, whereas she celebrated her mixed identity:

> *Take the three of us. I'm specific about being mixed race but my older sister says, 'I'm English' and my younger sister, she's 'black'. I think with both of them, it's them wanting to belong. My older sister she went to University in the country; she aspires to debs, upper class, middle England, where the nice people are, that's what she wants to be, if she says it enough, she will be. For both of them, Irish (what my mum is) doesn't come into it. With my other sister, she's black; she's always worked in London in black communities. But I didn't feel the need for a survival strategy.* (Local Authority Education adviser)

She goes on to suggest:

> *It's about how people see themselves. If a child, at school, has a Nigerian name a Yoruba name, take Kayode for example, they say no, Kayode (different emphasis) – they want to have their name said wrongly, they'll correct to make it the wrong pronunciation, they don't want attention drawn to themselves although they get attention that way too…but maybe if you don't feel that your sub group is valued enough- that's what you do.'* (Local Authority Education adviser)

She reflected that whilst some communities may have a confidence in their identity, mixed heritage children might not:

> *A Greek family in London, they're not hugely represented in this area but you can imagine a Greek family having enough confidence to say that they're Greeks- they*

don't 'blow it up, sink it down'- but if the sub group is on the outs – if you're hearing negative things and you don't see a lot going for it- you identify with the other group. (Local Authority Education adviser)

Fitting in with or over identifying with a group

A recurrent theme in discussion was the need for many mixed heritage children to identify with black children at school. However interviewees argued that:

Mixed race children might identify culturally with black but then maybe that's a South London thing- the white kids do too. (Secondary headteacher)

One interviewee felt it was inevitable that mixed heritage children would identify with black groups because the, *'majority of the black community is more accepting; the white community just sees us as black whatever.'* (Youth worker)

A senior secondary teacher suggested that whilst some mixed heritage children were comfortable with this identity others*, 'spend their entire time trying to fit into black groups.'* She described how:

Mixed race boys particularly over identify with black street culture; sometimes the negative sides of it, being in gangs, rap music. You can see it in the way that it is portrayed, their behaviour, the outward signs- dress codes- they have the biggest afros in the school, so big that they can't fit through the door. I can think of some boys straight away, coming into school, hats, and headphones. This identity is really important. It's to fit in.

She went on to suggest that:

This is in phases though. My own son went through this. Some go through puberty and then find themselves; find their own way of dealing with who they are. This often happens by Year 10.

A mixed heritage Youth worker, who was brought up in South London and visited family members in the Midlands, understood, from experience, the desire to fit into a majority group:

Where it's predominantly white…you might move to the white side. London …you'd move to the black side…feel more black because of young people you

hang with. It's hard, if you go to the white side you stand out or you may over identify with the black culture…then you're a coconut. People tease you whatever and you get confused; where do I belong? I used to think if there was a war on where would my loyalties be? My friends, yeah they are mostly black, I had a few Asian friends from central London.

Denial of identity/ adopting an identity

Various interviewees described how some children denied their mixed heritage identity, suggesting that this arises because of how children: '*view themselves- how they identify themselves'.*

One Local Authority adviser talked about his own schooling in the Midlands where he suggests there were, *'issues around denial and identity'.* He described how the school was beginning to change its population with a few mixed heritage and black families moving into the area:

> *There was an Indian/ white child who would deny his mother was Indian and say that he'd fallen into a can of yellow paint and a mixed race boy we called Pepsi Pete who used to say he'd fallen into a can of pop when he was younger. I believed all this- I was 11 or 12 at the time. I think because the environment wasn't comfortable for them or accepting of them they would deny their identity. It (their identity) wasn't strong enough for them to hold onto maybe.*

Other interviewees talked about mixed heritage children who deny a side of their heritage. This was often the white side. One Learning mentor suggested:

> *There is the rejection of the white side. I work with a girl who is very disrespectful of her white side and only acknowledges her black roots. This is quite common. Some naturally identify with this side because of racism.*

A parent of mixed heritage children described how she had seen a group of mixed heritage girls from her daughter's school shouting in the street in South London:

> *They were all shouting, we hate white people, we hate white people, but their mums were white! Why would they do that?*

However it was not always the white side of their identity. A secondary Learning mentor suggested:

> *Kids can lie about their background. K used to lie and say his dad was from Jamaica; it was because none of his friends were from Algeria…Arabs.*
> *It's quite common to deny where you are from.*

Identity comes from friends when there are no role models at home

Because some children, especially boys, lacked a role model at home it was suggested that there was a need to find identity and belonging in a friendship group. A Local Authority adviser, commenting on the underachievement of the middle class mixed heritage boys in secondary schools in her authority, highlighted the case of one Year 11 boy (white father/ black Nigerian mother) and his inability to identify with his father:

> *J is aimless; he hangs out with black kids who are disengaged. He is failing now. He has a university - educated mum, a single mum, Nigerian. She couldn't manage him; he's very bright but wouldn't listen to her, only to his mates. They decided he would live with dad- his dad is white Italian and middle class. He has high expectations but J doesn't relate to his dad, only his friends. All J's friends are black.*

When asked why J might not relate to his father the same adviser said:

> *J goes to Italy in the holidays, his surname is Italian but does he feel Italian? He looks Nigerian but how much experience has he of Nigeria? He has no role model of who he will grow up to be. He lives with his dad but I think Italy is a bit of a racist country. So if he needs role models or an identity; that comes from his friends.*

Indeed one Year 10 girl in the focus group, referring to mixed heritage boys that she knew, suggested that boys join gangs because, '*they are lost and it gives them an identity.*' She said: '*If it's a black gang and they become black that's then how they live the rest of their life- as a black person*'.

Two Year 8 boys in the focus groups suggested that although they lived with white mothers they chose to identify with black friends at school:

> *L: I live with my mum (white); I just do what she does*
> *B: Me too*

> *L: Although if I had to choose a colour it would be black because I hang out with black people even though my mum is white.*

Many interviewees highlighted a similarity between the experiences of mixed heritage and black children. However it was suggested that mixed heritage children often had the issue of their identity, with which to contend, too. A secondary teacher recognised that*:*

> *Young black boys have issues with positive role models- we think about this for them. They have the gang stuff. It's the same for the mixed race but they have the identity thing on top as well as this.*

Summary

Three important themes arose in the research findings. Firstly, many mixed heritage children's identities were 'invisible' at school. Interviewees reported confusion around the classification of mixed heritage groups and a lack of awareness about any needs and issues around mixed heritage identity in schools. Because mixed heritage children had a range of classifications, some of which may not even have referred to their mixed heritage, teachers did not always know who the mixed heritage children were or the issues they faced. Some made assumptions about their identity and home experience based on the colour of their skin or mixed status. A *'fall-back position' for* underachievement amongst children was often described where teachers stereotyped them as *'poor'* and confused about their identities.

Lastly, friendship groups shaped the experience that many mixed heritage children had at school. It was suggested that whilst some would adopt a different persona for a different group of friends others might deny their mixed identity in order to fit into the dominant group at their school. This caused confusion for both mixed heritage children and their families. Some boys, who lacked a role model of *'how to be'* looked to a friendship group for guidance and belonging, and moved to '*disengaged'* groups of black boys in search of identity and belonging. This was viewed as having a negative influence on achievement at school. The next chapter further analyses data presented in Chapters Four and Five to explore how individuals drew on their own internal, family and community resources to develop resilience in the face of these challenges.

CHAPTER 6: AN ANALYSIS OF RESILIENCE IN MIXED HERITAGE INDIVIDUALS

Introduction

The findings reported in Chapters Four and Five suggested that many mixed heritage individuals were exposed to a range of risk factors. Most suffered discrimination because of assumptions that were made about them; these were based on their skin colour, and/ or the ways in which they were viewed as victims of a 'culture clash' between two supposedly different 'races', with two distinctive cultures. Some also experienced poverty and its associated problems. Others lacked role models and recognition of their mixed heritage identities within their families and schools. Nonetheless some young people had the opportunity and capacity to navigate their way to a range of protective factors (Werner 1993), whilst others did not. In order to explore why this might be the case I decided to further analyse the data presented in Chapters Five and Six using a model developed by Ungar et al. (2007) to analyse resilience in 'at risk' young people.

In their qualitative findings of a 14-site, 11-country study of resilience among youths aged 12- 23, Ungar et al. (2007) identified that a young person's capacity to cope with adversity reflected different degrees of access to seven mental health-enhancing experiences; these they described as tensions. These tensions and their different components are outlined in Table 6.1. Young people, who saw themselves as resilient, or were seen as resilient by others, navigated their way through these tensions, finding a way to resolve all seven according to the strengths and resources available to them individually, within their families and their communities. Though these seven tensions were found in every culture, each tension exerted differing amounts of influence on individual paths to resilience.

Data in Chapters Four and Five showed that even amongst mixed heritage siblings and individuals with similar access to a range of material resources and family support, each had different capacities to deal with challenges, for example the discrimination they faced at school. I selected Ungar et al.'s (2007) model as a suitable tool to explore why this might be as. Although they suggest that other studies 'overlook' diversity in patterns of resilience found among youth living in geographic proximity to one another (Ungar 2007),

their model is sensitive to the comparisons of quite similar youth that demonstrate unique aspects of how resilience as an outcome is achieved (Ungar et al. 2007). Their model's sensitivity to the culturally embedded aspects of healthy functioning (Ungar et al. 2007) was also an important factor in analysing data presented in my research as the cultural heritage of family contexts appeared to be a significant factor in the lives of many mixed heritage individuals this research.

Table 6.1 The seven tensions

Tension	Components
Access to material resources	Financial, educational, medical etc.
Access to supportive relationships	Relationships with significant others, peers, adults in one's family and community
Development of a desirable personal identity	A sense of one's self as having a personal and collective sense of purpose, ability for self appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, aspirations, beliefs, and values, including spiritual and religious identification
Experiences of power and control	Experiences of caring for oneself and others, the ability to affect change in one's social and physical environment in order to access health resources
Adherence to cultural traditions	Adherence to, or knowledge of, one's local and/ or global cultural practices, values and beliefs
Experience of social justice	Experiences related to finding a meaningful role in one's community that brings with it acceptance and social equality.
Experience of a sense of cohesion with others	Balancing one's personal interests with a sense of responsibility to the greater good, feeling a part of something larger than one's self socially and spiritually.

In this chapter then, I use Ungar et al.'s (2007) model to further analyse data gathered in the interview process to assess why some individuals were able to access the psychological, cultural and social resources that sustain well-being and a positive sense of their mixed heritage identity, and some not. This is how I conceived resilience for the purposes of this research. I have focused specifically on data related to the experiences of six mixed heritage individuals. As suggested above each faced some risk factors either at

home or at school or in their communities. Each navigated their way through the tensions, finding a different pathway in which to resolve all seven tensions according to the strengths and resources available to them individually, within their families and their communities in order to challenge these risk factors.

The Case Studies

The six cases were chosen purposefully, guided by the research questions. The aim was to replicate or extend the emergent theory and to seek information richness (Meyer 2001). The six cases, outlined in Table 6.2 below, provided a detailed understanding of the protective factors necessary for individuals to develop resilience. Each either highlighted factors that were desirable in developing resilience amongst mixed heritage individuals such as supportive relationships, material resources and access to cultural heritage or the potential obstacles to developing resilience. The six cases described in detail why three of the individuals found a unique path towards resilience due to a range of protective factors available to them and why three of the individuals did not.

Two cases clearly highlighted protective factors that individuals needed in order to develop resilience. Both Esme (Case 2) and Nina (Case 6) had a range of protective factors available to them in their families and communities. These included supportive relationships, family networks that provided practical and emotional support with which to deal with discrimination and an understanding of their cultural heritage that was supported by material resources present in their families. They were both able to draw upon this range of protective factors in order to develop their resilience. However, Cases 3 and 4 highlighted protective factors that Reuben and Kim lacked in order to develop resilience and have a positive experience at school. These particular cases were useful because although Kim lacked many protective factors because of the poverty that was described in her family, Reuben's inability to access protective factors was not a consequence of his social background. This could well challenge the assumption highlighted in Chapter 5 that a less positive school experience is generally related to mixed heritage children's social background.

The cases of Joe and Nina were selected because they highlighted the different experiences of girls and boys, regardless of social background, reported in Chapters 5 and

6. Both siblings had the same protective factors at home namely supportive relationships, an understanding of cultural traditions and access to material resources. Yet whilst Nina was able to access many of the seven tensions to develop her resilience in the face of challenges at school, Joe was not. Lisa (Case 1) was selected as although she had access to some of the seven tensions she also had serious challenges to her resilience. The family had few material resources, there was little aspiration for Lisa's education and she lacked a relationship with her mother who left the family home when Lisa was 11 years old. However the case was a useful example of how an individual was able to draw upon conflicts in her life in order to develop resilience in the face of adversity.

My approach to data collection aimed only to explore how research participants made sense of their personal and social worlds and not to produce objective statements about those worlds. I did not seek to generalise my findings to the mixed heritage population as a whole. In five of the six cases, data were used from the in depth exploratory interviews described in Chapter Three. These were conducted throughout the research process. For Kim's case, data were used from third person accounts during semi-structured interviews with her teachers and her own first hand accounts, a focus group in which she took part and an individual interview. The cases can therefore be viewed in three categories; those which are first person accounts (Lisa, Reuben), those which are third person accounts told from their mothers' perspectives (Esme, Jo and Nina), and one which is both (Kim), told from her teachers and from her own perspectives.

I am sensitive to the different perspectives this provides. Whilst first hand accounts are based upon direct meaningful experience, the two mothers' third hand accounts may well be filtered through their own prejudices, experiences and backgrounds. Furthermore, Lisa's and Reuben's first hand accounts are retrospective as they include the subjective meanings they attached to their childhood experiences. This, of course, in addition to the children's cases, offers various contrasting snapshots of time and place.

However, my aim in this chapter is purely to offer interesting insights about how different mixed heritage individuals, in different contexts, develop the resiliency to deal with the challenges that they face. I am aware that it would be inappropriate to treat the six cases as equivalent, because of the variety of perspectives they include. I realised that Esme, Joe and Nina might have provided different accounts of their lived experiences than did their

mothers. This became evident in Kim's case where the assumptions her teachers made about her experiences, were very different from her own perspectives.

As outlined in Chapter Three, one interview was tape-recorded (Jo and Nina's mother); in the others, handwritten notes were taken. This was in line with interviewee preference. In the case of Kim, the semi structured interviews with teachers, her focus group and individual interview were not tape recorded as they took place in school. The tape-recorded interview was transcribed and handwritten notes were written in full as soon as possible after the interview. In each case participants' names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Table 6.2: The case study sample

Name of case	Role	Perspective	Self/mother's Categorisation	Gender/ Age	Sources of data	Social Class (How determined)
Lisa	Education Professional / mixed heritage adult	First person account	Mixed white/ Barbadian	Female	In depth exploratory interview	Described her mother as white working class and father as working class Barbadian
Esme	Child	Third person account (mother)	Mixed white American/ black Ethiopian	11 year old female	In depth exploratory interview with mother	Mother described her as coming from a 'professional home'
Reuben	Adult	First person account	Mixed white father/ black Kenyan mother	22 year old male	In depth exploratory interview	N/A
Kim	Child	First person account/ third person (teachers)	Mixed race-white mother/ black Jamaican father	Year 10 female	Focus group/ individual interview. Semi structured interview with educational professional	Described by teacher as 'living with a white working class mother'
Jo	Child	Third person account (mother)	Mixed white/ black Jamaican	14 year old male	In depth exploratory interview with mother	Mother described him as coming from a 'professional home'
Nina	Child	Third person account (mother)	Mixed white/ black Jamaican	10 year old female	In depth exploratory interview with mother	Mother described her as coming from a 'professional home'

Case Study One

Lisa

Lisa was a Learning mentor at an inner London primary school; she grew up in South London. She described her mother as white working class and her father as a working class Barbadian who came to London in the 1950s. Her mother lived a *'sheltered life'* in Middlesex, coming to London as a young woman where she met and married Lisa's father. The couple lived in Notting Hill, West London, where her mother only mixed with white women who were in relationships with black men. Lisa describes how:

> *They stuck together, kept themselves to themselves in the background. In those days white women with black men were seen as 'scum of the earth' by anyone who might help you to get anywhere in life.'*

Social injustice underpinned Lisa's family experience. Her extended family, who she did not meet until she was nine years old, discriminated against her as a child:

> *Mum took me back to her mother who referred to me as 'darkie'. She didn't want her neighbours to see me. I remember going to see my grandma and granddad, granddad Tom, he was a bit of a hermit; he'd sit in his room with his mynah bird. I was the only one allowed to go in and see him, my brothers weren't. He used to say to me 'you're not like the rest'.*

Lisa's father, who had five sisters, had no brother to talk to about his experiences of being married to a white woman and he felt emotionally isolated. His sisters shunned Lisa's mother and her experience became one of social marginalization.

Due to their different experiences Lisa's parents had conflicting views about her education. Perceiving education to have little importance, Lisa's mother didn't motivate her as a child:

> *She didn't see the importance of education, the only reason we went to school was in case my dad found out that we hadn't been, 'just don't tell your dad' she'd say. I think the crux was that my mum didn't see education as the key. My dad did but he couldn't drive it; he was at work full-time; he had to leave it up to my mum. So that's why I didn't succeed- if I got the opportunity to spend my dinner money on cigarettes and not go to school I wouldn't go.*

Now bringing up her own children, both Lisa and her husband see the value of education.

Her mother left the family home when Lisa was 11 years old. Lisa did not see her mother again until she gave birth to her own daughter four years later:

> *She'd had enough- with her four, darkie children- the stigma. She had a bad deal-*
> *it was the easiest route for her to get up and go. She sort of 'gave up the fight*
> *really.' She put up a real front about being brave. She had to battle with very*
> *dominant black women and the BNP mentality. She had to battle with that*
> *assumption that 'you're no good' because you're with a black man.*

Lisa became the primary carer for her father and her three brothers. She wasn't able to socialize much outside of the family home; she spent a great deal of time with her boyfriend at home and, *'ended up pregnant',* giving birth to her daughter at the age of 15. Lisa recognizes the challenge of being a carer and mother to her ability to achieve her potential at school. However the '*fight*' that her mother had first shown in the face of racial abuse and social marginalisation towards her status as a white woman with mixed heritage children shaped Lisa's attitude towards her own situation:

> *My mum didn't bother about education, saying, 'you don't need all that, you'll be*
> *alright but what she did tell us was to always stand up for yourself, always stand*
> *your ground. If anyone hurts you, you slap them back. I learnt this; I had three*
> *brothers, so I stuck up for myself and always have.*

Lisa suggests that a conflicted relationship with her mother nonetheless gave her power and control over her own life. In *'sticking up for herself,'* she took responsibility for meeting her own needs. Determination to give her daughter a *'better life',* and a role model, motivated Lisa to study for qualifications as an adult. She wanted to show her daughter that she, '*could get up and do it- I could educate myself or I could have done what my mum did.'* She therefore studied at the Open University whilst working at a Play centre.

Lisa describes a sense of cohesion with other mothers in her social network who all express a collective aspiration for their children. She described these mothers as more confident than her own mother's generation, keen to mix in circles that would further their children's life chances and who were willing to make sacrifices for their children in order

to give them a '*better life'*. She also described how white mothers in the group nurtured their children's mixed identity to give them a positive sense of themselves as children of mixed heritage. She described their aspiration in spite of limited access to material resources, recognizing that, '*you can be poor and aspirant, just as you can be rich and non ambitious'*.

For Lisa, liberation from social injustice came from access to a range of supportive relationships in her life. She acknowledged that she was lucky to have, '*good people around me'* to fill the emotional gap left by her mother's departure from the family home. She recalls how a humanities teacher took her under her wing and gave her, '*something to cling to rather than the whole mother and baby thing'*. She had a network of different support groups, one she described as:

> A *group at school, the headteacher encouraged me and supported me to obtain qualifications. They've given me different opportunities. I've also got my friends still from school- lots of networks, it's important.*

She also demonstrated power and control in her determination to retain emotional and practical support from her husband.

> *We got married when I was twenty, I was fifteen when I had C- but I didn't want to be a one-parent family, I was too bitter. I wasn't going to do it all on my own. So many mums just say 'go' to the dads- of course they want to get up and go and have an easy life.'*

Lisa also experienced cultural adherence throughout her life. She had access to both cultures and found her own mixed heritage reflected within her social networks and community. She explains how:

> *I've been to Barbados twice, my husband's from there too, as well as my dad. I don't know whether it's because I was with my dad but it all felt like home straight away, it felt like part of me- amazing to think that my dad had cycled here when he was little, and he was pointing out to me where there was a shack and stuff.*

Social marginalisation and racial abuse, whilst driving her mother from the family home, were a threat to Lisa's own resilience. Nonetheless the 'fight' that it gave her mother shaped Lisa's own determination to 'better herself' and the lives of her children. The

emotional gap, left by her mother's absence, was bridged by supportive relationships. The cohesion she experienced in this network gave Lisa a sense of control. An understanding of and ease with her own mixed heritage appears to have given her a personal identity that has enabled her to 'hit her stride' and to live with relative comfort despite the contradictions and conflicts within her life:

> *I've been alright, I like my job; I would like to have owned my own home,*
> *had more holidays maybe….*

Table 6.3 outlines how Lisa's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.3 Lisa's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute to resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Recognised the challenge of being a carer and mother to her access to education. This provided a determination to encourage her children's education. • Described the aspiration of her friendship group for themselves and their children in spite of their limited access to material resources
Access to supportive relationships	• Described a range of supportive relationships in her life that filled the emotional gap left by her mother's departure from the family home. A teacher gave her, '*something to cling to rather than the whole mother and baby thing'.* A headteacher for whom she later worked encouraged and supported her to obtain qualifications whilst working in her school. • Referenced a network of mothers in her friendship group in the local area • Retained the emotional and practical support of husband
Development of a desirable personal identity	• Has an understanding of and confidence in her mixed heritage. This gave her a personal identity that enabled her to 'hit her stride' and to live with relative comfort despite the contradictions and conflicts within her life
Experiences of power and control	• The conflicted relationship with her mother gave her power and control over her own life. In *'sticking up for herself,'* she took responsibility for meeting her own

	needs. It made her determined to give her daughter a *'better life',* and motivated her to study for qualifications as an adult. Wanted to show her daughter that she, *'could get up and do it- I could educate myself or I could have done what my mum did.'* • Sense of responsibility; caring for younger siblings as a teenager, 'required helpfulness' Rachman 1979 • Demonstrated power and control in her determination to retain emotional and practical support from her husband.
Adherence to cultural traditions	• Experienced cultural adherence throughout her life. Access to both cultures; found her mixed heritage reflected within her social networks and community • Has been to Barbados twice with her father
Experiences of social justice	• The *'fight'* that her mother had first shown in the face of racial abuse and social marginalisation towards her status as a white woman with mixed heritage children, shaped Lisa's attitude towards her own situation- 'fight' for what she wanted and to give her own children a better life
Experiences of sense of cohesion with others	• A sense of cohesion with other mothers in her social network. All express a collective aspiration for their children. All have a positive attitude to nurturing their own mixed heritage children's identities.

Case Study Two

Esme

Esme was a Year 7 pupil at a secondary school in inner London. She lived with her black Ethiopian father, white American mother and three siblings; two elder brothers and one younger sister. She came from what her mother described as a professional home. She was described as having a '*strong sense of herself as Ethiopian.'*

Each child in the family had freedom to develop their own personal identity, influenced by their family relationships and friendships both at school and within the community. They lived in a racially, culturally and linguistically diverse area, which was replicated in their school community. Esme's eldest brother A, described himself as an Ethiopian/ American who, '*just happens to live in London*;' he moved in many circles and spent a lot of time

with white middle class boys whom he met through shared interests that included acting and playing cricket. Her other brother saw himself as a, *'British urban London boy'*, not Ethiopian, who liked football. His friends were boys with whom he has things in common; most were Somali and Bangladeshi boys; they enjoyed playing football and going to the market together. Her younger sister A is six years old and was described as, *'mummy's girl'*. This was because she identified with her white American mother, had straight hair and looked Middle Eastern.

Esme's own personal identity was shaped by her close relationship with her extended family, most notably her Ethiopian Auntie, whom she saw every day after school and stayed the night with on a Friday. Her mother described Esme as, *'being raised by two mums'* and suggested that she had attached herself to 'Auntie' who gave her, *'an Ethiopian identity'* and strong affinity with the traditions of Ethiopian culture. Her mother stated:

> *She craves the food; she eats what her uncle eats. Auntie has no children of her own and it has already been decided that Esme will look after her when she's old- a big thing in Ethiopian culture. They've already divided up the jewellery. She wanted to get her ears pierced- I said in two years but Auntie let her do it, it would have been a lot earlier in Ethiopian culture.*

When she was younger Esme was frustrated with her hair describing it as, *'too puffy'*, a fact made worse by her little sister's straight hair which was, *'like mum's'*. Because her mother found it very difficult to manage Esme's hair, Auntie's support was important as it gave her pride in her appearance. She now had an Ethiopian hairstyle which she enjoyed showing to her family cousins in Boston in the summer.

Esme's closeness to her Auntie was exacerbated by the fact that Auntie felt rejected by Esme's younger sister who looked like and identified with her mother. Auntie reinforced this by referring to her as, *'mummy's girl'*. Yet despite her close relationship with her Auntie, Esme was very demanding of her mother's attention when her little sister was born. Her mother was sensitive to this and they had, *'special days'* together. This appeared to give Esme control over how she accessed her two closest relationships to develop her own personal identity, a choice of, *'what parts of her identity she takes from what relation'.* Her mother described how:

Auntie doesn't like to go to the cinema/ theatre so I do that with her. Esme, when there's a visitor will get her baby picture and say, 'look, I was white when I was a baby'; that's the part of her identity that wants to be like me. She wants jeans like me, boots like me and also to be like her cousin on my side. She doesn't want to dress like Auntie who's a bit middle-aged in this respect. I suppose she is drawing what she wants from different mums.

Esme also had a range of other supportive relationships; many with other mixed heritage families in the community. She frequently stayed the night with one mixed heritage friend in her family home; her mother felt that this reinforced her mixed heritage identity because she saw families like hers. Furthermore Esme's head teacher at her primary school, an ex pupil of her current secondary school, was a mixed heritage man who would, much to her excitement, often bring his white mother into school. There were also mixed heritage heads of department at her secondary school. So Esme had other role models, apart from those within her own family.

Although her mother suggested that Esme had never experienced racism within her community, she had experienced discrimination from black girls at her school. This, her mother assumed was because of her lighter skin and her perceived ability to attract attention from a black boy and two mixed heritage boys that were in her Year 6 class. Esme had been very upset and confused that her black girlfriends rejected her friendship. However her mother was able to explain why, discussing '*jealousy and how this can present in a negative way*', and gave her strategies to deal with it. Thus Esme had access to supportive and loving relationships that navigated her through any negative experiences related to her mixed heritage identity.

Esme's ability to cope with challenges, which so far seemed to have only manifested themselves in a rejection by her black friends, reflected her ability to access the seven tensions. Her range of supportive relationships nurtured the development of her personal identity and provided her with an understanding of discrimination and the tools to combat it. Her adherence to cultural traditions evolved through her familial relationships and those with other mixed families that her mother has encouraged. This provided her with shared beliefs and values that were within her family, a sense of cohesion with others that made her part of something larger than her own self socially and spiritually. Esme had power to make choices in her relationships and to have a positive experience of school to date.

Table 6:4 outlines how Esme's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.4 Esme's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute towards resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Comes from what her mother describes as a professional home where there is an active interest in her school experience • Mother is a Local Authority education adviser
Access to supportive relationships	• Close relationship with extended family, most notably her Ethiopian Auntie. Described as, '*being raised by two mums*' (her mother and auntie). Has attached herself to 'Auntie' who gives her, '*an Ethiopian identity*' and strong affinity with the traditions of Ethiopian culture. • Range of other supportive relationships; many with other mixed heritage families in the community. Her mother feels this reinforces her mixed heritage identity because she sees families like hers. • Relationships have given her strategies to navigate a path through any negative experiences relating to her mixed heritage identity e.g. rejection by other girls at school. • Mixed heritage role models at school e.g. headteacher and heads of department
Development of a desirable personal identity	• '*Strong sense of herself as Ethiopian.*' • Has had freedom to develop her own personal identity, influenced by family relationships and friendships both at school and within the community.
Experiences of power and control	• Exercises control over how she accesses her two closest relationships (mother and auntie) to develop her own personal identity, a choice of, '*what parts of her identity she takes from what relation*'.
Adherence to cultural traditions	• Lives in a racially, culturally and linguistically diverse area which is replicated in her school community • Ethiopian Auntie's support has given her pride in her appearance e.g. has an Ethiopian hairstyle. • Strong affinity with the traditions of Ethiopian culture e.g. *craves Ethiopian food*. Mother suggests it has already been decided that she will look after her auntie when she is old, '*a big thing in Ethiopian culture*'. • Part of her identity wants to be like her white American mother e.g. she dresses like her mother;

	describes how she was 'white' in a photograph of herself as a baby.
Experiences of social justice	• Experienced discrimination at school but mother was able to explain why this was to Esme; she discussed the jealousy of other girls and '*how this can present in a negative way*', and has given her strategies to deal with it.
Experience of sense of social cohesion with others	• Shared beliefs and values that are within her family; makes her part of something larger than her own self, socially and spiritually.

Case Study Three

Reuben

Reuben, twenty-two years old, was born in Kenya. He lived in Nairobi with his black Kenyan mother, who owned a hairdressing salon, his white father, originally from South London, and his younger sister. He moved to South London when he was twelve years old with his mother and his sister following the death of his father in Nairobi. Reuben said that he had had two experiences of being mixed heritage: being at school in Kenya, and in London. He suggested that in Kenya people thought his family were rich because he had light skin.

> *The girls all loved me and thought I was cute-they wanted to touch my hair until my sister came along and then they were more interested in her.*

He explained that his parents never sat down and talked to him about being mixed heritage when he was in Kenya because, '*I was happy, I never thought about it*'.

However when the family moved to South London his mother became anxious because they were the only black family in the area and assumed that they would be, '*blamed for any trouble*'. He explained how the, '*neighbours were really unfriendly- I was used to Africa where everyone was friendly.* Reuben described himself as '*hyper*' as a young child; because of this his mother wouldn't let him play football in the street as, '*he'd make too much noise*'. Even now she doesn't let him listen to music too loudly.

When he first arrived in London, Reuben didn't think about what it might mean for him to be mixed heritage at school. He recalled how he, *'got picked on a bit,'* but thought that this was because *'he was short- or because he was from Africa.'* To begin with he progressed well at his secondary boys' grammar school in South London getting 'A' grades in his first two years. Although his mother expected him to do well at school:

> *It was my dad who had sat down and done my homework with me. When he died she had to put food on the table but expected me to get on with my schoolwork. She would believe the teachers against me if I got into trouble at school; my dad always took my side. I lost motivation and didn't work as hard as I could have.'*

Reuben suggested that because the teachers knew his mother they didn't really stereotype him, but recalled how the science teacher would discriminate against the black children in the school:

> *The class was split- black and white- the white boys were at the front and the black at the back- she would say, 'You come and sit at the front because you want to learn, they don't want to learn back there'. There were racist comments flying around. I was caught in the middle. I didn't know where to sit- if I sat at the front I was a 'neek'. We could get away with the most in science, because it was standing around in a lab. I was in the top tier for science but then got moved down because of my behaviour.*

The division between the black and white boys in the school demanded that he choose between the two groups. He recognised that whilst in Years 7 and 8 everybody was friendly with each other, in years 10 and 11 boys started splitting up into groups along racial lines. He described also how:

> *I noticed with my sister she used to bring home white and black friends but when she got to Year 9 it was just black friends. I was quite pleased because the black were more headstrong, they don't take nonsense from boys, unless they fall in love.*

Reuben's confusion about which 'group to join', was exacerbated by his lack of a male role model at home. He described how his father was his role model in the back of his head after he died; he taught him good manners, but apart from that he, *'didn't have anyone'.* The emotional gap left by the loss of his father forced Reuben to seek comfort, trust and belonging from a peer group. He believed that girls have their mum throughout

their whole upbringing, '*they can talk and stuff whereas many boys, without a role model, have to figure it all out on their own- they have no one.'* He described how:

> *I was lost really. It was only two years ago that I really found myself- I was mixed up, hanging out with loads of different groups- I didn't really know what I wanted to be.*

He suggested that mixed heritage boys had two choices:

> *They can go with the white group- be a skin head- a yob or they can be with the black boys- be a 'rude boy'- become all trendy/ cool. I had a main group but I hung with the white group for a while and got into a lot of trouble and then with a black group- we were cool, stayed fresh for the girls, it was, 'us against the world.' I stopped telling my mum stuff; I don't tell her stuff now.*

Reuben's best friend, John, was black, '*We are like kind of related because he lost his dad too,*' but *w*hen he got a white girlfriend Reuben felt betrayed, like he had lost his best friend. He remembered that the black girls would be horrible to her because, '*he's handsome and they would be, 'why are all the white girls taking our men?'*
When he was young, Reuben only had black girlfriends because he didn't want to be '*stereotyped by my friends'.* He suggested that now that he had two good white friends it didn't really matter and he currently had a white girlfriend. He also recalled how he, '*got a lot of stick*', when he became friends with two white friends because they were seen as '*neeks'* and all they wanted to do was, '*roll in the park'.* He was embarrassed.

He did say that:

> *Generally my mixed race friends are all troubled- 'society is out to get me'- they have the same stereotypes. There are a lot of jokes that fly around 'I'm black, I can't be doing that….'*

Reuben described how people often perceived him differently from how he saw himself:

> *I'm always seen as black. My mum's friend is 'proper black' and she always tells me I'm black although my mum brought me up as mixed race.*

He suggested that it is in his treatment at the hands of the police where he most notices this:

> *They judge me; they already have a perception of me. When I was younger they*

(police and people) would look at me when I went into shops, I think they thought I was going to shoplift. They slowed down and watched me when I came into your house. When we, (R and two white friends), got stopped by the police, they separated me from the group and when I was driving back from A's at 3am I got followed and then surrounded by 4 police vehicles. They justified it by saying that they'd seen me delivering a package the day before.

At the time of the research Reuben was happy, healthy and well adapted to his life, living in the community to which he came with his mother and sister at the age of 12. He had developed a strong sense of personal identity and was able to rationalise his continued exposure to discrimination. He had emotional support from a variety of relationships; these he described as mentors, his girlfriend and close male friendships. He said, *'I don't think about all of this very much now'.*

Reuben admitted that he did not progress at school in the way he would have wished because of a number of challenges to his resilience. His mother's preoccupation with providing material resources for her family after the death of his father meant that although she expected him to do well at school, she was not able to support his education and he lost the motivation to succeed. Similarly the death of his father, who he described as his role model, forced Reuben to look to his male peer group for emotional support. His mixed heritage meant that he was unsure of which group to belong, the white, or the black group. By his own admission when he was with the white group he '*was in a lot of trouble*' and when he was with the black group he had an attitude of, '*us against the world'*; although this provided a sense of cohesion, it was based on a shared anger against society, in his case, the police and his school.

He was anxious not to be stereotyped as a 'neek' at school by the black boys so he aligned himself with them, rather than the white boys. He found himself discriminated against by teachers and placed at the back of the classroom with the black boys, '*who didn't want to learn'*. Losing motivation he was moved to lower sets at school because of his *'behaviour'* and failed to maintain his good grades. He, as with many of the mixed heritage boys spoken to during this research, didn't '*talk'* or discuss his experiences with his mother, thus denying himself the support that this relationship might have provided. He described how he took time to adjust to living in London after Kenya where, '*everyone was friendly'*, he had supportive relationships and his mixed heritage, *'was not an issue'.*

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Table 6.5 outlines how Reuben's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.5 Reuben's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute towards resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Mother expected him to do well at school but it was his father who supported him with homework. Although he progressed well at his school, when his father died his mother had to '*put food on the table*' and '*expected me to get on with my schoolwork.*' He lost motivation and didn't work as hard as he could have because of his mother's preoccupation with material resources and lack of capacity to support his education.
Access to supportive relationships	• The emotional gap left by the loss of his father forced him to seek comfort, trust and belonging from a peer group. • He didn't '*talk*' or discuss his experiences with his mother, thus denying himself the support that this relationship might have provided • His best friend JM is black, '*We are like kind of related because he lost his dad too,*' but when he got a white girlfriend and Reuben felt betrayed, like he had lost his best friend. • Now he has emotional support from a variety of relationships; mentors, his girlfriend and close male friendships.
Development of a desirable personal identity	• He has now developed a strong sense of personal identity. He says, '*I don't think about all of this* (experiences to do with his mixed heritage) *very much now*'. He can rationalise his continued exposure to discrimination
Experiences of power and control	• Little suggested as he was growing up but now Reuben chooses relationships that nurture him rather than his choice being dependent on how others might stereotype him. This suggests an ability to look after himself.
Adherence to cultural traditions	• His parents never sat down and talked to him about being mixed heritage when he was in Kenya because, '*I was happy, I never thought about it*'. • People often perceive him as black although his mother brought him up as mixed heritage • When he was young, he only had black girlfriends

	because he didn't want to be '*stereotyped by my friends*'. He suggests that now that he has two good white friends it doesn't really matter and he now has a white girlfriend.
Experiences of social justice	• When his family moved to South London his mother believed they would be, '*blamed for any trouble*' as they were the only black family in the area. The '*neighbours were really unfriendly- I was used to Africa where everyone was friendly*'. • Teachers discriminated against black children in school; aligning himself with the black children he became vulnerable to this discrimination also. • His treatment at the hands of the police is where he most notices discrimination.
Experiences of social cohesion with others	• He has always had a sense of cohesion with others although based on shared anger against society, the police and his school. By his own admission when he was with the white group he '*was in a lot of trouble*' and when he was with the black group he had an attitude of, '*us against the world*'.

Case Study Four

Kim

Kim was a Year 10 pupil at an inner London secondary school. She was described as living with her white working class mother and her brother who was also mixed heritage. Her Jamaican father did not live with them and was reported by a teacher to be in prison. The same teacher also suggested that there was domestic violence in the family.

A teacher at Kim's school described how:

> *She (Kim)* has c*onstant issues around friendships and bonding with others in school. She has issues around her ethnicity. The mixed race children are called names or call names; they are teased about their colour, called names like cheese, goldbar. When this happens Kim lashes out, asking questions later. She is constantly being sent home. But she is confused, she makes racist comments against other mixed race girls.'*

It was suggested that, *'poverty is behind a lot of it, dad is in prison. She over sticks up for herself. All these issues from home have an impact on her happiness and progress at school.'*

Kim's brother too, displayed low-level disruption in lessons. He often truanted from lessons, *'frequently squares up to other students,'* and resented being told what to do by teachers. Although given support through a vocational course one day out of school a week:

> *His mother thinks teachers pick on him; she's got a negative attitude. I talked to him about his likes and dislikes; he doesn't think he's got any problems. His mum is very aggressive; if there is domestic violence she is obviously acting out. Dad is illiterate and open about it.*

The teachers suggested that the family's lack of access to material resources was in some part responsible for the violence within the home. Furthermore it was 'acted out' outside the home, in her mother's aggression and Kim's physical reaction to name- calling.

Kim was also described as confused, having no sense of being mixed heritage. A teacher stated that Kim and her friends never talked about Jamaica or, *'have never said they've been to Jamaica. They're all Caribbean. They don't really have a sense of being mixed.'*

However during focus group discussion, Kim described how:

> *I have both cultures, sometimes my mum cooks Jamaican food, and we listen to Jamaican music. My granddad lives in Jamaica but he comes to see us even though we're with my mum.'*

Nonetheless she was keen to assert:

> *I think it's good to have a chance to talk about our identity and stuff like this- this is the first time that anybody's ever asked me about it. We never talk about it at school.*

It appeared that Kim lacked the opportunity, at home and school, to discuss issues relating to her mixed heritage identity. She might have been confused about why children called her names and therefore reacted in a way that was familiar to her.

A teacher argued that the mixed heritage girls, including Kim, were some of the most beautiful and powerful girls in the school. Kim exhibited pride, perceiving black girls to be jealous of her, *'looks and hair.'* Nonetheless her reactions to name-calling did not demonstrate power to care for herself, and she was frequently sent home from school because of her reactions.

Kim was keen to talk about issues relating to her mixed heritage. After the initial introduction she was keen to know that there was going to be a focus group discussion and was the first to return her parental consent form. Yet before the focus group discussion she had an argument with someone and was distracted and unfocused. This demonstrated a lack of power and control as she let events distract her from something that she had been looking forward to and that she felt might facilitate some change in school.

In the focus group Kim spoke about the discrimination she and her friends suffered from black girls because:

> *Boys like lighties; we have the best of both worlds. Our hair is better quality.*
> *Black people have grudges- they are jealous- we've got better quality hair-*
> *the colour of our skin's better.'*

She also spoke about the names that she and her friends were called at school including; mongrels; rich tea biscuit; muffins; yellow. She said that other children:

> *Call us yellow- we have to put up with cussing. They call us grey too- black*
> *and white makes grey- we're elephants. We know where black people come*
> *from. And white people, they're just neeks, but what about mixed race- where*
> *do they come from? That's what they say.'*

She said that although, *'we find the cussing funny amongst ourselves',* she was outwardly angry with the children that did it. She suggested that:

> *If you've got a mouth like me it's ok- I can stand up for myself. I don't need*
> *to tell my mum, I don't want her to worry but I would because I can talk to her*
> *about anything. The boys, I think they just brush it under the carpet- they deal*
> *with it in the wrong way.*

This suggested that Kim's closest relationships did not provide her with a sense of support for such discrimination, neither though did her school. The teachers themselves referred to name-calling as, '*just part of the vernacular*', not to be taken seriously. Neither did they provide support for issues of mixed identity within the school curriculum. Nonetheless a teacher noted that because some parents did not talk to their children about their identity, and, '*were not adequately prepared to bring them up as society sees them,*' that it was important that these issues were addressed at school. Yet, at the time of the research, they were not.

Kim was keen to assert that students didn't usually have a chance to talk about being mixed heritage at school and, '*that the Portuguese and Somalis get everything- group meetings etc- this school pays more attention to them. We don't get treated equally- this school is run by Somalis*'.

She also said that she didn't know anything about, '*mixed race; it's just a white man raping a black slave.*' Although her friends in the focus group felt that it would be good to talk about their history as mixed heritage people, '*A mixed race month- like a Black History month,*' Kim focused on the need to have, '*an assembly about the cussing that we have to put up with,*' the need to book a room, with bean bags where:

> *We could go and talk about stuff like this- how's your month been? Anybody called you a cuss word this month? White people have the library- black people have the canteen- we don't have anywhere. The Somalis have their own corridor- they learn their language even though they know it anyway.*

Kim also suggested that some of the teachers for example Mr. B '*thinks I'm black,*' which she found very frustrating, as she did, the fact that people spoke of President Obama as black, '*it bothers me that mixed race is classed as black.*' This suggested that she did have a sense of being mixed heritage, despite what her teacher had said of Kim and her friends.

There was a sense of cohesion in the way that Kim and her friends, '*laughed about it (discrimination) amongst themselves*'; they understood how each other felt. They were all grateful to live in an area that was diverse suggesting that in 'white areas' people stared at them for example in Kingston and '*in Selfridges*'. They agreed that they would prefer to live in London than a mainly white area.

'I prefer to live here- it doesn't matter here.'

Kim's teacher suggested that events from home, exacerbated by a lack of material resources, had a negative impact on her school experience. Indeed she lacked certain elements that contributed to developing resilience. She had not discussed her mixed identity with anyone before; neither did she, '*talk to her mum,*' about name-calling. No relationship was therefore fundamental in supporting and nurturing her mixed identity and empowering her with strategies to deal with discrimination. There was a sense of cohesion with mixed heritage friends; they were able to empathise with each other's frustrations, but Kim was not able to vent her frustrations other than the aggression which was responsible for so many of her exclusions from school.

Although described as 'powerful' by a teacher, Kim did not appear to exercise the power and control to care for her self in particular situations at school, often, *'lashing out and being sent home'*. Although some teachers were aware that more should be done to support these issues at school, they suggested that discrimination such as name- calling was often brushed off as part of the vernacular. Neither did the curriculum provide support to mixed heritage identity. For Kim there were remain many challenges; this had a negative impact on her school experience.

Table 6.6 outlines how Kim's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.6: Kim's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute towards resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Lack of material resources described as 'poverty' at home. • Domestic violence in the family exacerbated by poverty. It is 'acted act' outside the home, in her mother's aggression and Kim's physical reaction to name-calling

	• Parental illiteracy • Father does not live with them and was reported to be in prison.
Access to supportive relationships	• Constant issues around friendships and bonding with others in school • Little support for discrimination from closest relationships; Kim didn't discuss this with her mother • Little support from school: teachers referred to name-calling as, '*just part of the vernacular*', not to be taken seriously • No support for issues of mixed identity within the school curriculum.
Development of a desirable personal identity	• Described as being confused about her identity and knowing little about her own mixed heritage. Her identity was not supported at home or school; the school curriculum did not provide support to mixed heritage identity and teachers refer to name-calling as just part of the vernacular.
Experiences of power and control	• Although described as 'powerful' by a teacher, Kim did not exercise the power and control to care for her self in particular situations at school, often, '*lashing out*' at name calling, '*and being sent home*'. • Exhibits pride, perceiving black girls to be jealous of her, '*looks and hair*', and that, '*we have the best of both worlds. Our hair is better quality. Black people have grudges- they are jealous- we've got better quality hair- the colour of our skin's better.*'
Adherence to cultural traditions	• Lives in a racially, culturally and linguistically diverse area which is replicated in her school community • She suggests, '*I have both cultures, sometimes my mum cooks Jamaican food, we listen to Jamaican music. My granddad lives in Jamaica but he comes to see us even though we're with my mum.*' • Described as confused, having no sense of being mixed heritage; she makes racist comments against other mixed heritage girls. • A teacher states that Kim and her friends never talk about Jamaica or, '*have never said they've been to Jamaica. They're all Caribbean. They don't really have a sense of being mixed.*' • She suggested that some teachers '*think I'm black,*' which she found very frustrating. '*It bothers me that mixed race is classed as black.*'
Experience of social justice	• N/A
Experience of social cohesion with others	• Exhibits a sense of cohesion with mixed heritage friends; they were able to empathise with each other's frustrations. • Lack of cohesion with wider school community. Evident resentment to other groups. Keen to assert

	that students didn't usually have a chance to talk about being mixed heritage at school and that, *'that the Portuguese and Somalis get everything- group meetings etc- this school pays more attention to them. We don't get treated equally- this school is run by Somalis'.*

Case Study Five

Joe

Joe was fourteen years old. He lived in South London with his white mother, black Jamaican born father and younger sister, Nina, who was eleven years old. He was described as coming from a 'professional home'. He attended a large multiracial secondary school in central London.

His mother described Joe as a very popular boy, bright, good at sports and on the school's Gifted and Talented scheme. He was, *'adored by his friends'* and had a power that his mother described as, *'almost corrupting'*. She described Joe's primary school as, *'inclusive, celebratory of cultures; it valued the individual'*. Joe was happy there and had friends from a variety of backgrounds. His best friends were a white and a mixed heritage boy. His mother described how:

> *The school recognised that he was clever; he used to crawl around the floor but was very bright. They engaged him; the head's son was mixed race too and had a rap group that Joe joined. The music specialist got him in a band, she even came round to teach him because he was so good.*

When he transferred to secondary school Joe adopted a black and mixed heritage friendship group; his mother described them as:

> *A bad group. It's maybe an identity thing. His transition to secondary school was at a time when there were a lot of muggings, knife crimes - he went from a protected world. His friends have all been mugged and he was last year, at knife-point. It's like he's buying into the black stereotype- African, Columbian, mixed race urban friends. He dumped his white friends.*

His mother sent him on, '*Forest Camp*', *as an alternative, to mix with different types of people but, 'he doesn't like going; he thinks they are not his type.'* She explained how Joe's friend who looked similar to him (his mum is black and dad mixed race) also went but the two of them, *'tend to make a little group on their own.'* She described how one year the camp leader was mixed heritage and, *'into music so they did enjoy it more.'*

His mother worried that because of his friendship group his teachers would make assumptions about him. She was also aware that his friends distracted him from his schoolwork. She said:

> *I don't know if they stereotype him at school. I get daily negative phone calls for his behaviour, never good. They don't have time for good apparently. It's all low level for talking, but he'll miss a 20 minutes detention, just to get an hour one; he misses that, then it escalates.*

His mother asked the deputy head teacher to engage Joe more with sport, to get him away from his friendship group who she felt had no aspirations. She acknowledged that the school had some aspirations for him stating:

> *He was in the top set for maths but couldn't be bothered to do the work so moved down; they are now putting him back in the top and are giving him some 1:1 tuition to fill in the gaps, but the headteacher took him out to lunch and asked him 'do you ever see your dad? Does anyone in your family work? He obviously thought he was a street kid or something. I don't know whether he wanted him as an informer! The teachers are a bit more informed but I always make a point of telling them that I'm a teacher.*

She encouraged Joe's father to go to the school to talk to his teachers. His father worked in the field of black boys' achievement and she felt that he needed to engage with what was happening at the school and make his presence felt.

His mother described how Joe, '*doesn't share his feelings, like his father. Maybe it's a societal thing- a black macho thing.'* This suggested that Joe, like Reuben above, was not using close relationships to support him to face challenges in his life. Instead he was finding his sense of belonging with his friendship group but this group was having a negative influence on Joe at school. He did not yet possess the power and control to balance his schoolwork, and his need to belong to his friendship group at school. More

important was a need for protection in the community in which he lived, where many 'gangs' operated. Comments made by his head teacher suggested that he did not view Joe as an individual, but made assumptions about his experience due to his mixed heritage and his friendship group. Table 6.7 outlines how Joe's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.7 Joe's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute towards resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Comes from a professional home; there is an active interest in his school experience • His mother is an education consultant • Sent on '*Forest Camp',* as an alternative to London life, to mix with different types of people
Access to supportive relationships	• Access to a range of supportive relationships e.g. Jamaican relations on father's side/ Uncle on mother's side/ family friends • Mother describes how he, '*doesn't share his feelings, like his father. Maybe it's a societal thing- a black macho thing.'* Suggests that he does not use close relationships to support him to face challenges in his life. Instead he is finding his sense of belonging with his friendship group but this group is having a negative influence on him at school. • Little support from school; head teacher not viewing him as an individual but is making assumptions about his experience due to his mixed heritage and his friendship group.
Development of a desirable personal identity	• Described as a very popular boy, bright, good at sports and on the school's Gifted and Talented scheme. He is also, '*adored by his friends'* but has a power that his mother describes as, '*almost corrupting'.* '
Experiences of power and control	• Does not yet possess the power and control to balance his schoolwork with his need to belong to his friendship group at school. More important to him is a need for protection in the community in which he lives, where many 'gangs' operate'.
Adherence to cultural traditions	• Lives in a racially, culturally and linguistically diverse area which is replicated in his school community • Attends a large multiracial secondary school in central London. • Primary school was, '*inclusive, celebratory of*

	cultures; it valued the individual'. Was happy there and had friends from a variety of backgrounds.
Experience of Social Justice	• Mother worries that because of his friendship group his teachers will make assumptions about him. She is also aware that his friends distract him from his schoolwork • Head teacher not viewing him as an individual but is making assumptions about his experience due to his mixed heritage and his friendship group.
Experience of Cohesion with others	• Finding sense of belonging with friendship group based on a need to belong/ need for protection in the community in which he lives, where many 'gangs' operate. This group is having a negative influence on him at school and does not share similar values and aspirations as his family.

Case Study Six

Nina

Joe's (Case study Five) mother contrasted the experience of her son with her daughter, Nina, highlighting the significance of their age:

> *I think it changes with age. My daughter is 10; she has a lot of white friends because they are from a similar socio economic background; their parents have similar interests to us, and she plays with them out of school. She does also play with black girls at 'After school club' though.*

Her mother recalled that when she was young, Nina wanted her hair to be straight, '*like her friends'. She used to get anxious about it, about conforming.*' Her mother learnt to do cane row and put beads in her hair, '*which made a difference to her self esteem.*' Her mother recalled a family party:

> *She likes dressing up, like me, so I did a fake ponytail for her because she wanted long hair. A boy pulled it off; she was so upset. Her dad and I said to her 'you have to love yourself, your hair, for what you are.'*

Nina was described as now much happier with herself. She was unconditionally loved; a child who talked easily about her feelings and that was good at, '*seeking out support when*

she needs it from the right person.' She was self-contained, had grown in confidence and popularity at school and had, '*learnt to like herself'*. Her mother described her as more accommodating than her brother and suggested this was maybe due to her status as a second child. Nina, for example, went to the Forest Camp and, '*talks about the fact that it's mostly white and, would prefer it if it was more diverse but she talks openly about it.'*

Her mother described how Nina was doing well at school but '*she is less academic than him (*Joe)*; she has to work at it.'*
Nina found out that she was allocated the secondary school that was her fourth choice on her preference list. Her friends were allocated another school, Nina's first choice, and were all going together. Some suggested that she would be bullied as she was on her own. Although initially a little disappointed at the decision, Nina adjusted quickly and assured her friends and family that she would be fine. Her mother described how proud of her she was.

Nina was developing power and control over her life. She had developed the ability to care for herself by, *'seeking out support, when she needs it, from the right person.'* She knew that there were people she could trust around her. Although younger than her brother, her friendships were based on similar interests and circumstances rather than a need for protection. The relationships her mother had cultivated in order to support her children better, developed Nina's self-esteem and self-image, for example, her mother learnt how to style Nina's hair with help from her black and mixed friends and therefore Nina no longer wished to conform and have straight hair like many of her friends. Her mother suggested that she had to work harder than her brother to make friends and do well at school but her success had developed her confidence and her belief that she would enjoy secondary school. She appeared to have the ability to adapt to different situations, the Forest Camp and her secondary school. Nina appeared to be using the resources available to her to navigate her way through the seven tensions to face the challenges her life might bring.

The family's access to a range of supportive relationships shaped the children's, especially Nina's, resilience. These relationships were supportive of the children's identities as well as their mother's needs as a white mother in a mixed family. It also ensured that the

children adhere to their cultural traditions and their family identification. Their mother said that:

> *On their dad's side, they have their uncle and his two children. They have Jamaican food at their Auntie's. On Boxing Day there is a big family do; I'm usually the only white person there. The children love these reunions, Nina loved it- she had hundreds of cousins- it was really exciting for her.*

There was support from friends in the community. The family were friendly with a Guyanese/ Jamaican couple who had children of similar ages and:

> *There is my friend H who is mixed race with a Nigerian husband. This is important for my kids, for Nina to have black women in her life- they are really fond of her. When I couldn't cane row, H said to me 'you do have to learn how to do Nina's hair- my white mum didn't know how to do mine and it made me really miserable. These friends also told me about all black girls growing up wanting to have long straight hair (like Nina did) that made me feel better. Good to have people to make me feel better about this.*

Their mother also described how important her own friends were in supporting her to build the resilience to cope with the discrimination her husband's family had shown towards her and their children. She described an occasion when one of her husband's cousins discriminated against her and Joe, and she later drew on the support of her friends:

> *We were at a christening once and Joe was naughty. One of them said, 'that's what you expect of a nasty little half-caste,' D, my husband, didn't support me. I refused to go to family functions after that unless C, my friend, whose husband is mixed race and has had a lot to deal with, came with me for support, and W, a Jamaican friend, who's been inside and was fostered by a white woman; he doesn't care about colour…they've helped me.'*

After the christening she and her husband had a lot of:

> *Rows and he admitted that the loyalty he felt towards his family and the loyalty he felt to me was a real pressure for him and made him feel like giving up, but at least he was talking about it. At least I could try and understand. It was hard at first because I was brought up to be very anti prejudice, my family was very political.*

When her children were little their mother recalled how some of her friends and her husband's family had thought it unfair to have had mixed heritage children, '*they were*

separatist in their views. It used to make me feel upset, 'like I shouldn't have had them'.
She recalled how:

> *Nina's grandmother in Jamaica- she liked me, used to chat to me about D's*
> *brother's new woman and everything but once when Nina was sat on her lap*
> *she said, 'mixed race- them people- horrible they are- their eyes, they'll*
> *double cross you, you kids are ok but you wait until they grow up'. It used*
> *to upset me but I couldn't excommunicate her- I just had to understand the*
> *historical process- the caste system- light skin being more privileged- slavery,*
> *rebellion and remembering that she was poor and dark skinned. I should expect*
> *this.*

However she found support from her younger brother, '*who said to me that it's not my*
fault- I can't carry white guilt, for slavery, colonialism, light skin being more privileged-
you had nothing to do with that.'

She recalled:

> *I was at Brixton Law Centre the other day and the woman there started*
> *moaning about her brother being married to a white woman…there was*
> *so much hostility. D's family were like this.*

She described how she was:

> *More resilient about it now. I don't engage with all the Jamaican reunions.*
> *I think it's been an on going process of self-reflection, scrutiny, self-awareness.*
> *I take it all less personally now. I don't have to disprove it, just be aware that*
> *people have these views. I don't have to engage with his extended family anymore*
> *so much. When I went to something last time I noticed that one of his nephews*
> *is with a white woman now- nothing was said though. Times are changing.*

The sense of control she developed through supportive relationships and her continuing
process of self-reflection, had buffered the effects of social injustice she and the family
had experienced. She demonstrated a sense of control over her reactions to social justice
when she suggested that she takes it '*less personally'*, accepting that people have different
views and *'holds onto'* Maya Angelou's quote about prejudice*:*

> *'I've only got to encounter you, but you've got to live with it.'*

Table 6.8 outlines how Nina's experiences contribute towards each of the seven tensions necessary to develop resilience.

Table 6.8 Nina's experiences in relation to the seven tensions that contribute to resilience

The seven tensions that contribute towards resilience	Individual's experiences in relation to each tension
Access to material resources	• Comes from what her mother describes as a professional home where there is an active interest in her school experience • Mother is an education consultant • Sent on '*Forest Camp',* as an alternative, to mix with different types of people
Access to supportive relationships	• Described as unconditionally loved; a child who talks easily about her feelings and that is good at, '*seeking out support when she needs it, from the right person.*' • The relationships her mother has cultivated in order to support her children better, have developed Nina's self-esteem and self-image, for example, her mother has learnt how to style Nina's hair through the support of her black and mixed friends.
Development of a desirable personal identity	• Her mother recalls that when she was young, Nina wanted her hair to be straight, '*like her friends'. She used to get anxious about it, about conforming.*' Her mother learnt to do cane row and put beads in her hair, '*which made a difference to her self-esteem.*' Therefore Nina no longer wishes to conform and have straight hair like many of her white friends • Described as now much happier with herself
Experiences of power and control	• Developing power and control over her life. She has developed the ability to care for herself by, '*seeking out support, when she needs it, from the right person.*' She knows that there are people she can trust around her. • Quickly adjusted to not being able to go to the same secondary school as her friends- assured friends and family that she would be fine. • Attends Forest Camp- reflects openly on how she would prefer it to be more diverse but adapts and makes the most of the opportunity
Adherence to cultural traditions	• Lives in a racially, culturally and linguistically diverse area which is replicated in her school community • Relationships on mother's and father's family sides; attends Jamaican family celebrations • Relationships with mother's friends – they provide

	positive black female role models for Nina and have e.g. supported her with her hair (cane row)
Experiences of social justice	• N/A
Experiences of cohesion with others	• Friendships are based on similar interests and circumstances.

An analysis of the case studies using Ungar et al.'s (2007) model

In this chapter I analysed how three mixed heritage individuals found a way to cope with adversity and how three have yet to find a way. Each case study explored how their ability to cope reflected their different degrees of access to seven mental health-enhancing experiences as proposed in Ungar et al.'s (2007) model (see Table 7.1). It was clear from their experiences that there is no one uniform pathway to resilience. The case studies demonstrated how the seven tensions interacted to develop resilience. However, for the sake of presentation, Table 6.9 outlines whether each individual had access to the seven tensions that were necessary to achieve resilience.

Table 6.9: Each individual's access to the seven tensions

Individual cases	The seven tensions						
	Access to material resources	Access to supportive relationships	Development of desirable personal identity	Power and control	Experience of cultural adherence	Experience of social justice	Sense of cohesion
Case 1: Lisa	−	+	+	+	+	−	+
Case 2: Esme	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Case 3: Reuben	−	−	−	−	−	−	+
Case 4: Kim	−	−	−	−	+	−	+
Case 5: Joe	+	+	−	−	+	−	+
Case 6: Nina	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Access to material resources

Lack of material resources presented a challenge to Lisa, Kim and Reuben's resilience. When Reuben's father died his mother's focus became a need to put food on the table for her two children and less attention was given to supporting his studies. Without her attention and his father's support with homework, Reuben lost his motivation to do well at school. Similarly Kim's teachers suggested that poverty, and its associated problems, shaped her school experience.

Lisa recognised that the necessity to be a carer and mother, at a young age, presented a challenge to her ability to access education. However Werner and Smith (1992) suggest that the need to take care of younger siblings, what Rachman (1979) refers to as 'required helpfulness', contributed to the pronounced autonomy and sense of responsibility noted amongst resilient girls in their study. It appeared that Lisa's role as a carer enhanced her resilience as an adult.

Esme, Joe and Nina came from professional homes where access to material resources was taken for granted. Sufficient resources provided for a range of 'out of school activities' that nurtured children's developing identities; these included drama, cricket and 'Forest camp'. Parents supported their children's school experiences. Each child was encouraged to discuss their mixed heritage and given strategies to deal with discrimination when necessary. Their understanding of discrimination, and the tools provided for them to tackle it, enhanced their resilience. However for Joe, despite his access to material resources, other challenges existed which presented a barrier to resilience.

Relationships

The case studies reveal that significant relationships, amongst both kin and community, were foundational to children's resilience. Relationships provided love, trust and belonging; this challenged marginalisation, nurtured self-image and provided practical support for mixed heritage children and their families.

In their longitudinal study on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, Werner and Smith (1992) studied resilience in a multiracial cohort of children who successfully coped with

biological and psychological risk factors as troubled children. They found that resilient children relied on informal networks of kin and neighbours, peers and elders, for counsel and support. Many had a favourite teacher who became a role model, friend and confidant for them. They suggest that resilient children seemed to be especially adept at actively recruiting a surrogate parent. What stood out in Lisa's experience was the support of friends and colleagues who filled the emotional gap left by her mother's absence. Lisa described how a particular teacher at her school gave her an alternative to, '*the whole baby and mother thing*' by encouraging her to educate herself and make a better life for herself and her daughter. Nina's mother built a support network of black and mixed heritage women around her daughter to support her both emotionally and practically for example in managing her hair, which was essential to her self-esteem.

Reuben and Joe both built relationships outside their families amongst their peers. Reuben, without a role model, sought a sense of identity, a sense of who to become as a mixed heritage male amongst his peer group. For Joe, a sense of protection within his community influenced his choice of friends. These friendships were described as detrimental to school experience, but provided identity and belonging in the context that was needed for both boys. Kim lacked a supportive adult with whom to discuss the challenges she faced. She was confused and lashed out when she was faced with name-calling; this resulted in her exclusion from school.

Identity

Ungar et al. (2007) suggest that maintaining a sense of individual identity, as reflected in statements such as 'I am', 'I believe', and 'I feel', emerged as one of the tensions managed by youth as they looked for a position where they had a sense of themselves as healthy despite exposure to risk. Esme and her siblings maintained a sense of individual identity throughout their childhoods. Their network of relationships, their extended family and adults in the community and their peers nurtured these. Esme's sense that, '*I am an Ethiopian*' was nurtured especially by the beliefs and values of her Auntie. She also drew on the love and support of her mother; her mother suggesting that '*she gets different parts of her identity from different mums*'. Esme developed a secure sense of her own identity, which developed her resilience. Lisa's case study suggests that she was able to, '*stand up for herself*' and establish control over her life because of her focus on her purpose to

create a better life for her children; this was underpinned by the beliefs of her network of friendships with other mothers in her community.

Nina's mother described her daughter's journey to a point where she had the confidence to look forward to starting a new secondary school without her friends. She worked hard to be popular and do well at school; this gave her confidence. Her close relationships supported her and she had the independence to seek help from them when necessary. This was in contrast to her brother, Joe. His need for protection precipitated his gravitation towards a particular friendship group, the beliefs and values of which were in contrast with those of his family. Neither did he access the loving support available to him from his family relationships. This presented a challenge to his resilience.

Kim spoke of her ability to stand up for herself. Yet her reactions to discriminatory name-calling suggested that she did not necessarily have control over her life. Neither were they underpinned by an understanding of her mixed heritage identity; this might have been nurtured if Kim had had the opportunity to talk about it with significant adults in her life. Reuben too, due to the death of his father did not have the loving support to negotiate his identity towards adulthood. He described a journey of seeking '*who to be*' throughout his teenage years. This was made more confusing by his '*need to choose*' between a white or black group, neither of which was a model of what he wanted to be, due to his own mixed heritage.

Power and Control

The case studies reveal how an individual's internal locus of control and resources available to them in the family, community and school context gave them the power to shape their own experience. Lisa drew upon the resilience her mother modelled to shape a 'better life' for herself and her family. Despite becoming pregnant at a young age she ensured the continuing support of her partner in her quest to provide a better life, than the one she had known as a child, for her children.

Both Nina and Esme developed confidence and power from emotional and practical support inherent in the networks that their mothers constructed around them. Both girls drew on the support of different people as necessary. Werner and Smith (1992) suggest

that resilient children are able to ask for help from adults or peers when they need it. Both girls drew on the support of different people as necessary. Nina was doing well at school and was popular. Her mother suggested that although, unlike her brother Joe, she had to work hard to achieve this, the achievement had given her confidence and control over her life. Her mother too, developed a sense of control over her situation; this came through the support of relationships and a process of self-reflection. This had no doubt influenced Nina.

A teacher described Kim and her mixed heritage girlfriends as 'powerful'. She said that they were perceived as beautiful and therefore had 'influence' at school. However Kim lacked the foundations for resilience laid down for Nina and Esme. She had no opportunity to talk about discrimination and therefore no strategies to deal with name-calling. She lacked control over her reactions and became aggressive. This had a detrimental effect on her school experience.

Cultural adherence

Ungar et al. (2007) suggest that participants in their study described local cultural adherence as comprising aspects of ethnic, family or community identification. It appeared that for some children in the case studies above, a lack of cultural adherence presented a challenge to resilience. A teacher suggested that Kim had little understanding of and identification with her 'Caribbean side'. Although Kim said she benefitted from aspects of the local Jamaican community in her life, she described how she lacked the opportunity to discuss her mixed white and Jamaican heritage both at home and school and had little contact with Jamaican family members with whom she might discuss the discrimination she faced at school. She did not understand discrimination and furthermore lacked strategies to deal with it.

When Reuben's father died he lacked a role model of 'who to be' and had nobody to 'talk to' during his attempts to negotiate his male mixed heritage identity. He tried to find an identity within a peer group, first a group of white boys, then a group of black boys. He described himself as, *'mixed up, hanging out with loads of different groups- I didn't really know what I wanted to be.'* He described the tensions involved in deciding which group,

white or black, to identify with. Belonging to both, at different times, had disadvantages for him and distracted him from his schoolwork.

Joe's parents worked hard to nurture a positive sense of his mixed heritage through family and community networks, and by involving him in activities such as Forest Camp. Yet moving from the 'protected world of primary school' to a central London secondary school at a time of muggings and knife crime in the community influenced his choice of a friendship group with which to identify. His mother described how, '*he dumped his white friends*' and the white side of his identity, and adopted a '*black and mixed race group*' for protection. She describes how this group shaped Joe's experience at school. He aligned himself with black street culture, 'can't be bothered' with schoolwork and was vulnerable to being stereotyped by teachers. Unlike Reuben, Joe did have a male role model at home, his father, yet neither found it easy to talk to each other about their experiences as black men. Joe therefore preferred to seek belonging and protection from his friendship group.

Nina, Esme and Lisa all identified with the different sides of their family heritage. Each utilised role models of both within their family and family friendship networks. All socialised with other mixed families that reflected the cultural differences within their own families. Esme described herself as Ethiopian but drew upon her mother's white American culture as easily. All three were at ease in a variety of cultural contexts, whether these were mixed friendship groups at school or different family celebrations. This suggested that they were developing resilience.

Social justice

The case studies revealed that all individuals experienced marginalisation due to their mixed heritage status. The degree to which they were able to challenge this was dependent on their ability to navigate the seven tensions and the capacities of their family, school and community to support this process.

Lisa's mother's 'fight' in the face of marginalisation shaped Lisa's own resilience and determination to provide for her family, despite a lack of material resources. Both Esme and Nina's family members ensured that they understood social injustice and had the confidence to protect themselves against it. It is clear from Joe, Reuben and Kim's

experiences that their schools did not nurture their resilience. All three experienced discrimination from peers and/or teachers at school. Teachers made assumptions about the home lives of all three that did not match the reality of their situations. Kim had no sense of social community at school claiming the school's preferential treatment for other community groups e.g. the Somali students. Zimmerman et al. (1994) suggest that the presence of an understanding teacher or other support systems in the school increase a student's chances of developing coping skills. They suggest that activities where students have opportunities to share ideas, provide help to others, and participate in decision-making about issues of concern to them may also play a protective role. Although Kim's school prided itself on a strong culture of student voice, she stated that it had no systems in place to support the discrimination faced by mixed heritage children. Teachers too, alluded to a lack of recognition of mixed heritage identity within the curriculum and school policy.

Cohesion

Ungar et al. (2007) describe cohesion as encompassing an orientation to group life that is bigger than the 'I' yet includes the 'I'. Familial and social networks described in the case studies provided individuals with a sense of cohesion with others that affirmed their identities. This was most apparent in the cases of Lisa and Esme. Esme developed an identity through her extended Ethiopian family and their traditions. Whilst enjoying Ethiopian food, hair and beauty routines, it was already decided that Esme would look after 'Auntie' when she grew older. Lisa's values were shaped by a collective purpose amongst women in her community to provide a better life for their children. She described the sacrifices that she and other mothers made to achieve this.

Although described as detrimental to his school experience, Joe's attachment to his friendship group was based on a collective need for protection in a community where gang culture predominated whilst Kim shared anger and a sense of injustice with her mixed heritage friends, as they experienced discriminatory behaviour from other children.

Summary

The case studies provide snapshots of how individuals had or were yet to 'hit their stride' and live in relative comfort despite conflicts in their lives, many of which arose because of their mixed heritage identity. They demonstrate that relationships with significant others, peers and adults within one's family and the community, were imperative to particular individuals' resilience. Family members and other adults supported individuals' understandings of discriminatory behaviour and provided them with the strategies to overcome it. Relationships also nurtured mixed heritage individuals' identities by providing role models of 'who to become' as well as practical support with aspects of individual identity for example managing hair and beauty routines. This developed resilience; it raised self-esteem and guided resilient pathways to adulthood. Even when a relationship was conflicted, as in the case of Lisa and her mother, her mother modelled strategies that shaped Lisa's resilience and positive reaction to her own situation.

Relationships provided cohesion; this shaped individual and collective identities and offered belonging and security, a significant factor in resilience. They also provided cultural adherence for individuals so that they might have a better understanding of both parents' family cultures. This led to a sense of ease and adaptability in a variety of cultural contexts. Where cultural understanding was lacking, in the cases of Kim and Reuben, this resulted in confusion and a lack of understanding of their identity and a sense of frustration when faced with discrimination. Both challenged resilience as well as their ability to fulfil their potential at school.

Access to material resources proved a challenge to resilience in the case studies when resources were scarce; otherwise they were not mentioned. A lack of resources presented challenge to Kim and Reuben's resilience, mainly because of associated problems such as domestic violence and a lack of parental focus on their children's schooling. However for Lisa the manner in which a lack of resources shaped her childhood experience provided her with the resilience to provide a better life for her family. The experience of caring for oneself and others shaped control over her situation from which she found strength. Others, such as Kim and Nina found this through a network of relationships that supported them.

It is clear that, although the tensions have been presented separately above, they interact in each individual's path to resilience. What the case studies clearly demonstrate though is that the resiliency process may differ for males and females (Werner and Smith 1992). The example of siblings, Joe and Nina, with potentially equal access to the seven tensions, most clearly demonstrates this. Rutter (1987, 1996) claims that boys have been shown to be at greater risk of developing behavioural and emotional problems when they are exposed to stressful family arrangements. They also may not have a positive same sex role model in the home as girls do, as many troubled families who experience poverty tend to be headed by a single mother (Rutter 1987, 1996). Additionally boys tend to be treated more harshly than girls both at school and in the home. Although Joe experienced few of these challenges in his home life, his mother suggested that teachers at his school rarely spoke about him in a positive manner and also made inaccurate assumptions about his home experience. This was exacerbated by a lack of aspiration within his friendship group, which shaped Joe's own attitude towards school. Reuben however was exposed to stressful family arrangements due to the death of his father, the subsequent move to London and his mother's focus on providing material resources for her children. Neither did he have a role model. Although he was not part of a family that experienced poverty and its associated problems, the implications for him were similar. Indeed Werner and Smith (1992) suggest males were more vulnerable to separation from or loss of caregivers in the first decade of their life than girls. Neither Joe nor Reuben discussed their experiences at school with their parents, looking instead to peers for protection and belonging. Rutter (1987, 1996) suggests that it is this combination of increased environmental pressure coupled with a more immature neurological and other biological development that best explains the rather robust finding of sex related differences in risk and resilience.

In the next chapter research findings will be discussed in light of literature reviewed, limitations of the research outlined and educational implications discussed.

CHAPTER 7: A DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research examined the experiences that mixed heritage children have in the education system. Three research questions framed the data collection and analysis:

- In what ways are mixed heritage children's identities shaped by their social contexts; are these identities recognised by the ways in which others perceive them?

- In what ways do mixed heritage children deal with the assumptions that others make about their identities; can these indicate the development of resilience?

- What experiences do mixed heritage children have at school and how are these shaped by the assumptions that others make about their identities?

This thesis challenges any suggestion that we have moved to a, 'post race environment where ethnic and racial groupings become far less relevant than data on people's social backgrounds' (Easton 2008: BBC News website November 5th). Although social background played a role in the experience of mixed heritage's children schooling it was not the overriding influence. The thesis concludes that, despite the many different ways in which children's identities and experiences were shaped by their social contexts, their identities were not recognised in a system that categorised them purely by their phenotype or a belief that they were somehow victims of a 'culture clash' between 'two different races'. Such categorisation rendered them vulnerable to a set of assumptions about their experiences, which bore little resemblance to the reality of their lives. These assumptions were made about all mixed heritage children, regardless of their social backgrounds. Thus their social backgrounds became less relevant to their experiences at school than the ways in which others perceived them and the subsequent assumptions that were made about them. The thesis therefore adds another dimension to the research of Gillborn et al. (2012) who suggest that for 'black' children in the education system, being middle class and

having social and cultural capital offers scant protection against 'racist stereotyping and exclusion'.

This research suggests that because children were not recognised as mixed heritage in the education system, there was a general lack of knowledge amongst teachers about the needs and challenges that they faced. There also existed a general lack of critical literacy around racial identities with which to deal with issues arising in relation to children's mixed heritage identities. Whilst this posed a threat to the educational success of mixed heritage children in the ways described below, this thesis concludes that it was boys that were most vulnerable. Throughout my research I have come to believe that it is the social processes to which mixed heritage children are exposed which present a serious challenge to their resilience, their capacity to achieve their potential and their sense of belonging in their community. It is not, as many professionals would presuppose, a consequence of their mixed heritage.

The following sections discuss the main findings of the research, in light of previous literature on the subject. Whilst section one discusses the influence of a systematic focus on mixed heritage children's 'racial identities' which has become more relevant to their experiences than their social backgrounds, section two explores the implications of this for their experiences in school. Later in the chapter consideration will be given to the limitations of the research design and suggestions made for future areas of research. Educational implications arising from the research findings are also presented, as are recommendations for educational professionals involved in the schooling of mixed heritage children.

Section 1: Mixed heritage children's identities and the ways in which they are perceived in school

This thesis found that mixed heritage children's identities were shaped in many different ways by their social contexts. It acknowledged a suggestion by Williams (2009), that further educational research needs to focus specifically on the home and family factors that influence the schooling of mixed heritage children to help provide educators with a better understanding of how children experience schooling. Yet, in aiming to do so, it discovered that influential familial factors are not always recognised in schools where

children were categorised purely by their skin colour and/ or assumptions that they were victims of a 'culture clash' between two supposedly different 'races'. However interview data revealed six components that interviewees felt shaped personal identity in mixed heritage children. This echoes previous findings suggesting a range of social variables shape identity development amongst mixed heritage children (Wardle 2004; Song 2007). These components are outlined in table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: The six components of personal identity

1. Social Class	The impact of poverty and a range of associated factors The impact of living in families where school and education were given low priority The consequence of a lack of parental attention to children's mixed heritage.
2. Personal circumstances	Children having access to their entire heritage Family support networks The geographical context in which children live and go to school
3. Family heritage	Shadism Black Caribbean identities Black African identities
4. Gender	The different experiences of mixed heritage boys and girls
5. Age	The role of age in identity in mixed heritage children
6. The role of the mother	The influence of the mother's identity on her child and how this might be shaped by discrimination Mothers' influence on their children's school experience.

As well as shaping individual mixed heritage children's identities and experiences, these six components also determined their ability to navigate the seven mental health-enhancing experiences (Ungar et al. 2007) necessary for developing the resilience to cope with the adversity that many of them experienced, resulting from the inaccurate assumptions that others made about them based on their skin colour or their mixed status. Chapter Six detailed the unique pathways that six mixed heritage individuals navigated to resolve all seven mental health-enhancing experiences in developing resilience. Individuals had varying degrees of success according to the strengths and resources

available to them individually, within the social contexts that also shaped their personal identities.

Although the six components of personal identity were presented separately in the findings chapters, I would suggest that all six interacted in differing ways to shape personal identity and resilience amongst different mixed heritage children in this research. Although some interviewees argued that particular components of personal identity were more influential in shaping school experience than others, it was difficult to separate the differential influence of each. Whilst many suggested the dominance of social class, I would argue that, although it did shape mixed heritage children's identities and experiences, it was difficult to separate its influence from other components of personal identity in shaping mixed heritage children's school experience, and that issues arising in relation to children's racial identities were the overriding influence in their school experience. As suggested, this challenges any notion that 'we are moving to a post race environment where ethnic and racial groupings become far less relevant than data on people's social backgrounds' (Easton 2008: BBC News website November 5th).

Social background and racial identities

Two main ways in which social class shapes children's identities and experiences are discussed below. However it remains difficult to tease out its unique contribution as it interacts so closely with the other variables, which relate to 'racial identities'. One example explores how the ways in which mothers nurtured their children's identities, interacted with social class. Interviewees suggested that mothers, whom they described as white working class with low self-esteem, low levels of education and poor understanding of the needs of their mixed heritage children did not discuss their children's mixed heritage identities with them and when these children were within white extended families they were often not recognised as mixed heritage but simply seen as 'darker'. This was identified by Sir Keith Ajegbo in his 2007 lecture 'On Being Mixed Race', who, suggests his own family treated him as if he was white but had, rather accidentally, black skin. A lack of discussion about how to deal with the discrimination that many children encountered meant that children lacked the necessary resilience to deal with discrimination at school. Chapter Six highlights three individual cases where children

lacked resilience because they did not have the opportunities to discuss issues of identity with their mothers or other significant adults.

Whilst Edwards et al.'s (2008) qualitative study with parents of mixed heritage children, provided a useful overview of how parents negotiated 'difference and belonging' in their mixed heritage children, there was no mention of parents who do not recognise, or indeed deny, their child's mixed heritage and the impact that this can have on their identity, their resilience and their school experience as mixed heritage individuals. I would suggest that this was particularly confusing for children such as Kim (see Chapter Six) who lacked opportunity to discuss identity at home but then suffered discrimination at school due to the colour of their skin and their mixed status. This thesis therefore demonstrates a pressing need to address these issues in school if children are to develop resilience and fulfil their potential in the education system.

Conversely, it was reported that middle class white mothers of mixed heritage children, even when the child's black father was absent, created access to, and an understanding of, 'black' culture for their children. Previous research (Hill Collins 1994; Ali 2003 and Mirza 2008; Ali 2003) highlights the ways in which mothers negotiate identities with their mixed heritage children and for example maintain links with their child's father's family in order to establish their 'racial' identification. Some mothers, in this research, took their children on holidays to the Caribbean to meet extended family and also built networks of family friends that not only reflected the heritage of their children but also provided them with empathy and support. This is reflected in the cases of both Nina and Esme in Chapter Six who experienced a sense of belonging through sharing their family's traditions, beliefs and values. Both were described as having a better understanding of and indeed pride in their mixed heritage identities and both dealt better with discrimination at school. Mothers provided explanations about discrimination and helped their children to develop coping strategies. Such supportive relationships (Ungar et al. 2007; Werner and Smith 1992; Zimmerman et al. 2004) emerged as a strong determinant in the resilience of some mixed heritage children in this research.

A second way in which social background shaped identity and experience was suggested, but again it interacted with family heritage. Interviewees described a middle class dimension to families with mixed white/ black African children, suggesting that African

families had strong identities developed through links to both church and extended family 'back home'. Parents were educated and had high aspirations for their children's futures. This echoes Demie et al. (2006), who consider the relationship between family, church and school as integral to the academic achievement of many African heritage children in the education system. Mixed white and black African children in this research therefore benefited from the values and aspirations of the African parent and his/ her extended family. Many of these children also had middle class white mothers with similar values and aspirations. This shaped a positive school experience where the values of home and school were aligned.

Conversely a commonality of social class amongst white working class and black Caribbean populations in inner London was described. An increase in the union of black Caribbean men with white working class women was suggested, but as both groups were reported to have a tradition of having children outside of marriage, many children of mixed white/ black Caribbean heritage in this research were living with white working class mothers, but not their black Caribbean fathers. This was seen to be a particular disadvantage for boys who were thus growing up without role models of how they might develop into mixed heritage men. Yet, once again, issues of 'racial identity' compounded the impact of children's social background as boys would seek belonging in black friendship groups who were described as both 'disengaged' and lacking in aspiration' in order to affirm their identities. Consequently they were assumed to be 'black' by some teachers who attributed them with associated negative social values of being black in the education system. Numerous examples in this thesis described teachers' attitudes towards 'black' boys in school and indeed the role of peer pressure in children's learning. Mixed heritage boys from 'professional' backgrounds who chose 'black' friendship groups were pigeon holed as black and were vulnerable to the same assumptions about their family backgrounds and educational aspirations. Thus the focus on their racial identities became the predominant factor in teachers' expectations of their schooling, not their social background.

Yet other examples suggested that social class was a less influential force in children's identities and experiences than the personal circumstances they enjoyed. This resonates with previous research (Song 2007; Ali 2003) which highlights the many different influences and experiences which exist within the mixed group, shaped by a range of

variables such as gender, geographical location, religion, interests and hobbies, which makes it difficult to describe as homogenous. Some children for example, despite their lack of material resources, enjoyed a '*strong identity,*' because both parents were present and shared their 'culture' with their children. Children who attended family celebrations and visited parents' countries of origin felt more 'comfortable' with their mixed heritage identity. The advantages of having a common identity shared with siblings and living in an area and attending a school with a 'diverse population' were discussed. All suggested a positive school experience. Chapter Six explained how the lack of material resources which shaped Lisa's childhood experience also provided her with the resilience to provide a better life for her own family. The experience of caring for oneself and others taught her the responsibility necessary to meet her own needs, motivated her to study for qualifications as an adult and be a role model for her own daughter. Yet, although such contexts may provide children with resilience and the tools necessary for a positive experience at school, they do not render them invulnerable to the assumptions made about them based on their phenotype and mixed status.

Are some components more important than others?

Whilst the previous section demonstrated that it was difficult to separate the differential influence of the six components on personal identity and school experience, the thesis concludes that despite a common perception about the importance of social class in children's school experience, data analysis revealed the overriding importance of issues related to racial identity and their particular relevance to mixed heritage boys in the education system.

Whilst all children, regardless of their social backgrounds, suffered discrimination from educational professionals and peers due to their skin colour and mixed heritage status, the boys in this research were least likely to develop the resilience to deal with such discrimination and therefore had a less positive experience at school. Root (1996) has argued that whilst it is possible that gender influences how one comes to experience 'multiraciality', the links are not clear. I would suggest that this thesis begins to explain these links in ways that are explored below.

Boys and friendship groups

Despite a focus on social class and personal circumstances, data analysis suggested a recurrent theme; that mixed heritage boys, whatever their social background, had a less positive experience at school than girls. Two cases in Chapter Six demonstrated that the resiliency process differed for males and females (Werner and Smith 1992); these were the different experiences of siblings, Joe and Nina, who potentially shared equal access to the seven tensions suggested in Ungar et al.'s (2007) model. The predominant reason why boys lacked resilience and had a less positive experience at school appeared to be their choice of friendship groups. Whilst girls adopted a range of friendships based upon shared interests and similar, '*socio economic backgrounds,*' boys, regardless of social background, gravitated towards, groups described as, '*disaffected black boys*' who '*lacked aspiration*'. This extends previous findings that suggest that working class mixed heritage children move towards black youth cultures and middle class mixed heritage children move towards white groups (Ajegbo 2007; Tizard and Phoenix 2002).

There were a variety of reasons why mixed heritage boys in this research adopted black friendship groups. These included their need to affirm their 'black' identities and for protection in an area where they might feel vulnerable to knife muggings. They also shared anger with black boys in their localities regarding 'stop and search' tactics by the police and were influenced by the dominance and credibility of black urban culture in inner London. Many also lacked a role model of how to become a mixed heritage man when fathers were absent or were indeed 'white'. Whilst Root (1996) suggests that many mixed heritage people identify themselves differently in different situations, depending on what aspects of identity are most salient, this research suggests that this was a natural strategy in response to the social demands of different situations boys faced. Many moved between different friendship groups at different ages because they didn't always find it easy to define themselves; this was described as distracting them from their studies. Some boys, with university-educated parents, entered secondary school with an impressive academic record from their primary schools*,* adopted 'black friendship groups' who were described as '*aimless*' and '*disengaged*' at secondary school and subsequently did not fulfil their academic potential. This was of concern to many parents in this research. Many boys also, '*over identified*' with black street culture, often the negative side, in order to '*fit in*' with these groups. This has been researched by Goffman (1959), who suggests that

individuals control the impression that others have of them by changing their clothing, posture, speech patterns and bodily gestures to fit in with their peer groups and Tikly et al. (2004) who highlight the phenomenon of white/ black Caribbean children tending to act out particularly extreme and rebellious black identities in order to 'fit in'.

Yet it was the contradictory pressures with regards to mixed heritage children's identity suggested by Tikly et al. (2004) that resonate most with findings in this research. They suggest that on the one hand, mixed white/ black Caribbean children in their study were viewed as being caught between two worlds in the sense that they were neither black nor white. On the other, there was a tendency for them to be viewed as black Caribbean and rarely as white. They suggest these wider societal pressures had significant implications for the behaviour and achievement attitudes of white/ black Caribbean boys especially. However whilst their focus was on mixed white/ black Caribbean children from mainly working class backgrounds, this was true for all children, but especially boys, in this research, regardless of their social background. The tendency for them to be viewed as 'black' by teachers was certainly reinforced by boys choosing 'black' friendship groups. Therefore middle class mixed heritage boys shared similar experiences with working class black Caribbean boys, suffering what interviewees referred to as a legacy of rejection by society at large. The manner in which they perceived their treatment by, the media, teachers, shopkeepers and more often, the police led to a shared, *'us against the world'* attitude with black Caribbean boys, despite the support and aspiration shown for them within their families.

Because some boys did not share these concerns with their mothers, they often lacked emotional support and understanding of the discriminatory behaviour they faced and the strategies to tackle it. In her research into high achievement amongst black boys in one London secondary school, Warner (2008) asks whether strong family presence rendered one more resilient and less vulnerable to negative peer influence. I would argue that although some boys in this research, for example Joe, had supportive family units who held high aspirations for their sons, they remained vulnerable to peer pressure for the reasons stated above, and were therefore subject to the same expectations held by teachers regarding their engagement in education. Furthermore Rutter (1987, 1996) suggests that boys tend to be treated more harshly than girls in both school and in the home. If supportive relationships with significant adults, both at home and school, foster resilience,

then such harsh treatment might well challenge boys' capacity to develop the resilience needed to deal with the challenges they faced.

Section 2: Mixed heritage children's experiences at school

The fact that mixed heritage children were often pigeon holed as 'black', made them 'invisible' at school. Their needs were therefore ignored and the challenges they faced not recognised. A tendency to view them as 'black' shaped some teachers' perceptions about children's home backgrounds and furthermore influenced their expectations of children's outcomes at school. The experiences mixed heritage children had at school are outlined in Table 7. 2 below.

Table 7. 2 The main themes emerging from children's experiences

Discrimination	Bullying of light skin mixed heritage girls by black girls Name calling based on the colour of their skin
Mixed heritage children's needs are ignored in school because they are 'invisible'	A lack of classification They are a small group who do not show in the data streams They are often viewed as black in school and treated accordingly There is a lack of awareness about their needs There is no recognition of them in the curriculum
Teachers' perceptions and expectations of them	Teachers hold stereotype about their home lives/ class and identity Focus on pastoral instead of academic support
Friendship groups	They will change identity and behaviour to suit the group they are with They identify with the dominant group Some deny their identity Some who lack models find their identity in friendship groups

Mixed heritage children's needs were ignored in school because they were 'invisible'

Although existing research suggests that teachers need to be more aware of the needs of mixed heritage children (Smith 2006; Mirza 2008; Edwards et al. 2008; Wardle 2004; Williams 2009), this thesis suggests that the issue remains to be addressed. Whilst Cline et al. (2002) previously suggest that parents rely on schools to nurture their children's mixed identities, this research provides numerous examples of parents' frustrations with teachers' assumptions that their children were 'black'. This adds to various studies with mixed heritage children (Chiong 1998; Brown 1991; Wardle 1999; Song 2007; Tizard and Phoenix 2002; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Dewan 2008), both in the UK and US, which found that participants in their studies were viewed as 'black', and not mixed heritage.

What was significant, however, was that although some teachers in this research were aware who the mixed heritage children were and were conscious that it was inappropriate to view them as belonging to one homogenous group, children remained invisible within the school system. This was because teachers were aware of the many different experiences and influences that children brought to school and therefore judged it inappropriate to attempt to reflect one 'mixed heritage experience' in the curriculum or to plan relevant learning interventions pertinent to all. Thus children's needs and the challenges they faced remained unaddressed. This extends Ali's (2003) research with mixed heritage children which suggests that teachers who, by treating 'the whole class as individuals', eradicated 'race' from classroom practice but in doing so lacked awareness of the specific difficulties that might arise from the race of the child.

Teachers' perceptions about and expectations of mixed heritage children at school

Numerous examples in the data suggest that teachers also held inaccurate perceptions about children's family circumstances. Some teachers assumed that mixed heritage children were living with single working class white mothers who had little aspiration for their children's education. Some also assumed that children had no access to their 'black side', and therefore suffered 'identity confusion' because identities were not nurtured at home. However this was only the case amongst a small minority of children in the research. Indeed previous studies with mixed white/ black Caribbean children (Bagley and Young 1979; Wilson 1987; Tikly et al. 2004) found little evidence of 'identity confusion'

amongst the children in their sample, despite perceptions held by their teachers. Perceptions about 'identity confusion' amongst mixed heritage children at school were viewed as a barrier to learning for mixed white/ black Caribbean children in previous research (Tikly et al. 2004) as they were amongst interviewees in this research.

This research argues that the influence of an ongoing, *'underachievement debate'* in the media in relation to African Caribbean children is also of importance to mixed heritage children at school. Previous research (Coard 1971; Swann 1985; Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Strand 1999; Gillborn and Mirza 2000; Demie et al 2006) highlights the underachievement of African Caribbean children in the education system noting that many, especially boys, have not shared equally in the increasing rates of education achievement. Whilst interviewees suggested that low expectations of 'black' children amongst teachers were due to lingering messages about underachievement in the media, I would suggest that this is also pertinent to those of mixed heritage. The assumption that many mixed heritage boys especially, were 'black', suggested that they too were vulnerable to low expectations. Any threat to boys' resilience was further compounded by teachers' inaccurate perceptions of them and low expectations of them at school. They lacked the positive contribution of significant adults, both at home and school, which was necessary to their resilience.

Discrimination based on their skin colour and mixed heritage

The role of discriminatory behaviour towards mixed heritage children was an important finding in this research, because it had a direct impact on their education. Whilst previous research (Ali 2003; Tizard and Phoenix 2004) highlighted that mixed heritage children experienced discriminatory name-calling based on their skin colour, in this research mixed heritage girls also suggested that their black girlfriends made derogatory comments towards them because they were jealous of their lighter skinned complexions. However, what was of particular concern was that whilst schools took racist language aimed at black children seriously, discriminatory name–calling, targeted at mixed heritage children, was ignored by teachers, who suggested that it was simply part of the 'vernacular'. This was highlighted by Ali (2003), in previous research. Whilst the situation remains the same, children in this research found it very distressing, *'lashed out'* and were excluded from school as a result.

An Education Adviser described the reluctance of many teachers to tackle issues of race or identity with children. This has been suggested in earlier research (Dewan 2008; Killian 2001; Ayo 2010; Younge 2010), which highlights the reluctance of professionals in general, to discuss matters of 'race' and identity. Whilst this issue is not exclusive to education, data suggested that it was highly detrimental to children of a young age and had serious consequences for their education, as described above. I would argue that it is particularly detrimental for children who also lack opportunities to discuss their mixed heritage identity with family members and therefore lack understanding and the strategies to react appropriately.

Summary

Through this research I have come to believe that that there is more that educational professionals could do to support mixed heritage children in school. One secondary school teacher had suggested:

> *This group of students are bright- they could do a lot better if they didn't have to contend with all these issues we've talked about. You know, we actually need to be supporting them with their issues…*

A series of recommendations for schools is therefore presented later in this thesis.

Section 3: Contribution to the research field

This thesis extends existing studies. It explores how mixed heritage children's experiences are shaped by the ways in which others racially classify them, which renders them vulnerable to a set of assumptions about their lived experiences which bare little resemblance to the reality of their lives. Yet in order to address a gap in existing research it examines the subsequent impact on their school experience. I would therefore suggest that this thesis makes an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge in three ways.

Firstly, whilst findings from other studies (Tikly et al. 2004), relate particularly to the educational experiences of mixed/ black Caribbean students who came from mainly

socially disadvantaged backgrounds, findings in this study are pertinent to mixed heritage children (mixed white/ black Caribbean and black African) who come from different social backgrounds. Findings suggest that mixed heritage children, regardless of their social background, shared a unique set of experiences at school, based mainly on the ways in which others perceived them. These included discrimination from their peers, teachers' low expectations of them due to inaccurate perceptions about their home backgrounds and their 'invisibility' in school life. All threatened their potential to have a positive school experience. The fact that these experiences relate to mixed heritage children of all social backgrounds is important because it challenges the notion that there is often a strong association between school experience and social class (DfES 2006).

Secondly, findings demonstrated a clear difference in the school experiences of mixed heritage boys, and girls. This has not been identified before. Boys, again regardless of their social background, appeared to be less resilient in the face of discrimination and were therefore less able to have a positive experience at school than girls. Whilst girls adopted friendships based upon shared interests and similar, '*socio economic backgrounds,*' boys, regardless of their social backgrounds, gravitated towards groups described by interviewees as '*disaffected black boys*' who '*lacked aspiration*'. This shaped their school experience but also challenged previous findings suggesting that working class mixed heritage children move towards black youth cultures and middle class mixed heritage children move towards white groups (Ajegbo 2007; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). This suggests that those working with mixed heritage boys should view them as individuals with different personal circumstances, and not make assumptions about their social backgrounds and attitudes towards learning based on their friendship groups.

Thirdly the discovery of Ungar et al.'s (2007) framework, developed to assess resilience across cultures, was important. In this thesis it was used to analyse how six mixed heritage individuals developed resilience. It supported an understanding of why mixed heritage boys had a less positive experience at school, despite their access to material resources and the support available to them from parents, wider family members and the community. Ungar et al.'s (2007) framework, therefore, might be a useful tool for those working with all children, to begin to assess why they might have a less positive experience at school than their peers and therefore not achieve their potential. Again this level of individual analysis would guard against general assumptions about groups of children, supporting an

understanding of each child's experiences and capacity to access the seven tensions in Ungar et al.'s (2007) framework (see Table 6.1).

The importance of the research findings

These findings are important because although the mixed heritage population is growing, still little is known about children's experiences at school. An additional understanding of how mixed heritage boys, whatever their social background, experience secondary school will become increasingly important as the group continues to grow and boys' underachievement remains an issue. Whilst data from the 2011 national census is expected to show that there are now over one million Britons who describe themselves as mixed heritage, population projection by the University of Leeds predicts that the mixed population will reach 1.3 million by 2020, an increase of 93% between 2001 and 2020 (Smith 2011: guardian.co.uk Tuesday 4th October). Smith also suggests that if proved correct this means mixed heritage people will make up 2% of the British population by 2020. Whilst fifty per cent of mixed heritage people are under 16 years, making mixed heritage the fastest growing ethnic minority group in Britain, research has shown that one in ten children live in families that describe themselves as mixed or multiple heritage. This suggests a pressing need for all teachers to understand the experiences that mixed heritage children have in school and furthermore the particular reasons why many boys, regardless of social background, are less resilient at school than girls. Three important reasons for teachers to develop such an understanding were highlighted.

Firstly in Chapter One, Easton (2008: BBC News website November 5th) was reported to suggest that, 'one argument gaining currency is that we are moving to a post race environment where ethnic and racial groupings become far less relevant than data on people's social backgrounds'. Yet findings suggested that all mixed heritage children, regardless of their social background, experienced discrimination. In general girls seemed more likely to negotiate a positive experience at school than boys. Indeed educational professionals admitted that mixed heritage children were a group they knew little about and welcomed interview discussion as a catalyst for initiating discussions about identity in schools. This issue was recognised by a head teacher in a Hackney primary school who had observed that it was the mixed heritage children who were facing the next wave of

racism in schools and that they were neglected because people were unaware of the issues they faced (Smith 2006: The Guardian September 2006).

Secondly, many children lacked opportunities to discuss their mixed heritage identities both at home and school. One girl in Year 10 stated that she had never discussed being mixed heritage before her research interview. In his lecture, 'On Being Mixed Race' (2007) Keith Ajegbo suggests that all children need to understand their identity in order to feel they belong, and for their schooling to be fulfilling. Whilst some parents relied on their children's schools to foster a positive sense of mixed heritage identity, many teachers lacked the confidence to discuss issues of identity with children, especially multiple identities. The analysis of six cases using Ungar et al.'s (2007) model developed to assess resiliency, suggested that some children did not have the opportunity to discuss their mixed heritage identities with supportive adults at home and some boys who did have the opportunity, did not. This highlights the important role that teachers have to play in fostering a positive sense of identity amongst children and in tackling the discrimination they face.

Thirdly a lack of recognition of their mixed heritage identities caused some children to express resentment towards children of other ethnicities in their schools. In Cheverell School, both Somali and Portuguese children received weekly pastoral and language support in groups facilitated by school staff. However the mixed heritage children, who were largely deemed invisible at school, did not receive support of any nature and few felt a sense of belonging at school. Yet all children need to feel engaged and committed to a wide multi ethnic society and that they need to feel included and respected in order to respect others and Ungar et al. (2007) highlight that feeling a part of something larger than one's self socially and spiritually, is essential to resilience. In focus groups, which enabled many of the mixed heritage children's voices to be heard for the first time, children suggested that they required pastoral support similar to their Somali and Portuguese peers in the shape of monthly meetings and whole school assemblies to raise awareness about the issues they faced.

Educational implications of the research findings

This thesis raises implications for those involved in the school experience of mixed heritage children. Many children lacked the opportunity to discuss their identity or the discrimination they faced at school. Schools did not tackle discrimination and many teachers were unaware of the challenges faced by mixed heritage children because they were largely 'invisible' at school. This lack of awareness however is not new. Firstly previous research by Edwards et al. (2008) and Cline (2002) reveals that whilst parents relied on schools as a potential resource to support the diversity of their children's 'mixed' backgrounds and the development of a clear sense of their mixed heritage identity, teachers were not aware of their concerns. They were uncertain about the treatment of all minority ethnic children, but especially mixed heritage children. Secondly, Tikly et al. (2007) highlighted that whilst policy documents, in schools in their study, made reference to the 'commitment of the school to having high expectations of all pupils, to treat all groups equally and to promote an ethos of respect for all cultures in the school' (2007:353), institutional racism in the form of low expectations was a factor in the lives of mixed white/ black Caribbean students pupils. This suggests that teachers must become more aware of the experiences and needs of mixed heritage children, in order that they can support them better in school.

Secondly both Zimmerman et al. (1994) and Werner and Smith (1992) highlight that the presence of an understanding teacher or other support systems in school, as well as informal networks of kin and neighbours may increase a student's chances of developing the resilience and skills to tackle discrimination. Yet such options were unavailable for many mixed heritage children; this is highlighted by Kim and Reuben's case outlined in Chapter Six. Some teachers were acutely aware that their colleagues had to become more knowledgeable and confident in tackling such issues because so many children lacked opportunities to talk about their identities elsewhere. Many children came from extended white families that viewed them as 'accidentally darker' than other family members, or where they overheard, or were subjected to, racist language. Some teachers suggested a need for schools to work with parents on issues of mixed heritage identity and experience and the challenges their children faced.

Thirdly mixed heritage children in Cheverell School suggested that they would appreciate the opportunity to discuss issues relating to their identities and the challenges they faced. They were aware that groups existed to support Somali and Portuguese children in their school and wished something similar for themselves. Some children appeared resentful towards these children and the support that they received. Mixed heritage children suggested that the discrimination they faced should be discussed at whole school assemblies and monthly meetings. In his Curriculum Review of Diversity and Citizenship, (2007), Keith Ajegbo suggests that assemblies are an excellent way of bringing children together to think about diversity, consider moral issues and to build a school ethos. Whilst neither a Learning mentor nor Youth worker had considered it until they were interviewed for this research, both became convinced of the need to facilitate discussion groups on the subject of mixed heritage identity with their clients.

Furthermore many professionals in this research anticipated difficulties in reflecting a variety of mixed heritage experience in the school curriculum. Again in his Curriculum Review of Diversity and Citizenship, Ajegbo acknowledges the difficulty of incorporating the backgrounds and histories of all children into the curriculum but suggests that schools acknowledge diversity and individual identity in ways that are appropriate to their situation. Many mixed heritage children indicated that they were keen to investigate the history of mixed heritage and that they would like to have an opportunity to celebrate their identity through for example, celebratory days/ International Days as they did at primary school. The impact of mixed heritage role models amongst teaching staff was deemed as an important feature of school life amongst children, parents and teachers alike.

Lastly one Education adviser suggested that friendship groups of mixed heritage and black boys should be 'undermined' where appropriate, in order to support boys' achievement at school. She argued that teachers should look carefully to see which boys were being placed together in various learning sets and the potential impact on their aspirations and achievement. She suggested a careful examination would encourage teachers to view boys as individuals and not stereotype their home experiences and potential achievement based on their mixed heritage. Moreover careful monitoring of achievement data and target setting would support progress and achievement amongst mixed heritage children. Although some teachers from Cheverell School suggested that they did reflect on why black boys in their schools were underachieving and in doing so, made sure that they were

not all in lower ability sets, there was little differentiation between the black and mixed heritage boys in their analysis. Neither was attention paid to the various home backgrounds of mixed heritage boys and their particular needs in this process.

Limitations of the research strategy

A number of limitations in the strategy used during this research are acknowledged. These are set out below.

One limitation in the research strategy was the difficulty in drawing definitive conclusions from the findings as well as an inability to generalise them to larger groups because of the small scale of the research design. The strategy involved 1 to 1 interviews and focus groups with mixed heritage children; parents of mixed heritage children and professionals involved with their education. In total 39 interviews took place with 65 individuals. Whilst a questionnaire might have been used to gain the views of a wider circle of stakeholders it was felt that for three reasons 1 to 1 interviews were more suitable.

Firstly due to the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, a questionnaire was deemed an inappropriate tool for gathering information. This became clear throughout the research process as personal contact in the interview enabled trust to evolve between researcher and interviewee. Saunders et al. (2003) also suggest that interviews provide the opportunity for interviewees to receive personal assurance about the way information will be used. This was imperative to the research process as some interviewees were at first reticent to share their views, and some indeed to even take part. On reflection it appears doubtful that many participants would have provided sensitive and confidential information in a questionnaire to someone that they had never met (Saunders et al. 2003).

Secondly due to the lack of previous research in this field, it was necessary to gain an in depth knowledge of the issues involved in the topic. Therefore detailed in depth interviews were felt to be a necessary step towards this. Questions were open ended and I had the opportunity to probe answers, as appropriate. Whereas questionnaires might illicit only factual answers the interview situation was a good opportunity for interviewees to respond in a meaningful way.

Thirdly interviews were deemed appropriate because many respondents suggested that they had not discussed their own, or their children's mixed heritage before. The fact that interviewees' ideas about this topic were often inchoate might also have presented a challenge to research findings. However most interviews lasted an hour or more in length with minimum researcher talk so there was ample time for reflection and discussion time for interviewees to develop their thoughts.

It was also difficult to draw definitive conclusions from research findings or to generalise them to all mixed heritage children because the research findings related only to children of white/ black Caribbean and white/ black African descent. There is no reference in the research to children of, for example, mixed white/ Asian heritage. The research might also be unrepresentative of mixed white/ black Caribbean and mixed white/ black African children nationally. Although it includes the voices of parents and mixed heritage children from different social backgrounds these families all lived in inner London boroughs and attended schools with diverse populations. It was therefore not possible to generalise conclusions across the whole mixed heritage population. Mixed heritage children who live and attend schools in mainly white areas might well have school experiences quite different from their contemporaries in more diverse schools. Whilst time constraints meant it was difficult to conduct interviews in a wider geographical field, one might argue such an approach could be taken in order to produce research findings that are more applicable to a national audience.

I acknowledge that the reliability of the data analysis process might have acted as a potential limitation to the research strategy. Robson (1993) suggests that anyone moving away from studies based on quantitative data is likely to have to face criticisms that the work is unreliable, invalid and generally unworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 294-301) too question how one might establish the 'truth' of the findings, the applicability of the findings to other settings and the consistency of findings if the study were to be repeated with the same or similar people. I was aware of potential threats to internal validity (Robson 1993) as interviews with children were carried out in a school context, which might have influenced their responses. I adopted several techniques to overcome such threats; these are outlined in Chapter Four of this thesis. I also used 'peer debriefing' (Robson1993) to establish credibility as I shared my analysis and findings with two independent researchers on a continuous basis.

A further challenge to the research findings was the definitional difficulties that became apparent throughout the research process. To begin with it was apparent that interviewees had different ideas about what constituted mixed heritage. Although I explained clearly to each interviewee the definition of mixed heritage adopted for the purpose of this research, it is possible that different definitions might still have shaped interviewees' opinions and therefore the research findings.

Another limitation was that although children from different social backgrounds were interviewed, the parents who took part were mostly from middle class backgrounds, many being known, both personally and professionally to me. Although parents' and educational professionals' perceptions of white working class mothers of mixed heritage children were discussed during the research, few white working class mothers' voices were represented. I was reliant on the two secondary schools to ask these parents if they would be willing to be interviewed. As I was told by both headteachers that the parents were generally unwilling to come into school, access to this sample proved difficult. This might well present a challenge to definitive conclusions.

A further limitation in the research was my possible bias as a mother of a mixed heritage child and as a former teacher of a number of mixed heritage children in a Lambeth primary school. I acknowledge the dilemma of 'insider problems' (Robson 1993); that a researcher in my position might have preconceptions about issues and solutions, and would need to establish a clear difference of procedure between the research and the procedures of professional practice and my personal experience, to guard against the 'we knew that already' (Robson 1993). Although I adopted a number of key measures to overcome bias in interviews, which are outlined in Chapter Four, I appreciated that it was difficult to control bias in all cases. I acknowledge also that each interviewee in the opportunity sample knew that I was a mother of a mixed heritage child because they were friends and colleagues; this too might have skewed their responses.

Lastly I note a limitation to the literature review. A lack of previous research on the school experiences of mixed heritage children led me to seek out non-academic sources to learn more about their experiences. These included, newspaper articles, autobiographies and contemporary fiction many of which were written by mixed heritage people who wished

to share their personal experiences. I acknowledge firstly that these sources might have less stringent guidelines than academic sources and secondly that the experiences that many mixed heritage individuals have shared, and that have been written about, are not general to all.

Some limitations in the research design suggested possible areas of future research; these are explored in the next section.

Areas for further research

Because research findings were not general to mixed heritage children's experiences nationally, further research should encompass areas outside inner city London boroughs. Attention should be paid to how different geographical areas shape identity in mixed heritage children and the role this plays in their school experience. It would be particularly interesting, for example, to explore the experiences of mixed heritage children in mainly white schools.

Further research might also focus on the perspectives of white working class mothers. It might well be useful to explore how mothers perceive their experiences in mixed relationships shape their children's identities and how this influences their children's experiences in school. Other research has explored the identity of white women in mixed relationships (Twine 2010; Britton 2012), but not the subsequent impact on their children's school experiences.

For many boys in this research their mixed heritage impacted strongly on their school experience. This was apparent in their choice of friendship groups, as well as the perceptions and expectations that teachers had of them. Yet more than one reference was made to boys in similar contexts whose experiences were not shaped in this way. Further research might explore why this might be the case. The use of Ungar et al.'s (2007) framework to assess resiliency might well be useful in exploring how resiliency is developed amongst a range of mixed heritage boys from different social backgrounds. This would be useful in exploring ways in which schools could work with parents to support positive school experiences for mixed heritage children. A case study approach might also be taken to exemplify good practice where schools have worked with parents/

carers and other organisations to raise awareness of issues that mixed heritage children face and to establish good practice to be shared.

It is hoped that the following recommendations for schools and teachers working with mixed heritage children will redress a lack of knowledge and understanding on their part and support mixed heritage children to develop resilience and have a positive experience at school.

Recommendations for schools and teachers working with mixed heritage children

On the basis of research findings the following recommendations are made for schools and teachers working with mixed heritage children:

1. Teachers should receive support and training about the experiences of mixed heritage children in schools

2. Schools should develop critical literacy amongst staff and children so that they might reflect on their own and others' cultural traditions and develop skills to challenge their own assumptions and those of others. Assemblies can be used to facilitate this. It should also be integrated throughout curriculum delivery

3. Schools should actively challenge discrimination towards mixed heritage children e.g. name-calling based on their skin colour. The procedures for dealing with discrimination should be outlined in a school's e.g. Anti Bullying Policy/ Anti Racism Policy

4. Schools could use Ungar et al's (2007) framework for all children in order to begin to assess those who might be at risk

5. Mixed heritage children should have planned opportunities to discuss issues of identity and the discrimination they face in a safe place, with or without supportive adults to facilitate the process if required

6. Opportunities should be provided in the curriculum to acknowledge and celebrate diversity and individual identity. Children should have the opportunity to explore personal histories as part of this

7. Schools should aim to include mixed heritage teaching staff as role models and to build links with children and their parents

8. Schools should work in partnership with parents of mixed heritage children in order to support children's experiences at school, build their resilience and capacity to achieve their potential

9. Teachers should look carefully to see which boys are being placed together in various learning sets and the potential impact on their aspiration and achievement. A careful examination would encourage teachers to view boys as individuals and not stereotype their home experiences and potential achievement based on their mixed heritage

10. School performance data should be used to monitor and guide the progress of individual mixed heritage children and reflect on any patterns in performance e.g. are mixed heritage boys underachieving? Why?

It is hoped that the recommendations suggested in this chapter can support school staff to better understand the challenges that mixed heritage children face, and by doing so provide truly inclusive schools in twenty first century Britain.

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Appendix 1: Parental consent form

The experience of mixed race pupils in UK schools

A research project 2010

Dear parent/ carer

My name is Kirstin Lewis and I work for Lambeth Local Authority as the Raising Achievement Research manager. I was also a teacher for 10 years in a Lambeth primary school.

I am carrying out research for a PhD into the experiences of mixed race pupils in school. Little work has been done in this area and by exploring their experiences I hope to collect ideas that will make their experience in school the best it can possibly be.

In order to learn more about the experiences of mixed race children in schools I would like to talk to some mixed race young people during the school day.

I would like your permission to talk to your child for a short time, approximately 30 minutes, at school during the school day. I will ask them a little bit about their experiences at school. This will be voluntary. If your child would like to talk to me, he/ she may choose to do so on his/ her own or with friends.

Anything they tell me which I write as part of my research will be anonymous.

Please sign this letter at the bottom in the space provided and return it to the school if you are willing for your child to participate.

Thank you very much,
Kirstin

I am willing for my child to take part

Appendix 2: Young People Questions

Introductory comments

Thank you for being involved.
Purpose- to find out as much as I can about the experiences you have in school- I want to write about this so that I can make recommendations, if necessary, to make your experience in school positive.
Everything you tell me will be anonymous (relate to pupil voice interviews)
No records of the interview will be kept with your name on
If you don't want to answer any of my questions that is fine, please just tell me.
If you want to leave the interview at any point that is fine- please just tell me.

I am going to ask you some questions about your time at school but first I want to ask you:

How does being mixed race make you feel? Why?

School Experiences

How does it make you feel at school? Are there any issues in particular that you have to deal with that others don't? (How is this different from the black/ white children?)

Do you think there are different issues for boys and girls?

Do you have an opportunity to discuss your identity with any one? When/ how? Do you have an opportunity to celebrate with different family members e.g. food/ celebrations? Would you like to?

Would it be useful for you to talk about your mixed heritage identity at school? Is this important to you?

Do you think teachers/ people in school know that you are mixed race? Does this matter to you? Why? / Why not?

Does your family want you to do well at school? How do you know? Does anyone in your family support you with your homework? Do you talk to your parents about school?

Who has the most influence on you? Mum? Friends? How does this influence you re school experience?

Can you tell me a little about your friendship groups? Were you friends with the same people when you were younger?

Appendix 3: Interview schedule- semi structured interview (School staff/ LA officers)

Introductory comments

- Thank you for your time
- Purpose of the research/ my own position (mother of mixed race daughter- how research came about)
- Two main research questions/ recap on themes
- Anonymity of discussion
- No named records will be kept
- Willingness to send a copy of notes after the interview if required
- Please tell me if you would like to leave at any point in the discussion- grateful for any time spent

Question headings

Identity

Who are the mixed heritage children in your school?

Are all the staff aware of who the mixed race children are?

How do you think children's identity impacts on their experience at school?

What is the role of the family (the mother) in developing identity? The community (media)?

School outcomes

How do you think children's identity impacts on their experience at school? How does this shape their outcomes?

Heritage

Could you tell me about any differences you notice between the white/ black Caribbean and white/ black African children's experiences at school?

What is the role of the family in developing identity/experiences? The community? The church?

Friendship groups

Please tell me anything that notice about mixed race children's friendship groups

Are there different issues for boys and girls?

Do friendships change as children get older? Is this the same for boys/ girls?

Gender

Do you think girls and boys experience school differently? Why?

School curriculum

Is a mixed race experience covered in the curriculum in any way?

Do children have opportunities to explore their identities- in the curriculum/ wider school life?

(International/ Diversity Days? Assemblies?)

Closing comments

- Thank you to the interviewee
- Please add any points that they might not have had a chance to contribute.

Separating the data by theme

The gender of the mixed heritage child shapes school experience

I think its harder for the mixed race girls- the boys, they have football, brings boys together, growing up on an estate, you're a part of something…the police all assume you're black anyway….the boys move towards being black.

Not the same attitude from black boys towards mixed race boys- different from girls- pale mixed boys with black tight together
Only move you have here (Brixton) against mixed race is from black men involved in black consciousness movement

But for girls….its the stigma- they know they are really sexy, and the black girls are all bitchy to them.

There is a potential for insecurity for those mixed girls based on their identity- if the parent they identify with is a different colour and its not talked about there are difficulties and deep insecurities.
I think there's a big issue about personality too- if the daughter lives with the mum, is a different colour but has personality traits like the dad who is absent this is difficult- and isolating for the child. Examples of this at P H School.

Some girls with white mums are angry- its not about rejecting the child, there are loving relationships its just not talked about. There are examples of this at PH school. (J's example).

It's more difficult for girls growing up than boys- black girls get jealous- we get more attention from men. In my generation, black men preferred mixed race girls.

I think mixed race girls are far more confident than mixed race boys-
 I think it all starts with…young girls, they want to date black men- they end up being mums- they think mixed babies are so cute, I want to have a mixed race baby, even though they know that the dad won't stick around. The guy, says you know that I didn't want to have a baby with you…..
The daughters are nurtured….played with, admired but the boys once they are bit older go off and play football on own in street- there is no man there to play with them. Girls do everything with their mum. Mum's friends might get involved but when the child is a bit older, not so cute, the interest dies down. Mum gets alienated. The girls have their mum throughout their whole upbringing- they can talk, about boys etc. But the boys have to figure it all out on their own- they have no one.

It is hard for mixed race boys, its a fashion thing..having a mixed race child…problem is if you're just linking this guy then he won't be around and then you won't be able to bring the child up culturally. There will be young black guys that can't bring white girls

home (they worry about the shame in the community) so they would never admit to having a mixed race child so the child never knows its family on his side.

They (the white girls) know the guys aren't going to be around but they have the children….

It's hard, mum can only do so much, the father's not there and the boy needs a black role model. With girls its different…they have their mum and its all about how to be a female

Boys have two choices- they can go with the white group- be a skin head- a yob or they can be with the black boys- be a 'rude boy'- become all trendy/ cool.

I had a main group but I hung with the white group for a while and got into a lot of trouble and then with a black group- we were cool, stayed fresh for the girls, it was 'us against the world.' I stopped telling my mum stuff, I don't tell her stuff now.

The police is where I notice it most. More than in school. They judge me, they already have a perception of me.

When I was younger they (people) would look at me when I went into shops, I think they thought I was going to shoplift. I got looked at when I came into your house by the police.

When we got stopped for cannabis- they separated me from the group.

When I was driving back from Ali's at 3am I got followed and then surrounded by 4 police cars – they got me out of the car- searched the car- they justified it by saying that they'd seen me delivering a package on R road the day before. When they did my name search they found out that it was my birthday- they all said happy birthday- they didn't apologise- they changed my handcuffs 3 times.

It's hard for boys- it happens to boys more- when I went to the cinema with my friends- the woman said I'm going to be watching you on the camera to see if you are silly.

I would talk to my friends more than my mum- if name - calling happened all the time- like mongrel, half breed I might tell her….

R- I stopped talking to my mum- I didn't want to worry her.

Extras

Hair is a big issue- I had it with E- 'my hair is too puffy- we looked at books about is etc. The Auntie came into do it. I've given into a straightener- she is looking after it herself. It was made worse by the fact her sister has straight hair. She had an Ethiopian hairstyle that she adopted to show her family cousins in Boston in the summer.

In the 80s/ 90s you always saw black men with white women- now its turning- white men and black women. White men are more confident to talk to black women now. Its like when I am out a lot of white men come and talk to me – especially when my hair is in braids- when its loose- black men come and talk to me.

Appendix 5: Capturing the themes

Research questions

- *How is personal identity formed in mixed heritage children and how does this shape their school experience?*
- *What experiences do mixed heritage children have in school?*

Main themes identified in the data set:

1. Social class shapes identity and the school experience of mixed race children

2. Cultural heritage shapes identity and the school experience of mixed race children

3. Children's personal circumstances impact on their identity and school experiences of mixed race children

4. The role of the mother has an impact on the identity of the mixed race child and their school experiences

5. The child's age has an impact on their identity and their experience at school

6. The child's gender has an identity and shapes their school experience

7. The friendship groups with which mixed race children choose to align have an impact on their school experience

8. Invisibility of mixed race children at school (for some at home too) shapes their school experience

9. Teacher expectations and perceptions of mixed heritage children shape their school experience

(Each theme has a set of data in the form of individual quotes of paragraphs to justify theme)

Summary/ Story of each theme

1. A headteacher suggested many mixed heritage children, 'they fit the profile of white working class families'. They experience poverty and its associated problems, lack of aspirations in the family. However 'being mixed race for these children is white working class with all the knobs on'. They have further issues to deal with than mono racial working class children in Lambeth e.g. some may live in extended white working class families with racist members, who either reject their mixed heritage child, don't acknowledge their mixed heritage or use racist language as part of their vernacular when referring to the child.

2. A. The cultural heritage of the child has an impact on their school experience. Children of Caribbean parents have witnessed the 'rejection of 3 generations; their grandparents, their parents and themselves'; 'many were poor which is why they came to Britain, looking for work. The African children by contrast have a sense of pride, they might say, 'I am Nigerian, I am African and then I am British.' They have a strong sense of their cultural identity through e.g. separate language, church, links to their country- children get taken home regularly to maintain ties, expectations of behaviour etc. Educational aspiration transcends social class. These expectations influence the education of mixed heritage children that have either Caribbean or African family members.

   The legacy of slavery lives on deep in the psyche of the Caribbean community in Lambeth. This is seen in the hierarchy of skin shade- there is much animosity towards mixed heritage skin as it is 'light' and therefore seen to be more desirable. It was described as giving mixed heritage girls a 'sense of power' but also subjects them to racist taunts. This shapes their experiences at school in varying degrees. One girl was regularly excluded due to aggressive retaliation.

3. There are individual circumstances that transcend class and heritage for many mixed race children. A working class couple that stay together showing great resilience may have a positive impact on the child's capacity to achieve at school. Examples of single mothers that nurture the other side of their mixed heritage's child's identity and give them a stronger sense of self. These instances may have a positive outcome on school experiences of mixed race children

4. The role of the mother in shaping the identity of the mixed heritage child is a strong determinant in their school experience. One mother left the family home due to the racial abuse she encountered as a white mother of mixed heritage children. Conversely another single white mother, determined that her daughter should have a strong sense of both sides of her heritage, worked hard to choose her own friends to act as role models for her daughter and saved money to take her over to Trinidad herself etc. This contributed to different school outcomes.

5. It would seem that the influence of the macro society has less impact on children under 11 years old than it does over 11. 'You're more conscious of what people think of you when you're at secondary school.' 'There is more understanding of place in society, codes of language/ impact of media etc'. Many mixed heritage children said that that they had 'no issues with their racial mix at primary school but everything started at Year 8.' Some mixed heritage boys over identified with black street culture to be excepted into black groups. 'They have the biggest afros in the school.' This can lead to teacher perceptions of them as black Caribbean boys, lowering their expectations of their aspirations at school. Also, 'this confusion, and finding yourself impacts on their studies'.

6. The gender of the child impacts on the experiences they have at school. Examples cited; J, 16, who lives with his mum, his dad is white so is not there to be a role model but also is not a model of how Joseph will grow as a black (he sees himself as) man. To fill this void he is 'hanging out with the underachieving black kids and is therefore not fulfilling his potential at school.' White mums have m/r children with black men- the man does not want the baby so disappears

and the mother is left to bring the child up- if this is a girl it is easier because there is the closeness of gender; if it is a boy, more difficult to negotiate- boy gets lost- fills void (se above). Girls however suffer the taunts and jealously relating to skin colour- gets in the way of their learning.

7. The friendship groups with which heritage children choose to align have an impact on their school experience. E.g. boys that move towards the black groups/ over identify with the black 'look' in order to fit in/ N – describing himself as pink in order to fit in at nursery where everyone else was white. Mixed race boys aligning themselves with black groups in a shared anger against the police or 'its us against the world.' Quotes from the data suggest that this can have a negative impact on achievement at school.

8. The invisibility of mixed heritage children at school means their identity is not reflected in the curriculum or school policies. Their small numbers 'don't show up in the data' so their underachievement goes unnoticed. Teachers are unaware of the issues they face at school and schools do little about a mixed identity in school. This is exacerbated in some instances by the fact that some mixed race children are invisible at home too e.g. they with white extended families and their racial identity never gets referred to- they are just darker versions.

9. Teacher perceptions and expectations shape the school experiences of mixed heritage children and their comments reveal certain assumptions. Teachers assume children know little about their heritage e.g. their Jamaican side'. Yet the same children talked about their mothers cooking Jamaican food etc. Teachers assumed that mixed heritage children were black. This leads to their identities not being recognized; lowered expectations in a lot of cases.