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**Citation:** Morley, Dinah (2011). Mixed Experiences: a study of the childhood narratives of mixed race people related to risks to their mental health and capacity for developing resilience. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City University London)

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

*"...that's where I'll tick*

*Only place I can*

*OTHER*

*Why do I have to tick other and then explain my parentage?*

*People still making it seem like a unique small group who are often discounted*

*Hmm..... maybe they should consider that over 40,000 others exist*

*and every time we fill out application forms many of us are wondering*

*when the time will come for a mixed-race identity to be officially*

*recognised in a group of our Own." (Myers 2005)*

### ***Background and context***

This study adds to the literature on children and young people of mixed race, focusing specifically on mental health/emotional wellbeing of these young people and the implications for policy and practice. The issue of mixed race received unprecedented popular attention during the campaign and election of Barack Obama as the president of the United States of America (USA) which adds to the timeliness of this study. The field work was undertaken in 2007/8, mainly before that event, but some of the material was collected subsequently. The participants were recruited via the internet and their ages range from 20 to 65 years of age, with the majority being in their 20s. Most grew up in the United Kingdom (UK) but some spent their childhood elsewhere.

The study examines the childhood experiences of 21 adults and looks at the factors which may have presented challenges to their emotional wellbeing. None was recruited because they exhibited mental disorders of any sort and there is no intention to identify or diagnose mental disorder. The project explicates their lived experiences to see whether there are *risks* for mental health or factors which may have built *resilience* that might be specific to their being mixed race. It considers whether these risk and resilience factors have a contribution to make to policy and practice in childcare, leading to the research question: *'Do the childhood experiences of people of*

*mixed race highlight any additional risk and resilience factors which could contribute to the literature and evidence base of child and adolescent mental health and to professional practice?’*

In summary the purpose of this research is to understand how being mixed race proscribes the experience of childhood and growing up; the ways in which this proscription could affect the wellbeing of the individual child and whether the findings can inform the policy and practice of childcare. In so doing it considers the issue of mixed race at three inter-related social levels, the micro – the lived experiences of the study participants; the meso – the service response; and the macro - exemplified by the inclusion of Chapter 8 on the Obama election and by the demographics set out in Chapter 4. The inter-relation of these three levels is inevitably complex, as ideas socially constructed at the macro and meso levels will affect, and be variously interpreted by, the participants to emerge in the micro data which the researcher is explicating and interpreting.

Government departments, most specifically the Department for Education and Skills (as the Department for Education was known until 2010 under the Labour administration) and the Department of Health, have produced many volumes of policy and practice guidance which have shaped the way health and social care professionals are required to approach the assessment of the needs of children and young people. This has covered the ways in which practitioners should work together to put the child and young person at the centre of that assessment process in England and Wales in the 21st century.

In the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (Department for Education and Skills 2004) programme, the recent Labour administration set out five outcomes for children which practitioners are expected to have in mind when assessing and planning for children generally and children in need specifically. Children are to be:

- Healthy
- Stay safe

- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The standards for mental/emotional wellbeing were set out in a sister document *The National Service Framework for Children and Young People and Maternity Services*:

The Children's National Service Framework sets national standards for the first time for children's health and social care which promote high quality, woman and child-centered services and personalised care that meets the needs of parents, children and their families (Department of Health 2004: Introduction).

Most of its 11 standards, both those that are universal and those that are targeted, relate directly or indirectly to the delivery and/or preservation of good mental health. The standards, which cover health promotion, disability, safeguarding, the management of medicines and provision of services for children who are hospitalised, as well as mental health, all have implications for children who are 'different'. Whilst physical disability and geographical location are identified as service access issues, racial or ethnic difference is not identified as a primary difference. This may be intentional in the overarching documents, further detail being in guidance documentation, but reference is frequently made to ensuring that services are accessible and appropriate and that they take account of families who may live in poorer areas with fewer resources.

Standard 9 deals specifically with children's mental health as follows:

All children and young people from birth to their eighteenth birthday, who have mental health problems and disorders have access to timely, integrated, high quality multidisciplinary mental health services to ensure effective assessment, treatment and support, for them and their families (Department of Health 2004 Standard 9).

As this standard is expanded in separate document *The Mental Health and Psychological Well-being of Children and Young People* there is acknowledgement that services for children and young people: 'should be provided irrespective of their gender, race, religion, ability, culture or sexuality.... to ensure greater equity is achieved' (Department of Health 2004 p.8).

It acknowledges that the: 'mental health needs of minority communities are currently not being specifically met by mainstream services', and that: 'services need to be sensitive to these differences and ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge to work effectively with the different groups represented within the community they serve' (Department of Health 2004 p.13).

Whilst inclusion is central to the development of the subsequent discussion and guidance, and attention has been paid to the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) children and young people, children and young people of mixed race have generally been included within the BME category and have been identified by their non-white ethnicity.

In relation to mental health, it was left to the National Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) support service, which ended its work in March 2011, and its partners in non-statutory organisations to develop guidance and tools for the assessment of BME children. Even within the range of material available for BME children, issues which might be important for children and young people of mixed race are rarely identified and much less explored as integral to their assessment, other than by the tiny number of projects set up specifically for these young people.

Similarly in an earlier, adult focussed, document *Inside Outside: improving mental health services for black and minority ethnic communities in England* (National Institute for Mental Health in England 2003), people of mixed race are not identified separately. This is the case in many local policy documents across the United Kingdom (UK) and, although patients/service users are encouraged to identify their racial mix, rather than just ticking 'other' (see Myers above), any

requirement to consider the specific needs of children and young people of mixed race is hard to find.

The key factor in raising awareness of the existence of people of mixed race was the expansion of ethnic categorisation in the 2001 Census which allowed for people of mixed race to specify their parental mix for the first time and many public data sets are subsequently using these new categories. There is now scope for a real examination of the demographics and the socio-economic experiences of people of mixed race and, as the results of the 2011 census come through, more sophisticated data will be available which will show developing trends in the mixed race groups over a longer period.

In policy and practice terms, because of the increasing numbers of people of mixed race and the variety of their mixedness and the youthfulness of this population, it is now more pressing than before to consider the additional needs of this group and particularly the children who are mixed race. Being different from the norm, in terms of needing additional or different supports, is a factor for many children and young people who are caught up in the health and social care services. For example, gender and ability issues are well established in professional practice as areas which require specific assessment and intervention strategies. Race is arguably more problematic in that it overlays other differences and adds a further complexity to the child's experience. Although there are large numbers of policy documents, including race and cultural awareness programmes, for example Bennett (2007) et al for the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health and the Department of Health (2005), very little attention is currently paid to mixed race as a possible additional factor in assessment and intervention.

Notwithstanding the fact that children of mixed race will have gender, ability and other differences in many cases, it is possible that their mixedness creates an added dimension to their childhood experiences that sits alongside any other specific differences and which is deserving of further exploration.

The urgency of this exploration is supported by the disproportionately rapid growth of the mixed population (shown by the demographics of this population, discussed in Chapter 4) and the fact that it is a young population which is potentially vulnerable to some very specific and particular experiences which could have an impact on mental health. Currently little is known about the potential impact of these factors on the assessment of children of mixed race. If they are found to be significant then there is the potential for the consequences of these factors to precipitate emotional difficulties which may endure into adult life, creating sub-optimal mental health outcomes for sections of this population.

The invisibility of mixed race children in practice and policy is also found in the longstanding debate on mixed race and adoption, influenced by Small (in Ahmed 1986 and 1988) and Maxime (1986). In describing the motivations of adoptive parents Small says:

'The concept of mixed race, which has become part of conventional social work language, is misleading because it caused confusion in the minds of transracial adopters. It can lead them to believe that such children are racially distinct from other blacks' (Small 1986 p. 91).

For many adoption services 'black' has been the default racial grouping for children of mixed race, denying their white heritage regardless of their personal feelings about their identity, the way they are viewed by others, or their early lived experience. The importance that has historically been attributed to race as an overriding criterion for allocating adoptive parents is evident in the ministerial forward to the latest Adoption Guidance:

I want to move away from the situation where children are kept in care for a long time simply to find a family of the same ethnicity when a suitable family of a different ethnic background is available who can meet their other needs. To say the obvious, parents

from one particular background can be loving, sensitive and successful adoptive parents for children from very different backgrounds and that must be our primary consideration. Local authorities must consider all of the child's needs and not place the issue of ethnicity above everything else, though this must be taken into account. I know that children tend to do well when placed with a family who shares their ethnic or cultural background, but I know also that delay can have a very detrimental effect. It reduces the child's chances of finding a family and has negative consequences on their future development. If there can be an ethnic match that's an advantage, possibly a very significant one. But, it should never be a "deal-breaker" (Department for Education 2011 p.2).

However while this calls for a more liberal approach to racial and ethnic matching in the adoption system, tacitly acknowledging the priority given to race as a criterion for allocating adoptive parents, the guidance makes no reference to children of mixed race who are over represented in the care system.

### ***The Popular Discourse***

Mixed race issues were first significantly debated in the UK in the 1980s, usually as part of the transracial adoption debate (Small 1988, Katz 1996). In these debates there is a strong emphasis on the importance to mixed race children, usually at this time white/African Caribbeans, needing to and being expected to identify as black. Underlying this perception was a belief that being 'mixed' meant being 'mixed up' psychologically (Barn and Harman 2005) and an implicit belief that the adoption of a black identity would ameliorate this racial confusion. This notion that 'mixed' means 'mixed up' has been refuted in no small way by the obvious and public achievements of many people of mixed race, and there is a developing and popular assumption that racial and ethnic difference (Nava 2007) is a positive attribute.

Yet at the same time the rising phenomenon of mixed race may be seen as a product of the conditions of late modernity, a period exemplified by globalisation and characterised by de-

traditionalisation, privativism and individualisation, described by writers such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992 and 2008) as they examine the concepts of global and personal risk in the context of the 'Reflexive Modernity', 'Risk Society' and the 'World at Risk'.

Arguably these contemporary social conditions may provide a greater opportunity for mixed race people to reflexively forge personal identities beyond the traditional categories of class, race and nationality. However my data do not suggest that this 'freedom' is felt by participants in this study and is challenged in the current discourse by a cautious approach to the idea that being mixed might be the future (Mahtani 2009). The liminal<sup>1</sup> position occupied by people of mixed race is evidenced in the data in that participants describe moving between two identities and enjoying the knowledge and experience which arises from identifying with to two or more cultures. These theoretical considerations are returned to in Chapter 10.

Issues of mixed race have, during the course of this project, been made more 'fashionable' by Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 United States of America's presidential election. A response to this from some of the study's participants is included as Chapter 8. But for several years before this discussion of mixed race, and what this means to individuals who are mixed, has been live in the media.

For example, in a newspaper article in 2006, Laura Smith (2006) points to the growing numbers of children of mixed race and their need to have a visibility: 'It was only in the 2001 Census finally gave mixed race people a category of their own.' Her article quotes from workers in the field of education and social care, showing that this growing group does not have its different needs recognised. Smith assesses the difficulties and benefits of her 'mixed' position which she describes as: 'a bit like being on the fence, able to see into both gardens – black and white – but without a garden of our own.' (2006 pps 1-2)

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<sup>1</sup> from the Latin word "limen" meaning "threshold"

Judging by the response to this article in the following week's edition (Society Guardian 2006), she touched a chord for many people across the UK and elsewhere with respondents commenting that there was no category for them and those who had faced outright hostility. Over a year later The Guardian carried a feature 'Proud to be Mixed' (Ahmed 2007) trailing a London seminar on mixedness later that week. The following week, prior to the same seminar, Smith (2007) wrote again in a Guardian special supplement on race relations in Britain, about mixed matches.

A more strident discourse has been gradually developing, culminating in the controversial views expressed in the media during Obama's campaign and election. From The Guardian to the Evening Standard Obama's victory was hailed variously as 'A Great Week in Black History' and the arrival of the 'First Black President' in the United States of America. There followed a lengthy and often acrimonious development of the discourse, across the media, in which people of mixed race pointed out the fact that Obama was mixed race, as were other contemporary heroes such as Tiger Woods and Lewis Hamilton. This position was criticised by others, perhaps most stridently by Michael Paulin (2008a) who declared: 'As a mixed race person, this racist attitude is something with which mixed race (people) are all too familiar. The implication is that we are only civilised because we have a white parent.'

Since the Obama watershed there have been many articles and programmes about people of mixed race. Even Marie Claire magazine (2009), a publication given mainly to fashion and celebrity, carried a feature entitled 'The Mixed Race Revolution' focusing on the lives and identities of women of mixed race.

The theme was revisited in 2010 on the back of the fall from grace of Tiger Woods, with Gary Younge reminding us that Woods was at some pains to identify himself as mixed race, using the

term 'Cablinasian'<sup>2</sup> to capture his rich racial heritage. Inevitably more has been written as the Obama presidency continues, justifying the importance of seeing Obama as of mixed race as well as insisting that he is black, effectively mirroring the divergent views that are popularly held. Most recently there has been a short BBC series (2011) which has explored the topic of mixed race, both historically and through the experiences of a number of people of mixed race. These programmes identified and celebrated a mixed population going back several centuries and highlighted the accelerated growth of the mixed population in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***Creative writing and personal accounts***

As Chomsky says: 'It is quite possible - overwhelmingly probable, one might guess - that we will always learn more about human life and human personality from novels than from scientific psychology'. (1988 p 159.) In the field of mixed race there is a wealth of autobiographical writing as well as fictional writing which is based on intimate experiences, providing the reader with an immediate exposure to the lived experience of mixedness, as the following writings show.

From both the black and the white community people of mixed race experience hostility at some level, and have to accommodate to both cultures whilst feeling and knowing that they are different from both. A prime example is the reaction of Gwendolen, a young woman settling in England from Jamaica, featured in Buchi Emecheta's novel of that name, who is fiercely suspicious of the mixed race social worker who visits her family:

She was a trained social worker, one of those half-castes who used every available cosmetic to emphasize their whiteness...Having established her whiteness she went into a beautiful studied Jamaican accent. This was the part that was called for in this case...Gwendolen was somehow not deceived. She had learned from Amanda and the

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<sup>2</sup> A portmanteau coined by *Tiger Woods* to describe his ethnic makeup. *Ca* for Caucasian, *bl* for black, *in* for American Indian and *asian* for Asian (namely Thai). Allwords.com

other 'Yellow Niggers'<sup>3</sup> what it was like to fake black when the occasion called. What was bad in their just being themselves instead of being white one day and black the other?  
(Emecheta 1989 p.169)

Ekow Eshun, in his book *Black Gold of the Sun* movingly describes his feelings of shame on discovering one of his ancestors had been a slave trader. The ancestor was able to ply his trade effectively as a man of mixed race, in a liminal position, and as such accepted by both the African slave traders and the Europeans who worked the international slave market. As someone who identifies as black, Ghanaian Eshun describes the shock as physical: 'The sun is too bright. Your head aches. You find yourself walking along a sand-blown highway no longer sure who you are anymore.' (Eshun 2005 p.141)

Jackie Kay, following her own ancestry in Nigeria and also having identified as black throughout her childhood in Scotland where she was adopted by a white couple, finds herself sticking 'out like a sore thumb' in a rural market place. She says: 'It's the first time in my life that I've properly understood what it means being mixed race. It's not a term I've ever embraced, and have always felt more black than white..... I realise that I want to be accepted. I want other Nigerians to see in my face that my father is Igbo.' (Kay 2010 p.216)

In a much earlier writing Mary Seacole, a mixed race nurse who came to prominence during the Crimean War (although her part in nursing the troops has only recently been fully recognised), demonstrates in her *Wonderful Adventures* (1857) how on many occasions the different ways she as a 'yellow' woman was received by the various groups she moved amongst, sometimes clearly identified as a 'nigger' and at other times more aligned with white people. In her own mind she seems to occupy an undefined position related to her current activity, at times almost surprised that her skin colour should cause any reaction, critical of the attitudes of both blacks and whites as she finds them.

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'yellow niggers' is used to describe people of mixed race.

This uncertainty about, and movement between, identities is shown many times in the data collected for this project.

### ***Demographic Trends***

Whilst there has been substantial interest in mixedness and the popular discourse on the topic has developed, with hopefully a greater degree of awareness of the issues generally, there is little evidence that service provision is being affected, despite the compelling demography.

In the 2001 UK census 677,117 (1.15% of the total UK population) people were identified as being of mixed race, a figure that is estimated to rise to 1.2 million by 2020 (Rees 2007). Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics (2011) show that this figure had risen to 986,600 by 2009. Half of the people recorded in the 2001 figures were children aged 15 and under. Whilst there are still difficulties in establishing accurate figures (see Chapter Four), within the black and minority ethnic (BME) population the known numbers of mixed race children are increasing significantly, accounting for 37% of this BME child group. Data also indicate that for young men aged 20 of Caribbean origin, who were born in the UK or came before the age of 14, and who had a partner, 63% of the partners were not Caribbean (Platt 2009). Potentially this has further implications for mixed race birth rate increases. In the face of this striking demographic trend it is timely to focus on the needs and experiences of young people of mixed race and to ask whether there is a need for health, social care, education and youth services to do more to ensure equality and appropriateness of access and support.

A review of the available statistical material is included as Chapter 4 to provide a context and to demonstrate the extreme heterogeneity of this group. This material, which is mainly English and UK data, illustrates the complexities involved in gathering data on mixed race and demonstrates the inadequacies of statistical measurement, which is frequently used to improve service delivery through a system of target measurement, in this important area.

In utilising statistical material, where it is available, to review the relevant demographic information on mixed race, and in using the risk and resilience literature (see Chapter 3) as a framework for understanding the childhood experiences of the participants in the study, this thesis builds on early knowledge derived from a range of quantitative and qualitative studies. It has been argued that building on previous knowledge is a key methodological characteristic of studies designed to have an impact on service improvement (Crabtree and Miller 1999; Pawson et al 2004). This project hopes to impact on service provision and, as such, it is essential that it builds on what is already known and uses existing data, in combination with the newly collected field work data, to take forward this understanding.

As this study provides qualitative evidence which has a relevance to policy and practice it is important to consider this evidence against what is known about the subject from a broad range of sources to demonstrate the relative significance of the findings. Pawson et al (2004) describe the process of 'realist synthesis' in their paper on different ways of evaluating evidence. They point to the importance of 'administrative data' in filling out the evidence context: 'Finally, administrative, legislative and the generally grey literature may all also add to the synthesis, since they can provide the contextual information that is often squeezed out of the academic journals.' (Pawson et al 2004 p. 40).

Statistical information from various reports is used in this project to ensure a rounded understanding of the topic being researched here.

### ***Reasons for Undertaking this Study***

Very little research exists which specifically examines the general wellbeing of mixed race children and young people and even less addresses their mental health/psychological well being and the implications for professional practice. This is particularly important in assessments for mental health/psychological wellbeing and also for general assessments under the Comprehensive Assessment Framework which came into being under the *Every Child Matters*

(Department for Education and Skills 2004) programme, and which is being reviewed in the light of the *Munro Report* (Department of Education 2011) into child protection systems. It is also crucial for the ways in which children and young people of mixed race are supported in school.

This study is undertaken against the background of the increasing recognition of the central importance of mental health to all aspects of child and adolescent development (Rutter 1989, Wilson P. 2003, Fonagy and Target 1997, Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills 2006). It seeks to identify factors that might promote or impede the mental health/emotional well being of mixed race children specifically, through the exploration of risk and resilience factors that might be exclusive to the experiences of this group. In so doing it contributes to the general body of knowledge about working with mixed race children and young people and to our understanding of the development of resilience.

The evidence base for child and adolescent mental health practice draws heavily on the research into risk and resilience factors which are derived from regression analyses of the findings from large scale population surveys, frequently endorsed by Cochrane reviews<sup>4</sup> which can be found online (The Cochrane Library 2011). These concepts of risk and resilience in this context are universal in that they relate to all children and young people. Where the number of risk factors in a child's experience is high then mental health outcomes are predicted to be worse, unless these risk factors are mediated by resilience factors, that is where negative experiences have been counteracted by, for example, positive parenting and/or a secure home environment.

In the field of socio-psychological problems links have for example been found between hyperactivity at age 10 and behavioral problems four years later (August and Holmes 1983) and between conflicts with the parents at age 16 to depressions at age 33 (Buchanan and Ten Brinke

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<sup>4</sup> 'The Cochrane Collaboration, established in 1993, is an international network of more than 28,000 dedicated people from over 100 countries. We work together to help health care providers, policy makers, patients, their advocates and carers, make well-informed decisions about health care, based on the best available research evidence, by preparing, updating and promoting the accessibility of Cochrane Reviews – over 4,600 so far, published online in *The Cochrane Library*.' <http://www.cochrane.org/about-us>

1998). In the field of drug abuse one study related personality problems at ages six and ten to early smoking, alcohol and drug abuse (Masse and Tremblay 1997), while another related parents' alcohol consumption to children's own over-consumption from the ages of 10 to 11 (Weinberg et al 1994). In the area of juvenile delinquency family factors of boys aged eight have been correlated with delinquency (Farrington and Hawkins 1991); furthermore, anti-social behaviour in boys from ages 5 to 11 is correlated with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) at age 13 (Moffitt 1990). These findings, and findings from other studies, have been translated into clinical programmes which have been tested using a range of methods including random controlled trials (RCTs) (Woolfenden et al 2004, Nye et al 2005).

While much of this research focuses on the pathology of childhood mental health, increasing recognition is being given to the development of universal public health policies which address the mental health of children and young people. Public health policies are designed to meet the mental health needs of all children by increasing the effectiveness of protective factors and minimising the impact of the risk factors on the child, the child's family and the community of which the child and family are a part (Pearce 1993, Wallace et al 1995 and Offord et al 1998).

Alongside the clinical work of people such as John Bowlby (1952), Carolyn Webster Stratton (1999) and Michael Rutter (1990: 2007), these findings have cumulatively contributed to major policy documents such as *Together We Stand* (Health Advisory Service 1995); *Children in Mind* (Audit Commission 1999); *Bright Futures* (Mental Health Foundation 1999) and form an important part of Government policy in *The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (Department of Health 2004) and the *Every Child Matters* programme (Department for Education and Skills 2004). Whilst social policy changes are being made by the Coalition Government in the UK, both major parties declare a commitment to supporting children's mental health. The recent publication of the Coalition Government's mental health strategy, *No Health Without Mental Health* (Department of Health 2011), ensures that children's mental health is firmly on the policy agenda, although currently in 2011/12 child and adolescent

mental health services (CAMHS) are being subjected to extensive reductions due largely to the cuts in local government funding and the requirement for cash releasing efficiency savings in the health services (CRES) in the current economic climate.

Despite the extensive epidemiological and clinical research that has been conducted into the mental health needs of children and adolescents stretching back over more than half a century, very little of this research has focused specifically on the needs of children from BME communities. Even less has focussed on mixed race children who in particular have rarely been identified as a group for any service focus or investigated as a separate group to inform service development. Their presence in various health, social and educational statistics, although increasingly in place, is not always in evidence, with almost no longitudinal studies which reliably identify mixed race children as a separate group, thereby precluding any data on trends. Most usually they have been assigned to the 'other' category. Large quantitative studies from which the risk and resilience factors are derived are therefore unlikely to gather any reliable evidence on the specific issues that are important to mixed race young people and which might be affecting their mental health development or other aspects of their lives. These factors need to be searched out qualitatively and described in order to inform the focus and categorisation of needs in future larger quantitative studies. (Bryman 1988, Holloway and Wheeler 2002).

This qualitative study is designed to meet this need. In exploring and describing the personal experiences of 21 people of mixed race it examines those experiences thematically and considers them in the context of the CAMHS risk and resilience data. It identifies issues which are specific to this group and considers how these findings might inform policy and practice.

### ***Risk and Resilience as a Theoretical Framework***

The concept of risk and resilience, as understood in the child and adolescent mental health (CAMH) literature, is generally regarded as the most appropriate way of identifying psychological need and vulnerability to mental disorder/psychological distress in childhood. It underlies the

approach to assessment of the mental health of children and young people described in the previous Government's child policy document *The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (Department of Health 2004) and the *Every Child Matters* programme (Department for Education and Skills 2004). Evidence of additional risks encountered and/or different ways in which mixed race young people build resilience, in contrast to the general population, may identify specific factors that could be incorporated into population surveys on the mental health of children and young people in future research. Testing any such factors statistically in future, for their impact on risk and resilience, would refine and sensitise the risk and resilience evidence base which informs current policy and practice to the specific needs of mixed race young people, should specific needs be identified.

The development of an understanding of the risk and resilience factors sensitised to the needs of the mixed race child population would promote more effective services better able to meet the specific needs of this population thereby ensuring equality of access to service provision for this group across health, social care, education and youth provision as well as enabling appropriate early intervention. The avoidance, or amelioration, of risk situations and the development of resilience in the social and economic contexts of the growing up of mixed race young people would be protective of their mental health and offers an important way of looking at service effectiveness with a view to service improvements. This study is designed to explore whether the current evidence base requires modification to accommodate the specific needs of mixed race children and young people or whether mixed race experiences have minimal impact on mental health development.

To an extent the current evidence base is generalisable and for the most part the experience of the participants in this study has been broadly that of all children, with risk and resilience factors arising as they might for any child. Indeed their experiences are more akin to those of all children from black and minority ethnic groups in terms of the racism they experience and the isolation they feel. But in a small number of significant ways the fact of their mixedness has created

additional risks to mental health, as is shown in Chapter 9. These risks may be superimposed on more generally experienced risks and, in this way, create cause for concern. The data also show that the experience of mixedness appears to aid the capacities for resilience that some of the participants have developed as they have learned to deal with the risks, exemplifying Rutter's (2007) 'steeling', or inoculation, effect. (See Chapter 3)

In summary, data from the participants in this study make it clear that there have been significant risk factors for mental health in their growing up. How far these relate to being mixed race can only be inferred from the words of the participants themselves and are closely interwoven with family, class and economic status. Rutter (2005) emphasises the importance of separating the proximal and distal factors in these experiences, that is those factors which directly impinge on the individual's day to day life and those which may be causing or affecting the direct experiences. For example, some interesting questions arise as to whether the proximal experiences emanating from parental relationship breakdown are or are not caused by the more distal effects of the parents' mixed relationship.

The themes from the data and their relation to risk and resilience in mental health are described and discussed, drawing out the factors which have affected the mental wellbeing of some participants and developed the resiliencies of others. The geographical context as well and the socio-economic context have considerable importance for this process. Proxy indicators for risk and resilience are identified, drawn from the significant themes, as they relate to the literature on risk and resilience. The analysis shows how these play out for the participants as a group and for participants individually and indicate how some risk factors may have heightened importance for children of mixed race, suggesting ways in which services might adapt and highlighting the need for greater practitioner awareness.

Participants in this study have not been selected on the basis of any existing, or pre-existing, psych morbidity nor has there been any intention to suggest that 'mental illness' was a

prerequisite for participation. The study is primarily about describing and explicating the issues for children of mixed race as these are reflected on from adulthood. On the basis of these descriptions, the effect on the emotional wellbeing/mental health of the participants is explored and the possible implications for service delivery considered.

### ***Methodological Approach and Method***

The methodological approach and methods of this study are set out fully in Chapters 5 and 6. In summary, a qualitative methodology has been chosen in order to collect data which describe intensely personal and very individual experiences. An interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) has been followed in order to draw out the significant statements and to identify the themes which are important to the participants. This has its roots in the Heideggerian approach which accepts that the presence of the researcher and the researcher interests will influence the explication of the data. An interpretative analysis is used in the second stage of this study in order to answer the research question and to make a contribution to the understanding of how risk and resilience factors in relation to mental health might be affecting the experiences of mixed race young people.

In seeking to answer the research question this project draws on a theoretical framework derived from the quantitative and qualitative enquiries. These provide the basis of the data which inform the understanding of risk and resilience as these concepts relate to the mental health of children and young people to link theory to practice and to contribute to, and extend, the literature on children of mixed race. Whilst this project does not offer any new quantitative data itself, the inclusion of the demographic context surrounding mixed race, see Chapter 4, also supports this approach.

Approaches to qualitative research are increasingly following a mixed method path with researchers more commonly asserting that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches has the possibility of providing a more complete picture of the topic under

consideration. As Bryman (1988) points out: 'when quantitative and qualitative research are jointly pursued, much more complete accounts of social reality can ensue' (p 126). This approach allows for a more holistic exploration of the research question and for interpretation which takes account of context as well as explicitly stated researcher assumptions. 'Data alone are insufficient; they must be telling and must answer theoretical questions.' (Charmaz 2005 p. 551).

### ***Positionality***

The experiences and 'position' of the researcher must always be a factor in the genesis of the research project and in the interpretation of the data (see Chapter 6).

My interest in this topic derives from several sources, not least my background in education, health and social care, most recently working with an organisation concerned with the mental health of babies, children and young people.

As a teacher in the 1970s and 1980s I worked in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood where I had responsibility for home/school liaison<sup>5</sup> as well as class teaching. This brought me into daily contact with mixed race families and their children, with a closer involvement in some cases where there were school related difficulties. I taught many children of mixed ethnicity and was particularly struck by the way in which these children negotiated themselves around their identity. These young people, and I refer here specifically to those who were mixed black/white, were seen as black by their community and encouraged to think of themselves as such. This seems logical, given a) how they will be seen by wider society and b) the fact that many black people, significantly those from the Caribbean, have a past mixed heritage. However, the reality for many of the children I taught was that they were being brought up in an almost totally white family environment. Frequently their black father was an absent figure and there was often little

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<sup>5</sup> Home/school liaison is based on the contention that 'where school-home links are strong, pupil's motivation, attendance and levels of academic achievement will be improved. Children are less likely to be excluded from schools where pupils, parents and the school work together.' <http://www.schoolhomeliasion.org/>

evidence of the acceptance in the wider community of the white side of the child of mixed ethnicity. This type of experience and how it is thought of by the participants is strongly demonstrated in my data and resonates with my earlier pilot study (Morley 2005).

In the Health Service in the mid 1980s I ran a community support team for adults with mental illness as part of an action research project. This programme, which was focussed largely on supporting long stay patients as they returned to the community, also established a resource for families which provided out of school activities for their children and general support where the main parent was mentally ill.

Later, in the 1990s, as an assistant director of social services, I had responsibility for mental health services and subsequently for all children's services, including the social care input to the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), as well as for adoption and fostering services where many debates were had about the contentious issues of same race placements, calling into question the appropriate placement for mixed race children. The categorisation of children of mixed race as black is a process that continues to have strong advocates, but whilst my data show that some young people of mixed race strive to see themselves as black, as they become young adults they are insistent that their full mixed heritage is recognised.

More recently, from 1997 to 2005, I worked with the national charity YoungMinds, which brought together my interests in both mental health and children's services. Whilst I was there a study of services for BME children and young people was undertaken, in conjunction with Mellow<sup>6</sup>, for which I had overall management responsibility, and which drew attention to the difficulties in accessing CAMH services for BME children and their families. Currently I am involved with the East London Foundation Trust which is the mental health provider for East London and beyond, where I take a particular interest in CAMHS and the development of services to meet the needs

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<sup>6</sup> Mellow is a pioneering East London-based NHS programme committed to improving the experience of African and Caribbean people with mental health problems, and promoting their well-being within the community.

of the large number of people of ethnic minority origin, including people of mixed race, across the area.

Whilst I have worked closely with children of mixed race I also have a number of close personal relationships which inform my interest, the most important being my eldest daughter who is mixed race with whom I have been able to discuss my emerging thoughts and often obtain different and useful insights. This is therefore an important topic for me and brings together my interests in mixedness, mental health and the development of mentally healthy children.

As my research has progressed I have been pleased to have had opportunities for sharing my emerging findings with others who have previously not been aware of the specific issues relating to mixed race which might require a different or more flexible and insightful service approach. In undertaking this study I add further to the understanding of these specific experiences and difficulties which mixed race children have to deal with as they grow up. The explication of my data and the conclusions, where these are significant, will contribute to professional practice in relation to the ways in which services are delivered to children and young people of mixed race.

### ***Terminology***

Throughout the thesis I am aware that I am using terminology for race and mental health which can be controversial and about which those people described have differing and strong views. It is important to clarify my usage at the outset and I set out my reasons for choosing these terminologies below.

#### *Race, ethnicity and culture*

In the UK we live in a highly racialised society where the fact that we are all part of the one human race has little relevance for many individuals and for institutions, as evidenced by the

MacPherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (MacPherson 1999)<sup>7</sup>. In the British vernacular the terms race, culture and ethnicity are frequently used interchangeably to describe the same phenomena in our 'multicultural society', referring to different countries of origin, shared religious practices and customs, epidermal difference and frequently class differences. Fernando (2003) suggests that culture is more important to minority groups than race but that, however people are seen in racial terms, 'the colour of one's skin matters' - pointing to an essentialist definition. The social construction of race is evidenced in the one-drop rule<sup>8</sup> in the United States of America and in the legacy of apartheid<sup>9</sup> with its racial hierarchies, proving – as also reflected in the data from participants in this research – that skin colour as such is not necessarily an identifying factor. People of mixed race can 'pass'<sup>10</sup> for white but in these regimes they cannot choose to be white.

The data for this project have inevitably been collected in highly racialised, although different, contexts where there are many terms for people of mixed race and in which many theories have

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Lawrence (13 September 1974 – 22 April 1993) was a black British teenager from South-East London who was stabbed to death while waiting for a bus on the evening of 22 April 1993. After the initial investigation, five suspects were arrested but never convicted.[2] However, it has been suggested that the murder had a racist motive and that Lawrence was killed because he was black. In 1999, an inquiry headed by Sir William MacPherson examined the original Metropolitan police investigation and famously concluded that the force was "institutionally racist" and has been called 'one of the most important moments in the modern history of criminal justice in Britain'. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Lawrence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Lawrence)

<sup>8</sup> The one-drop rule is a historical colloquial term in the United States that holds that a person with any trace of African ancestry is considered black (unless having an alternative non-white ancestry which he or she can claim, such as Native American, Asian, Arab, or Australian aboriginal). It developed most strongly out of the binary culture of long years of institutionalized slavery. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop\\_rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop_rule)

<sup>9</sup> Apartheid (Afrikaans: "apartness") policy that governed relations between South Africa's white minority and nonwhite majority and sanctioned racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against nonwhites. The implementation of apartheid, often called "separate development" since the 1960s, was made possible through the Population Registration Act of 1950, which classified all South Africans as either Bantu (all black Africans), Coloured (those of mixed race), or white. A fourth category—Asian (Indian and Pakistani)—was later added. Racial segregation, sanctioned by law, was widely practiced in South Africa before 1948, but the National Party, which gained office that year, extended the policy and gave it the name apartheid. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/29332/apartheid>

<sup>8</sup> In the racial politics of the United States, racial passing refers to a person classified by society as a member of one racial group (most commonly Caucasian / Afro-American heritage) choosing to identify with a group other than that assigned by social prejudice. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passing\\_\(racial\\_identity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passing_(racial_identity))

developed which suggest that people of mixed race are less stable and more confused about their identities than the monoracial, (Park 1950, Barn and Harman 2005). Whilst accepting the fact that we are all one race and that genetically we differ very little from one another, between and across different groups, the term race is used as it is commonly understood. The term 'mixed race' is used throughout as being the term most used and preferred by those who were consulted to inform the 2001 census (Aspinall et al 2006), see below. It is interchangeable to an extent with mixed heritage, multiple heritage, biracial, multiracial, mixed ethnicity and multi ethnic. (Alibhai Brown 2001) It describes a commonly held view of skin colour (epidermic) difference but it does not capture ethnic differences which have no epidermal consequences, for example Icelandic and Spanish or Irish and Croatian. Although not exclusively the case it is epidermic difference to which racial prejudice attaches. These are the prejudices which have been experienced by the participants in the study, none of whom have objected or taken issue with the term 'mixed race' as a descriptor.

The social construction of the terminology is further exemplified by the use in Germany of 'doppelstaatig' or 'doppelstaatsbürger' meaning 'double nationality'. Mixed race is not commonly used as the minority community is almost exclusively Turkish. Double, or dual, nationality is not a comprehensive enough term to describe the complexity of racial mixes and national allegiances which are found elsewhere.

When given a choice it is clear from the Aspinall study (2006) that people prefer to give precise information about their ethnicity, citing the ethnicity of both parents. However there are some interesting comments, made by respondents to the Aspinall study, which show that this is not always an accurate picture.

If you ask for culture I am British and White. If you ask my race I am of mixed race. This is important. My ethnicity is Welsh. In the end it's all words: I am not the description of myself. (Aspinall et al 2006 p.29)

I feel my dominant influential culture is British and would like that to be recognised and acknowledged. I have never visited either parent's county of origin yet my identity is their culture. (Aspinall et al 2006 p. 30)

When asked to rate all generic terms the preference was for 'mixed race'. Interestingly Aspinall's respondents were not offered the term bi-racial which seems to be used frequently in the US. The terms respondents found least attractive were 'dual heritage' and 'half caste'. They were not offered 'brown' as an identity although one respondent made the following observation.

In order to counter accusations of foreignness, I often point out that I am probably no less English than someone who happens to be white but is Jewish, or half Polish, or something like that. Let's face it, it is the skin colour that causes the problems, most people never question a white person about their background unless they look different in some way. (Aspinall et al 2006 p. 30)

A discussion on the complexities of meaning of race and racial identification is not included, but the focus is on the meaning that comes from the data. In some instances the term ethnicity or ethnic is used to reflect the cultural experience of participants rather than racial differences or similarities. The discourses around these areas are not developed within this thesis as this has been adequately done by others, for example Hall (1989).

There are occasions when the use of the word 'race' seems to jar unacceptably and throughout the term 'mixed heritage' is used interchangeably.

### *Mental Health*

The words 'mental health' are specifically used throughout this thesis to describe health as opposed to illness. In some instances this term is softened by using the term 'emotional

wellbeing' in recognition of the fact that 'mental' is often linked inextricably to psychopathology for many people.

Mental health is something most people enjoy most of the time, but 10% of under 16 year olds at any one time have mental health disorders or illnesses, with this percentage likely to be considerably higher in the big conurbations (ONS 2007). Maggie Sawkins (2008 unpublished) describes how having a mental disorder can feel, evoking a sense of liminality which resonates with the research stories:

*Borderland*

*Sitting out on the borderland*

*I'm a pebble on the shore*

*I'm a night without a whisper*

*I'm a room without a door*

*But the stars are in my pocket*

*and the moon is in my head*

*I'm a book of many poems*

*that's afraid of being read.*

### ***The Structure of the Thesis***

This thesis is set out in 12 chapters with six appendices.

*Chapter 1: Introduction.* This chapter has set out an over view of the work. The content of the following eleven chapters is as follows.

*Chapter 2: Literature Review.* This chapter begins to develop the framework for the project. It reviews the relevant, mainly UK, literature on mixed race children and young people, as it relates to black and minority ethnic (BME) mental health literature. Given the paucity of literature which combines the two aspects it reviews the developing debate about BME people and mental health and the material on the mental health of children and young people generally to provide a comprehensive background.

*Chapter 3: Risk and Resilience.* The literature relating to risk and resilience in the context of children and young people's mental health is considered. The continuum from risk to resilience is explored. This definition of risk and resilience is used in the study to identify concerns for mental health in the participants' contributions and underpins the findings in relation to risk and resilience that are described in Chapter 8.

*Chapter 4: Relevant Demographic Data.* In order to give a context to the data collected by this project, this chapter critiques the socio-demographic data which is relevant to mixed race and BME children and which can be considered to have a bearing on their mental health/emotional well-being.

*Chapter 5: Methodology.* This chapter makes the case for the use of a qualitative methodology to collect data which will address the research question. It discusses the use of the phenomenological approach in tandem with a theoretical framework which draws on a body of mainly quantitatively-derived data, that is the data on risk and resilience. Interpreter bias, reflexivity and the use of narrative are considered.

*Chapter 6: Method.* This chapter describes the process of data collection and analysis, covering ethical issues, confidentiality, use of the internet to identify participants, the recruitment process. Three types of response methods were offered and used. These are examined in terms of content and reliability. Ethical approval and issues which arose in that process are described.

*Chapter 7: The Thematic Analysis.* This chapter explores the data and identifies the main themes from the narratives of the lived experiences of the participants. The themes are brought together under three main clusters - family, community and personal – which match the risk and resilience classifications used in children's mental health. The rationale for this is set out.

*Chapter 8: The Obama Election.* This chapter reflects an international and political understanding of the experience of mixedness by presenting data from participants' responses to the Obama victory, showing the powerful emotions this has evoked for individuals and, by association, families and communities.

*Chapter 9: Analysis of Risk and Resilience Issues.* This chapter interrogates the data in order to discover whether there are any factors which might effect risks for mental health or develop resiliences. It moves on from the thematic analysis of the previous chapter to suggest ways in which the participants' experiences may have affected their susceptibility to mental disorders and goes on to look at how these factors might build up in the experiences of any one young person. Proxy indicators are identified to show how risks to mental health, and opportunities for the development of resilience, exist for the participants which are related to their mixedness and as such are additional to the experiences of all children. The continuum from risk to resilience, which is evident in the data, is considered.

*Chapter 10: Theoretical Possibilities.* The chapter considers how the phenomenon of mixed race both exemplifies and fits within sociological theories dealing with risk, globalisation and individualisation. Understanding mixed race as a liminal phenomenon suggests that it is both a

product and an exemplifying feature of late modernity as well as being a risk that could endanger the social order. Theories of risk are discussed and their relation to the risk and resilience framework of child mental health is considered.

*Chapter 11: Discussion of Findings and Their Context.* This chapter revisits the key findings and considers the specific and important issues that the study has raised for policy and practice in the caring professions. It considers relevant recent policy and describes the state of current service provision. The methodology and the use of proxy indicators are reviewed and the contribution of the study is considered. The strengths and limitations, as well as the future opportunities for research are discussed.

*Chapter 12: Concluding Remarks.*

### **Researcher's note**

***Footnotes:*** In some places I have specifically selected definitions of concepts from Wikipedia where these have provided clear and concise material not similarly available on other sites.

**Quotes:** Where these are from the existing literature they are in the regular font; quotes from the study participants are in italics.

## **Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature**

### ***Chapter Overview***

This chapter sets out to provide a comprehensive background against which the findings from this study can be seen. Much of what is written on mental health and mixed race is dispersed within studies of mental health in relation to race/ethnicity and studies of mixed race young people more generally. The chapter discusses the development of these discourses in the literature with the emphasis on the mental health/emotional wellbeing of young people, specifically identifying research which has relevance for the mental health of young people of mixed race.

Most of the literature relating to mental health and mixed race people focuses on adult experiences and most has been gathered on the basis of experience outside the UK. Some of this literature is covered, but the focus is mainly on UK material as the UK experience of racism has a different historical trajectory from that of, for example, the USA where the 'one drop'<sup>11</sup> rule is still a strong influence, as evidenced relatively recently by the actions of a justice of the peace in Louisiana in refusing to marry a black woman and a white man in 2009.

The chapter is divided into three discreet parts in order to extract from the existing streams of literature work that is relevant to this study. It is presented as follows:

- mental health and ethnicity
- mixed race young people
- service delivery issues as they affect young people of mixed race.

Search engines have been used and although a number of alerts were set up these have not produced a great deal. Most of the literature reviewed here has been identified through specialist sources and web sites in the field of child mental health and mixed race studies. Publishers'

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<sup>11</sup> The one-drop rule is a historical colloquial term in the United States for the social classification as black of individuals with any African ancestry. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop\\_rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop_rule)

catalogues have proved useful as have some of the broadsheet newspapers. Other relevant studies have been accessed via academic seminars and professional and personal contacts.

### ***Mental health and ethnicity***

There is an extensive literature which examines the historical and current relationship between race and mental illness, largely focusing on the abuse of power relationships considered by a number of writers to be evidenced by the disproportionate numbers of black adults detained in mental hospitals (Fernando 2003).

The work by Littlewood and Lipsedge (1982) is one of the earliest and best known of such writings in the UK. Littlewood and Lipsedge drew attention to the disproportionate numbers of black people who are in receipt of compulsory in-patient care, diagnosed as schizophrenic. They offered a number of possible reasons for this. Littlewood and Lipsedge describe the 'Afro-Britain' as being in a double bind position in society suffering from the deprivations of poverty as well as racism, but suggest that this is not the whole story.

West Indian patients in Britain who become psychiatrically ill have experienced significantly more chronic environmental stresses such as overcrowding, poverty, poor accommodation, insecurity of tenure and a long working day than have English patients. However, they have suffered no greater hardships than those West Indians who are not ill. (1982 p.135)

They drew attention to the fact that patients from the black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are unlikely (at the time of their writing) to receive the more attractive type of psychiatric care such as individual or group therapy: 'because they do not meet the accepted, racist, criteria in terms of being able to describe their feelings in the 'middle class' way.' (Littlewood and Lipsedge 1982 p.65)

Progress has been slow to remedy this and in the East End of London, where Littlewood and Lipsedge practiced at the time of their writing, schemes are only now underway to ensure that the talking therapies are more accessible to all BME groups. However, 'transcultural' work has been on limited offer for some time to those adults who were referred particularly to the services where working transculturally had been given a sufficient profile (D'Ardenne and Mahtani 1999).

Since Littlewood and Lipsedge's work there has been a greater focus on these issues and further refinement of the debate. More recently, the Aetiology and Ethnicity in Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses (AESOP) study (Morgan et al 2006), a robust multi centre research programme, finds higher rates of first episode psychosis in black people than in the general population in the UK, although it does not find that this is the case in the Caribbean. In common with Littlewood and Lipsedge, though 24 years later, the AESOP team also suggests that socio-economic factors must be playing a part in this finding, concluding that the differences it finds are a product of the social disadvantage experienced by black people and migrants generally.

In the intervening years a number of studies and polemics have challenged and questioned this evidence. Psychiatrists Ndegwa and Olajide express concern at the interest paid by their profession to the diagnosis of schizophrenia in relation to black patients. They suggest that other diagnoses have been overlooked. They strongly challenge what they perceive as the current acceptance by 'service providers, academics and policy makers' that this (high rate of psychosis) is the norm for the black population (2003 p. xi).

However Collinson and Turner, in their contribution to the same book tracing the rise of the links between race and medicine also point to the links between mental illness and poverty. They explore the historical development of these links and in their conclusion point to the fact that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'the medicalisation of race coincided with the growing apprehension of the urban poor in Britain's cities as also being a 'race apart'' (2003 p. 25).

Fernando (2003) argues that it is the inherent racism in the health system that causes a disproportionate diagnosis of psychosis to be made in black people and catalogues the apparent reluctance of health professionals and others involved in health systems to challenge this. He refers to the study by Wing et al (1974) which suggested that the use of the Present State Examination (PSE) would avoid the misdiagnosis of BME patients. As Fernando points out misdiagnosis is not avoided as:

Unfortunately when racism is institutionalised in ways of working – as it undoubtedly is in the psychiatric system of making judgments about the presence or absence of ‘symptoms’ – use of PSE cannot counter this because it does not incorporate any means of doing so. (2003 p. 33)

Fernando’s views are strongly held by many in the field. A further strand of literature looks at the stress caused by racism itself, some using mental health measures (Williams et al 2003.) The organisation Black Mental Health UK displays on its web site the following digest of views:

- The UK experience reveals that it is in the field of forensic psychiatry that racial injustices and cultural oppression are felt most acutely by African Caribbean service users.
- People from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups suffer poorer health, have reduced life expectancy and have greater problems with access to health care than the majority White population.
- Inequality in mental health services between Black people and the majority White population has been the subject of ongoing debate and study for decades. It is well documented that people from BME communities and African Caribbeans in particular fare worse under the British mental health system.
- There is a history of misunderstanding and discrimination when it comes to the use of compulsory powers against African Caribbeans. Black people mistrust and often fear

services, and staff are often wary of the Black community, fearing criticism and not knowing how to respond. (Black Mental Health UK 2008)

Smaje (1995) however is more equivocal about endemic racism in the health professions, specifically psychiatrists in relation to mental health, and interrogates the existing data to caution against any sweeping conclusions. Also Bhui (2002a), in his chapter on *Feeling for Racism*, adds a further, more psychodynamic, ingredient to the debate by identifying the importance of the internal world in relation to racial discourse, of both black and white people. Bhui points to the potential attendant psychological damage inflicted by challenges to identity in his discussion of the psychosocial and psycho-political aspects of racism:

Misidentification, to be considered not to be who one believes one is, to be denied preferred identities that are precious, are akin to psychological mutilation or annihilation. Identity is cherished, even at the expense of it being illusory and temporary (2002b p.44).

In summary, social forces and attitudes as well as alleged shortcomings in the psychiatric professions are all implicated in the resultant disproportionate numbers of BME psychiatric patients. The debate about the relative effects of these factors is ongoing and demonstrates that mental health services need to adapt and change to allow BME populations to access help in a more timely and culturally appropriate way. The virtual absence of mixed race people from this discourse is noteworthy although the above quote from Bhui has enhanced meaning for people of mixed race.

The politics of health in relation to ethnicity and culture are complex. These are reviewed by Hillier and Kelleher (1996) stressing the need for an awareness of cultural practices and beliefs whilst not 'pathologising' culture; an issue fully explored in the same book by Ahmad. Hillier and Rahman (1996) specifically review the issue of mental health in the Bangladeshi community of East London and the ways in which the traditional services, including CAMHS, respond.

The Tower Hamlets CAMHS has won a National Institute for Mental Health England (NIMHE) Positive Practice award for its targeted services to BME communities, where the runner up was the Liverpool Building Bridges project. These projects work with families from ethnic minorities who are not accessing mainstream services, working through practitioners who speak the same language as service users. Neither of these award-winning services specifically addresses the mental health needs of mixed race children.

### ***Mixed Race Young People***

Much of the research and autobiographical literature on mixed race inevitably cover issues which impact on mental health/emotional wellbeing, focussing as these studies do on family relationships and the racism of the outside world. Many references are made to the trauma of secondary school, to the difficulties of establishing an identity, to strategies for dealing with racism – all factors which have the potential to affect mental health adversely.

Most of what has been written about mixed race comes from the USA and, whilst much of it is applicable to the UK experience, it is important to acknowledge the very different trajectory of racism in the two countries and to hold this in mind when reviewing this work. The history and legacy of slavery in the USA produced the ‘one drop’ rule and the segregation of the races which persisted in education until 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>12</sup>), and was only finally eradicated in law by the passing of the National Voting Rights Act of 1965<sup>13</sup>. Counter to this, the absence of the class system, which fundamentally affects social perceptions in the UK, and the supremacy of meritocracy, witness the election of Barack Obama as president, demonstrate a type of equality

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<sup>12</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), was a landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students and denying black children equal educational opportunities unconstitutional. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown\\_v.\\_Board\\_of\\_Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_v._Board_of_Education)

<sup>13</sup> The National Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 1973–1973aa-6) outlawed discriminatory voting practices that had been responsible for the widespread disenfranchisement of African Americans in the United States. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting\\_Rights\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_Rights_Act)

for US citizens that we struggle to achieve in the UK. There is only a small number of studies in the UK comparatively and these also deal with emotional well-being tangentially.

The main focus of this section of the review is the research into mixedness that has been undertaken in the last 20 years in the UK. Studies of identity development specifically are not included here as much of literature which is covered has ample contextual material included within it which deals with identity, drawing, for example, on the work of Root in the USA and Barn and others in the UK. Ifekwunigwe's *Mixed Race Studies* (2004) provides a comprehensive set of polemics on mixedness, bringing together the key contributors to the field from Europe and America, and drawing from some of the literature reviewed here. The four following contributions from the USA are included as they specifically illuminate issues of risk and resilience.

Pinderhughes identifies two barriers to the achievement of a healthy identity for biracial (sic) children setting out the positive and negative contexts for biracial children which are central to this thesis and relevant across national boundaries:

- the continuing denigration in our society of the minority group to which they are connected, and
- the non-existence of a multicultural ethnic group to which they can feel connected, causing the invisibility of biracial existence.

She goes on to describe the primary factors in producing a positive growing up experience for interracial children as:

- geographic location – where the sense of difference is minimised
- the degree and quality of parental understanding and help with racial issues
- support from the wider family and community

- acceptance of both parts of their racial heritage – which can be done by maintaining positive connections with individuals from both ethnic groups’ (Pinderhughes 1995 p. 78/9)

Pinderhughes draws attention to the dynamic properties of racial identity and the tensions that can develop when loyalty to parents conflicts with a need to be accepted by the outside world (1995 p. 82), a position which is theorised in a paper by Vivero and Jenkins (1999) as ‘cultural homelessness’. This wide-ranging paper explores the possibility that the mixed race child will become hyper vigilant to cultural clues, asking questions about where s/he fits in at an early age and having to learn different cultural meanings for different situations. The authors suggest that there may be a developmental disruption to learning which may be internalised by the individual as failure and inadequacy. Vivero and Jenkins acknowledge that ‘multicultural people’ may have some advantages from being in a ‘culturally enriched environment but that where the demands of their close relationships exceed the child’s developmental capacity, there may also be problems.’ (1999 p. 21)

They go on to say that this ‘extensive repertoire’ which the mixed race child acquires may stimulate cognitive strengths: ‘but at the cost of confusion and errors when cues are ambiguous or the demands exceed developmental resources’ (Vivero and Jenkins 1999 p, 21). The paper describes the treatment approaches for those individuals who are suffering from ‘cultural homelessness’ and promotes the use of this term as helpful in allowing the patient to see that s/he is not ‘crazy’. (Vivero and Jenkins 1999 p. 22)

Whilst this paper appears to subscribe to the view that mixed race means mixed up, the authors do point to the strengths and potential resiliencies of mixedness. This complexity is mirrored in some of the autobiographical writings, which deal with the complex and often difficult journey through childhood but culminate in strong and resilient adulthood.

Binning et al (2009) continue this theme in a paper which specifically looks at psychological well-being and mixedness. Based on completed questionnaires from 182 young mixed race people at high school asking them which groups they identified with amongst other questions on self-esteem, they show that 'those who identified with multiple groups tended to report either equal or higher psychological well-being and social engagement.' (Binning et al 2009 p.35)

They conclude that identifying positively multiracially, rather than identifying with only one side of your ethnic heritage, leads to more positive psychological outcomes. They suggest that 'embracing multiple group memberships' means that people have decided to voice their multiracial status rather than subsume it into one group, with all the consequences of that suppression. This leads them to conclude that there is something 'unique' about these individuals and their resilience.

The risk and resilience theme is explored in a recent study of American Indian youth (Mmari et al 2010). Although this is not a study of mixed race it is of interest in that it looks at both BME and mental health issues. It identifies the factors that increase risk and protection/resilience and particularly cites racism as a significant risk factor which motivated the young people in the study to violence and self destructive behaviours. Racism was less of an issue where the community was more isolated from the mainstream but it was strongly experienced in school where there was a lack of teacher support and strong peer pressure to not do well academically.

The following UK texts discuss the emotional wellbeing of mixed race children and young people and represent current thinking generally on mixed race issues. No one study looks exclusively at risk and resilience in relation to mental health but the data collected across these studies provide compelling evidence of both.

Kramer and Hodes (2003), who provide a good overview of the mental health of African-Caribbean children, point to a number of biases which could be operating to distort the picture in

relation to children of mixed race. They cite the inherent racism of those making the diagnosis as well as a range of socio-economic and developmental factors and endemic racism. They refer to a study by Goodman and Richards (1995) which found that BME young people were over-represented in the diagnosis of psychotic disorders, mirroring the research findings in relation to the adult population and go on to say, citing Tizard and Phoenix (2002 [1993]), that many young people of mixed race identify themselves as black which is also likely to confuse results of any surveys.

The major piece of research in the UK which looked at the circumstances of mixed race children is that of Tizard and Phoenix (2002 [1993]). This study looked at the racialised identities of mixed race young people and was part of a wider study in which the fieldwork was undertaken by Les Back (1991). From this study Tizard and Phoenix surveyed a sample of 58 young people in 32 different schools, aged 15-16. They found:

a not very strong relationship between having a positive identity and attending a multi-racial school, and a much stronger one between currently wishing they were another colour, and the strength of their affiliation to white people. Because siblings differed in their racialised identities, we suspect, also, that family dynamics and the self-esteem of the young people are influences on whether their racialised identity is positive. Having a positive racialised identity was not associated with living with a black parent. (Tizard and Phoenix 2002 [1993] p.115)

They thus draw attention to the importance of family and self esteem, as well as differing sibling identities in the experience of the child of mixed race.

Ilan Katz (1996) undertook a small study from a psycho-dynamic perspective to research the development of identity in the mixed race child. His study shows that children of mixed race do not necessarily identify with the black community and are influenced by their childhood

environment and the links that are made with the black/non-white family. This work moves on the debate of the 1980s about the proper care of children of mixed race/ mixed parentage which focussed to a significant extent on the development of the black identity of these children (Maxime 1986).

Katz describes the families that he interviewed as being in 'a constant process of negotiating difference' and points to the hostility experienced from both black and white extended families. He identifies class as a fundamental factor in all the participant families and concludes that: 'class affected the family life style more than race and culture' (1996 p.174).

Parker and Song (2001) draw together much of the thinking on mixedness as editors of *'Rethinking Mixed Race'*. A contribution in this book by Ifekwungiwe (2001) describes a research project in which she interviewed 25 mixed race people and selected six of these to listen to in depth. The stories of three women are reproduced in her chapter. The women look back at their childhoods and describe many of the situations which have also been identified by the participants in this thesis, such as the prejudices of both black and white people towards them, the horrors of secondary schooling and the coming to terms and appreciation of their mixedness.

These same issues are described by Alibhai Brown (2001) who provides a personal account as well as a comprehensive digest of the discourse of mixedness. She interviews a purposive sample of people of mixed race and, within this, clear class differences emerge. She provides evidence of identity dilemmas and the same sense of 'sitting on the fence' that is regularly referred to in the discourse of mixedness. She also finds families where there is a sense of loss of one identity and where children will be encouraged to marry back into the lost identity to redress the balance. 'I sometimes think I betrayed my people' (by marrying a white woman) says one of her interviewees (Alibhai Brown 2001 p 81). Others prefer to identify as black, although having one white parent, and others who 'pass' for white describe the uncomfortable place that this can be.

Participants in the study for this thesis have reflected all these views and have spoken about the ways in which they have come to terms with their identity. Rob (British mother, Ethiopian father) specifically says that it was finding Olumide's work (2002) that helped him to understand the confusions he was experiencing. He writes, when thinking about the people who were important to him and helped him: *'The closest I came to help was when I picked up a copy of 'Raiding the Gene pool, the social construction of mixed race by Jill Olumide.'*

The contextual material in Olumide's work traces the history of race and mixed race and provides a comprehensive overview of current discourses. The research element of the work is based on 35 interviews and two workshops with a roughly equal number of men and women of mixed race with a range of ages and class backgrounds. Whilst her participants describe many of the difficulties already mentioned and which are also evident in the data collected for this thesis, there is a strong emphasis on the positive features of mixedness, the ability to span two or more cultures, to understand and experience the differences at first hand. However these are outweighed by the negative impact of external forces and, whilst accepting that her sample is not wholly representative, she concludes:

they (her participants' views) do serve to suggest that much energy is expended on considering responses to definitions imposed from 'outside'.....The mixed race condition is constructed as a problematic state (Olumide 2002 p118).

Ali (2003), in her study *Mixed Race, Post Race*, looks at the lives of children in three schools. She spends time with them in school and at home, describing the situational differences which were evident in the way children related to her in different environments. Her study also graphically shows that children are preoccupied with very different concerns from race and colour, although they struggle to deal with their mixed parentage, helped to some extent by the presence of mixed race people in the media. Ali points to the differences in the schools that she

visited, in terms of location and intake as well as ethos, and the impact of that on how racism and racist behaviours happened and were perceived. She does not find that the schools are dealing appropriately with multicultural issues although teachers on the whole recognise the importance of these. She sums up:

The failing school policy in the area of multiculturalism in the schools visited is only one such area of concern. I believe that this research has implications for family studies, 'race', ethnicity and cultural studies, as well as ongoing concerns within feminism about the continued hegemony of the acquisition of normative gendered positions. (Ali 2003 p165)

The study undertaken in London by Barrett et al (2006), based on interviews with 12 British Bangladeshi and 12 black-white mixed-heritage young people, as well as using a quantitative questionnaire with 569 pupils from 3 London schools, endorses Ali's finding of the importance of location. They found there was no feeling of marginality or being between two cultures, rather that identities were 'fluid and contextually contingent.' This conclusion supports the thesis of Nava (2007) that London is a unique setting in terms of racial/ethnic mixing, and acts as a necessary caution against making any sweeping statements in relation to young people of mixed race as a homogenous group.

Caballero et al's research assesses the perspective of the parents of mixed race children. The study participants are 'ordinary' mixed families and the researchers seek to understand the day to day parenting of mixed race children from the parental perspective. They focus on how parents give their children a sense of belonging and heritage; negotiations around these areas; and the opportunities and constraints. A questionnaire was distributed through schools in England and Wales to find parents of mixed families. An interesting finding from the 35 subsequent interviews is that 'mixed parenting is not just about mixedness'. Whilst the parents in this study had a

variety of concerns in dealing with mixedness these 'pale into insignificance when compared with the other considerations they face in their everyday parenting.' (Caballero et al 2008 p.28)

Their concerns were those of any parent for the safety and security of their children. The findings also show that the mother is the main caregiver and disseminator of custom and practice in the family, having 'on the whole' more time with the children, as in most families generally. This research again emphasises the heterogeneity of the mixed population and the variety of ways in which families deal with mixedness to support, ignore or emphasise it. The authors find that the main difficulties anticipated by the families about their children's mixedness is the reaction they will get from the outside world. They call for changes in social policy and practice that are indicated by their findings.

Okitikpi (2009) picks up this theme from a different perspective in his study of inter racial relationships of 20 African and African-Caribbean men and 20 white women. He finds that these relationships are subject to intense scrutiny from wider family and beyond, unlike mono-racial intimate relationships. In some cases hostility is intense and partners go through personal crises, a process described by Aymer (2010) and evident in many autobiographical accounts. Although these crises are dealt with subjectively, there is a commonality of approach to the process. Once again it is the interaction with the outside (racist) world which creates the tensions for inter racial partnerships, which inevitably affects the children of those partnerships.

Patel (2009), exploring transracial adoption placements of BME and mixed race children, endorses the need for change. She explicates the reflective narratives, gathered between 2000 and 2003 of adoptees between the ages of 21 and 43, showing how they constructed their identity as they grew up in white families to achieve a transracial identity.

The narratives from all these studies identify remarkably similar concerns as the participants in this thesis encounter, and deal with, the racism of the outside world.

Harman (2010 [2009]) looks specifically at the position of lone white mothers as they manage the upbringing of their mixed race children in the absence of the black parent. Her work is based on interviews undertaken in 2004/5. Participants were recruited through support networks. Harman is interested in the changing nature of white privilege that these mothers experience as they confront the prejudices of the outside world when they are seen with their children. The extent to which the presence of a black father in the family, although intimately related to class, appears to offer an altered dynamic to the experience of mixedness is one that deserves further exploration by academics in this field.

*Who are We and Should it Matter in the 21st Century?* (Gary Younge 2010) deserves a mention in this review. It provides a wide ranging picture of race, sameness and difference. Younge describes the gamut of mixed existences from the intermarriage of Tutsis and Hutus, through the one drop rule and its contortions to those of apartheid, through the Cablinasianism of Tiger Woods to a new social identity of mixedness as this is developing in the West. His work underpins the socially constructed nature of race and the economic forces which have been, and are still, dependent on racial categorisation. Whilst the human race comes out badly in terms of prejudice and compassion the book perhaps heralds a more thoughtful future.

In summary a very heterogeneous picture emerges, with family and location being important influencers of the developing identity and self esteem of young people of mixed race. But whilst the racism in the external environment is perceived as challenging and essentially the root of conflict, mixed race children also struggle with the same issues as mono racial children as they grow up and establish themselves as adults. In the fluid, cosmopolitan environment of London and other large conurbations the external environment is less problematic although the experiences in secondary education, when there is stronger group identification, remain challenging. Throughout this literature there is evidence that not belonging to either the black or the white group is a significant stressor, particularly in the teenage years.

### ***Service Delivery Issues as They Affect Young People of Mixed Race***

A number of the above studies have concluded that more needs to be done to improve service delivery and sensitivity to children of mixed race, for example Ali (2003), Alibhai-Brown (2001) and Patel (2009). Whilst there are some projects which do address these special needs, written accounts of them are few. Fewer still are studies that cover the mental health of mixed race young people although there are some covering BME young people more generally (Sewell 2009).

The difficulties of access to CAMHS for BME children and young people have been well documented (Malek and Joughin eds. 2004; Street et al 2005, Malek 2011) and a number of studies specifically look at the ways in which treatment and support can be most effectively given to BME young people and their families (Dogra et al 2002, Sinclair and Hai 2003). Much of this work cautions against 'colour blindness' and institutionally racist behaviours (Walker 2003; Maitra in Malek and Joughin 2004). Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) have produced a detailed account of the racism of psychology, challenging stereotypes and calling for a strategy for change. The establishment in North London of Nafsiyat<sup>14</sup> (Kareem 1988) provides a specific service for BME adults as does the East London-based service described by D'Ardenne and Mahtani (1989).

Much less has been written about the mental health of the mixed race child who is generally identified by others as black but may be growing up in a predominantly 'white' family, particularly if the black father is absent, that is in the case of separation or divorce. Tizard and Phoenix (2002) touch on this topic in their study and there are other studies of the experiences of black children who have been adopted into white families (for example Park and Green 2000, Patel 2009). The development of *New Black Families*, a project to recruit adoptive and foster parents

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<sup>14</sup> Nafsiyat provides psychotherapy for patients from diverse cultural backgrounds, using therapists from a wide range of cultures and ethnicities.

originating in South London, was a response to the need to recruit families which would share the identity of black children coming into care. (Small in Ahmed et al eds.1986.)

From a review of the available data and reports of services it is evident that there are additional potential risks to the mental health of children of mixed race. Readfearn (2004) reporting on the Sheffield Multiple Heritage Project<sup>15</sup> identifies an over-representation of mixed race young people against a number of negative indicators, which themselves suggest lowered self-esteem.

Okitikpi (ed. 2005) makes a significant contribution to practice issues, covering mental health issues whilst looking at identity development. There are full references in this work to many aspects of working with mixed race children and on intermarriage, its history and the perceptions around the children of mixed marriages.

Unpublished work on 'fractured attachment'<sup>16</sup> may show implications for mixed race children (Arnold and Geddes unpublished, 2004). This looks at the way in which these early attachment relationships, which were disrupted by immigration two generations ago, continue to have implications for academic achievement of today's young black people, whose own mothers have been affected by this fractured parenting and struggle to parent them adequately. This work has particular importance for new waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe and may alert us to additional difficulties in relation to those children who have more than one heritage.

Barn and Harman, in their paper which reviews the contemporary discourse on mixedness, conclude as follows:

This paper has further emphasised that differences in family form, contact with the extended family, social capital, dynamics of acceptance within family and social

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<sup>15</sup> The Sheffield Multiple Heritage Project provides individual mentoring for young people and school-based group sessions on cultural heritage, dealing with racism and enhancing well-being.

<sup>16</sup> This term is used to describe the separation of mother and child. In this case it refers to the separation that takes place when the mother emigrates and the child is left with a relative in the home country, returning at a later date to live with the mother who has, in many cases, become a stranger.

networks, and socio-economic status have important implications for the lives of individual young people, which must be acknowledged and included in the debate about their welfare. The dearth of research exploring the experiences of inter-racial youth, particularly those in vulnerable positions, must be addressed. (Barn and Harman 2005a p.1322).

### ***Chapter Summary***

This literature review has looked at material which is relevant to the mental health and BME groups in the UK, focussing on studies that identify people, and more specifically children and young people, of mixed race. The studies and papers included in the literature review have been selected to provide a context for this thesis and to demonstrate that there is a need for an in-depth understanding of mental health of mixed race young people. Existing studies look at the mental health of BME groups and BME children and young people, or they look at the lived experience of children of mixed race. They do not coherently bring the two themes of mental health and mixed race together. By looking at aspects of the participants' experiences which may create risks to their mental health or may indeed develop their resiliences, this thesis is a useful addition to the current body of literature in that it fills a gap in the literature between that concerning young people of mixed race and the literature on young people's mental health.

The context for the study is further developed by the following two chapters which deal with the literature on risk and resilience, Chapter 3, and the relevant demographic data, Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 3: Risk and Resilience**

### ***Chapter Overview***

The purpose of this study is to listen to the stories of people who are reflecting on their childhood experiences as these relate to their mixedness and, from these accounts, to consider whether there are any additional risks to mental health and any additional opportunities to build resilience in their lives. To do this, risk and resilience factors, described according to their accepted usage in child and adolescent mental health services, are used as a theoretical framework within which to interpret the data. Whilst this framework is not strictly a diagnostic tool, it is used to assess and predict vulnerability to mental disorder and is used here in that context.

The use of a knowledge base that has been constructed largely from a regression analysis is at variance with the accepted process of qualitative research. However, research which aims to influence professional practices and service delivery cannot ignore the pre-existing evidence base informing these practices and services. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

This chapter, therefore, examines the literature around risk and also around resilience and looks at the three main groupings of factors largely at the individual and micro/meso social levels, that is those risks inherent in the child him/herself; those risks which emanate from the family and those which are experienced in the community. (Statistical data in relation to known risk factors are considered in Chapter 4.)

The more macro social level of global risk is not considered here but is discussed in Chapter 10. The continuum from risk to resilience is discussed together with the concept of the 'steeling' effect', which may be seen as protective of mental health and part of a positive development in the young person.

### ***The Literature***

The risk and resilience literature which is relevant to this thesis is that which informs practice in the child and adolescent mental health services and is derived from a regression analysis of substantial data sources as well as from some qualitative studies. Very little of this has specifically focused on mixed race children and young people and mental health but the body of evidence generally on risk and resilience is considerable and robust. There is a general acceptance in the child and adolescent mental health (CAMH) community that the co-existence of a number of adverse social, health and economic factors put the child and young person at risk of mental illhealth. This is evidenced by an analysis of relevant data brought together in the seminal CAMHS text *Together we Stand*, illustrating the impact of risk factors on the 'prevalence of disorders' in children (HAS 1995 p25). More recently there has been a greater focus on resilience and the 'steeling effect' that some experiences appear to produce, indicating that resilience is not just about positive mental health or social competence (Rutter 2007).

In response to this increasing understanding, a UK resilience programme has been established and is being evaluated by the Young Foundation for the Department of Education (Challen et al 2010). This programme links the promotion of well-being and resilience in children and young people to improved school performance which is showing some measure of success with more disadvantaged groups. Other programmes, for example Professor Hart's 'Magic Tricks' (2007), have been developed to support teachers and other practitioners in resilience-promoting practice, mainly for disadvantaged groups.

The development of resilience is the theme of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) study which identifies a number of factors which promote resilience. Whilst suggesting that 'adverse experiences in early life can influence the course of subsequent development...

there are many possible pathways, and early adversity does not necessarily lead to maladjustment.' (ESRC 2006 p.8)

Indeed, as Rutter and others suggest, early adversity can provide a 'steeling' or 'inoculation' effect against future adversity. Good schools and good employment support are two of the resilience-promoting factors which the ESCR project identifies, but perhaps most important is general happiness with one's lot. Income and status are found to be far less important, as postulated in the work of Richard Layard (2005) and Oliver James (2007).

From this more generalised approach to risk it is possible to see clear links between risk and wellbeing (or happiness). The literature on risk in relation to the mental health of children and young people exists within this context, focussing on factors outside the control of the individual but which impact daily on children's lives, arguably a micro version of Beck's 'risk society' hypothesis, discussed further in Chapter 10, concerning the lack of individual control of risk in the global environment of late modernity.

Understanding these risk factors leads to the identification of potential needs. However Godin (2006), in contextualising this approach to mental health care, argues that this perceived risk status distorts need, in that people are perceived as requiring care as a result of their risk status rather than the needs they have. Commenting specifically on mental health, Godin cites Castel (1991) as suggesting:

that the threat of madness, once thought of as dangerousness, dwelling within the individual mental patients, is now understood as an objective entity, namely risk, existing within the population. Whereas the former understanding gave rise to the asylum

system, which simply confined the threat of madness, the latter results in a more proactive monitoring and control of risk to prevent the eruption of madness. (Godin 2006 p.18)

This praxis of risk analysis, accepting that it is imperative to act to improve the life quality and chances of individuals who have no capacity in reality to effect the global risk environment and/or protect society from their 'madness', allows for the development or reorganisation of services in a pragmatic way. Risk assessment seen in this practical context in relation to CAMH can be theorised as an aspect of benign governmentality, providing an important understanding of micro and meso environmental risk and the potential for beneficial service intervention. However, the balance between the presence of risk for mental disorder and factors in the individual which have built resilience are all important if risk assessment is not to distort need as Godin describes.

Risk in relation to mental health and to children's mental health specifically is stylistically and linguistically different from the portrayal of global risk. The aggregation of what is known about risk in relation to children can however be usefully employed as an objective diagnostic framework, that is to say a set of pre-disposing factors relating to the capacity for mental health.

It is within the idea of risk as an objective entity that the HAS (1995) report, modified from Pearce (1993) describes risks to child mental health in relation to the domains of the child, the family and the environment (see below). Whilst the environmental factors are clearly outside the individual's control and often global, the factors in the family and the child are also out with the control of the child for whose mental health they pose a risk. Where Giddens (1991) talks about the risks in relationships, quoting the work of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990), the focus is on the adults and the risky and dangerous nature of adult relationships over which some choices can be exercised and risks limited. There is no such risk limitation available to the child in the mental health context.

The list that follows derives from the application of a detailed regression analysis which identifies pre-disposing factors for risks to mental health in children and young people (Pearce 1993 in HAS 1995). These factors, when they are present in sufficient number and/or severity for the individual child or young person, severely compromise his/her chances of good mental health and puts him/her *at risk* of mental disorder.

### **Risks in the Child**

- Genetic influences
- Low IQ and learning disability
- Specific development delay
- Communication difficulty
- Difficult temperament
- Physical illness, especially if chronic and/or neurological
- Academic failure
- Low Self Esteem

### **Risks in the Family**

- Overt Parental conflict
- Family breakdown
- Inconsistent or unclear discipline
- Hostile and rejecting relationships
- Failure to adapt to child's changing developmental needs
- Abuse - physical, sexual and/or emotional
- Parental psychiatric illness
- Parental criminality, alcoholism and personality disorder
- Death and loss - including loss of friendships

## **Risks in the Environment**

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Homelessness
- Disaster
- Discrimination
- Other significant life events

These risks are offset by more positive factors which develop and sustain the child's resilience.

The HAS report, citing Rutter (1990 and 1989) identifies the three key domains of resilience as:

- Self esteem, sociability and autonomy
- Family compassion, warmth and absence of parental discord
- Social support systems that encourage personal effort and coping (HAS 1995 p.25)

The work of Michael Rutter has influenced much of the thinking on both risk and resilience in relation to child mental health over the last forty years, building on the work of John Bowlby and others. What follows is a review of some of the seminal early work and the more recent academic studies in order to show how concepts of risk and resilience are understood in the child and adolescent mental health field.

### ***Risk factors relating to the family***

In 1952 the World Health Organisation published a work by John Bowlby called *Maternal Care and Mental Health*. It focussed on what was known about maternal deprivation as it appeared to relate to the emotional capacities of the child to make subsequent meaningful relationships with others. The report came from a post war drive to study the needs of children who were orphaned and/or separated from their families, particularly focussing on their mental health. It gathered together studies on maternal deprivation, both from clinical and research data, and

concluded that, whilst not all the data had been rigorously collected, there was a striking similarity in the conclusions which were being reached across Europe and in the United States of America.

Bowlby gathered his data to argue that children who were deprived of their mother at the earliest stages of life were vulnerable to mental disorder at a later stage. Whilst he acknowledges other parental behaviours which have an affect on the child's emotional state and also the role of fathers as supports to the mother, both practically and economically, it is the mother/infant dyad that is explored in this report. There is some discussion about the most vulnerable period for maternal deprivation and about other factors which may be in play. Bowlby was intensely aware that further research was needed to refine the type, time and length of maternal deprivation. The possibility that heredity might play a part is dismissed on the basis that the studies identified by Bowlby have adjusted for family types.

A year later Bowlby published his seminal work *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (Bowlby 1953) which is based on the earlier report. Blakemore and Frith (2005) point to the fact that, in his classic work, Bowlby draws attention to the use of physiological measurements, suggesting that electro-encephalographic studies would be of interest, effectively pre-figuring the recent important work on the development of the infant brain.

These writings by John Bowlby fuelled a debate that still continues about parenting and the effect on the subsequent mental health of the child. Whilst there are many nuances in the opinions held about Bowlby's work there is general agreement that poor and/or disrupted parenting is a risk factor for children's mental health and can have serious consequences for the child's later abilities to form relationships and parent successfully.

Lynne Segal, one of the most prominent writers of the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist movement, drew attention to the links between the archetypal family and capitalism and saw the Bowlby endorsement of the traditional family as a way of keeping women in the home and within

restricting family settings. She and others describe the changes that were being experienced by women in *What is to be Done about the Family* (Segal 1983) as they chronicled the changes of the 1960's. She cites Fletcher (1962) as having a more optimistic view of the modern family as a place of greater equality and loving support, but admitting at the same time that this new type of relationship would be more volatile and bring its own stresses and strains. She later argues that Laing endorsed the view that families are damaging places where children are repressed by bored and anxious parents, who repress sexuality for the sake of security and in order to fit in to the capitalist mould. The dysfunctional family of today, referred to more properly as 'vulnerable', sits somewhere between these two paradigms.

These challenges to Bowlby's ideas were brought together earlier by Michael Rutter who, whilst he brings evidence from more recent research to show that the relationships are more complex, essentially supports the importance of early caring in the child/mother relationship for the developing child. In his work *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed* (1981), Rutter brings together and reviews the new evidence for the mental health consequences of maternal deprivation as well as looking at the possible reasons why: 'so many children do not succumb to deprivation or disadvantage' (Rutter 1981 p 12). Rutter accepts that growing up in an institution where individualised care may not exist is likely to be more harmful to children than growing up in a family, where care may be mainly from the mother or from a number of adults but within a secure environment. He describes the differences of level of risk relating to differing patterns of care along this spectrum.

Rutter also identifies other factors which play a part in relation to risk for mental ill health, such as the temperament of the child, the level of disharmony in the home and the consistency of the parenting. He quotes research by Robins et al (1975) undertaken in the USA in which a cohort of 223 young black urban-born men were studied. Parental arrest histories were powerful predictors of their children's delinquency, but other family characteristics that might modify the risks of delinquency in children of arrested parents were also explored. Robins et al found that 'black

children living in broken homes of low social status were less likely to drop out of school if brought up by grandparents.' (Rutter 1981 p.213) A study by Werner and Smith (1980), as part of the Kauai (Hawaii) longitudinal research project, showed that those children who were most resilient had better sources of emotional support both inside and outside the family. Although Kauai and urban USA are not comparable with the UK, the points both Robins and Werner and Smith make might be generalisable to black and culturally mixed societies. The Kauai study was one of the first to look at resilience, which will be explored later in this section.

It is impossible to do justice here to the wealth of evidence that Rutter brings together in *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed* but of particular significance is his contention that one risk factor/chronic stressor is unlikely to carry a 'psychiatric risk'. However, in the second edition, he points to his earlier research (Rutter et al 1975) which shows that the existence of two risk factors caused the risk to rise four-fold. (See Table 1 below for more recent data relating to multiple risk.) The question that remains, even now, largely unanswered is why do some children who show multiple risks appear not to be thrown off course?

Quinton and Rutter (1988) in their two studies of parenting breakdown identify risks for mental health and subsequent parenting capacities in children brought up in institutions but also identify turning points in later life. For example where, as adults, those children meet and settle down with strong partners, the support they derive from this appears to alter the potentially poor trajectory.

Wallace et al (1997) sum up the risks that have been identified by a regression analysis of the research and clinical observation, as well as the experiences of parents, teachers and social workers, in the context of a needs analysis for commissioning purposes. They are able to tabulate the indicative rate of mental disorder in children against some of those risks. (See Table 1)

**Table 1: Prevalence of specific child and adolescent mental health risk factors and impact on rate of mental disorder (Wallace et al, 1997) p.16**

<b>Risk factors in the child</b>	<b>Impact on rate of disorder</b>
Physical illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chronic health problems</li> <li>- Brain damage</li> </ul>	Three times increase in rate overall. 4 to 8 times increase in rate of disorder in youngsters with cerebral palsy, epilepsy or other disorder above the brainstem.
Sensory impairments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hearing impairment (four per 1000)</li> <li>-- Visual impairment (0.6 per 1000).</li> </ul>	2.5 to 3 times more disorder. No figures but rate of disorder thought to be raised.
Learning difficulties	2 to 3 times increase in rate, higher in severe than moderate learning difficulties.
Language and related problems (2%, but better methods of identifying required)	Four times rate of disorder.
<b>Risk factors in the family</b>	<b>Impact on rate of disorder</b>
Family breakdown (divorce affects one in four children under 16 years of age). Severe marital discord.	Associated with a significant increase in disorders (e.g., depression and anxiety).
Family size	Large family size associated with increased rate of conduct disorder and delinquency in boys.
Parental mental illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Schizophrenia</li> <li>--Maternal psychiatric disorder</li> </ul>	8 to 10 times rate of schizophrenia. 1.2 to 4 times the rate of disorder.
Parental criminality	2 to 3 times rate of delinquency.
Physical and emotional abuse (of those on child protection registers, one in four suffer physical abuse and one in eight neglect).	Twice rate of disorder if physically abused and three times the rate if neglected.
Sexual abuse (6.62% in girls and 3.31% in boys).	Twice rate of disorder if sexually abused.
<b>Environmental risk factors</b>	<b>Impact on rate of disorder</b>
Socio-economic circumstances	Gap in applicable evidence base.
Unemployment	Gap in applicable evidence base.
Housing and homelessness	Gap in applicable evidence base.
School environment	9% in grades one to nine are victims of bullying. 7 to 8% of children have self-reported bullying other children themselves.
<b>Life events</b>	<b>Impact on rate of disorder</b>
Traumatic events	3 to 5 times rate of disorder. Rises with recurrent adversities.

***Risks associated with the wider community***

Many of the significant risks for mental health that have been identified arise from the parenting and family experiences. However other factors in the environment of the child and her/his family are seen to have a significant influence. The main areas of risk are schools, peer networks and communities beyond school and family.

### *The school*

The statistical evidence on the performance of children of mixed race in schools and some discussion of underlying factors is set out in the following Chapter 4. What follows here is a digest of the issues which effect how schools interact with their pupils taken from Mortimore (1995) with insights that are illuminating in relation to children of mixed race from Ali (2003) and Tizard and Phoenix (2002).

The importance of the interaction between home and school is described by Peter Wilson (2003) in *Young Minds in our Schools* where he refers to the Department of Education and the Department of Health publication on the education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (DH 2004) in seeking to provide an understanding of exactly what it is about schools which affects the emotional wellbeing/mental health of their pupils. He says: 'the emotional development of children must continue to be a central concern for mainstream education' and includes a perceptive quote from Jamie Oliver who from his recent experience in schools around school meals says: 'the one thing I've learned in the last year is that it's very hard to teach or inspire anyone to do anything unless they've got their personal lives sorted out' (The Guardian 2003 G2 p.8).

Wilson uses this quote to draw attention to the importance of family characteristics and behaviours in relation to all aspects of the child's life, emphasising that children come into school bringing considerable influences from the outside world, so that: 'however healthy a school culture may be and however competent its teachers may be, there is always a limit to what can be achieved with any given child.' (Wilson 2003 p 20). At the same time he acknowledges that there are also significant influences which come from within the school.

These influences have been explored in a meta analysis by Mortimore looking at ten studies and reviews. This analysis identified the mechanisms associated with school effectiveness and

showed how these can be positively developed. Whilst the research studies have differing methodologies and methods, researchers across a number of countries have reached very similar conclusions about these mechanisms. These include strong, positive leadership of schools; high expectations that challenge pupils appropriately; the monitoring of student progress, which demonstrates an interest in the pupils; the involvement of students in the life of the school; the existence of rewards and incentives, publicly honouring achievement; parental involvement in the life of the school; the use of joint planning and consistent approaches towards pupils, students subject to conflicting demands become less confident; academic emphasis and focus on learning.

Mortimore concludes that the learning in this area over the past twenty years has confirmed the potential power of the school to affect the life chances of the pupils, particularly where this is: 'coupled with the promotion of other pro-social attitudes and behaviours, and the inculcation of a positive self-image' (Mortimore 1995 p357).

In their study of school children and mixed race, Tizard and Phoenix suggest that teachers and school policies can have an 'important influence on children's identities' (2002 p235). In particular schools the existence of clear and effective anti-racist policies seemed to have a positive effect on the day to day lives of black and mixed race children. This illustrates the part played by the mechanisms for school effectiveness which Mortimore draws from research more generally.

Ali (2003), in her study of mixed race children's school experiences, reminds us that for school age children many facets of their lives guide their thinking and behaviours, from how they look, how they dress, how they eat and make music as well as the ever-present need to be seen to be heterosexual. Taken with the importance that children attach to their friendships in school and elsewhere, which Tizard and Phoenix demonstrate in their study, what happens at school is the most important influence on children and young people after their families.

### *Peers*

The idea is generally accepted that friendships become very important for young people and linked to this peer pressure, a desire to conform to the group, becomes less resistible. Where these peer groups exert positive influences they support the young person in positive ways. However, as Smith and Bradshaw (2005) tell us, this is not always the case and an increasing number of young people are turning to violent gang membership for acceptance and identity. However, Seaman et al (2006) argue that there is evidence to show that finding and attaching to a charismatic adult by a young person in his/her community can have positive long-lasting effects.

### *The community beyond the school*

Whilst broad effects can be demonstrated, the complexity with which family and external influences interact will differ for each child and each family and each school, and are further influenced by the community within which the child or young person lives. As Reiss says in his review of the place of community influences on anti-social behaviour: 'schools are rarely a microcosm of the communities in which they are located' (1995 p.307), with both pupils and teachers coming from differing, sometimes overlapping, communities of class, faith, interests and preoccupations. Reiss points to the small amount of research in this area and the fact that much of what there is has been carried out in the USA, and the complexity of separating family, school, peer group and community in identifying cause and effect.

Reiss cites William Wilson (1987) on poverty who concluded that the effects of poverty are different when they are experienced in a ghetto neighbourhood from when they are experienced in more socially diverse neighbourhoods, where there are evident routes out of poverty. Poverty, albeit relative poverty, is identified as one of the risk factors for mental health (see above) but is likely only to be a significant influence when taken in conjunction with other factors such as community organisation and ethos.

Work undertaken by Peter Benson (1990), in which he surveyed 46,000 adolescents to test a number of risk factors against internal and external assets, showed that the more assets an adolescent had the lower the likelihood of high risk behaviour. He went on to test four key assets: positive school climate; family support; involvement in structured youth activities; and involvement in church or synagogue. These four assets were compared against at-risk indicators which were found to reduce, almost one for one, as assets were added. Of interest here are the last two assets which indicate the usefulness of youth provision and the importance of involvement in what is frequently a culturally-based activity, such as religion. Research such as that by Hodes et al (2008) into immigrant groups has shown that where communities are strong, young people do better across a range of domains and that they do less well in geographical locations where there is not a critical mass of people from their own culture.

### ***Resilience***

These research findings about the influence of families, schools and communities moves the debate into resilience. What is it about young people's environments and experiences that makes some more resilient than others, when they all appear to have the same level of disadvantage? Benson (1990) identifies 'assets' and others talk about 'resilience factors'.

In concluding a review of the evidence presented by a number of experts, Coleman and Hagell note that: 'We need to keep in mind that resilience is a slippery concept'. (2007 p166) Resilience is a term that has meant, and continues to mean, different things to different people. It is linked essentially to risk and, in the context of child and adolescent mental health, is frequently presented as the antithesis of the risk factors (see above). In the same way that cumulative risks are more likely to threaten mental health, cumulative resilience factors are more helpful in supporting young people through difficult times and building their mental/emotional ability to cope in future stressful situations.

As a number of writers suggest, experiencing some degree of risk may be positive for a young person and may develop their resilience in certain circumstances (Coleman and Hagell 2007, Rutter 2007). This is likely to happen where good support is available to the young person to help them through a difficult period. This learned ability to cope with adversity is generally accepted as a necessary ingredient for the development of good mental health. (HAS 1995) Coleman and Hagell (2007) give a slightly different example in relation to black and minority ethnic children suggesting that whilst a more authoritarian parenting style might be seen more generally as a risk to mental health it could alternatively be seen as a protective factor for a child being brought up in an inner city area where firmer boundaries may be needed. In this way, features of risk and resilience are juxtaposed and resilience can indeed be seen as slippery.

In their conclusions Coleman and Hagell provide a useful summary of the attributes of resilience:

Resilience is not a stable personality characteristic, but a process. It arises as a result of an interaction between risk and protective factors.

Resilience is often seen as an outcome, but this is misleading. Good school performance, or avoidance of crime, is an outcome. Resilience is not something people have or do not have, but rather is a response to difficult circumstances.

There are many different types of resilience, depending on the particular individual.

Some types of resilience may be considered more 'healthy' than others, but will depend on the situation of the individual.

Resilience is not static; it can change over the life span. It may not be apparent at one stage but may then develop at another stage because of the availability of protective factors.

We have to be careful not to 'blame' people if they are seen to be less resilient than others. Resilience is not to do with value judgments, but rather with an understanding of the individual's response to a complex set of positive and negative circumstances.

(Coleman and Hagel 2007 pps. 167/8)

Coleman and Hagell cite two 'landmark' studies which demonstrate the risk/resilience links. First, the study undertaken in Hawaii by Werner and Smith (1992), which followed up individuals who had been studied as children (see the Kauai study above), showed that from the group who had experienced major risk factors, one third had survived well. The others had developed serious problems by the age of 18. The second study, the Christchurch Health and Development Study (Fergusson and Horwood 2003), similarly showed that not all the children with significant risk factors in their childhood succumbed to these. Coleman and Hagell point to the continuing discussion of the dynamic processes associated with the development of resilience, which is strongly emphasised in the work Michael Rutter, who suggests that measurement of resilience is impossible as an 'observed trait'. (Rutter 2006) He maintains that it can only be studied if there is a 'thorough measurement of risk and protective factors' and that 'resilience requires the prior study of risk and protection but adds a different, new dimension.' (Rutter 2006 p.3)

However, attempts have been made to measure resilience by the use of tools specially designed for this purpose. Campbell-Sills et al (2004) used such a tool to measure resilience in 132 college students in the USA. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale was used which asked questions such as: "I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships' and 'I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger'" (Campbell-Sills et al 2004 p.14). In the Campbell-Sills study, as reported by Arehart-Treichal, students were also asked to complete four other forms which identified personality traits, symptoms and pre-disposing risks. In summary they found that resilience had:

- highly significant and positive relationships with extraversion and conscientiousness
- a highly significant negative relationship with neuroticism
- a small but statistically significant positive relationship with openness
- a non significant positive link with agreeableness

and that:

- active problem-solving in the face of stress was positively linked to resilience
- simply responding emotionally to stress had a negative link
- a conscientious personality trait and a task-orientated coping style when under stress were found to contribute even more to resilience in ethnic minority subjects than in Caucasian ones
- individuals with relatively high levels of childhood neglect and low levels of resilience showed high levels of current psychiatric problems
- individuals with high levels of childhood neglect and high resilience showed low levels of current psychiatric symptoms
- individuals with high childhood neglect and high resilience reported even fewer psychiatric symptoms than those without childhood neglect and high resilience. (Arehart-Treichal 2005 p. 14)

These latter findings are in line with the stress-inoculation theory, often alluded to as having the same effect in developing immunity as physical inoculation for diseases such as smallpox, which Michael Rutter (2007) talks of as a 'steeling' process. Those young people experiencing high levels of stress appear to have grown stronger through that experience, enabling them to cope better with future stress than their counterparts who did not experience neglect in childhood. The differing results for ethnic minority students as compared with Caucasian students may also be explained in this way, in terms of exposure to racism for example.

Rutter picks up this point in describing resilience as:

an interactive concept that refers to a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or overcoming of stress and adversity ...essentially resilience is an interactive concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences.' (2007 p1)

He postulates that successful coping with stress or hazard is likely to be significant in the development of resilience, engendering 'physiological adaptation, psychological habituation, a sense of self-efficacy, the acquisition of effective coping strategies, and/or a cognitive redefinition of the experience'. (Rutter 2006 p.2)

Rutter describes five domains of resilience as follows:

1. resistance to hazards may derive from controlled exposure to risk (rather than its avoidance)
2. resistance may derive from traits or circumstances that are without major effects in the absence of the relevant environmental hazards
3. resistance may derive from physiological or psychological coping processes rather than external risk or protective factors
4. delayed (later) recovery may derive from 'turning point' experiences in adult life
5. resilience may be constrained by biological programming or damaging effects of stress/adversity on neural structures' (Rutter 2006 p.1)

A striking point here is that Rutter, in common with Fonagy and Target (1997) and Blakemore and Frith (2005), identifies close links between the physiological and the psychological in the risk and protective factor debate. Rutter refers to physiological and psychological coping processes as well as biological programming and early damage to neural structures. He is careful to say that these may be predisposing factors rather than causes. He is also at pains to point out that later recovery may derive from positive personal circumstances rather than from early positive attachment. He cites the research of Laub and Sampson (2003), which showed that a supportive marriage brought with it a positive turning point in the lives of those who had grown up in challenging circumstances.

Rutter returns to this life span theme in one of his more recent papers (Rutter 2007) to stress that good interpersonal relationships were significantly associated with resilience, and that: 'this applied to relationships across the entire life period from childhood to middle age.' (p. 206)

These suggested ingredients of resilience, particularly those relationships within the family, together with the apparent inoculation effect of early adversity, are evidenced convincingly in the data collected for this thesis.

### ***Chapter Summary***

This chapter has looked at a range of studies and writings in relation to risk and resilience. It has shown how these concepts have developed since the early work of John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott through that of Michael Rutter who has been one of the main leaders of the risk and resilience debate in the UK for many decades. From a range of studies it has been possible to identify factors which increase the risk of children and young people developing mental disorders. These have shown that risk factors exist which are related to the child, to the family and to the community in which the child lives.

Other studies have focussed on the development of resilience and have shown how children who are well supported can have negative experiences which do not threaten their long-term mental health. As a result they are 'inoculated' against experiences which could pose risks to their mental health in future. The importance of family and the negative experiences of the school years are aspects of the participants' lives which are shown in the thematic analysis, in Chapter 7, to be of particular significance to them and to the way in which they have negotiated their mixed race identities.

A continuum from risk to resilience may occur in troubled young people as they mature into adulthood and benefit from new, affirming relationships and achievements.

The following chapter deals with what is known about the demographic of the mixed race community and provides another view of the effect of family and community.

## **Chapter 4: Relevant Demographic Data**

### ***Chapter Overview***

In order to develop the context of this study, available demographic data have been brought together which show the relative position of young people of mixed race across a range of social indicators. Whilst data on mixed race as such are not plentiful they are important indicators of trends.

There are significant limitations in the data that are available in terms of the accuracy of recording of mixed race, resulting from lack of appropriate categories as well as the possibility that people of mixed race have elected to be seen as either black or white. The complexity and variety of 'mixes' shared by people who would identify themselves as 'mixed' inevitably makes it inaccurate to describe people of mixed race as a homogenous group.

In this chapter data are selected that are available to describe the demographic and prevalences of young mixed race people across a number of social domains and the related issues are discussed.

### ***Robustness of the data as it relates to mixedness***

The heterogeneity of people of mixed race and that fact that there have only relatively recently been opportunities for them to register their mixedness, or for their mixedness to be registered, means that data may give a partial or inaccurate picture. Ali (2003) discusses these issues and points to the usefulness and danger of a 'mixed race' category when looking at statistical data, given the inadequate recording of mixed race generally. However data which show trends are useful as checking mechanisms, that is demonstrating demographic changes and identifying areas of inequality. Data have the potential to alert practitioners to variables and issues which they may hitherto have neglected, as may be the case in relation to the care and support for

mixed race children and young people, and it is in this context, whilst acknowledging their limitations, that the data are presented in this chapter.

There are very few data sets which effectively identify a mixed race category. Many research projects have a 'black' classification and an 'other', into which people of mixed race might place themselves. It is also equally possible that people of mixed race will identify themselves as white. Information from the 1991 census exemplifies the social construction of such data (see below).

Where data relating to mixed race have been collected there is evidence of a disproportionate number of mixed race people in some important domains. The intention of this section is to determine whether there are data to support the proposition that people of mixed race are over-represented in areas of social concern, such as crime, teenage pregnancy, children in public care, mental disorder and under-achievement. However a wider reading of the statistical material suggests that people of mixed race are not over-represented in these areas of social concern, although there are some significant exceptions such as the disproportionate number of mixed race children in public care and in in-patient CAMHS, but this cannot be shown unequivocally owing to an absence of sufficiently detailed data. There is some evidence that the type of racial/ethnic mix is a significant factor.

### ***Ethnicity***

The 2001 census was the first in which it has been possible to record 'mixed' ethnicity. This classification was not included in the 1991 census, the first to record ethnicity, as field trials had indicated that people of mixed race did not want to be 'distinguished as a separate group' (Bradford 2006 p7). Interestingly when the results of the 1991 census were analysed 230,000 people had written in a mixed heritage on the census form in the 'other black' or 'other ethnic' category. Following further research, it was clear that people were becoming more keen to identify as 'mixed' and wanted to be able to accurately record their mix. (Bradford 2006) We can only speculate about the reasons for this, but the growth in numbers of people of mixed race, the

political agenda around equalities in the 1980s, such as the work in schools undertaken by the Inner London Education Authority, and the increasing presence in the media of people of mixed race are highly likely to have influenced these choices about self-identity

The categories made available in the 2001 census were derived from what was written by respondents in the 1991 census.

They were:     *White and black Caribbean*  
                  *White and black African*  
                  *White and Asian*  
                  *Any other Mixed background*

Very little space was available on the 2001 forms for those with more complex mixes to adequately record those, potentially skewing the full validity of the data. However, it is possible to see the broad shape of the 'mixed' population from 2001 (see Table 2). It is highly likely that numbers of mixed race people will still prefer to identify as black, possibly for political/ideological reasons, and others may continue to identify as white. Bradford's (2006) article for the ONS on mixed ethnic groups, using longitudinal data, revealed that 15% of mixed race people who were classified as white/black Caribbean in 2001 had opted for 'black Caribbean' in 1991 and that 29% had identified as 'white'. This is probably a reflection of the way in which the entries were analysed, for example someone electing to be identified as 'mixed white' would have been counted as 'white'. That in itself is interesting as in many cases it is reasonable to assume that 'mixed black' or 'mixed Asian' could have been substituted. It may be indicative of how some people of mixed race see themselves in terms of what they experience as their predominant culture. Also the possibility that the information could have been provided by the white parent, as head of household, may be a factor in influencing this categorisation.

In 2001 in the UK more than 677,000 people described themselves as being of mixed race in response to the Census question on ethnic origin (ONS 2002). Fifty percent were children aged

15 and under, far higher than the percentage of children in the total population, which is 19.89% in the UK. More dramatically the children of the mixed category white/ black Caribbean make up 54.68% of the total white/black Caribbean group (see Table 2). The mixed race group has been identified as one of the fastest growing groups of all ethnic groupings and it is predicted that it will have increased by more than 40% by 2010 and more than 80% by 2020 (ONS 2002). A more recent estimate by Rees (2007) predicts this to rise to 1.2 million by 2020.

**Table 2: Mixed race demography (UK) 2001**

	1991	2001
<b>Total population</b>	54,888,844	58,789,194
<b>Total child population &lt;16</b>	11,033,000 (20.1 % of total pop.)	11,700,000 (19.9% of total pop.)
<b>Total BME population</b>		4,635,000 (7.9% of total UK pop.)
<b>Total UK child BME population</b>		927,000 (20% of total BME pop and 7.9% of total UK child pop.)
<b>Total mixed race population</b>	230,000	677,117 (14.6% of total BME pop. and 1.2% of total UK pop.)
<b>Total child mixed race population &lt;16</b>		338,559 (50% of total mixed pop; 37% of child BME pop; 3.2% of total UK child pop.)

As the Tables 2 and 3 illustrate, the mixed population is a young population in the UK. The 2001 census showed that 50% of the mixed population was less than 16 years of age. As data for England and Wales show, this rate varies between different mixes, with 58% of this mixed

population being identified as white/black Caribbean compared with 48% of white/Asian, 45% of white/black African and 44% from the other mixed category.

**Table 3 - Mixed race demography (E&W) 2001**

<b>Total child mixed race population</b>	330,500 (50% of all mixed race)
<b>White/black Caribbean</b>	137,460 (58% of all w/bC)
<b>White/black African</b>	35,550 (45% of all w/bA)
<b>White/Asian</b>	90,720 (48% of all w/Asian)
<b>Other mixed</b>	68,640 (44% of all other mixed)

**Table 4: Age distributions across the ethnic groups (LFS data sets 2004-2008)**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Average (mean) age, years</b>	<b>Median age, years</b>	<b>0-15</b>	<b>16-29</b>	<b>30-60</b>	<b>60+</b>
White British	40	40	18	16	42	24
Other white	39	36	13	24	44	20
White/Caribbean	16	13	57	26	15	2
White/African	19	14	50	22	25	3
White/Asian	18	12	54	23	20	3
Other mixed	23	19	42	23	30	5
Indian	33	31	21	24	44	11
Pakistani	26	24	33	27	34	6
Bangladeshi	24	21	38	27	30	5
Other Asian	31	31	22	23	48	7
Black Caribbean	35	36	23	17	44	16
Black African	26	27	33	22	41	4
Other black	28	27	35	17	41	7
Chinese	32	29	14	37	42	7
Other	30	30	23	26	44	7
All groups	39	39	18	18	42	22

The more recent data in Table 4, taken from the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) study, shows the age distribution taken from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) household

data sets October-December 2004 to April-June 2008 (weighted proportions) and shows the proportions across the age bands. (Platt 2009 p 20)

**Location**

The majority of people in the UK of mixed race (79%) was born in the UK. This rises to 90.5% for those under the age of 16. Table 5 shows their location within the UK. In 2001 whilst the largest number of people of mixed race lived in London (33%), others lived elsewhere in the south east (13%) and the West Midlands (11%). Mixed white/black African young people were more likely to live in London than other mixed groups (see Table 5). However, people of mixed race were proportionately less likely to live in London than people of other BME groups, and this trend was more pronounced among younger people. Bradford (2006) suggests that this is because people of mixed race gravitate back to the conurbations in adulthood, having grown up in the white partner’s more rural or provincial home district. This is born out by my data, where a number of participants have reported moving into London or other large conurbations as young adults, where they felt they fitted in and became part of a cosmopolitan population. Bradford also suggests that ethnic minority people are a much smaller minority when they live outside the main conurbations. As a result they it is more likely that they will develop relationships with white partners.

**Table 5: Location of people of mixed race in the UK - 2001 Census. (Bradford 2006)**

<b>Total living in the South East</b>	<b>Total living in the West Midlands</b>	<b>Total living in London</b>	<b>Total &lt;16 living in London</b>	<b>&lt; 16 white/Asian living in London</b>	<b>&lt; 16 white/Caribbean living in London</b>	<b>&lt;16 w/black African living in London</b>	<b>&lt;16 other mixed</b>
13%	11%	33%	32%	27%	29%	42%	37%

**Education**

The 2001 census shows that the educational attainment, as measured by possession of a higher educational qualification, was higher for all mixed groups than for the general population, 25% in comparison with 20% (see Table 6). The exception to this pattern was the mixed white/black

Caribbean group of which only 15% held a higher qualification. This latter group also shows up as most likely to have no qualifications, with 25% having no qualifications. Mixed groups were less likely than the general population to have no qualification, 20% as against 29%. These comparisons are affected by the age profile of the mixed race population and, whilst interesting, do not necessarily tell us anything about its comparative overall achievement across the age range.

**Table 6: Educational attainment (higher educational qualification) as a proportion of ethnic population (16-74yrs). 2001 Census E&W (Bradford 2006)**

<b>grouping</b>	<b>%</b>
General population	20
All mixed groups	25
<i>White/black Caribbean group</i>	15
<i>Other Mixed</i>	32
<i>White/Asian</i>	30
<i>White/Black African</i>	27

The recent data on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results for BME performance (Department for Education and Skills 2004) show that white/Asian and other mixed groups outperform and equal white British, 65.7% and 52.3% respectively as against 52.3% for white British in achieving 5 A-C passes (see Table 7).

The white/Asian pupils do not do quite as well as Indian pupils but significantly outperform Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. Whilst Traveling and Roma children have the poorest results, black Caribbean and white/black Caribbean mixed young people all do poorly.

**Table 7: 5 A-C passes gained by 15-year olds in GCSE and equivalent by ethnicity – England (DfES 2004:Table 3)**

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>%gaining 5 A-C passes</i>
<b>White</b>	<b>52.3</b>
White British	52.3
Irish	58.3
Travelers of Irish Heritage	30.2
Gypsy/Roma	13.5
Any other White background	55.0
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>49.7</b>
White and Black Caribbean	39.7
White and Black African	47.1
White and Asian	65.7
Any other mixed background	52.3
<b>Asian</b>	<b>55.3</b>
Indian	66.6
Pakistani	45.2
Bangladeshi	48.4
Any other Asian background	60.0
<b>Black</b>	<b>39.0</b>
Black Caribbean	35.7
Black African	43.3
Any other Black background	36.2
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>74.2</b>
<b>Any other ethnic group</b>	<b>48.8</b>
<b>Unclassified</b>	<b>47.1</b>
<b>All pupils</b>	<b>51.9</b>

Tickly et al (2004) in their study of mixed race pupils at 14 schools in Birmingham also found that white/Asian students are above average in achievement and that white/black Caribbean pupils are below average. They conclude that the barriers to achievement of white/black Caribbean pupils are the same as those for black Caribbean pupils, for example social disadvantage, institutionalised racism in terms of low teacher expectation and exclusion from school. Ticky

and colleagues observe that mixed race pupils experience racism not only from teachers but from both black and white pupils, as is evidenced in my data. Teachers in the sample studied explained the difficulties of their mixed race pupils as being because of identity issues and were convinced, incorrectly, that the majority of their mixed race pupils lived in single white parent families, with mothers who could not deal with racist abuse. Tickly et al demonstrate how this racism links with peer pressures to precipitate mixed race boys particularly into a downward spiral of poor achievement and 'unacceptable' behaviour.

Social disadvantage, as evidenced by the free school meal (FSM) eligibility rate, is shown to be closely linked to the relative levels of achievement in that the proportion of white/black Caribbean pupils on free school meals (33%), is around twice the national average (16%) with the level for white/black African pupils (28%) also being high. For white/Asian pupils the proportion is closer to the national average (19%), suggesting that this higher achieving group is financially generally better off (Tickly 2004). Across all groups pupils eligible for free school meals have poorer results at Key Stage 4 (KS4) than those not eligible. Black Caribbean girls still outperform black Caribbean boys despite their relative poverty (see Table 8.) However, black Caribbean girls who have free school meals still do worse than those who don't have free school meals.

**Table 8: Attainment at KS4 - percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades of pupils of mixed race, by gender, ethnicity and free school meals (FSM) eligibility in England (taken from Tickly et al 2004:104)**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>KS4 boys eligible for FSM</b>	<b>KS4 boys not eligible for FSM</b>	<b>KS4 girls eligible for FSM</b>	<b>KS4 girls not eligible for FSM</b>
<b>All pupils</b>	20%	50%	24%	61%
<b>White/black Caribbean</b>	22%	37%	33%	53%
<b>White/black African</b>	22%	46%	35%	62%
<b>White/Asian</b>	24%	67%	42%	75%
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	19%	28%	29%	45%

The Birmingham research of Tickly et al (2004) describes the 'invisibility' of mixed race pupils and the need for all young people to be seen more holistically in terms of their identities. Interestingly Tickly et al identify the lack of a common terminology to describe pupils of mixed race, both in schools and in policies, as a possible restricting factor in terms of schools being able to identify and respond to the needs of their mixed race pupils. However, the researchers are careful to point out the heterogeneity of the mixed race pupils, whilst flagging up the consistent underachievement of white/black Caribbean boys within the mixed race group. The existence of a common terminology, as noted above, does not do justice to the complexity of the mixed group but these data suggest that there is a need to focus supportive measures on some groups of young people of mixed race.

Programmes for under-achieving black boys have been put in place and have included boys of mixed race, for example the Black Children's Achievement Programme (DCFS 2009). Whilst there are concerns about the performance of mixed race pupils in some quarters, few specific programmes have been established to offer them support, other than those projects set up by the voluntary and independent sector (see Chapter 11). Recently white boys have been identified as a worrying under-achieving group (Cassen and Kingdon 2007), making up nearly almost half (46.8%) of all low achievers (pupils with no GCSE passes). This is not initially a surprising percentage as boys make up just over half the population in the 16-17 age groups and white pupils make up 80% of the researched population. However, as Cassen and Kingdon point out, the relative affluence of the white group would suggest they should be doing better. White boys who start at a disadvantage (in the lowest 10% of achievers) have the highest risk of staying there. The gender gap is not evident until post 14 years of age, when boys significantly outstrip girls as low achievers, with white British boys and Afro-Caribbean boys faring worst.

Programmes to respond to this white group's needs are being put in place, (see *White Boys from Low-income Backgrounds: good practice in schools*. Ofsted 2008)

As Tickly et al (2004) point out, whilst mixed race young people may benefit from inclusion in policies targeted at BME pupils generally, the pupil of mixed race has not received similar attention other than in very small localised programmes. One local education authority (LEA) for example was 'supporting the development of curriculum resources that presented positive role models of people of White/Black Caribbean origin' and 'had conducted in-service training sessions for teachers and governors focusing specifically on the needs of White/Black Caribbean pupils'. (Tickly et al 2004 p 69/70)

### **Crime**

The Youth Justice Board's (YJB) report (Feilzer and Hood 2004) *Differences or Discrimination*, admits difficulties of classification, namely that the ethnicity of some young people aged 12 – 17 was not recorded at all, and that this has meant that young people of mixed race were shown as under-represented in all the youth offending teams (YOTs). However, the findings from the Feilzer and Hood research show generally small but significant differences between ethnic groupings, with young men of mixed race having a higher rate of conviction and prosecution than other ethnic groups and having the lowest pre-court disposal rate. Only 10% of mixed race young men had their misdemeanors dealt with without recourse to a court hearing as compared to 19% of young black men. These pre-court disposal rate differences were also significant for mixed race females (42% as compared with 62% of white females and 65% of black.)

Feilzer and Hood (2004) show that the chances of a case involving a mixed-parentage young male being prosecuted, as opposed to a pre-court disposal, were 2.7 times that of a white young male with similar case characteristics. The proportion of cases involving remand to secure conditions again shows young mixed race males at an apparent disadvantage at 13%, compared with 8% of white and 10% of black males (see Table 9.) Sentencing from the Crown Court, where longer sentences can be handed out, also show a slightly higher proportion for mixed race males (7%), against white males ( 5 %), but slightly lower against black males (8%).

**Table 9: Criminal justice disposals of young people aged 12-17 by ethnicity (Feilzer and Hood for YJB 2004)**

<b>Ethnic grouping</b>	<b>Pre-court disposal rate</b>	<b>Remanded to secure accommodation</b>	<b>Crown court proceedings</b>	<b>More restrictive community penalties</b>	<b>Custody</b>
<b><i>Mixed race young men</i></b>	10%	13%	7%	28%	15%
<b><i>Young black men</i></b>	19%	10%	8%	26%	13%
<b><i>Young white men</i></b>	No data given	8%	5%	21%	12%
<b><i>Young Asian men</i></b>	30%	6%	6%	23%	12%

A greater use of more restrictive community penalties and of custody was found for young mixed parentage males. A mixed race male was 1.33 times more likely than a white male to receive such a sentence and pre-sentencing reports (PSRs) tended to recommend more restrictive penalties for males of mixed parentage, although the case characteristics did not justify this, even when taking social variables into account. No explanation is offered for this phenomenon, which may be affected by the ethnic recording inadequacies, and more research is needed to fully identify the underlying factors. The YJB report concludes that there is a postcode lottery in terms of sentencing. The differences in treatment of mixed race young offenders, however, cannot adequately be explained by geographical location.

However, in terms of custodial sentences, whilst the raw data suggest that mixed race males are more likely to receive a custodial sentence when other variables (higher proportion of offences likely to attract a custodial sentence, breach of a court order) are discounted, custodial sentences for mixed race and black males are shown to be below that of white males.

An Audit Commission Report draws attention to the fact (based on the same YJB data) that :

...in 2001/02, about 7% of black young people and 8 % of those of mixed race were remanded to custody; by 2002/03 these proportions had increased to over 10 % and nearly 12 % respectively. In contrast, the rates for white young people remained at less than 6 % over the same period (2004 p 22).

The youth justice picture is therefore a complex one and there is a sense of the variation being much to do with the ethos of the part of the system involved, namely courts attempting to be even-handed to BME youth; assumed Home Office preferences for non-custodial sentences; and perhaps youth justice practitioners seeing the young person more holistically or in loco parentis, particularly where court orders have been breached.

Whilst the more recent report on anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) (Youth Justice Board 2006b) shows a disproportionate use of such orders for black boys, the data is not collected in such a way that it can be interrogated for frequency of use for young people of mixed race.

Convictions for drug usage amongst young mixed race people between ages of 10 and 17 are minimal according to figures from the Youth Justice Board Annual Statistics 2005/6 for England and Wales (YJB 2006a), (see Table 10). Young people of mixed race between the ages of 10 and 17 make up just under 4% of the total convictions for drug usage. Given that the mixed race population is a very young population in that approximately half the mixed population is under 16 years of age, this is not a significant figure.

**Table 10: Convictions for drug usage by ethnicity in young people aged 10 – 17 (Youth Justice Board 2006a)**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Not known</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	631	1,463	60	507	263	9,870	12,794
<b>Percentage of total convictions</b>	4.9	11.4	0.5	4	2	77	100

### ***Victims of Crime***

The British Crime Survey (Home Office 2003) finds a higher proportion of mixed race people were at a higher risk of crimes being perpetrated against them, even when this was controlled for age and location factors. People of mixed race were more likely to be victims of racially motivated incidents; 34% had suffered household crime; and 17% had experienced personal crime in the previous 12 months. In England and Wales 45% of recorded personal robbery offences occurred in London (Home Office 2003). Data from the 2010 British Crime survey (BCS) (Home Office 2010) show that young people were more likely to be victims of crime and that this was more prevalent in deprived areas. Whilst further research is necessary the data may suggest that mixed race people are the target of both black and white assailants. However, they are disproportionately represented as London residents and in the youth population.

### ***Early pregnancy***

Data from the 2001 census reported on by the Department for Education and Skills (2006a) show that rates of pregnancy vary considerably by geographical location, educational standard and socio-economic factors for women under 19 years of age. When these data are controlled for distorting factors, mixed white/Afro-Caribbean, other black and black Caribbean young women have a disproportionately higher rate of pregnancy. Figures for white young women also show disproportionately high rates.

(It is only possible to speculate on these differences, but significantly the report also references work done by Maskey in 1991 showing that a quarter of teenage mothers had a psychiatric disorder, and the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) report on teenage pregnancy which points to a similar link.)

### ***Children in Public Care***

The Government Green Paper *Care Matters: transforming the lives of children and young people in care* (Department for Education and Skills 2006b) identifies 8% of children in care as being

mixed race, 8% as black and 3% as Asian, (see Table 11). A further 2% describe themselves as 'other'. Interestingly the proportion of mixed race children who are adopted from care is substantially larger than that for the other BME groups (Care Matters. 2006 pps 113- 115):

Black and mixed race children are over-represented (each comprises 3% of all children, but 8% of those in care) and Asian children are under-represented (6% of all children, but 3% of those in care.) (Department for Education and Skills 2006b p16).

No explanation is offered for this or for the larger proportion of mixed race young people adopted. It is likely that differing social customs and attitudes play a significant part in these differences. The above data have shown a higher level of social difficulty and under-achievement amongst black groups. The adoption of mixed race children is likely to be affected by the feelings of identification both black and white adoptive parents will have with these children, thereby potentially widening the pool of prospective parents.

**Table 11: Children in Public Care by Ethnic Group. (DfES 2006)**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Black children</b>	<b>Asian children</b>	<b>Mixed race children</b>
<b>% of all children</b>	3%	6%	3%
<b>%of children in care</b>	8%	3%	8%

### ***Mental disorder***

The ONS study (2004) of the mental health of children and young people in the UK identifies children of mixed race but gathers very little data about their psychomorbidity. This is recorded as being a lower percentage than that of the white and black population but it is highly likely that a number of mixed race young people would have described themselves as black. (See section on terminology in Chapter 1.)

The Audit Commission (1999) in *Children in Mind* does not identify mixed race children within its small section on ethnicity. The data on non-white children suggests that in major conurbations, such as Manchester and London, disproportionately higher percentages of non-white children were using the child and adolescent mental health services. In London just over 50% of the children using CAMHS were non-white compared with the total non white child population of 36% (Audit Commission 1999 p,15).

The Report on the Implementation of Standard 9<sup>17</sup> of the National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and the Maternity Services (Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills 2006) does not specifically mention mixed race children but it does point out that the number of young black people in in-patient units is rising (6% in 2005 compared with just over 4.5% in 2004). An increase from 3.5% to 4% was found in use of the tier 2/3 services, that is the community based child and adolescent mental health services, from 2004 to 2005. These data appear to mirror that of the adult psychiatric population with higher numbers of black people as inpatients and smaller numbers accessing community-based services.

The Aetiology and Ethnicity in Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses (AESOP) study provides further evidence of ethnic differences in the adult population:

With regard to ethnicity, our findings of marked variations in incidence rates support previous studies showing high rates of schizophrenia in African-Caribbean populations in the UK, and extend these by showing that: a) rates of all psychoses are high; and b) rates are similarly elevated in the Black African population in the UK. Given that the AESOP study overcomes many of the methodological limitations that have characterised previous studies in this area, the weight of evidence is such that there can now be little

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<sup>17</sup> This standard deals with the mental health and psychological wellbeing of children and young people

doubt that there is a genuine and marked excess of psychotic illness in African-Caribbean and Black African populations in the UK. (Morgan et al 2006 p. 40-46)

These findings, although consistent with findings about migrant populations worldwide, have drawn criticism from the premise that cultural differences have been misinterpreted by the medical profession. The AESOP researchers refute these allegations and point out that the study does not show elevated rates of mental illness in the Caribbean. This difference suggests that the social disadvantages and racism to which African Caribbean people are exposed to in the UK are a prime cause.

This AESOP study essentially compares rates of mental illness between African and African-Caribbean adults and white adults. It does not look specifically at mixed race other than to say:

Intriguingly, the incidence rates for all psychoses were also raised for all other ethnic groups (other White, Asian, mixed, other) compared with the White British populations, albeit much more modestly. (Morgan et al 2006 p.44).

In looking at the possible differences for young people, the data from the American National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which provides a large national sample of adolescents in grades 7 to 12, Udry et al (2003) show that mixed race adolescents are at greater risk when compared with single race adolescents in areas such as general health, school experience, smoking and drinking. These health aspects exemplify risk factors for mental health such that it can be extrapolated from this work that mixed race adolescents are likely to be less mentally healthy than their single race counterparts. Whilst identification of mixed race status in this study is based on the self reporting of those taking part and the North American experience is not directly transferable to the UK, over 90,000 questionnaires were completed by children in school in addition to over 20,000 in-home responses. Data have been collected from the adolescents themselves, and from their parents, siblings, friends, romantic partners, and school administrators

who are representative of a wide variety of family types and all ethnic groups. The size and depth of this study ensures a measure of generalisability to the UK situation.

The Healthcare Commission's (2005) study of inpatient bed occupancy across the age range has recorded the psychiatric inpatient days for people of mixed race identifying four mixed groups: white/black Caribbean mixed; white/African mixed, white/Asian mixed and other mixed. It finds raised rates for all four mixed groupings.

Data collected for the *Count Me In* census 2010 for the East London Foundation Trust shows 'a marked increase of patients who are of dual or multiple heritage' (Jones 2010 p.4), suggesting that this is an area to monitor closely, although the actual numbers in this survey are small. Other data from the Costs, Outcomes and Satisfaction for Inpatient Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services COSICAPS study (Tulloch S. et al 2007) show that children of mixed race made up 7% of in-patients in the study, just over twice the percentage of mixed race children as a percentage of all children, that is 3.2%. Numbers are small but significant, 26 children out of 403.

### ***Summary of statistical information***

The number of young people of mixed race is growing faster than any other section of the BME child population. Under 16s make up 50% of the total mixed race population, but only 19.9% of the total UK population and 20% of the total BME population. However, there are significant differences within the mixed race category underlining the fact that this is by no means a homogenous group. White/black Caribbean young people account for as much as 58% of the total white/black Caribbean group, whereas white/black African young people account for only 45% of the total white/black African population. Whilst the young mixed race population taken as a whole is more likely to live in London, white/Asian and white/Caribbean young people are less likely to do so.

The age and location profile of the mixed race population affects the interpretation of other data. For example, mixed race young people are proportionately more likely to be in higher education, proportionately more likely to be involved in drug offences and to be victims of crime, being younger and living predominantly in the large conurbations.

Whilst mixed race young people are doing less well overall in terms of GCSE passes there is again considerable variation within the mixed race category, with white/black Caribbean young people performing worst and at the same level as the black Caribbean group which performs worst of all. These outcomes are more closely linked to poverty, as measured by free school meal eligibility, than race.

In terms of early pregnancy white/black Caribbean young woman have some of the highest rates, but there are similarly high rates in the white and black Caribbean communities.

Although the data are complex young people of mixed race are possibly being more harshly treated in the youth justice system and children of mixed race are disproportionately represented in the care population. In London BME children are using the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) disproportionately more, reflecting the larger numbers of BME families choosing to live in the London area. These data do not specifically identify children of mixed race although the COSICAPS data (Tulloch et al 2007) show a disproportionate use of in-patient beds by mixed race children, but the numbers are small.

An unclear picture is therefore presented about the position of young people in terms of data of disadvantage. Whilst there are many caveats, rehearsed at the beginning of this section, on the wisdom of looking at data on mixed race as a homogenised category, the dramatic growth of this 'mixed' child population deserves exploration and attention in terms of a more refined understanding and appropriately sensitive service provision.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

### ***Chapter Overview***

This study focuses on the experience of growing up as a mixed race child and interprets the experience in the light of known risk and resilience indicators as these are understood in relation to the mental health of children and young people. The methodological approach that is taken is designed to bring together the popular understanding of mixed race as demonstrated by the current discourse referred to in Chapter 1; the review of the relevant literature in Chapter 2; the knowledge base on risk and resilience in relation to child and adolescent mental health (CAMH), developed from multiple international large cohort studies using a wide range of quantitative methodologies, including regression analyses, to isolate causal factors associated with outcomes as outlined in Chapter 3; the available demographic data outlined in Chapter 4; and the field data collected for this study presented here which uses a qualitative methodology.

The rationale for this methodological approach is examined in this chapter and the choice of phenomenological methodology in the thematic analysis of the data is discussed.

### ***Using phenomenology***

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) has been chosen as the most appropriate tool to explicate the lived experiences described in the field data, in order to contribute to a better understanding of risk and resilience in relation to mental health needs of mixed race young people. The methodological steps have their descriptive and interpretive roots in the works of both Heidegger and Husserl (Holloway and Wheeler 2002). This approach, in so far as it describes a process for identifying significant issues and developing clusters of themes or commonalities, allows for the identification of common experiences for the participants. Any interpretation or theorising of the data comes at the second stage once the themes are clear.

IPA has been used either in its original form or in a modified form in many research projects, largely in the nursing field, though also to a lesser degree in sociology and anthropology, in the investigation of the lived experience. Giorgi A and Giorgi B, making the links between psychology and phenomenology, describe phenomenological methodology as aiming:

...to clarify situations lived through by persons in everyday life. Rather than attempting to reduce a phenomenon to a convenient number of identifiable variables and control the context in which the phenomenon will be studied, phenomenology is to remain as faithful as possible to the phenomenon and to the context in which it appears in the world....  
(The participants) have first-hand experiences that they can describe as they actually took place in their life. (Giorgi and Giorgi 2003 p. 26/ 27).

Benner moves from descriptive to interpretive phenomenology, describing the goal of the latter as being 'to uncover the commonalities and differences, not private idiosyncratic events or understandings'. She describes these commonalities with references to her earlier work with Wrubel as follows:

1. Situation – includes an understanding of how the person is situated, both historically and currently.
2. Embodiment – includes an understanding of embodied, or physical/emotional, knowing or understanding of particular situations.
3. Temporality – being the experience of lived time and the way one projects oneself into the future and understands oneself from the past.
4. Concerns - the way the person is orientated meaningfully in a situation, constituting what matters to the person.

5. Common meanings – taken for granted linguistic and cultural meanings that create what is noticed and what are possible issues, agreements and disagreements between people. (Benner and Wrubel 1989 p.104/5)

In a later work she writes that:

...learning the skills of interpretive phenomenology comes much more easily once the ontological concerns are recovered and the researcher is able to shift from the questions about what it is to know (epistemology) to questions about why and how we 'know' some things and not others and what constitutes our knowing (ontology). (Benner 1994 p. 102)

However, although Benner has identified the need for multiple sources of evidence, she has not identified the need to bring into the analysis pre-existing clinical knowledge or evidence which is prevalent in health care. The analysis of the field data in this 'Mixed Experiences' study has used pre-existing knowledge in order to answer the research question and, in this process, has moved beyond the basic phenomenological analysis to a second stage. This second stage looks at the wider social and structural factors which may be contributing to individual experience to investigate the risks to mental health and/or to the development of resilience embedded in the lived experiences of the research participants.

Thus the analysis is undertaken in two distinct stages:

- Stage 1. Thematic analysis of data using principles of qualitative analysis as set out by Colaizzi.
- Stage 2. Situating the findings from stage 1 in the broader social, historical and evidence-based context. In particular using the evidence base on risk and resilience to interrogate the findings arising from the stage 1 qualitative analysis.

Whilst the collection of field data and its analysis follows the inductive process of qualitative research the second stage analysis relies on the use of deductively derived material to answer

the research question. The individual stories are looked at through the lens of the risk and resilience factors which are used to assess emotional needs in child and adolescent mental health and which have themselves been established through rigorous quantitative techniques designed to produce a causal analysis of these factors. Thus, as has been explained above, the analysis and interpretation of the data draw on a well established knowledge base in relation to risk and resilience. Whilst the objections to 'contaminating' inductively derived material with deductive data are recognised, the external knowledge base cannot be set aside if the research question is to be satisfactorily addressed. The rationale for the use of deductively derived material is set out later in this chapter.

The second stage analysis explores the data to identify whether or not there are any experiences arising from growing up as a mixed race child which create specific differences in risk exposure and resilience development in relation to child and adolescent mental health (CAMH) for children of mixed race. By being explicit in its focus on risk and resilience, the underlying interpretative framework is made available to the reader to judge the validity of the approach taken.

Additionally the positionality of the researcher has been clearly set out in Chapter 1 and the reader is able to judge the extent to which any pre-existing influences and experiences may be behind the interpretations.

### ***Interpreter bias and reflexivity***

Priest describes phenomenology as 'the attempt to produce presuppositionless descriptions of the contents of experience, without any prior commitment to the objective reality of those experiences.' (Priest 1991 p183). This useful, Husserlian description confronts the inevitable subjectivity, or bias, of both the researcher and the participant in telling and interpreting the narrative. However, this purist position makes the assumption that the researcher can successfully discard any prior interest in, or knowledge of, the research topic in question in order to ensure that preconceived ideas of findings are eliminated. Whilst it is important to ensure that data are not contaminated by preconceptions of the researcher, it is more important to recognise

what those preconceptions might be and where their roots are in order to manage them as far as possible in the ensuing analysis.

Giorgi A and Giorgi B suggest that Husserl's concept of 'bracketing', a process to deal with unexpected biases, both those which the researcher brings or which may derive from the participants themselves, does not require the researcher to be:

unconscious of these other sources but rather not to engage them so that there can be no influence from them on the situation being considered....to notice different nuances or new dimensions of the phenomenon. (Giorgi and Giorgi 2003 p.32)

In contrast, interpretive, or hermeneutic phenomenology rooted in Heidegger's philosophy, essentially accepts the presence of the researcher and all that the researcher brings to the enquiry, emphasising: 'that it is impossible to rid the mind of the background of understandings that has led the researcher to consider a topic worthy of research in the first place' (Lopez and Willis 2004 p. 729). It refutes the Husserlian view that the researcher's views and experiences must be 'bracketed' off from the research process ensuring that no pre-conceived views influence the object of the study.

Smith and Osborn, influential proponents of IPA, point out that the individual researcher's own perspectives will inevitably determine how s/he accesses the world of the participant: 'Access depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions: indeed, these are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretive activity' (2003 p. 51). They go on to explain that in using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) 'There is no attempt to test a predetermined hypothesis of the researcher; rather, the aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern' (Smith and Osborn 2003 p. 53).

As Denzin and Lincoln point out:

There is increasing recognition that because observation is inevitably saturated with interpretation, and research reports are essentially exercises in interpretation, research and interpretation are inextricably entwined. (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 p.1027)

The researcher must get close to the participant's personal world and to try to make sense of it in the way the participant her or himself is trying to do. At the same time the researcher is asking critical questions of the data, exploring the question under investigation and making an interpretation of the findings.

Lopez and Willis set out some helpful guidelines for this project in showing that: '...personal knowledge, according to hermeneutic scholars, is both useful and necessary to phenomenological research' and that 'making preconceptions explicit and explaining how they are being used in the enquiry, is part of the hermeneutical tradition.' (2004 p 730) They go on to say that:

...there could be more than one interpretation of the narratives depending on the focus of the research.....but the meanings that are stated in the research findings must be logical and plausible within the study framework, and they must reflect the realities of the study participants (Lopez and Willis 2004 p. 730).

Benner addresses the management of potential researcher bias within interpretive phenomenology saying:

Interpretive researchers critically reflect on what their biases and blind spots might be and why they think the questions they are asking are relevant. They follow this critical reflective exercise by recreating a sense of openness and ability to hear questions and challenges to their questions that they had not even considered prior to encountering the text. (Benner 1994 p.105)

Amanda Coffey (1999) discusses the perspectives which the self must bring to research, categorically stating that the self is always present. Although she is focussing on the ethnographical methodology what she says has relevance to other research approaches more focussed on narrative interpretation.

She points to the unhelpful opposing paradigms of 'ethnographer-as-stranger' and 'over-identification'. The reality lies somewhere between the two and the range of possibilities needs to be considered by the researcher. Coffey advocates: 'an awareness of the fact that we are responsible for the reconstruction and telling of the field. Our writing is implicated in how we reconstruct the settings we have researched, and in how we reconstruct ourselves'. (Coffey 1999 p.160)

Kingdon, using midwifery research to appraise reflexivity, argues:

Reflexivity has become much more than methodological self-visibility. It now provides a means of dealing with epistemological concerns about how our identities as researchers are multiple, contradictory, partial, strategic and located. It shows how all research accounts are ultimately screened through the narrator's eye. (Kingdon 2005 p. 623)

All these writers, in their different ways, embrace the perspective of the researcher whilst describing a rigorous approach to the interpretation of data to ensure that challenges to the researcher's pre-existing views are responsibly explored and contextualised.

The researcher cannot but bring her/his experiences and personality to the analysis of data and reflection on that process must be an essential part of the writing up of the study. My own experiences, set out in the positionality section of Chapter 1, which I bring to this particular project are bound to guide and influence my perceptions, and indeed provide the *raison d'être* for my

work. The process that Kingdon (2005), describes as 'reflexivity as introspection' that is that my own reflecting, intuiting and thinking may be functioning as part of my primary evidence must inevitably be a significant factor in the analytical task. My personal knowledge base, which influences my perspective in relation to this study, is significantly influenced by a range of personal and professional experiences as well as evidence based findings. Whilst these findings also form an independent and objective pre-existing knowledge base accessible to anyone interested in the topic, and to that extent stand outside personal perspective, the way in which the researcher interprets these, as well as the way in which the researcher will have interpreted her/his own experience, must inevitably influence the interpretation of new data.

### ***Using narrative***

Using narrative/story telling has its dangers in terms of reliability and relation to reality. In collecting and analysing the field data the intention has been that the medium of the internet, which was employed for data collection, will have allowed people where they elected to use it, the privacy to be frank. Even in the usually intensely private world of sexual stories, researched by Plummer (1995), the researcher concludes that something near the truth will emerge.

Stories change over time and relate to the circumstances in which they are told and relived. Paul Thompson's work (1988) demonstrates how oral history, using the narrative of private individuals, has contributed to a fuller understanding of events and how these different, personal views can be teased out by careful and skilled questioning. In asking participants to reflect on the immediate past the researcher is hearing views which are intensely personal and not necessarily views which will fit into the already established views about mixed race children and young people. In the explication of historical events evidence is also gathered which sheds light on a potentially rapidly changing experience of people of mixed race generally.

### ***Rationale for the use of Deductive Material in the Secondary Analysis***

Traditionally and still today qualitative research is seen by many as either an 'add on' to what has been derived from a quantitative study, or as a precursor to statistical enquiry which assists in defining the areas that need to be explored. The more eclectic approach taken in this study is in tune with much current thinking about the need to build on previous research from the full range of methodologies even when undertaking qualitative research. The theoretical considerations of such an approach have been explored by many writers (for example Bryman in 1988 and Silverman in 2010) but the philosophical questions, which will be discussed in this chapter, about the potential conflicts and benefits from a mixed approach, remain largely unresolved.

Mahoney, commenting on the design of social enquiry, reminds us that: 'The idea that quantitative analysis might supplement findings derived from an initial qualitative analysis is not new' (Mahoney 2010: p.114). However, the philosophical question of combining the different methodologies in social enquiry remains largely unanswered. It is essentially up to each researcher to set out her/his rationale for how these differing philosophical approaches are being used in relation to the question which her/his project has been designed to elucidate. This view is articulated by Carter and Little who stress that, in their view: 'Methodologies can be combined or altered, providing that the researcher retains a coherent epistemological position and can justify the choices made' (2007 p 1326).

This thesis, whilst acknowledging the debate about the relative merits and uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, is predicated on drawing together the knowledge that is available and relevant to the subject under consideration, whilst accepting that that which is quantitatively derived will have a different philosophical base from the qualitative data that has been collected specifically for the thesis through the field work. This approach is in tune with those researchers who believe that it is important to have: 'an approach to methodology that is thoughtful, historically and theoretically situated, and flexible rather than dogmatic.' (Carter and Little 2007: p.1318).

The field data collected in this study are being considered in relation to a particular aspect of health theory, namely the understanding of risk and resilience, with an appreciation of the related diagnostic tools that emanate from this theoretical base, as previously explained in Chapter 3. The historical position, within which the data are collected analysed and interpreted, is considered through a macro discourse analysis, previously discussed in Chapter 1, and an examination of the relevant demographic context, covered in Chapter 4. A synthesis of the available knowledge has been undertaken and used to inform the analysis of the data collected for this study, in order to achieve a comprehensive end product. The analysis of the fieldwork data is at the centre of the study.

The use of risk and resilience evidence which has been deductively derived, in order to conduct the second stage of the qualitative analysis, potentially presents some problems for the qualitative researcher in relation to the traditional inductive approach of qualitative research. However, the thesis has been written with the intention of adding to the current knowledge and practice base. It draws attention to areas of practice which could not only be informed by the thematic analysis of the field data but which are also currently informed by an extensive cumulative evidence base as well as being influenced by the macro context, for example the demographics and popular discourse.

In using the deductively derived evidence and practice frameworks on risk and resilience the project is able to deliver a deeper understanding of the data in relation to mental health, an understanding which has a meaning outside this particular project which a thematic analysis using a purely inductive process would not be able to deliver. The value of the inductive, bottom up, approach to collecting the participants' experiences is not compromised by examining these experiences in the context of what is already known in the field of enquiry, in this case risk and resilience factors which impact on mental health. Throughout, the stage two analysis remains grounded in the significant themes identified in the stage one analysis.

The use of a body of mainly deductively derived knowledge, which forms the basis of practice guidelines in the UK and many other western countries, gives more credence to the overall analysis than if the researcher had independently mined the themes for indications of mental disorder on the basis of the personally pre-conceived ideas and idiosyncrasies of the researcher. Indeed one could argue that a more robust 'bracketing' is secured by using a universally accepted diagnostic and assessment tool as a lens through which to examine the data.

To add to this eclectic approach, as has been explained above, in order to create a context for the primary data analysis and interpretation, the available demographic data in relation to the contemporary social context of mixed race has been reproduced in Chapter 4. In addition to population data, the demographic information included is that which is particularly connected to the known potential risk areas for mental health such as crime and educational attainment and use of drugs.

The inclusion of the epidemiological and demographic data, together with the deductively derived risk and resilience framework, may be seen as an unusual departure for a qualitative study but, as Brown (2010) demonstrates in her paper on qualitative method and compromise in social research, in the real world of private and public sector research qualitative methods may be mainly employed but quantitative aspects are not ignored and are seen to make an important contribution to producing a comprehensive analysis required to address many of the most pressing problems confronting the users of social research.

Crabtree and Miller (1999) point to the importance of context in situating qualitative studies and express their growing dissatisfaction with a 'heavy reliance on interviews'. They say, in a discussion of the development of their research methodology, that: 'We were finding that our interview-based studies were missing context at the very moment when context was increasingly seen as important' (1999 p.294). Whilst accepting that the micro data collected in the field work

study for this thesis will have been affected by the differing views and internalisations by participants of the macro context, the thesis provides an objective macro context in Chapter 4. In addition Chapter 8 provides an international perspective by showing how the Obama election has affected this group.

The philosophical issues have been discussed above and the overall intention of this project, as has been stated, is to give as complete a picture as possible of the mixed race experience in relation to potential impact on the mental health of those growing up mixed race. Without context the research question could not be fully understood or answered.

The extreme heterogeneity of the mixed race group, if indeed it can be called a group, mitigates against any simplistic statistical or descriptive categorisation, although to some extent experience in the UK is different from that of elsewhere (Métis<sup>18</sup> in Canada, Creoles<sup>19</sup> in the United States of America and coloureds<sup>20</sup> in Southern Africa, together with the one drop rule<sup>21</sup> followed until recently in the United States of America, have created mixed groups which are not identified in the same way in the UK.) The data, which have been gathered from a wide range of participants

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<sup>18</sup> 'Prior to Canada's crystallization as a nation in west central North America, the Métis people emerged out of the relations of Indian women and European men. While the initial offspring of these Indian and European unions were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of Indian and European cultures and settlements, as well as, the subsequent intermarriages between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of a new Aboriginal people - the Métis.' <http://www.metisnation.ca/who/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> 'Unlike many other ethnic groups in the United States, Creoles did not migrate from a native country. The term Creole was first used in the sixteenth century to identify descendants of French, Spanish, or Portuguese settlers living in the West Indies and Latin America. There is general agreement that the term "Creole" derives from the Portuguese word *crioulo*, which means a slave born in the master's household. In the West Indies, Creole refers to a descendant of any European settler, but some people of African descent also consider themselves to be Creole. In Louisiana, it identifies French-speaking populations of French or Spanish descent. Their ancestors were upper class whites, many of whom were plantation owners or officials during the French and Spanish colonial periods.' <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Bu-Dr/Creoles.html>

<sup>20</sup> 'In the South African, Namibian, Zambian, Botswana and Zimbabwean context, the term Coloured (also known as *Bruinmense*, *Kleurlinge* or *Bruin Afrikaners* in Afrikaans) refers or referred to an ethnic group of people who possess sub-Saharan African ancestry, but not enough to be considered Black under the law of South Africa. They are technically mixed race and often possess substantial ancestry from Europe, Indonesia, India, Madagascar, Malaya, Mozambique, Mauritius, St. Helena and Southern Africa. Besides the extensive combining of these diverse heritages in the Western Cape – in which a distinctive 'Cape Coloured' and affiliated Cape Malay culture developed – in other parts of southern Africa, their development has usually been the result of the meeting of two distinct groups. Thus, in KwaZulu-Natal, most coloureds come from British and Zulu heritage, while Zimbabwean coloureds come from Shona or Ndebele mixing with British and Afrikaner settlers. Griqua, on the other hand, are descendants of Khoisan and Afrikaner trekboers. Despite these major differences, the fact that they draw parentage from more than one 'naturalised' racial group means that they are 'coloured' in the southern African context.' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coloured>

<sup>21</sup> 'The one-drop rule is a historical colloquial term in the United States that holds that a person with any trace of African ancestry is considered black (unless having an *alternative* non-white ancestry which he or she can claim, such as Native American, Asian, Arab, or Australian aboriginal).<sup>[1]</sup> It developed most strongly out of the binary culture of long years of institutionalized slavery.' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop\\_rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop_rule)

for this project, demonstrate the significance of context, both between countries and between areas within the same country.

The field work for this study has followed a qualitative methodology in order that data could be gathered which would provide a thick description of feelings and relationships which have been important in the lives of the participants growing up as mixed race young people. Their experiences are comprehensively described in Chapter 7 and significant statements have been systematically identified. From these statements themes emerge from which interpretations can be made. In this process inductively derived features of childhood experiences are identified in the stage two analysis which have been either positive or negative in relation to risk and resilience, using the deductively derived concepts described in the child and adolescent mental health literature.

### ***Methodological Approach Summary***

Current thinking on qualitative research allows for a more holistic approach and for interpretation which takes account of context and explicitly stated researcher assumptions. Both micro and macro analyses contribute to the fuller understanding of the topic. The social significance of the qualitative data is better understood within the context of the relevant quantitative data. It is essential therefore, in order to make the most of the inductively derived data, that context is developed as fully as it can be and that the deductively derived cumulative knowledge base around risk and resilience is utilised where this helps to develop insights that contribute to practice improvement.

New approaches to qualitative research are increasingly following this path and a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches have the possibility of providing a more complete understanding of the topic under consideration. As Bryman has pointed out 'when quantitative and qualitative research are jointly pursued, much more complete accounts of social reality can ensue.' (1988 p. 126) Whilst these philosophical issues are still under active discussion, the

contention in this thesis is that the interpretive framework of this thesis, which draws on a mix of data, both quantitatively and qualitatively derived, more fully explicates the research question and provides a more robust knowledge base.

## **Chapter 6: Method**

### ***Chapter Overview***

This chapter describes how the participants were contacted and recruited; the use of the internet for recruitment, with reference to the specific sites selected; and how the data were collected. It considers the use of the internet and the specific data collection options in relation to the robustness of the material collected. Issues relating to consent and confidentiality that these data collection methods raise are also discussed, as are validity and reliability.

This chapter describes the process of the thematic analysis following Colaizzi's seven steps, which are set out below in the discussion of the thematic analysis process.

The ethical approval process is covered in this chapter and ethical issues are identified and plans outlined for their management should any problems arise. The trigger questions that were used as necessary to draw out the stories are included here.

### ***Participant Eligibility***

The intention of the research was to gather the stories from a sample of mixed race people, who would be asked to reflect on their growing up as mixed race children and young people. The purpose of the study was to gather data about the lived experience of growing up being mixed race. Thus a purposive sample was sought in order to ensure that participants would have a commonality of experience, although their individual lived experiences might vary considerably. Recruitment methods, via websites dealing with issues of mixed race, ensured that participants came forward who were likely to have an interest in the issues of mixedness and would therefore be thoughtful about the topic. This sampling strategy is commonly used in qualitative research where researchers are keen to attract: 'informants who have insight into a particular situation or are experts in an area of knowledge'. (Holloway and Wheeler 2002 p.122)

Although a secondary interpretation of the data is concerned with risk and resilience in relation to mental health/emotional wellbeing, participants were specifically sought from the general population of mixed race adults as opposed to a population of people with mental disorder of any type. (In the event it was evident that varied levels of mental disorder had been experienced by a few of the participants or other members of their families. This information was not specifically sought.)

The research was not limited to specific types of racial mix nor to a specific age range, other than that participants should be aged 16 or over in order to be able to reflect back on their childhood experiences. Although originally it was assumed that mixed race adults from the UK would be recruited, expressions of interest were received from people currently living outside the UK and from those whose childhood was lived outside the UK. As a result the eligibility criteria were widened to include a broader range of people as it was considered that their experiences were highly likely to shed a useful light on the research topic.

### ***The recruitment process***

The participant sample was recruited through the internet, using sites identified as likely to be accessed by people of mixed race (see below). The web posting was a simple description and short questionnaire to identify interested people and to check eligibility.

A key concern was to keep the operation simple in terms of ease of communication and simplicity of the technology. One of the original participants, who did not take part in the full study, suggested that a dedicated web page/site was set up for responses. This could potentially have limited access, and this is the experience of writers on the subject (Hewson et al 2003), for people who either did not have the correct web programme or who only used the basic features of their information technology (IT) systems. It was straightforward for the researcher too, to set up a dedicated web address for responses and use a basic email system. The web address is protected by a password which is known to the researcher only.

### ***The Chosen Web Sites***

Two websites were identified which focussed on the UK and which were providing support and discussion groups for people of mixed race, as well as general information. (There are other sites which are more commercial, exist to promote products targeted to mixed race people and/or are based outside the UK.) The two web sites were *Intermix*<sup>22</sup> and *People in Harmony*<sup>23</sup>, both of which agreed to put the request for participants on their sites. The research participant request was also posted on the *YoungMinds*<sup>24</sup> web site. The *People in Harmony* site proved the most fruitful, displaying the request on its home page, whereas it was more deeply embedded on the *Intermix* site. Only one respondent came through the *YoungMinds* site.

As an organisation, *People in Harmony* has been interested in this project, advertising it in their magazine. Subsequently they have given space to a presentation of the project at one of their annual meetings and a national conference. The researcher has also contributed to the production of a statement of the aims of the organisation. There was no way of knowing how many hits there were to the project proposal on that site. There were 81 hits on the project page of the *Intermix* site over the data collection period.

### ***Contacts and participant recruited***

A total of 36 people were in contact between September 2006 and October 2007, (see table below). Most people completed the short questionnaire and two people offered further suggestions about topics that could be covered. On receipt of an expression of interest, via the completed questionnaire, a more detailed account of the project together with a consent form was emailed back to the respondent. These documents are included in Appendices 1, 2 and 4. If, on

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<sup>22</sup> *Intermix* is a web site 'which aims to offer friendship, support, information and advice to mixed race individuals, couples, and families, as well as to carers of mixed race children.' (2008)

<sup>23</sup> *People in Harmony* was established in 1972 as a support group for families at a time of deliberate political moves to emphasise the disadvantages of racial mixing and, over the years, has challenged these assumptions. It has evolved to meet the needs of members, to raise awareness generally of the needs of mixed race communities throughout Britain, and to take on issues such as school problems at different levels, offering support and sometimes intervention'. (2008)

<sup>24</sup> The *YoungMinds* website targets people who have a concern about mental health, either of a child with whom they are involved or for themselves if they are children. YoungMinds is the national children's mental health charity.

reading more about the project, respondents chose to participate they were asked to type their name on the consent form and email it back to the researcher. They were also asked how they would like to tell their story.

There were three choices:

- a face to face interview, provided they could meet the researcher at the university
- a telephone interview at a time convenient to them
- a written account, emailed to the dedicated address

Of the 36 respondents, 21 agreed to relate their childhood stories and chose their forms of response as set out below:

- face to face interview = 5 (four of which took place at the university and one at the participant 's place of work)
- telephone interview = 3
- writing their story and emailing it to the researcher = 13

The 15 who did not engage any further with the project were mostly, de facto, not back in touch with their reasons. However, in one case a person was ineligible, not being of mixed race, and in another withdrew owing to pressure of work. Four further non-respondents said that they would be back in touch but, although several reminders were sent, nothing more was received from them. Two people, one included in and one non-respondent, agreed to come to an interview and although several dates were fixed they did not arrive. One of these people is counted in as he sent some information by email. A brief synopsis of each participant's story is included at Appendix 5.

In addition to these contacts there were seven responses to a further request relating to the Obama victory. No options for form of contact were offered at this point and all responses were

emailed. Interestingly Jenny, who had not responded to the initial request to participate, did respond to the request for a reaction to the Obama victory.

**Table 12: Initial response grid**

ID	gender	age	father	mother	main childhood address	method of response	length of written reponse
1	m	d/k	d/k	d/k	d/k	NA	NA
2	f	56	guyanian	welsh	N.wales	t/c and email*	>5500
3	m	29	english	jamaican	cayman	f2f	>4500
4	f	46	indian	german	hampshire/suburban	f2f *	>6000
5	f	18	jamaican	chinese/english	d/k	withdrew	NA
6	f	20s	guyanian	english	yorkshire/urban and rural	f2f	>5500
7	m	30s	english	asian	london suburbs	f2f	>4500
8	f	22	nigerian	english	yorkshire/urban	t/c	>4000
9	m	26	irish/english	jamaican	london	email x 2	1,154 words
10	f	26	indian/pakistani	finnish	london	email*	782 words
11	f	24	caribbean	british/white		email promised	
12	f	NA	NA	NA	NA	criteria not met	NA
13	m	28	asian/kenya	english	english	email	1186 words
14	f	35	irish	black/mixed race	inner london	t/c *	561 initial email
15	m	23	mauritian	belgian	Belgium	short email *	349 words
16	f	40	St Vincentian	Finnish	d/k	email	930 words
17	f	23	ghanaian	scottish/irish	scotland/glasgow	email promised	127 initial email
18	f	23	black	white		no response post info	
19	f	24	white	black/mixed race		no response post consent	NA
20	m	32	jamaican	white/english/welsh/irish	liverpool	email x 2	220+3323 words
21	f	16	sri lankan	english		no response post info	
22	f	25	german/english	chinese	west coast suburban	email x 2	7113 + 450 words
23	f	24	jamaican	english	s.w.london	f2f	262 + 6129 words
24	f	25	white australian	papuan	PNG	short email	393 words
25	f	21	irish	jamaican/british		no response post info	
26	m	21	white, irish, scottish, english,	ethiopian	d/k	short email	291 words and DNA'd int.
27	f	45	jamaican	irish	notting hill	email*	1722 words
28	m	32	creole	creole	chicago	email	290 + 4458 words+ 370
29	f	35	irish	singaporean chinese	australia	no response post info *	
30	f	30	white	mixed jamaican european	d/k	f2f interview arranged	DNA'd interview
31	f	30+	iranian	white	yorkshire	email	1276 words+662
32	f	23	black jamaican	white		no response post info	
33	m					truncated email only	
34	f	25	white south african	black south african	london	email promised	
35	f	55	pakistani	english	s.w. london	email	885 words
36	m	28	chinese/indian - malaysian	scottish		no response post info	

\* denotes email responses received about the election of Barack Obama; the number of words has not been added to the original response total.

### Sample Size

Mason (2010) offers a comprehensive critique of sample size and factors that govern decisions about what constitutes saturation in a variety of qualitative approaches. He found that studies using a phenomenological approach used between seven and 89 participant interviews. He

shows that the range of 5-25 was most common for phenomenological studies. He also finds that only 19.9% of the 25 studies included in his analysis used only interviews as their method of data collection. In relation to saturation he says:

There could be an argument, for example, which suggests that ten interviews, conducted by an experienced interviewer will elicit richer data than 50 interviews by an inexperienced or novice interviewer. Any of these factors along the qualitative journey can affect how and when saturation is reached and when researchers feel they have enough data. (Mason 2010 para 50)

and goes on to point out that 'Results from this analysis suggest that researchers are not working with saturation in mind, but instead a quota that will allow them to call their research "finished" ' (Mason 2010 para 51)

This study falls within these limits, with 21 participant contributions. These have satisfied the researcher in relation to saturation in that the main themes have come up consistently across the contributions.

### ***Obtaining Consent***

As has already been explained all respondents were sent a consent form via email and those who then wanted to contribute their stories were asked to type in their name and email the consent form to the researcher. In some cases these forms did not come back electronically and a significant number (15) dropped out at the consent stage. It is not possible to be sure why this is but it is possible that at this stage people get cold feet and it may be indicative of the fact that people are thinking seriously about the consequences of sharing information.

For those participants who did not return consent forms it is reasonable to assume that, having freely told their stories and having received clear information on at least two occasions explaining how the data they provide will be used, they are in fact consenting.

It is also reasonable to assume that if people offer a face-to-face or telephone interview they also consent to the material contained in these accounts being used in the way set out in the research information sheet and reiterated at the beginning of the interview. Indeed they are almost all hoping that there will be some positive outcomes from telling their stories.

### ***Types of responses – pros and cons***

As explained above, participants were asked to choose their preferred way for telling their story. The majority chose to write it and email it to the researcher. It is possible that the quality of the data might not be as good as it could be from being collected in this way, lacking as it does the capacity for immediate clarification or elaboration of issues that might be raised in a face to face or telephone interview. However, as Kvale points out, much can be lost from the immediacy of the face to face interview in the transcription process: 'The lived interview situation.....provides a 'richer access to the subjects' meanings than the transcribed texts will later.' (1996 p.129). In fact the considered and reflexive accounts which came by email from participants in this project were amongst the richest accounts collected.

Citing Mann and Stewart (2000) Hamilton and Bowers make the point that: 'Whether the interview is accomplished orally or in writing might have less impact than the overall commitment of the participant to the questions being investigated in the research.' (2006 p. 829) This level of commitment was then likely to be high amongst the participants, a significant number of whom had a professional as well as personal interest in the project. Hamilton and Bowers (2006) also suggest that email interviews could lack validity if the participants refused to clarify or elaborate any unclear points. This has not been the experience in this project as those participants to whom the researcher has needed to return, whatever form of interview they chose, have responded promptly. But they also say that 'By creating a more level playing field, the use of Internet recruitment and email interviewing might enhance a researcher's ability to 'give' the expertise to the participant.' (p. 832).

It is obviously easier for the researcher to receive data in this way as it does not have to be transcribed, so it was important that the choice was fully articulated to every potential participant and that every request for an interview was followed up meticulously.

All face to face and telephone interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and participants were asked for their permission for the tape recorder to be used throughout the interviews. During interviews, undertaken as they were by a single researcher, it is difficult to take comprehensive notes and subsequently it was important to do the transcribing as shortly after the interview as possible in order to ensure that any words that were unclear on the tape were remembered. Email interviews can be seen as a more truthful record of the participant's views in that transcribing, with its attendant problems, for example of ensuring the right emphases and punctuating to capture meaning, is not necessary.

A key issue for this approach is the balancing of the different types of response and making some assessment of whether these different approaches affect the data positively or negatively. In relation to this project it is highly likely that allowing participants a choice has the potential to broaden the range of people willing to come forward to take part. This method has provided an acceptable mechanism for those who prefer to have a direct, interactive experience and for those who prefer to reflect in their own time over their stories. In the context of a qualitative study such flexibility has a number of positive aspects in that it has captured the experiences of people with differing approaches to their personal reflections and differing preferences in recording these.

### ***Ethical approval and possible associated risks***

Ethical approval for the project was obtained in September 2006 from City University Ethics Committee and some risks were identified at this stage. It was considered possible that, by reflecting on past experiences, painful memories might occur that would cause distress to the participant. At any time the participants were able to withdraw and/or be signposted to

appropriate help. (This could have been to a voluntary organisation such as Mind or YoungMinds or to a local mental health service, or to projects which specifically offer support to mixed race people.) With my experience as a social worker and mental health support team manager in the past and my recent experience with YoungMinds in relation to the parents' helpline, together with my knowledge of mental health services and emerging knowledge of mixed race organisations, I felt confident of being able to offer effective support had it been necessary.

### ***Confidentiality, anonymity and integrity***

In using the internet confidentiality can be managed by the participant as well as by the researcher. The only contact information is an email address which need have no bearing on the real name of the individual and no real name or location details need be given.

Relevant sections of the thesis can theoretically be copied to all participants and any issues of concern about identity followed up and dealt with to the satisfaction of the participants and the researcher. However, as explained above, it proved impossible to contact some of the participants more than a year after the original interviews and submissions had been undertaken and received. Thus the faithful adherence to each original story must be carefully maintained by the researcher.

Confidentiality in the collection of data was preserved through the use of private email addresses and a dedicated, password protected, email address at the receiving end. All data are stored electronically on a home computer in a password protected site and/or in a locked file. Access to the site is limited to the researcher only, as is the locked file.

Data collected through face to face and telephone interviews have been transcribed by the researcher personally and, in writing up the data, care has been taken to preserve the anonymity of all participants and to ensure that data used are not traceable to the original participant by any third party. All identifying features have been removed as far as possible and participants have

been given fictitious names. At any time participants could request that any data gathered about them are not used in the project report.

Where there has been lack of clarity in the data participants have been contacted again for assistance in clarification. In some cases it has proved impossible to re-contact people, possibly owing to changing jobs and email addresses. In these cases some data have not been fully usable.

### ***Reflexive aspects***

In acknowledging what has been said above about the position of the self in data gathering, a section on positionality has been included in the introductory chapter and my particular interests/biases do not need to be repeated here. However my position or bias probably fits the category described by Kingdon (2005) citing Finlay (2000) as 'reflexivity as introspection' which means that my own reflecting, intuiting and thinking may be functioning as part of my primary evidence. Inevitably, as suggested above in the Methodology section, aspects of my personal experience provide a particular lens through which I interpret my data.

I was also concerned that, although I did not specify my own ethnicity, it would be obvious that I was a white person with no obvious mixed race connections. As such I might be seen as a less than legitimate person to be doing research in this area. It will never be possible to assess the extent to which this might have inhibited or indeed strengthened the way some participants told their stories. My impression throughout was that people were very open to talking about their experiences and were interested, when it arose, to know of my connections and reasons for selecting this research topic. However, I have to accept that there has almost certainly been some withholding of data. This is not unusual in any area of research for differing reasons and does not invalidate the work.

### ***Use of the internet to identify participants***

Before submitting a proposal to the Ethics Committee, and in order to answer the research question, accessing and possibly using some of the East London longitudinal research data on young people was considered. On investigation these data sets proved unreliable in terms of children of mixed race, as mixed race categories had not been used consistently over the period of the study. Had this not been the case it might have been possible to trace the trajectories of young people to identify emerging mental disorders. However, as has been referred to in the literature review, the difficulties of accessing any consistent data on mixed race young people are considerable as mixed race is either often not recorded or recorded as a homogeneous group, masking the essential differences between mixes.

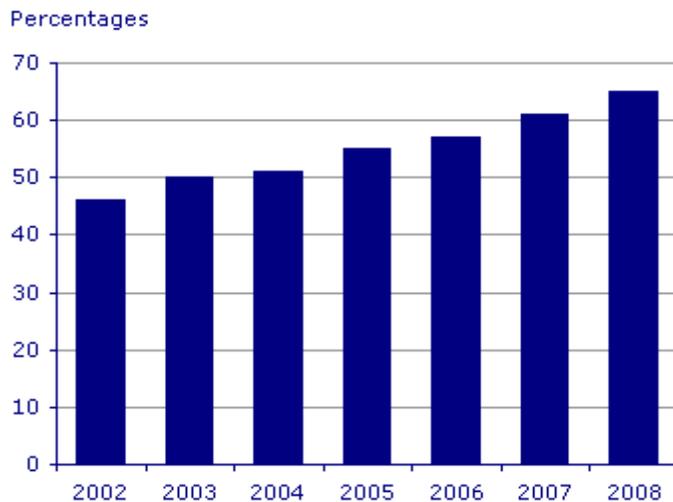
An alternative was to collect, through a purposive sample, reflective accounts of childhoods from adults of mixed race, asking them to reflect on their childhood experiences. As has been highlighted above it was not the intention to attract participants who were in any way involved with mental health services but to look at mental health and not mental illness. It was important to access a wide population and the internet was chosen as a means for making initial contacts.

Whilst there are clearly some shortcomings in using the web as a way of recruiting participants, there are also some very positive features (see below).

### ***Who uses the internet?***

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on internet usage provides the following information for 2008, the period of data collection for this study.

**Table 13: Households with access to the Internet in Great Britain.** (ONS 2008)



(Estimates for Great Britain are provided to give a time series, as UK estimates were not available in 2008 prior to 2006.)

In 2008 almost 16.5 million (65 per cent) UK households including Northern Ireland had access to the Internet. This was an increase of 1.2 million households (8 per cent) since 2007 and 5 million households (46 per cent) since 2002. The region with the highest level of access was the South East with 74 per cent. The region with the lowest access level was the North East with 54 per cent. Fifty-six per cent of all UK households had a broadband connection in 2008, up from 51 per cent in 2007. (ONS 2008)

Adults under 70 years of age who had a degree or equivalent qualification were most likely to have access to the Internet in their home, at 93 per cent. Those individuals who had no formal qualifications were least likely to have an Internet connection in their home at 56 per cent. (ONS 2008 p. 4)

Over half the population has an internet connection at home. It is likely that a far higher percentage will have access via their place of work, if they are of working age. Whilst some

mixed race groups are less likely to have formal qualifications and therefore, according to the ONS data, less likely to have internet access at home, this is a small proportion of the whole mixed population. Data from the USA (Hamilton and Bowers 2006) showed that African Americans made up 12% of all internet users and are 12.3% of the total population. There was proportionally less use by Hispanics who were 9% of all internet users and 12% of the total population. This research also shows that older people use the internet less, a similar finding to that in the UK by the ONS (see above.) These data have been collected from a very different population to that of the UK but go some way to establishing that internet usage is more affected by poverty than by ethnic grouping.

Extrapolating all this to the UK it suggests that, given the higher incidence of poverty in the BME populations, (Summerfield and Gill 2005), and the predominance of BME people living in urban areas which also tend to be more deprived areas (Tinsley and Jacobs 2006), BME people would be less likely to have internet access. According to Aspinall et al (2006) respondents to web based surveys tend to be female and in professional occupations.

The above data show that relying on accessing participants through the internet has its shortcomings but for the requirements of this study a purposive sample was sought and a varied group of participants has been accessed. The internet sample has produced a wide geographical spread and people from very different backgrounds have taken part. Participants felt positive about the experience of contributing and telling their story and nine of them already had a developed interest in the topic, for example they were involved in a similar project or working for an agency whose business was either race relations or mental health. As a self-selecting sample this is not a surprising finding. A purposive sample achieved in this way will inevitably be unrepresentative but this does not negate the importance of the data gathered. Indeed it could be argued that the data are more helpful when those providing them have given significant prior thought to the subject area.

It could be said that using the internet is an easier way to recruit participants, in contrast to using clinical sites for example, in that the researcher can gain speedy access to a purposive group of potential participants. To some extent this was true of the method of recruitment to this study, but it would not have been appropriate to use clinical sites as people with psychomorbidity were not specifically sought and a clear focus on mental health and not illness was desired. Hine (2004), in an online review, stresses that 'researchers considering Internet recruitment must address the question of how well the Internet population 'fits' the research question they are exploring.' Using the internet for this project provided a wide range of views and experiences from far-reaching geographies and varied lives. The data gathered in this way have provided a rich and varied insight into the childhoods of the participants. This diversity of responses is unlikely to have been collected so effectively in other ways.

#### ***Other recruitment methods***

There was concern at the early stages of the data collection period that it might not be possible to collect enough participants via the Web. Therefore a flyer was produced (See Appendix 3) which was circulated to people who expressed a direct interest, either for themselves or on behalf of friends, through which other potential recruits were directed to the websites. A photograph of the researcher was included on the flyer as it was considered important that the researcher was identified as a white woman. Two people were recruited in this way, one of whom was ineligible.

#### ***Data quality***

Once respondents had agreed to tell their stories, interviews were set up where appropriate and were undertaken based on a series of trigger questions (see box below). These same questions were emailed to those who elected to respond by email with the caveat that they should write their story as they felt it should be written and should not feel at all constrained by the questions set out. It was stressed that such questions were only to help them to start thinking and writing about their childhood experiences. In the face to face and telephone interviews that process was more directly managed to ensure that any initial questions did not hamper the free flow of

memories and thoughts. At the same time the existence of some 'trigger' questions made it possible to ensure that the same broad areas were covered with all participants.

### **Interview Trigger Questions**

Can we start by you telling me about your childhood – was being a mixed race child something that affected you in a big way?

How did you feel about yourself as a mixed race person as you grew up? Is that how you feel now?

What were the attitudes of others toward you – in your family, extended family, community? School etc? –

Do you think that where you lived was a factor?

Who did you relate to particularly as a child - family, friends etc? Were they mixed race too?

I am interested to know about your school experiences. What were they like? Were they different in different schools? Were any teachers/staff important to you – why?

Did you have any involvement as a child with other institutions such as the health service – hospitals, clinics etc or social services?

Were you involved in any community activities - clubs, scouts/guides, sports clubs, youth clubs etc? What was your experience of these?

Did you feel disadvantaged as a mixed race child? What were the positives?

Can you tell me a little about your family, any siblings etc?

Do you think things are changing for mixed race people?

What sort of affect do you think being mixed race has had on you – in terms perhaps of confidence, achievements etc?

In your view what needs to change to make things better for mixed race children growing up?

Are there any big issues that you feel should be addressed?

How do you feel about yourself now? When did you start to feel like this etc?

What sort of help/support/understanding do you think might have been helpful to you?

Is there any message you would want to give to mixed race children growing up today? Something that you think might help them or get them through any difficult times?

As mentioned above some of the participants were emailed with requests for further clarification where it was felt that further information would be helpful. All participants were asked at the

outset if they were willing for their stories to be followed up in this way, and most were contactable within a reasonable period. This was not the case over a year on when only six of the original participants, and one of the original contacts who did not take part in the main project, responded to the request for views on the Obama victory.

The length and intensity of the data collected varied, particularly amongst those who responded by email. In a few cases, because the contribution was to a large extent confined to the trigger questions, it was difficult to decide whether to include the data received in the research analysis. The criterion arrived at for inclusion in these cases was the content of the contribution in terms of the insights it added to the themes that were already emerging from others, either by endorsing the points made by others or by saying something that was essentially different. Table 14 shows the differences in lengths of contributions, but should not be taken as a league table of usefulness in terms of the data each contains.

**Table 14: Length of written submissions**

Length of submission	Number of participants (n=13)
< 1000 words	5
1000 – 2999 words	4
3000 – 4999 words	1
5000 – 6999 words	2
7000 words and over	1

In most cases small amounts of additional data were gathered through the initial response forms and short email communications. Interestingly at least one participant who had sent one of the shorter accounts wrote at length about the Obama victory.

### ***The Thematic Analysis***

Following an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) themes have been identified by following the seven-step approach to data analysis which Colaizzi provides as follows:

1. All descriptions will be read to make sense out of them and acquire a feeling for them
2. Significant statements will be extracted

3. Meanings will be formulated
4. Data will be organised into clusters of themes and validated
5. These results will be integrated into an exhaustive description of the topic
6. An exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon will be formulated in as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible.
7. The results will be validated by returning to each subject, integrating any relevant new data into the final product.

Holloway and Wheeler (2002) helpfully point out that Colaizzi encourages the researcher to be flexible with these stages and also reminds the researcher to refuse the temptation to ignore data or themes which do not fit. In fact Colaizzi warns the researcher that:

discrepancies may be noted among and/or between the various clusters: some themes may flatly contradict other ones, or may appear to be totally unrelated to other ones. ....the researcher must rely upon his (sic) tolerance for ambiguity; he must proceed with the solid conviction that what is logically inexplicable may be existentially real and valid. (Colaizzi 1978 p. 91)

This is an important statement for this project where data vary considerably in relation to the same themes and some appear to be at variance with the current discourse.

The transcriptions and print outs of the data were read through carefully a number of times and synopses of each contribution have been written up and are included in the appendices. At this point all participants were given a pseudonym. No real attempt was made to make the pseudonym appropriate to the expressed ethnic identity of the participant, other than in the very broadest sense in that a range of names was selected which reflected the mixedness of the participant population.

The Nvivo data analysis package was used as a way of recording/coding themes and tracking data back to source and has been a helpful resource for extracting significant statements and clustering them into themes. The use of Nvivo has allowed for data to be stored and accessed in relation to the themes, identifying the significance of these for the whole sample, that is how many participants expressed the same views and which experiences were unique to the contributor. No other applications of the package were used.

### ***Reliability***

Inevitably story telling has its dangers in terms of reliability and relation to the truth and stories change over time, relating to the circumstances in which they are told. It is doubtful, given the highly subjective nature of the stories, that one would ever get to the truth. However as Shelley Day Sclater (2004), in describing the stories she heard in her work as a divorce lawyer, discovered that 'people were wedded, often very deeply so, to their personal narratives and it was sometimes impossible to prise apart the person from their story.' (p.100). She goes on to say that 'in their stories they (the divorcees) attempted to piece together the fragments of their lives and to make sense of what had happened.' (p. 101). As she began to look at narratives from a more academic stance she was immediately struck by 'the way in which the stories seemed to speak a coherent identity that the subject had put together again after the trauma and separation of divorce.' This suggests that people use their stories as re-affirmations of their being, something that was evident in the rather different stories that were told by participants in this project who, in some cases, had struggled with knowing who they were and in making sense of relationships. An awareness of these possibilities was important in analysing and interpreting the data.

Murdock points to the researcher's desire to dig below the surface and reach a 'solid bedrock of experience' He goes on to say that:

As a result, the researcher runs a risk of being taken in by the "authenticity" of the respondent's testimony, because she believes she has access through it to a raw, dense, untarnished form of speech that others will not have known how to pick up and provoke. (Murdock 1997 p188).

Ensuring rigour in qualitative research, in order to draw robust conclusions from the data, is inevitably problematic. Checklists, such as those devised by Tong et al (2007) and by Silverman (2010), assist the researcher in ensuring that there is transparency of method and that any interpreter bias is evident to the reader. For example in this thesis the positionality of the researcher is set out at some length and the use of the internet is discussed fully in the Methods chapter. Similarly within qualitative research there is always a concern about the trustworthiness of the accounts given, in both the telling of the story and the completeness of the interpretation of the data, see Plummer (1995) and Day Sclater ((2004) both of whom concluded that something of the truth will emerge and that people will talk about those matters which seem to them to be most significant in their interpretation of events. A further approach to establishing trustworthiness is to review the similarity of the findings with other studies in the same area and to identify any discrepancies. Willig (2001) advises that 'qualitative researchers should check whether their accounts are credible by referring to others' (p143). The data collected for this study show many similarities between the findings in this study and those of others in the field (for example Tizard and Phoenix 2002, Katz 1996, Ali 2003) which provides confidence that the subsequent interpretation of the data to address risk and resilience is based on trustworthy data. This similarity with other findings suggests that the findings from this project are robust and can be trusted.

As has been referenced above people will always give their version of any story and the participants in this study will have told a very subjective story. It is possible that stories received over the internet, and to some extent the stories relayed face to face or over the telephone, could

be entire fabrications. However the fact that a significant number of the participants were evidently highly committed to doing something about the misunderstandings around mixedness as they saw them, and that the issues raised across the participant group are remarkably similar, both within this study and in other studies, suggests that they are valid and reliable accounts of events as they were experienced by the individuals involved. Hewson et al (2003) writing on internet research generally, point to the benefits of internet-mediated research in that it can recruit people who are difficult to contact, due to its anonymity, and that the possible losses of meaning incurred in transcription are avoided. As Searle (1999) says: 'Trustworthiness is always negotiable and open-ended, not being a matter of final proof whereby readers are compelled to accept an account' (p 468). Provided the methodology and methods used are set out, together with the positionality of the researcher. The reader is able to judge the trustworthiness of the data.

In situating the analysis within the current discourse on mixed race a robust context is provided for the interpretation and, at the same time, a reflexive awareness is maintained of the researcher's own context in undertaking this project. The earlier section on positionality in Chapter 1 fully describes the context of the researcher for this project.

### ***Chapter Summary***

This chapter has explained how the data were collected and has dealt with the issues which arise for the data collection method, including validity and reliability. The process of the thematic analysis has been described. It is considered that an adequate purposive sample has been obtained and that the quality of data received, although variable in length and depth, provides appropriate material through which the research question can be thought about.

The use of the Internet has produced a wide variety of participants from across the world, although most are based in the UK and have grown up there. Whilst there is a wide age range overall most participants are young people in their 20s and 30s.

The following chapter brings together the methodology and the method in the thematic analysis.

## **Chapter 7: The Thematic Analysis**

### ***Chapter overview***

This chapter sets out the process for analysing the data within the methodology and method described earlier. The first stage analysis identifies and explicates the dominant themes, exemplifying these through the data, and considers these with reference to the risk and resilience literature at a second stage. Family relationships are shown in a tabulated format to identify the strength and breadth of family ties as well as the dominant culture in the household. Service responses described by the participants are also considered.

The significance of appearance and the identity issues which come to the fore in secondary school years stand out. Geographical location is also an important factor affecting the lived experience of being mixed race.

### **The Analysis Process**

Using an interpretive phenomenological approach to the analysis of the data it is helpful to return to the five commonalities identified by Benner and Wrubel:

Situation – includes an understanding of how the person is situated, both historically and currently.

Embodiment – includes an understanding of embodied, or physical/emotional, knowing or understanding of particular situations.

Temporality – being the experience of lived time and the way one projects oneself into the future and understands oneself from the past.

Concerns - the way the person is orientated meaningfully in a situation, constituting what matters to the person.

Common meanings – taken for granted linguistic and cultural meanings that create what is noticed and what are possible issues, agreements and disagreements between people.

(1989 p104/5)

The data give insights into the participants' 'situations', with specific focus on their childhoods. They provide a great deal of detail about 'embodiment' or understanding of particular situation in terms of the emotional. The fact that participants are looking back and reflecting on their childhood gives a good understanding of the 'temporality' of their experiences, and enables the researcher to understand their 'concerns' as they reflect, as inevitably those aspects of their childhood which affected them deeply are likely to be those which are recalled. The 'common meanings' could perhaps be expected to be hard to identify, given the breadth of experiences and geographical location alone, yet, as will be seen from the following thematic analysis, the data provide ample evidence of common experiences and common understandings of those experiences. For example, experiences of isolation both at school and in the communities where people grew up were experienced by the participants as rejection by both black and white groups.

Benner (1994) suggests that whilst the goal of interpretive phenomenology is to uncover the commonalities and differences, it should not be concerned with the private idiosyncratic events or understandings. The participants' stories collected here inevitably cover the private and the idiosyncratic and these data are important to note, given the level of heterogeneity of the participants. Descriptions of the idiosyncratic lived experiences underline the realities of the lives of people with mixed parentage and highlight the importance of recognising this in service delivery. Where these experiences add to a deeper understanding of the data overall, they have been included. Otherwise the significant themes that emerge across the stories are the focus of the main analysis.

### ***Telling the stories***

As is described in Chapter 6, the nature of the material provided by the participants varies according to their chosen method of communicating. Participants were offered, and have variously chosen, to provide data via face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews or through writing via email. Each type of response will be identifiable as set out below:

- Face to face interview            F
- Telephone interview            T
- Written email                    W

Each participant is identified by a pseudonym and by gender (see Table 15). The pseudonyms do not accurately reflect the ethnicity of the participants and no meaning should be derived from them. The area in which the participant grew up is recorded as L for London; UK for places other than London; and A for abroad.

Where stories have been written, the original text, punctuation and emphases are preserved, for example lower case where the writer uses this. Where the stories have been told in face to face interviews or over the telephone they are punctuated in the accepted fashion to stay as true to the spoken word as possible.

*Table 15: Characteristics of participants, showing pseudonyms*

<b>name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>father</b>	<b>mother</b>	<b>data type</b>	<b>Area</b>
Tina	F	56	Guyanian	Welsh	T	UK
Theo	M	29	English	Jamaican	F	A
Anna	F	46	Indian	German	F	UK
Sarah	F	20s	Guyanian	English	F	UK
Cyrus	M	30s	English	Asian	F	L
Aileen	F	22	Nigerian	English	T	UK
Noel	M	26	Irish/English	Jamaican	W	L
Rosa	F	26	Indian/Pakistani	Finnish	W	L
Suhail	M	28	Kenyan Asian	English	W	UK
Carla	F	35	Irish	Jamaican	T	L
Emile	M	23	Mauritian	Belgian	W	A
Clare	F	40	St Vincentian	Finnish	W	UK
Thomas	M	32	Jamaican	English/Welsh/Irish	W	UK
Tracey	F	25	American	Chinese	W	A
Louise	F	24	Jamaican	English	F	L
Kelly	F	25	White Australian	Papuan	W	A
Rob	M	21	Ethiopian	English/Welsh/Irish	W	?
Kathleen	F	45	Jamaican	Irish	W	L
Jack	M	32	Creole	French Creole	W	A
Mary	F	30s	Iranian	English	W	UK
Ayesha	F	55	Pakistani	English	W	L

Participants record a wide range of mixed parentages, set out in Table 15. Ten people have UK white mothers and a further three have white mothers from other European countries, three are from Jamaica, one from Ethiopia, one Asian from East African, one from China, one from Papua and one French Creole in the United States of America. These heritages together with those of their fathers, of whom five are UK white, one white Australian, one white American, two from Guyana, five are Asian (one of whom came from Kenya), three from Jamaica, one from Nigeria, one from Iran, one from St. Vincent and one American Creole, exemplifying the heterogeneity of people of mixed race and the potentially complex issues surrounding their individual identities. A further discussion of this is in the section on risk factors relating to the child below.

Looking purely at epidermal difference, there are more non-white fathers than mothers, 15 as compared with eight non-white mothers. There is a significant literature on white mothers of 'black' children (Harman V. 2010) but little on the experience of the black mother of 'white' children. These data suggest that this might be an important area of further enquiry. No participant, other than Jack whose parents are both Creole, had two 'black' parents, and there is little data on children from these dual heritages.

There is a wide age variation across the participants who are predominantly female (F n=13 and M n=8). Whilst the data do not suggest any clear differences of experience between boys and girls in relation to mixedness, the experiences of those participants who are in their mid to late 40's and 50s (n=4) might be expected to be generally more difficult, given the prevailing racial discourse of the time. Although these four women describe significant difficulties associated with their mixedness, the younger participants' accounts do not differ very much. In some cases the younger participants describe equally or more distressing experiences, possibly because they are closer to them in time.

## Identifying the Dominant Themes

Following the second, third and fourth steps outlined by Colaizzi (see Chapter 6) in undertaking an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA),<sup>25</sup> sixteen significant themes, drawn from the frequency of significant statements, present themselves in the participants' contributions. In 'listening to' the narratives carefully, data about context and intensely personal and individualised experiences emerge. Where these are specifically relevant to the research question these accounts are included with caveats about their generalisability to the sample.

Following Colaizzi's fifth step, the identification and explication of these experiences contribute to the process of undertaking an exhaustive description of the topic. This process identifies the significant statements and dominant themes which are later explored in relation mental health and wellbeing, defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. In this context the findings are presented below in three areas crucial for children's mental wellbeing, the **child**, the **family** and the **community**.

The analysis seeks to carefully balance those factors which the narratives suggest have a relationship to being mixed race and those factors that have little bearing on race/ethnicity. It is essentially the lived experience of each individual that is being thought about in this first stage analysis and interpreted later at the second stage through the risk and resilience lens in Chapter 9. The common themes arising across the data are drawn out whilst respecting the 'voice and experience' (Benner 1994 p.101) described in the text and are derived from statements made to/received by the interviewer. They include statements that convey both positive and negative experiences about each theme, for example for some participants 'difference' is seen as something to enjoy and be proud of, whereas for others it has been unremittingly difficult. The importance of each theme to the participants can be seen by the number of significant statements

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<sup>25</sup> these are: significant statements will be extracted; meanings will be formulated; data will be organised into clusters of themes and validated

made which relate to each one. For example, identity and racism are referred to most frequently and, although participants were encouraged to talk about experiences of services they had used<sup>26</sup>, this is not reported on very much at all.

In order to move to the second stage of the analysis the significant themes are described under the three headings child, family and community and tabulated in Table 16. The headings have been chosen to reflect the way in which the literature codifies risks for children’s mental health, corresponding to the clustering of risk and resilience factors which are set out in Chapter 3. For example, identity, appearance and anti-racist work are experiences fully located in the person, in this case the child, whereas the other themes are located elsewhere, that is in the family or the community.

**Table 16: Clusters of Themes**

<b>Child</b>	<b>No: of significant statements</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>No: of significant statements</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>No: of significant statements</b>
Identity confusion/issues	97	Attitudes of family members	65	Experience of racism	91
Appearance	67	Access to wider family	27	Isolation	84
Anti-racist work	17	Sibling differences	24	School experiences	54
		Class	16	Multi-cultural nature of area	44
		Visits to parents' home country	10	Attitude of friends	34
		Meeting an absent parent	6	Access to black groups	19
				Service provision/support	7

<sup>26</sup> Participants were asked 'Did you have any involvement as a child with other institutions such as the health service – hospitals, clinics etc or social services?'

### ***Themes and risks relating to the child***

The risk factors for mental health have been set out in Chapter 3. Whereas most risks inherent in the child, for example genetic influences and specific developmental delays, may afflict any child, other factors may cause them to have low self esteem. Low self esteem is potentially more likely to be a factor for the child of mixed race in that having a clear and secure identity is an essential part of feeling good about oneself. Many of the participants show that they were confused about their identities at the adolescent stage, as evidenced by the statements from Carla and Emile below.

For most of the participants in this study the data show that during early childhood racial/ethnic identity was not particularly significant and generally friends paid scant attention to racial difference but that, emerging from childhood, the young person finds her/himself abruptly in a different world. The adolescent phase is a period in which peer group relationships are cemented and when identity as part of a peer group is important. For many young people this is a fraught process in that it coincides with entry into secondary education requiring both a physical and emotional transition as well as a time when peer group pressures exert themselves and relationships with peers assume an equal or greater importance than family relationships. The data show that the child of mixed race finds her/himself outside the group, often excluded by others who were good friends at an earlier developmental stage. This is a finding in a number of research projects focussing on children of mixed race (Tizard and Phoenix 2002; Ali 2003).

Kathleen describes how she experienced being different in her primary school but shows that it was not significant to her at the time in the way that it was later:

*I didn't really understand that I was different until I was about 5, when I went to school. My parents tried to explain to me about my colour when I asked why I was brown, in simple language that a child can understand, something to do with mixing white paint with*

*brown paint and that the result was me, you know that kind of thing, and I was happy. Life was very simple until I was about 11 when I went to secondary school then it all changed! (f/W)*

Staged theories of identity, such as Erikson's, describe this adolescent phase as a period when young people are 'remarkably clannish' and 'cruel in their exclusion of all those who are 'different', in skin colour or cultural backgrounds.' (Erikson 1977 p.236). Erikson suggests that this is in itself a defence against identity confusion.

Group identity and the existence of the in-grouper and the out-grouper are exemplified strongly in the data, showing that children of mixed race who cannot find a group to belong to are always in the position of out-grouper. Carla explains how she feels:

*I am one of many mixed race people who I feel are the forgotten ones. We don't look mixed race in a traditional sense. We look 'different' and people can't quite place where we are from, possibly Italian or South American. I now call myself mixed race and am happy with that because I don't care if other people mistake me for being white and expect me to say I'm white. What I do care about is that I don't fit in anywhere and that has given me issues of identity because if my skin was darker I could fit in with the Mixed race crowd and be accepted by the black crowd. But as it is I just look white and have to explain myself to people. (f/T)*

Being able to identify with a group enhances self esteem and, in the post Erikson era, identity is seen as shifting and changing to meet external demands or perceived demands. Thus the individual can swap identities to fit in more closely with the peer group by becoming an in-grouper on a temporary and utilitarian basis. Many of today's young people move fluently from group to group, modifying language and behaviours from classroom to peer group and from home to other social settings. For the child of mixed race, who is struggling to find her/his primary identity, it

seems likely that managing these multiple identities will be a more difficult task. Tina takes a pragmatic view as an adult but did not and has not, found group membership:

*My position with regard to the issue of mixed race is both complex and simple. I take the line that I am a human being and resist being categorised racially. For the purposes of bureaucracy I like to be as flexible as I can since I do not believe in a fixed and immutable identity - a fixed self - though this is invariably what many people are doing and what is expected..... My own experience has been that no white person will accept me as white, but if I claim blackness that is also denied. (f/T)*

Emile, who has described his alienation from black and white groups at different times, attempts a resolution through a strong musical allegiance:

*I had severe identity crisis, didn't know who I was and where I could fit in. I found refuge in Hip Hop music, It spoke to me on a whole nother level and gave me the feeling of being understood. (m/W)*

Racial and cultural biases are developed as the individual compares his or her race/ethnicity with his or her own self-concept<sup>27</sup>. This is likely to be another difficult area for the mixed race young person whose self concept may not accord with that of the group to which s/he aspires. Those participants who 'passed'<sup>28</sup> for white throughout their childhood were accorded in-group status with their white friends and were obliged to subscribe to the higher status accorded to this grouping. At the same time it is clear that they felt uncomfortable with this position.

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<sup>27</sup> 'Self concept or self-identity is the sum total of a being's knowledge and understanding of his or her self. The self-concept is different from self-consciousness, which is an awareness of one's self. Components of the self-concept include physical, psychological, and social attributes, which can be influenced by the individual's attitudes, habits, beliefs and ideas.' <http://en.wikipedia.org>. - Identity (social science)

<sup>28</sup> In the racial politics of the United States, racial passing refers to a person classified by society as a member of one racial group (most commonly Caucasian / Afro-American heritage) choosing to identify with a group other than that assigned by social prejudice. The term was used especially in the US to describe a person of mixed-race heritage assimilating to the white majority during times when legal and social conventions classified the person as minority.' <http://en.wikipedia.org> – Passing (racial identity)

Several participants talk about not looking sufficiently mixed and, as a result, feeling compromised in the company of white friends and being able to 'pass' as white. It is clear that white friends, although evidently not overtly racist, make some racist assumptions as Carla illustrates:

*I sit with white people and talk about things and talk about issues and I think they're talking to me as a white person, some of the things they say if they knew I was mixed race they wouldn't say things like that really. (f/T)*

Participants who had this experience express a sense of fulfillment at having their ethnicity acknowledged in later years and have enjoyed establishing their new found identity. Tracey, whose white American father was the dominant cultural influence in her childhood home has subsequently made significant efforts as an adult to imbibe her mother's culture.

*i decided to go abroad to china at the age of 22, after i graduated from university. it was my first time, and i didn't actually choose china specifically because it's my mother's birthplace, but that's definitely become one of the reasons i've stayed (it's nearing three years that i've been here). (f/W)*

For Jack, an American Creole, it was a journey from black to mixedness:

*My physicality didn't become an issue for me until I was 29 approaching 30 years old. All of a sudden, I didn't feel "Black" anymore & needed to figure out who I was... (M/w)*

The enjoyment of 'difference' which embraces feelings of 'otherness' in the majority of participants is an interesting and optimistic finding. Rob describes the contrast of this position with how he had felt growing up:

*I used to think that this meant I was neither white, nor black, but I have come to realise that I AM BOTH. Perceiving myself as being neither was debilitating. REALISING im both is more positive and much more empowering. (m/W)*

However, it was not universal finding and two participants certainly felt strongly protective of their children, or future children, in wanting those children to be clearly established as black. This is a shift from the high status seeming to attach to 'whiteness' exemplified by other participants.

Kathleen, now in her 40s, describes her difficulties with boys as a young person and her position as an adult:

*Today being mixed race is 'fashionable' and all the young black guys want to date mixed race girls. When boys entered my life it was even more confusing. If I dated a white boy, the black girls who had hated me previously, suddenly thought I was betraying my 'race' and if I dated a black boy, my white friends were terrified of him!*

*My experience as a kid played a large part in the way in which I looked at the world. The saying 'the best form of defence is attack' became my mantra as a kid. I also made a vow to myself that I would not do this to my kids. I wouldn't have a child with a white man and let them grown up even more confused than I was - I married a black man and had two children - in their minds they are black not mixed race! (f/W)*

These data demonstrate clearly that the participants were significantly preoccupied with establishing their racial/ethnic identities as children and young people. It is evident that over the period of childhood and into adolescence and young adulthood ideas and feelings about identity change dramatically, from not being very aware of difference in early childhood to acute awareness and wanting to belong in adolescence, to wanting to be seen as who they are and the mix that they are as young adults. Whilst Kathleen accepts that being mixed race is 'fashionable' in current times, a point made by several participants, she has been so affected by her own negative experiences as a mixed race child that she has been determined to avoid this

experience for her own children, to the extent of restricting her choice of marriage partner to a black man.

She emphatically says that she wouldn't have children with a white man and yet she herself is half white and could perhaps just as reasonably elected only to marry a white man. Kathleen was very influenced by her black grandmother as a small child but felt that her own mother favoured her sister who looks white. Kathleen describes her skin colour as brown and says that her best friend, who was black, jettisoned her because she was too white. As an adult she has effectively elected to be black, challenging race/ethnic theories of high status/ low status in so doing. As Tina says in her comments on Obama being described as the first 'black' president, (see Chapter 8), that '*black of course is a far more safe place to be.*' The assumption being that it is better to be identified as black rather than mixed.

### *Appearance*

Physical appearance has had a profound effect on the identity development of many of the participants. The stories contain many references to how other people see the participants as people of mixed race as well as references to how the participants saw their own physical appearances as children. The apparent need for both black and white people to pigeonhole or categorise people of mixed race is very evident. As Tracey, who 'passed' as white as a child, describes it:

*people seem to have an innate desire to categorize, and one of the most immediate ways to do that is based on appearances. "race" is supposed to be one of those immediately recognizable things that manifests itself in our physical appearances-though as has been demonstrated before ....., it doesn't always. so whichever "race" manifests itself as most dominant is what a mixed-race person will be automatically categorized as. tiger woods, black. me, white. (f/W)*

Several participants 'passed' for white as children, being able to do so because they looked white to outsiders. To themselves they had features that came from their black/non white heritage and they speak of resentment that others defined them as white and did not recognise their true heritage. Mary, whose father is Iranian, experienced this as she was growing up in a predominantly white county town:

*If you look at it from an identity perspective and like me only had the white culture around me, the other part of me wasn't able to identify at all, but yet it was always the part of me that I had to explain. Even now if I explain myself I will say I'm half Iranian, because I've always had to do that - when people ask me, have you been on holiday or that's a nice tan you have, I still to this day get that. (f/W)*

Carla, whose mother is Jamaican, describes herself as light skinned. Although she grew up in a racially mixed inner city area, says that her mixedness was not acknowledged:

*I am one of many mixed race people who I feel are the forgotten ones. We don't look mixed race in a traditional sense. We look 'different' and people can't quite place where we are from, possibly Italian or South American. (f/T)*

A number of participants describe being seen as southern European rather than as mixed race or black. Sarah, whose father is Guyanese, enjoys this experience:

*I like people not knowing - I've had all sorts, am I Spanish, am I Iraqi and Iranian, am I south American? I quite like it, I think it's quite funny. (f/F)*

But others find it demeaning and an uncomfortable place to be and are keen to establish their own particular mix. Participants who describe their skin colour as dark or brown struggle to have

their mixedness recognised. Ayesha, whose father is Pakistani, describes her attempts to explain her mixedness and a friend's rejection of her Englishness/whiteness:

*On numerous occasions I would try to fend off hostile approaches and questioning by saying that my mother was English, but this was to little or no avail, as I realised that it was my appearance that caused the most aggravation. One friend actually advised me not to mention my dual heritage as "you don't look English." (f/W)*

The data provide numerous references to the difficulties of explaining mixedness and in getting your racial heritage properly recognised. Skin colour, as the above examples show, is a powerful factor in this experience, effectively categorising people as either 'white' or southern European and, depending on context, black. Unsurprisingly for people growing up as mixed race in the UK there was a greater incidence of being described by others as southern European. It is impossible not to conclude that racism was playing a significant part in these categorisations – a reflection of the higher status accorded by western society generally to fair skinned people. Cyrus struggles to articulate this:

*You get sort of mixed mix that's growing and that's a difficult one .....Say Greek and Turkish kids there is obviously a mix going on there but they won't get problems because of colour so I think maintaining that kind of divide between mixed something like Jewish and Irish you know and I think that begins to make it like everybody effects them and I think we have to go back to a bit of the root of it then and to say well actually the root of it is still colour and mix its not just the Jewish and Irish or Eritrean and Slovakian .. (m/F)*

But the data also show that skin colour is registered differently in different settings as is evident in Jack's experience as a Creole being brought up as black, and in Theo's experience in the Cayman Islands as well as in the USA and in the UK where class also seems to play a part. Describing his experience in the UK Theo says:

*the white crowd assumed I was black as well actually so I was like apparently I'm black. I don't really care but you know whereas in the Caribbean you are probably pushed more to the white side when you're mixed race. (m/F)*

The negativity with which some participants saw their own physical appearance as children gives more cause for concern. Some participants describe a real hatred of their 'dark' appearance, including a dislike of their hair and complexion. For some this happens with adolescence when identification with the in-groupers becomes important, as does appearance more generally. Louise describes very strong negative feelings as a teenager, which still persist and cause her distress:

*I felt really disgusting when I was that age - I felt really dark and aware of my looks. I had this really big thing about hair and darkness and yuk - shave it, pluck it, everything - it plagued my life and it still does now. I had laser treatment this morning - and I can't afford it and I do it and .... with my boyfriend now I'm quite proud when I say look I really hate this in myself but I have to accept it and you know wish I could deal with it - but I was very unhappy about my features, my darkness. (f/F)*

It is highly likely that Louise's strong feelings as young adult have been exacerbated by the media and may not be entirely ascribable to her own basic feelings about her mixedness. She grew up in a 'white' environment and feels that her difficulties in developing sexual relationships as a young adult had '*something to do with the darkness*'.

Anna, who as an adult praises the bravery of her parents' relationship, did everything as a child to conceal her mixedness:

*I remember as a child that was the last thing I wanted anyone to know about me. That's possibly the times because I grew up in the late 60s and 70s and there was a huge strong NF presence and you know my father was Indian and I was always called Paki at school and stuff and I remember I desperately wanted to fit in with all the white kids so I wore white make up for instance and I see pictures of myself and I look ridiculous. I look like a clown. (f/F)*

The desire to look different can be experienced at a younger age as Tina describes in an attempt to change her appearance and her father's harsh reaction to this:

*I can remember looking out the window and seeing all the little girls playing in their shorts and tee shirts and blond hair and I can remember going to the mirror and taking my thick plaits out and taking my skirt off so it looked like I had shorts and I went out in the street and my father came home - it had a powerful affect on me because I was trying to be the same as the little white girls and he wasn't having it. (f/T)*

These experiences of Louise and Tina are concerning. From very different life situations and experiences both have felt negative about their blackness. The experience of Tina, described above, could be that of many children trying to fit in, but the apparent harshness of her father's reaction suggests more than this.

The internalised self- concepts of these women who as children and young people of mixed race have dealt with the effects of racism expressed in this most intimate way can only be guessed at. It is evident, from the later section in this chapter on Community, that both 'friends' and 'professionals' are unwittingly unaware of the damage to self esteem that must be sustained.

### *Involvement in anti-racist work of some participants*

It was probably to be expected that in a purposive sample which has self-selected via websites devoted to mixed race issues that a number of the participants would turn out to be committed to equalities issues and be working in the equalities field. This was the case for four people, with others specifically saying that they had a heightened awareness of race issues and/or wanted to do something to put issues of mixed race into a more public domain, specifically suggesting that educationalists should be more aware of mixed race children and provide more mixed race role models. The opportunity to identify oneself as mixed on census forms and other documents was seen a very positive and the singular importance of being able to identify yourself by the mix you were was raised many times.

These strongly held and, for the most part, thought through ideas about how young people of mixed race should be treated and supported cannot necessarily be generalised to all people of mixed race but almost certainly indicate areas and issues which have played a part in the self concepts of these specific people.

### ***Themes and risks relating to the family***

As has been shown in Chapters 2 and 3, in the context of risk and resilience, the stability or otherwise of the family relationships plays a key role in either creating risks for the mental health of the children or in supporting the development of the children's resilience. Generally it is accepted that being brought up by both your birth parents is supportive of mental health. However, the data collected for this project are not significantly illuminating when viewed in this way, (see Table 17.) Although they show that the majority of the participants grew up with two birth parents it does not follow from these data that birth families consistently dealt well with issues around mixedness or that families with step parents dealt less well.

**Table 17: Family status of participants (some appear in more than one category)**

Growing up with two birth parents	Growing up with a step parent	Growing up partly with two parents and partly with one	Growing up with one parent	Spending some time in the care system
Theo Sarah Cyrus Aileen Noel Rosa Suhail Emile Tracey Kelly Rob Kathleen Jack Ayesha	Carla Louise Thomas (part)	Tina Anna (part)	Clare (part) Thomas (part) Mary	Anna Clare
14	2	2	3	2

The early literature on mixed families points to the often problematical nature (Wilson W 1987) of these relationships, whereas current data show that mixed families are more likely to endure than their comparators in the community as a whole, namely that 87% of mixed parents stay together as compared with 65% of those who are in same race partnerships (Caballero 2008). The data in this study do however generally bear out this more recent picture.

Tina and Anna both lost their fathers in childhood, one to divorce and one to death. The trajectory for these two women has been very different in that their descriptions were of dysfunctional families prior to losing their fathers. Tina had been cared for by relatives whilst her father and mother lived abroad and then lived with a depressed and grieving mother after her father left the family for another woman. Anna, after a turbulent early childhood with both birth parents, went on to spend the remainder of her adolescence in care, separated from her siblings. Clare similarly had a period in care and returned in her teenage years to a stable, if impoverished, single parent family. Mary had also been brought up in by her mother in an apparently stable single parent setting, her father having departed when she was a baby.

Three respondents, Thomas, Carla and Louise, experienced parenting from their mother's new partner. In Carla's and Louise's cases they had a stable family upbringing with a mother and step-father, but Thomas, although gaining much from his mother's temporary partner, also suffered violence at his hands as did his mother. Apart from the turbulence of this early relationship, he describes a relatively stable family setting.

Whilst family type inevitably affects the developing resilience of the child, the experiences of the participants is highly heterogeneous within these settings, rendering any definite conclusions based on them unsafe. However with this caveat, it is broadly possible to say, from a detailed study of the material, that those young people growing up in stable, affirmative families seemed surer of their identity and more positive about their mixedness as children.

Whilst the data confirm the high level of intact mixed relationships it is evident that these relationships were not always happy and unproblematic, raising the possibility that mixed parents could be staying together as a result of the major commitment they made originally to their mixed partnership. The commitment made in these marriages is likely to be greater as couples often face considerable opposition from those close to them, causing a great deal of soul searching before the decision to marry/partner is taken.

Other studies (Aymer 2010) have identified a crisis point in mixed relationships, engendered by the pressures from both black and white society, which when reached and worked through strengthens mixed couples, for whom breaking up would be not only a serious loss of face but would pose extra concerns for the future care of the children who would essentially be deprived of living with one half of their heritage. As Noel says:

*There were issues for my parents being in a mixed relationship and tensions between family members. As a child you pick up on these things, I certainly did. (m/W)*

### *Attitudes of family members*

A vast amount of information was provided from the contributions about how participants' own families reacted to their mixedness; the mixed marriage of their parents; their parents' capacities, or lack of them, to understand their mixedness issues; and the support they received from them in dealing with problems related to their mixedness.

Strong black mothers and strong white mothers emerge whose attitudes help to develop resilience in their children. Carla gained valuable insights into her mixedness from talking with her mother and sharing her experiences:

*My mother's always been very pro black... she's always said I'm a black woman..... she's always been like that quite militant in a way. I've grown up knowing about her experiences and her experiences of racism and knowing that it's difficult and knowing about the challenges and stuff like that so I can't be a white person. I've got more of an understanding of it and in a way I know about racism and I know about things like that ...*  
(f/T)

Her mother is perhaps making a political statement about race in presenting herself as a black woman, reflecting what some have identified as the 'progressive' views about people of mixed race of the 70's and 80's (Small J. 1988, Maxime J.1986)

Louise's description of her mother's strong but qualified support for her identity also touches on political perspectives:

*she sees it (mixedness) positively and I think she acknowledges the difficulties as well so it's kind of like positive realism so she's always allowed me to be quite verbal about my struggles and maybe in hindsight it would have been nicer to be a bit more celebratory about it but my mum's quite politically... and I think training to be a social worker I think*

*they come from a background where it is about roots and it is about understanding the specific. So I think she was coming from a different perspective from me and I've always been a bit more ooh yeah harmony and brown and... a bit idealistic I guess. So she did support me but we've got slightly different ...and its all a bit and comes from a place of struggle really, whether it's celebrating or from the difficulties. (f/F)*

But there is other evidence which suggests that in other families the issue of mixedness was denied or at best superficially dealt with. Thomas describes the lack of understanding that he senses his wider family had of the issues:

*You may wonder why my family did so little to adjust their views or behaviour to accommodate someone of mixed race, but, my mother and grandfather aside, I'm not sure that it's ever occurred to them....I don't think of anyone in my family as genuinely racist, but their cluelessness infuriated me then, as it does now. (m/W)*

Emile's parents seemed to be in denial about any potential difficulties:

*My parents never really enlightened me about racial situations, not because they didn't care but probably because they wanted to "protect" me. They probably thought that if you don't speak of something it ceases. (m/W)*

Cyrus points to a similar experience:

*it was sort of like a non- issue, you're facing problems and it doesn't matter. You can't get someone to see it does matter and if it does matter you have to face it yourself.*

He goes on to say that:

*the parents couldn't quite understand it cos I think the repercussions for them would be they wanted me to grow up as a normal kid and it was difficult for my mum particularly to feel that her self identity was good enough (m/F)*

suggesting that much of the denial is deeply invested in the aspirations for their child/ren and in the protection of the child/ren from the repercussions of their mixedness, exemplified by Mary who reports a lack of connectedness to her parent saying she never really had a conversation with her mother about her mixedness other than to be told to ignore racist remarks.

The apparent denial of the mixed heritage of their children may not have been the intention of the parents. White parents, particularly lone mothers like Thomas's, are frequently subjected to racist remarks and more extreme racism (Harman 2010) and their behaviour may derive from a genuine lack of ability to deal with the situation, resulting in denial of reality to protect both themselves and the child. Banks (2010) says that white mothers are often in denial of the 'observable reality' of their child's mixedness, and are unaware of, and incapable of doing anything about, the unmet identity needs of the child. It is also possible that the denial is part of the anger and sadness about the breakdown, where this has occurred, of the relationship with the black father who has moved on. Additionally it reinforces the idea that they have made a mistake in their choice of partner and their denial is a way of dealing with the guilt that this engenders.

Similarly, there are descriptions in the literature of black mothers of mixed race children being attacked for their disloyalty to the black race in going with white men (Aymer 2010). Cyrus's description (above) of his mother's guilt at not being good enough may exemplify this, particularly as her own family had been so against her marriage. However, the historic assumption in the 'white' world of the lower status of black people must also be a factor.

As a result of this denial, several participants grew up knowing little or nothing of their racially mixed heritage and are fiercely resentful. Tracey, who knew little of her Chinese family, says:

*it seems from the very start my parents' union was, culturally, on my dad's terms. As a result, even when my mother's father was on his deathbed when I was 10, I didn't view him as anybody really related to me. (f/W)*

More dramatically the experience of Clare, who spent some of her childhood in care, returning to live with her mother when she was 11 years old, demonstrates a double jeopardy of being a mixed race child in care for whom no-one seems to have made it their business to provide her with the facts of her existence:

*I grew up as White for the first 20 years of my life being told my mother was from Finland and my father from Portugal. That was a lie he was from St Vincent I found out in 1986 at the age of 20... I feel sad that I was denied my true ethnicity until I was 20. When I found out I wanted to shout it from the rooftops I wanted to celebrate who I was and I wanted to find out more about my father and St Vincent. (f/W)*

Mary also suffered from a lack of knowledge about a parent's ethnicity:

*As a mixed race person growing up I felt very confused because my mum didn't really have a conversation about my colour, it was almost like it had been swept under the carpet and wasn't really talked about. I wasn't really around my Iranian culture and I know even at my age now I feel a real sense of loss. (f/W)*

But Jack sees this as having benefits, "*Ignorance Is Bliss*", they say. *Growing up unaware of my multiple heritage shielded me from its complications.*' (m/W) Growing up in an African-American community where his 'blackness' was 'normal', Jack was protected from the challenges of a racist

society. The significance of the place in which the child grows up is described below in the section on Community.

Ayesha felt that her mother tried to offer support over difficult times but was not really able to help her:

*I sometimes spoke to my mother about incidents that happened to me and she tried her best to be supportive but in hindsight I realise that she felt there was little she could do. Even her telling me to be “proud to be Pakistani” seemed rather ridiculous to me as an 11-year-old having to contend with unfriendly classmates and a less than sympathetic Class Teacher. (f/W)*

Aileen says that her parents did visit her school once or twice following racist incidents and, whilst seeing this as supportive, seems not to have engaged with them about the issues.

Carla, Kathleen, Sarah and Louise describe their families as very affirmative of their mixedness. Sarah explicitly feels her family was seeking to develop in her a pride about who she is:

*my wider family as well but definitely my mum and my dad always brought me and my brothers up to be very proud of who we were. They were always saying that it's good to be different it's good – you know you should be proud of the fact that you can say that you come from nearly every continent in the world. We were very much brought up to not even think of it as unusual and whenever incidents would come up my parents would be... they would just sort of remind us that we're perfectly normal there's nothing wrong. (f/F)*

Table 18 shows that apparent dominance or otherwise of one parent's cultural influence over the other, in relation to contact with grandparents and the wider family.

**Table 18: Wider family relationships and influences**

<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Ethnic mix m/f</b>	<b>Contact with maternal grandparents</b>	<b>Contact with paternal grandparents</b>	<b>Contact with other maternal relatives</b>	<b>Contact with other paternal relatives</b>	<b>Mother's apparent influence*</b>	<b>Father's apparent influence*</b>
Tina	Welsh/Guyanian	none	none	some	none	subordinate	dominant
Theo	Jamaican/English	moderate	minimal	some	some	equal	equal
Anna	German/Pakistani	none	none	none	none	subordinate	dominant
Sarah	English/Guyanian	both	both	frequent	unknown	equal	equal
Cyrus	African Asian/English	infrequent	unknown	infrequent	unknown	subordinate	dominant
Aileen	English/Nigerian	frequent	minimal	some	none	equal	equal
Noel	Jamaican/Irish English	none	unknown	unknown	unknown	equal	equal
Rosa	Finnish/Pakistani	unknown	unknown			dominant	subordinate
Suhail	Kenyan Asian/English	some	minimal	unknown	unknown	dominant	subordinate
Carla	Jamaican/Irish	frequent	minimal	some	some	equal	Equal (step parent)
Emile	Belgian/Mauritian	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	equal	equal
Clare	Finnish/St Vincentian	none	none	none	none	dominant	absent
Thomas	English/Jamaican	frequent	none (birth parent) some (step parent)	frequent	Some (step parent)	subordinate	dominant (step parent)
Tracey	Chinese/American	minimal	unknown	some	frequent	subordinate	dominant
Louise	English/Jamaican	frequent	some (birth father)	frequent	Some (birth father)	dominant	subordinate (birth father dominant when present)
Kelly	Papuan/Australian	some	some	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Rob	English/Ethiopian	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Kathleen	Irish/Jamaican	unknown	frequent	frequent	unknown	subordinate	dominant
Jack	Creole/Creole	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Mary	English/Iranian	frequent	minimal	frequent	minimal	dominant	subordinate (absent)
Ayesha	English/Pakistani	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	dominant	subordinate

\*as experienced by the young person

Thomas, whose mother was his sole carer through most of his childhood, was clearly very affected by her temporary partner, not necessarily in positive ways. He writes about this

experience movingly, describing his reaction to what he experiences as a 'macho' blackness in this man and his desperate attempt to understand his mother's experience in this context:

*my mother allowed her boyfriend to move into our home. Like myself, he was mixed race and grew up without a father, but outwardly he appeared 'black', with a much darker skin tone than mine and a tight, well maintained afro. Initially his presence was liberating: a keen martial artist, he trained me in certain Karate moves and we spent many afternoons watching his Bruce Lee collection on VHS. He could immediately sense my weakness and tried to awaken some kind of healthy resistance in me, teaching me about such formidable black figures as Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X. At only twenty-one he was a fantastic Caribbean cook and regularly took me to his mum's flat in ..... where his brother and sister immediately welcomed me and showed me the local sights on .....Street. He was a gifted illustrator and I've been keen on art for as long as I can remember. Unfortunately he was also possessive toward my mother, cruelly impatient to me (which doubtless worsened my bumbling awkwardness) and regularly violent toward the both of us. I don't doubt that much of his harshness came from his frustration and discomfort at how obviously I appeared to be my mother's son. My mother, though caring, has always been too 'soft' in her dealings with others in her life, employers, friends and partners. I can't possibly know the fear that a physically imposing, violent man inspires in a single mother, but as well as worrying for her welfare in the three and a half years she spent with him, I lost some respect for her. (m/W)*

Thomas's reaction to his mother's partner is a complex mix of admiration and resentment, but whilst other participants describe harsh treatment from 'dominant' fathers, but the data do not suggest that this was the same for all participants whose fathers' cultures were 'dominant'.

The experiences of participants differ widely, from those who described their families as trying to deny their mixedness either because they saw, or preferred to see, their child as white like the

family of Rosa who feels that her Pakistani family didn't communicate with her because she looked white and 'passed for white', or because they lacked the skills to offer the support and nurturing that their mixed child needed as evidenced strongly, though very differently, by Cyrus's and Thomas's experiences above.

In some instances the response from the family to mixedness seems to be influenced by educational standard and class, but this is not always the case. The stability of the family appears to be the significant factor and, taken together with class and education in some but not all cases, provides a background where a strong sense of pride can be instilled in the young person and where an ability to withstand and/or ignore racist insults and actions can be developed.

#### *Access to Wider Family and Visits to Parents' Home Countries*

As indicated in Table 18, for some participants the wider family, that is the family other than birth and/or immediate parents, has had a significant presence in their lives. In eleven cases there has been close involvement with the parents of the mother but in only two cases has there been the same level of contact with the father's family.

Mothers' parents are shown to be more in touch and more influential in the family network, illustrating the importance of the mother's line as the dominant cultural transmitter. However the data show that many factors affect this, including geographical location of some parts of the wider family, as well as the dominant cultural influence in the home. There is some indication that where the mother's influence is dominant there is frequent contact with maternal relatives, but again there is no clear pattern. Dominance of fathers' influence is not shown to relate to access to paternal relatives consistently either.

Strong, influential white and black grandparents also emerge, supportive of their grandchildren's mixed heritage though differing in their ways of doing this. Sarah speaks of her grandmother with admiration:

*my granny is an artist and she's very – she's a big lefty artist so my mum and dad got together my gran she was great. She's always been so proud of us of all her grandchildren. (f/F)*

Kathleen, who purposefully elected to have a black partner as an adult, was very close to her black grandmother. Her Jamaican paternal grandparents lived with her family until she was 18. Her grandmother had a key role in her daily life, caring for her after school and listening to her daily experiences. She describes her grandmother movingly:

*She told me family stories etc of when she was growing up - she was the family philosopher. She had very little formal education, but she loved books! She learned through me too - my opportunities became hers if you know what I mean! She rejoiced in my achievements in the way that grannies do. Although not mixed race herself she had seen the way that mixed race people were treated in her lifetime, and she said to me when I was older (about 18 just before she passed) that every child is a precious gift from God, and that to receive the gift that is given but not look after and cherish it, is a sin against the God that gave it to you. She said that no child should walk alone, and that the Lord never gave you a burden that was too heavy to carry. She was a great believer in the fact that everyone was put on this earth for a purpose. She told me that hers was to help us to find ours..... She fed us and talked about our day, I would share mine with her and tell her about the things that I had learned that day and in some ways I became the teacher! Life was her education and often she would tell me things that seemed at first to bear no relevance to the problem that I had brought her, but she would always end the conversation with "think about it child"! So I did - and 9 times out of 10 I understood -*

*I thought she was the oracle and that everything that I could possibly want to know was contained in her head somewhere - she usually didn't disappoint me! (f/W)*

This account exemplifies the importance of strong attachment to the care giver and security within the family generally. Kathleen describes a grandmother who held her in mind constantly and loved her unconditionally, substantially taking on the mothering role, and who espoused a deeply held Christian philosophy.

Thomas specifically cites his grandfather as playing a significant role in his young life, accepting that this grandfather previously had a racist perspective which changed when Thomas was born and which his grandfather, a politically aware person, was able to acknowledge:

*As a younger man, I had by far the most intelligent and insightful conversations with my grandfather.....he had a bluntness which was far from charming but did me more favours. He bravely admitted to me that he was a racist before I was born, but that my arrival changed his perspective deeply.... He had deep political knowledge, and despised the denial of the popular voice by the ruling classes. He still held reservations on the subjects of economic migrancy or the stridency of Islamic fundamentalism, but he believed that all who were self reliant with something positive to contribute should be welcome in the UK.*  
(m/W)

The data present a complex fusion of culture, geography, wider family attitudes and of the personality/resilience of the parents themselves, as can be seen in Tracey's account:

*because of my mom's marriage "into whiteness," that whole side of my family was very distant from me. i never knew my maternal grandmother, and my maternal grandfather spoke no english and had had a stroke by the time i was born, so the few times i met him i never talked to him. he had been very opposed to my mother's marrying a white man*

*(he had, in fact, promised her to a friend's son in exchange for the friend helping him obtain the immigration papers for my mother and her brother and, after she refused, encouraged her to date only chinese men), to the extent that he refused to even attend my parents' wedding. (f/W)*

Some of her Chinese relatives lived close by and are similar in age to Tracey, but they were rarely visited. In contrast there was a much closer relationship with her father's family, although they lived in different cities and were not so close in age. Tracey provides a number of examples of her father's apparent desire to distance himself from her mother's culture. This is possibly the most graphic:

*my father always expressed his dismay at going to (banquets held in a restaurant in Chinatown), at the "dirtiness" of the restaurant or the strangeness of the food. one time he went so far as to take my brother and cousin, who were both young boys at the time, around the corner to mcdonald's for dinner, so repulsed he was by the lack of cleanliness of the dishes. what kind of message did this send to us? (f/W)*

In the gendered nature of parenting Tracey's story is unusual. As has been noted above mothers are generally seen as the most significant influence on the child's experience, passing on their culture and being the educators of their children. However what seems to be more important in terms of Tracey's family's identity, as perhaps for Theo, is the place of her growing up, that is in the United States of America, where the influence of her father and his culture was predominant.

Theo enjoyed good relations with both sides of his family but geography was a key factor in his experience of his wider family, rather than race or class. Living in Cayman and therefore nearer to Jamaica, the home of his mother's parents, he saw that side of his family more often and clearly formed a closer bond: *'I was always close to my Jamaican side of the family very*

*welcoming very amazing people really amazing people.'* (m/F) It is evident from his account that although links were kept with his father's family in the UK, Theo never felt quite so close to them as he says:

*to get to England 3 kids in tow probably cost a lot of money so we only got here every 2-3 years.....grandparents never came. My aunts - I have 2 aunts - they came twice not nearly as often as we went to visit.*

As a young adult he has come to England to study and whilst he seems settled in the UK he has little contact with his less familiar English family: *'I only see them if I have to, very nice people but we were just never close.'* (m/F)

Sarah also has grown up with positive experiences of her wider family on both sides, seeing them frequently. She knows there was some early opposition to her parents' marriage from her grandfather on her mother's side but that has changed over time.

*But my granddad has I think come around. My granddad and my dad get on really well and my granddad absolutely adores my dad. I should think it was a bit - at the time - it was quite a bit of a statement. Granddad thought mum was trying to make a statement now he realises they just fell in love. So that's my granddad's side of the family - we do see them and everything is all great.* (f/F)

Louise does not describe such a positive experience. She experiences visits to her Jamaican birth father as:

*looking in on the kind of like black kids in the community and visiting my dad at the weekend and kind of hearing the lingo and kind of I could pick it up a bit with my large Jamaican family - British Jamaican family - but always feeling slightly jealous slightly*

*resentful slightly bullied slightly out cast from that kind of connection, that kind of scene  
the black scene what ever it is. (f/F)*

Despite these feelings she says the Jamaican family is accepting of her and blames herself for not being more in touch with them as she seeks to establish her identity. In an attempt to make up for this she has visited her father's family in Jamaica as a young woman on holiday. But there seem to have been differing expectations and things did not go well.

*I did go on holiday there and I didn't like it... I stayed with my dad for a part of it he was also visiting - he never went back to Jamaica or anything he started to and then I stayed with this guy uncle Bertram apparently -he's my sister's uncle and he wasn't a very pleasant character but he took us around Jamaica you know. He was alright but I was may be a bit young and feisty and told him what I thought of him cos he wouldn't tell us where we were going and I think it was a different way of doing things. (f/F)*

Louise, like others, has a desire to immerse herself in the 'black' side of her family, but has found cultural expectations hard to manage.

Ayesha and Mary have had virtually no contact at all with one side of their families, although enjoying strong bonds with the other side. As young adults they have both tried to remedy this situation without very much success and some disappointment. Ayesha's story demonstrates this: *My own upbringing was almost totally bereft of any knowledge of my father's Asian heritage and language because he chose to ignore it completely.*

As a young adult she decided to stop over in Pakistan to meet her father's relatives:

*These were people whom I had never met or even heard about. I enjoyed my visit, although we have rarely kept in touch since. These were distant relatives and it was very*

*confusing as to their identity, although they were all kind and welcoming. I felt as estranged from these people and their culture as I was often made to feel in England where I had lived for most of my life. They were astonished that I didn't speak my father's mother tongue and there were no close relatives alive then who knew my father before he left his native India in 1943.....On the other hand, I had grown up knowing my mother's relatives. We visited my grandmother every year during my early childhood up until she died. (f/W)*

Mary had lived in Iran, her father's family home, as a baby for about a year but has no memory of this. She had a close bond with her mother's family and, like Ayesha, sought her father's family as a young adult. She describes the contrasting experiences:

*My father was Iranian and I have no memory of him being around, so it was just me and mum and then my extended family around me. I can remember my auntie used to always go out with black guys, and I used to feel really intrigued by that. She used to take me to the carnivals as a child and I used to love it and have a real sense of feeling at home when I was there.*

*I have two half sisters from my dad's side, but only discovered they existed when I was 18..... I haven't had that much contact with my Dad at all. I saw him when i was 8 and that is the last time I saw him..... I went to America when I was 18 and discovered I had a half sister because when i was there i saw a photo of a young girl who really looked like me, I had already spoken to my dad on the phone and expected that he would have been there for me, but he wasn't. At this time I was staying with my dad's mum my grandmother, she can't speak much english, but unfortunately it was down to her to tell me that I had a sister, and then later I discovered I had another sister. At this point I went back to England, I was supposed to stay in america for 3 months, but only lasted 3 weeks. I think everything just hit me hard.*

She did go back to the USA but had no interest in seeing the father, whom she seems to see as indifferent to her.

*I did go over to America a few times, but my Dad was in prison at the time for drug related offences, and so I didn't end up seeing him. Last year I went to a wedding which was right where he lived, and I just had no interest in seeing him, i guess ive been burnt so many times, that i just wouldn't ever want to put myself in that situation again. (f/W)*

Theirs is a rather different story from those of Tracey and Theo who went to the country of their other parent for their education, as well as the experience of the culture and possible family contact. These two quite different accounts of attempts to re-engage with the lost or unknown family suggest a desperate need to know and be accepted by the absent parent, in common with many young people who are not mixed race who have been deserted by one parent. For the mixed race young person this search takes on an extra dimension of cultural difference and confusion.

Jack makes a bald statement about such issues, reflecting a North American experience: '*Our White family members in Tennessee lived separate from us mulattos.*' In searching for his own identity and wider family he draws attention to the ethnic complexity that is his lived experience. He says:

*Turns out that I'm a French Creole I speak French (3 of my 4 grandparents are of French descent] with roots in SW & Central France as well as Crawford, Lanarkshire, Scotland...My family settled in Tennessee & Virginia & migrated North to Illinois after The Great Depression. (m/W)*

The inferences that can be drawn from the data on this hugely varied experience of intergenerational and wider family contact confirm the extreme heterogeneity of experience and influencing factors in the lives of mixed race children and young people.

#### *Sibling differences*

A striking finding from the stories has been the existence of differences between siblings in the ways in which they have created their identities. Sometimes this has been as a result of siblings being brought up in different areas for substantial periods of their childhood, but more interestingly it is related to skin colour (see section on Appearance above) as Carla describes:

*my sister isn't very much of a mixed race and I've had these kind of discussions with her about it before I don't know what she classes herself as really but she... kind of thinks if you don't look mixed race then obviously you're not mixed race..... I've got another sister - she probably sees herself being more with white people - she looks s even more white than I do. In my family my cousins are mixed race and all of us are different. We go from looking white to looking mixed race and we all have the same sort of mix. (f/T)*

Tracey was close to her darker skinned sister but their blood relationship was sometimes not recognised by others because of their differing skin colours:

*i often hung out with another half-chinese, half-white girl, and my sister. because they both had darker skin people often mistook them for sisters and me as the [possibly white?] friend. (f/W)*

Ayesha's experience shows how complex this can be:

*My brothers and sisters ..... appearances are slightly different to mine. My elder brother is very fair-skinned like his mother, and my other siblings do not have the same dark skin*

*tone that I have. In fact my elder sister died (sic) her hair blonde for over 20 years and my younger sister looks more Italian than Asian! (f/W)*

Also Anna's account of her brother and the way his chosen identity has informed his choice of marriage partner and the development of his persona shows that he has established an identity which is radically different from hers, a process that has driven them apart:

*My brother who is now married he's assimilated into the community and to all intents and purposes he's written off his Asian identity - the woman he's with is a racist as far as I'm concerned.....The other thing she's done is persuaded him to change his name so he no longer has two Asian names he's got two English. I now have to call him P (English name) - his name's M (Asian name). He really wants to be seen as just another English man - whereas I'm the totally .....I love the fact that I have this unusual background (f/F)*

These disparate accounts add to the understanding of the range of choices possible for people of mixed race but it is evident that geography plays a part even within sibling groups. Sarah describes the choices she felt her brother had as a result of being brought up mainly in London, whereas she was brought up mainly outside London.

*he's got a very very mixed group of friends. I think he identifies more with the black community than with L (other sibling) or I because he's grown up with them much more. He came back down here when he was 11 and he's nearly 17 now - those important teen years he'd been down in London so he was very much ...he identifies ...I think he's chosen to see himself as mixed but he can slip in and out. I think he feels much more comfortable with the black community than I do particularly 'cos I've really never had much of a chance to live in it. (f/F)*

The data suggest two types of sibling relationships. One is characterised by close sibling relationships, with siblings not necessarily looking very alike but sharing a common understanding of their mixedness, to a second group who seem to identify through skin colour, selecting their friendship groups accordingly and growing apart from siblings who look different. Although not all the participants would divide in this way the stories show an unconscious (and sometimes very conscious) epidermal prejudice being played out in these familial settings.

### *Class*

Amongst all the other factors which have impinged on the childhood experiences of the participants it is evident from what they describe that class is a factor in how they were perceived in their own communities and the way in which their families negotiated their mixed relationships.

Tina feels that class and race are interwoven; *'I can't isolate race, I can't isolate class'*. Her father was Guyanese and was renowned in the art world, as she puts it *'my father was up there with them'* (f/T). Sarah, whose father was a senior local government officer, describes a similar protective factor:

*my dad - his parents came over to this country to give him a better life - they wanted him to move on and move up,.. He's always been a professional and he's very much middle class, he's not the gansta type you might want to associate with a black man. (f/F)*

But she also describes another illuminating incident of when her mother, obviously the parent of two mixed race children, was approached at the school gate. *'Another mum came over to her and was like "your children are beautiful how long have you had them."'* Her mother answers that one child is three and the other one year old. The other mum replies *'Really where are they from?'*

Sarah's mother explains that she gave birth to these children and Sarah deduces that because:

*she was quite obviously middle class with a wedding ring so this woman assumed she must have adopted these little brown babies, they couldn't possibly - I think if she'd been working class it would have been different.... they're allowed to go ... interbreed. The fact that she was middle class and clearly married she couldn't possibly have been with a black man. (f/F)*

Sarah has instinctively seen that this was a racist view which was all about class perceptions of the intermarriage of black and white people. Theo makes the same connections and from the racially varied setting of the Caribbean he brings further insights.

*JA's a very divided society and it tends to be the black people are the bottom of the pile and the lighter shaded people are the people who own the companies or who just have money basically, so there is quite a resentment and if you look for example at advertising. In JA it's the brownings<sup>29</sup> so they're called the brown people who are quite fair - mixed race - basically who are poster people (m/F)*

When considering whether he thought this was related to class he says it's '*probably more a class thing - it tends to be that the fair people that have some white in them (that are more middle class).*'

Theo himself came from a comfortably off family and had been seen as white in Jamaica, mixed in Cayman – where he grew up – and black in the UK where he came to go to university. He was interested, amused but not fazed by these categorisations, and had a confidence no doubt stemming from his own middle class upbringing. Many writers have drawn attention to the place of class in relation to race and the data from this project bear that out.

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<sup>29</sup> The assumptions are that beauty is not obviously black; although, in the context of Jamaica, and perhaps the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean, it is not overtly Caucasian and aquiline. Something in between translates in Jamaican parlance to "browning," the mixed-raced person legitimised by beauty contests and endorsed in popular culture ([www.doubletongued.org](http://www.doubletongued.org))

### *Meeting the absent parent*

This has been very important for those participants who knew about, or found out about, their fathers but did not grow up with them. (See Table 19)

**Table 19: Growing up without two birth parents**

Growing up with a step parent	Growing up partly with two parents and partly with one	Growing up with one parent	Spending some time in the care system
Carla Louise Thomas (part)	Tina Anna (part)	Clare (part) Thomas (part) Mary	Anna Clare
2	2	3	2

The experiences of Louise, Ayesha and Mary in trying to find their fathers has been described above and it is clear that all three women wanted their father to be a part of their lives and a living proof of their other heritage. In contrast, although Thomas's father was absent virtually from the time Thomas was born, he does not make any mention of trying to trace him. Thomas was very unsettled by his mother's short term partner who seemed to challenge Thomas's blackness. Perhaps the undermining effect this had on Thomas's self esteem has been a factor in this apparent disinterest in finding his own black father.

Only in Louise's case has there been any on-going contact throughout childhood, perhaps because Louise's mother recognised the importance of this, being a social worker, or possibly because the other parents' relationships were too difficult to countenance and manage this. In Carla's case her father was white. Though she grew up with a dominant black mother she had a white step father to whom and whose family she was obviously close.

### ***Themes and Risks relating to the community***

The themes of racism and the attitude of friends to the participants' mixedness are so interwoven with the other significant themes under the Community heading that they are not described separately but are exemplified throughout this section.

### *Mixed Race Isolation*

Participants' experiences inevitably varied considerably, depending on where they grew up. Some grew up in very culturally and ethnically mixed areas where they were able to move across the black/white divide and find people like themselves. Others felt much more isolated, either because they were the only person with a different skin colour or racially different parents in their neighbourhood, or because both black and white groups did not include them.

Significantly different experiences are described by those growing up in inner and outer London, from feelings of isolation in the suburbs to a sense of not fitting in within the inner city, not being black enough. The sense of being an outsider, with no-one who is exactly the same as you to share your experiences with is a very frequent finding from all participants. Whilst many of the participants, particularly those living largely outside London, see living in London as a much more comfortable option than living elsewhere in the UK, the sense of isolation and being the only one persists. Ayesha stresses this point:

*I feel that I belong nowhere, never having been fully accepted into this society purely on the basis (so it would seem) that I inherited my father's dark complexion as opposed to the fair skin and blue eyes of my mother.*

She goes on to describe the isolation of her family:

*we were the only mixed race family in our neighbourhood at that time in the 1950`s and 60`s and that my father stood out very much as a minority amongst the indigenous white community.....my siblings and I were raised in a strange "No Man's Land", aping the English culture within which we grew up and yet not seen as an acceptable part of it. I have come to the very painful realisation over the years that my parents were, in many ways, irresponsible in their decision to marry, settle and breed together in this country at the time they did. (f/W) (Ayesha is one of two participants in their 50s.)*

Anna talks about her lack of a community to fit in with, both ethnically and sexually:

*well I'm not white either so its impossible for me to identify as German and its impossible for me to identify as Indian or Asian because I'm a bit of both and that's been the biggest problem for me all my life that I've never felt that I had a community to belong to ever. Like I was part of an Asian women's group but I was one of maybe two other mixed race Asian women in the group and I just felt left out. Because they would all be talking in their various dialects very happily and I don't speak any Asian dialects and they all looked vaguely the same and I didn't look like them so even though I was in a group - an Asian lesbian group - I still didn't feel that's (where I belonged). (f/F)*

Thomas's sense of isolation appears to have engendered sexual ambivalences:

*My attractions have primarily been towards white people, I guess because they're who I've seen the most of. Throughout my teens and early twenties I had the definite feeling that I was gay, but I have many doubts and anxieties about exploring those feelings, because in truth I sense that my attractions have arisen from childhood circumstance, maybe a need for a deeper sense of relation to others, particularly confident males who 'belong' where I did not. My greatest longing was and is for brotherhood. (m/W)*

Rob expresses his isolation in terms of the same lack of close relationships: *'having lived in both black and white areas and since i was 7 having not had a real relationship with anyone else who was mixed race left me feeling isolated.'* (m/W)

Mary's narrative follows this theme and also suggests she would have liked her mother to have been more open about her heritage, leaving her with a sense of loss and contributing to her isolation:

*As a mixed race person growing up I felt very confused because my mum didn't really have a conversation about my colour, it was almost like it had been swept under the carpet and wasn't really talked about. I wasn't really around my Iranian culture and I know even at my age now I feel a real sense of loss... I did feel disadvantaged as a mixed race child because I had nobody to relate with and nobody who really truly understood what I was going through. (f/W)*

Tina's mixed family stood out in the community but was 'protected' to some extent by her Guyanese father's reputation and standing. When he left the family her life changed dramatically:

*We were already terribly isolated if you see what I mean. My father, his job, the money and all the rest of it validated us as human beings, but when he'd gone there wasn't anything, there was my white mother and five mixed race children.*

She explains how it feels:

*in their looks they look with suspicions and there's a lot said about black people and paranoia but actually what if that paranoia is actually a reality - what if the suspicion that black people feel - that mixed race people feel - ..... the look is in some ways more intimate than the word spoken themselves. Um it's a look that says you're different from me, I'm not like you. (f/T)*

Sarah too feels that her Guyanese father's status in the community probably reduced the racism she experienced. She describes growing up in an 'open-minded' small town but still registers her difference:

*we were the only non white family I think. Oh actually there was one other family in the whole town so then it became a little bit more like - because there weren't a lot of other mixed people and what ever way around me - it was a bit more OK I think a bit different. But in well (town) was a fairly open minded place. It was a small town but a slightly open-minded small town, - at least I didn't personally feel much - how much my parents protected me from other people's views but from the kids there was never anything. I did sometimes think I think I look a bit different, but it was never really an issue. (f/F)*

As does Cyrus:

*race wasn't a sort of issue in those days when I was a child but obviously at various points in school I was definitely different to other kids. (m/F)*

Louise found that she could fit in at a cost:

*my white environment I fitted in to but I felt that there was a bit of misunderstanding, a bit of like hush hush you're OK you're fine you'll fit in, just don't be too loud and proud about who you really are. (f/F)*

These similar experiences although in very different contexts, demonstrate a deeply felt persistent sense of personal isolation.

### *School experiences*

After the family and friends, schools play a key role in the socialisation process, increasing in their influence as the young person matures and established her/his autonomy. In summary, the aspects of school life that emerge from the data include the fact that most participants experienced primary school as positive and secondary school as difficult. This mirrors findings of

Ali (2003) and Tizard and Phoenix (2002) which show that other factors than race pre-occupy children at the primary school age.

Varied views about teachers are described and a variety of tactics are deployed by the participants to get through school days where these are experienced as being excluding and demoralising. For some the process built their resilience and determination to succeed, others just wanted to get out as soon as possible. Whilst these reactions are likely to be broadly similar for young people of any ethnicity and subject to the same experience of racism as any non-white child, the data show that for young people of mixed race these responses have been strongly influenced by the attitudes of both pupils and teachers towards their mixedness, see Kathleen's comments below. There are varying descriptions, too, of the ways in which schools dealt with racist bullying, either as a result of parents' intervention or in its absence. Whilst there is some evidence of schools being seen to take the issues seriously, the overwhelming impression is that very little was done in an attempt to address the bullying or to put things right.

Thomas provides an example of those who did not find school days altogether easy, but where primary school was not so hard:

*Certain kids, boys especially, would sense my being 'other', and start a fight or confrontation for the vicious fun of it. But on the whole, certainly in primary school, other kids and I got along well. (m/W)*

Kathleen confirms this aspect of primary schooling:

*Life was very simple until I was about 11 when I went to secondary school then it all changed! ....secondary school was a nightmare! I was a bright kid and was eagerly looking forward to going 'big' school, but from the first day I was treated differently from the others, by both teachers and pupils. I was the only mixed race child in my school for*

*the first four years...Some white teachers told me that they expected me to do better than the black kids because I had white blood in me, but the black kids hated me because of it. Other teachers told me I was doomed to failure because of my heritage. As it turned out I did well - to this day I don't know if I did it for me or to prove those that said I'd never amount to anything wrong! I was bullied for a while too. (f/W)*

Kathleen's experience of racism was shared by many participants who report that they were confronted with racism in secondary school which they had not felt in the primary years. Mary expresses her dismay at this change:

*When I started high school I suffered a great deal of racism. People used to call me 'paki' and that continued throughout my whole school life. (f/W)*

Whilst it is highly likely that their peers did not register difference in the primary years and therefore did not express prejudice in the way older children might, it is evident from some accounts that racist insults did occur during this period but they seem to be neither given nor received prejudicially on the whole. Mary's story also demonstrates an innocence which others also describe:

*One memory I have as a 10 year old child was someone shouting at me - "Up the national front" I can remember running home and asking my mum what they meant by that, and she just told me to ignore it, because they were ignorant. (f/W)*

Cyrus' description of his experiences shows the same early innocence:

*I wasn't quite sure what they were talking about sometimes but they would suddenly talk about things and I was not quite sure what the hell they were going on about cos it was*

*about monkeys and trees and things and that would really feel strange. But by and large I think I became more aware of the issues for myself really in my later teens. (m/F)*

Whilst wanting at times to be seen as black and some 'passing' as white, most participants were at the butt of racial and prejudiced taunts which set them apart as neither black nor white.

Thomas recalls such an incident:

*I remember an altercation with a black boy in secondary school (one of only four or five black pupils in a wing of five hundred or so) who labelled my 'white' tone of voice and manner "a disgrace to the black race"! As regards any schism between my appearance and my behaviour, it has sometimes been black people, guys in particular, who find me hard to 'read' and have acted the most abruptly. (m/W)*

Experiences of pupil-teacher relationships were good and bad with several participants having been well supported by at least one teacher. Tina had a varied school experience but acknowledges that

*... there are angels everywhere. In my first school ... there was a teacher called Mrs. --- she was the sewing teacher and I loved sewing and she loved me because I loved the same thing that she loved. And she always was very nice to me and made me run into town for her and made me do little errands and made me feel wanted .... and when I went to the secondary school there were also people there who were interested in me and made the life more bearable than it was. (f/T)*

Louise also describes a more varied experience but acknowledges too that she was not the easiest pupil:

*I had a couple of teachers, one in particular really despised me from quite a ... the word go. But I think I was quite naughty..... I did have a couple of really inspirational teachers and I think I was really lucky for because I think they saved my butt really ... (f/F)*

A number of participants described the different escape routes they used which helped them to get through the school years. Some, looking back, felt like Louise that they had been difficult in school. This difficult behaviour could be interpreted as a natural reaction to the implicit racism that so many encountered from both black and white peers and from teachers, and to being marginalised and largely friendless. For those whose homes were less stable, like Anna, the attitudes of peers and teachers exacerbated the difficulties at home, leading to risky behaviours.

Five participants talk about playing the class clown. Suhail writes that *he 'tried to be popular by cracking jokes in class'* (m/W) and Tina says that contrary to her basic personality she:

*started to develop ways of making people like me, ways of impersonating people and things like that that would make people laugh, but actually I'm a very serious person. (f/T)*

Thomas gives an even more desperate account of his efforts, describing his antics as a: *'maniac desperation to make myself the centre of everyone's attention.'* (m/W)

Others coped by immersing themselves in books, music and drama. In Anna's case music was combined with drug use:

*I was heavily into music – rock music. I used to go to loads of gigs rock festivals and I would say that being on drugs and going to these festivals that was my escape and that's how I dealt with it. (f/F)*

(A recent study [Bengry-Howell 2011] has shown that many young people attend festivals to escape from the rigours of their daily lives and dull jobs.)

Emile found refuge in hip hop music and culture as a way of distancing himself from whites who racially abused him:

*I was already a few years deep in Hip Hop culture. I rebelled against everyone who was white...my mother, my white family, my teachers, other children at school and myself. I had severe identity crisis, didn't know who I was and where I could fit in. I found refuge in Hip Hop music, it spoke to me on a whole nother level and gave me the feeling of being understood. (m/W)*

Emile speaks about his search for identity through revolutionary black literature: *'I carried the autobiography of Malcolm X<sup>30</sup> with me as if it was my bible...'* (mW), and Kathleen retreats into books for solace and comfort in the face of prejudice from both black and white 'friends':

*The white kids didn't want me to play with them because I was black and the black kids didn't want me because I was 'white'. I became a bookworm; books didn't let you down or say horrible things to you. (f/W)*

Louise turned to performance as a means of coping:

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<sup>30</sup> The son of a murdered black nationalist, Malcolm Little was imprisoned in 1946 on a burglary conviction. It was in prison that he encountered the Nation of Islam, which advocated African-American nationalism and racial separatism. (The) teachings had a strong effect on Malcolm, who entered into an intense program of self-education and took the last name of X to symbolize his stolen African identity. (He) became an effective minister of the Nation of Islam in New York City's Harlem area. In contrast to civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X advocated self-defense and the liberation of African Americans 'by any means necessary.' A fiery orator, Malcolm was admired by the African-American community in New York and around the country. In the early 1960s, he began to develop a more outspoken philosophy (and) in December of 1963, (was) suspended .. from the Nation of Islam. The following March, Malcolm formally left the Nation, and in April, made a Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, where he was profoundly affected by the lack of racial discord among orthodox Muslims. Upon his return to the United States, Malcolm founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity, which advocated black identity and held that racism, not the white race, was the greatest foe of the African American. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was shot to death by Nation of Islam members while speaking at a rally of his organization in New York City. ([http://www.thehistorychannel.co.uk/site/great\\_speeches/speech\\_53.php](http://www.thehistorychannel.co.uk/site/great_speeches/speech_53.php))

*I never tried to fit in to the black scene and I used drama and acting as a way of not having to fit in anywhere so I ...when I was very young I fitted in in the playground quite a lot but I used a lot of escapism - a lot of singing and role play. (f/F)*

There was often an expectation from teachers and others that children of mixed race would be fully conversant with both sides of their cultural heritage. The participants draw attention to the unreality of this assumption. Tracey's account shows the very mixed expectations in this area:

*One time when i was probably in first or second grade, a new student arrived who, as it turned out, was korean. some of my friends knew i was part "asian" and insisted that i try to speak some chinese to her—they wanted to know what nationality she was since she couldn't speak any english. i told them i could only count to ten and that even if she were chinese i'd look pretty dumb reciting numbers to her.*

She then goes on to describe a more positive experience:

*it was my kindergarten teacher, probably, who piqued my interest in china at a young age, by encouraging me to ask my mother to teach me chinese ..... and i recall my second-grade teacher as well, asking my mom to write out all my classmates' names in chinese characters, which she did, though it was a challenge for her lacking a solid education in chinese and not having used the written form of chinese in well over 20 years by that point. she teamed up with the local librarian who was also chinese and together they managed to produce a nice set of calligraphed cards which my teacher hung up in the classroom—and, of course, everybody knew it was my mom who had done them. (f/W)*

Suhail, whose father is a Kenyan Asian, gives a clear example of a teacher's lack of awareness or understanding of the likely nature and cultural experience of mixedness:

*it is often assumed that students from mixed backgrounds know everything about both sides of their culture. "How do they spend Christmas in India?" I wouldn't have had the faintest idea. (m/W)*

Ayesha's assessment of the school experience is condemning of teachers:

*I am also very much aware of the harsh realities that mixed race children have to face and contend with in the school situation. There is no safe haven for these "Other" children when some of the most abusive, dangerous and ignorant of people are found in the guise of teachers. (f/W)*

It is possible to think of some of the experiences described above as being similar to those which any child might have faced. However, from the data it is evident that young people of mixed race see these as linked to their mixedness and experience a facet of relationships with teachers and peers that is different from other young people who, whilst possibly the butt of racist prejudice, would be able to identify closely with others and with a substantial grouping and identity. Tickle et al (2004) draw attention to this lack of a 'mixed race' group in their writings, as referred to in Chapter 4. The mixed group has to deal with racism/prejudice from both black and white peers and, in some cases, has to balance the expectations of their 'white' heritage against the stereotyping of their black or 'other' identity. These are experiences which other young people do not share.

#### *The Multi-cultural nature of the Community*

Many experiences are proscribed by the place in which the participant grew up. Participants in this study come from across the world, providing data to show that, whilst there are many commonalities of experience, where people grow up and the type of community they live within is highly significant in how they perceive and feel about their mixedness.

Although living in and experiencing a multi-cultural environment was, for many, a positive experience, it did not necessarily mitigate their sense of difference and isolation. It is evident from the following accounts that whilst environment has a major impact, a complex system is in play which includes geography, culture and class as well as the racial mix of parents and the dominant culture of the home. Experiences are undoubtedly affected to some extent by the age of the participants, which ranges from 21 – 56 years.

Carla's story shows that although she grew up in a very multi-cultural area, her own experience was 'western'. She says:

*I grew up in a very mixed area ... where in my class it was quite mixture of different backgrounds. It wasn't an all white area and I didn't really think of where I was from. I didn't really think of myself as anything, I was just me. I didn't really see myself as different in terms of race or anything....But we grew up in a mixed area, it wasn't real black culture with food and stuff like that. We were quite western. (f/T)*

Several participants grew up in predominantly white areas, mainly suburban parts of large towns, including suburban London. Mary's childhood was spent in a small Yorkshire town where she feels little has changed:

*Looking back now I feel that because it was small and also predominately white, I was aware of my skin colour from an early age. I remember running home from school because I had been called names.....I still work in (town) and ironically enough at my old high school the children to this day don't really see lots of other cultures so the cycle continues. (f/W)*

Louise grew up in a London suburb and describes a 'white' environment at all levels. She says that, although her mother is an aware person, the home:

*it is very white - even the decor of our house is incredibly white you know, my mum's got like corgi china dogs and grandfather clocks - a lot of real English feel for it. (t/F)*

Thomas lived in a very white part of Liverpool with a National Front presence and did not experience its multi-cultural side until he was a bit older:

*From infancy to just before my adolescence, I lived in the ..... district of the city which still has almost no black presence, and I do remember the 'NF' slogans spray painted on alleyway walls and the passing shouts of 'coon' which usually came from the mouths of grown men (brave of them). (m/W)*

Like many other participants he went on to experience life in London and missed this when returning home to Liverpool:

*my three years down South were an eye opener (in ways I can only now appreciate, on reflection). The wealth of opinions and experiences all brought into the capital made me grow up faster than I had before, and gave me a sense of belonging that was so much deeper, I began to take it for granted. Coming back to Liverpool (out of financial constraints) has reminded me how thrillingly anonymous I felt in London, and I miss that sense of being part of a big sea of people, despite the pace, lack of space and costliness there. (m/W)*

He speaks eloquently of the contrasts between London and Liverpool saying:

*London is a city full of solitary explorers, and that perspective can even serve as a bond.*

*In Liverpool, you either socialise or face suspicion. (m/W)*

Sarah, who went to school in a northern town, speaks fondly of London and the general growth in the numbers of people of mixed race:

*other than my family I didn't really know anyone else who was mixed race ....but I think I really like it when I'm walking around London or pretty much wherever now and you see it (mixedness) so much more and I think that's really nice - I really like that. (f/F)*

Whilst her living environment has been mainly outside London her younger brother has been there since he was 11 years old and has a different experience:

*He came back down here when he was 11 and he's nearly 17 now - those important teen years he'd been down in London so he was very much he identifies - ....I think he's chosen to see himself as mixed but he can slip in and out - I think he feels much more comfortable with the black community than I do particularly cos I've really never had much of a chance to live in it. (f/F)*

Anna, who grew up in the south of England, felt happiest when she could escape to London and took risks to do this:

*Even in the 70s when I used to hitchhike a lot.... I'd always come to London. I always wanted to come back to London and I would go out to clubs and all kinds of things gigs and things and you would see the odd black face in the crowd or you know people looked different so I always felt at home when I came back to London....so I moved back to London that's how I came back to London and as soon as I was back in London I just felt so much happier. (f/F)*

When she visits family out of London she is reminded of the isolation and unhappiness she felt as a child:

*On the rare occasions that I have gone down there as soon as I get into the station I'm like you know my heart keeps dropping and I just you know - its because I associate it with all that nastiness. (f/F)*

The London theme recurs frequently in the data, which describe the relief and joy at seeing people *'like yourself'*. Theo, who grew up outside the UK but is now living here, describes this:

*its actually nice in London you actually see a face - I was on the train this morning I was forced right next to her and I was like aah you don't speak to people on the tube but its nice just to see someone who obviously had your kind of experience. (m/F)*

He also enjoys the anonymity London affords him: *'in London you are basically nothing special you are anonymous you walk around as nothing special which is quite nice.'* (m/F)

Kathleen, one of the older participants, found her part of inner London a difficult place to be for a young mixed race person in the 60s, in contrast with the London of today:

*I was born in London in Nottinghill in the 60s to an Irish mother and a Jamaican father, at a time when 'nice girls' did not date black men never mind have babies with them. I didn't really understand that I was different until I was about 5, when I went to school..... The London of the 70's in which I was a teenager was a very different thing than it is today. Today, I would be in the majority and not a minority. Today being mixed race is 'fashionable' and all the young black guys want to date mixed race girls. (f/W)*

These accounts affirm the multi-cultural, cosmopolitan nature of the capital, whilst indicating that racism still exists under the surface. Those participants who grew up outside the UK had other experiences. Theo was first generation mixed in Cayman, and was unusual in a country where most people were multi-generationally mixed. He describes Cayman as:

*a place where there are a lot of mixed people multi generationally not first generation ...so I wasn't anything special.....I certainly was different, it wasn't such a big deal I suppose. I wouldn't say I was teased or something like that but it was recognised that I was first generation. (m/F)*

Jack grew up on the south side of Chicago where he saw himself as different but did not find this problematic although he had to fight for his identity. He expresses this in strident terms:

*people of ALL colors whom inhabit those wards tend to be KEEN on Black/African-American issues....Therefore, you have people of multiple races whom politically, culturally, sociologically & psychologically identify as "Black/African-American" solely. I am a rare exception; I "Escaped" from the Black Regime, FOUGHT FOR & RE-CLAIMED my White Creole/Mixed-Race Identity. Growing up mixed was never a problem, if there was any animosity toward me from Blacks, then I wasn't aware of it. I always got on well with African-Americans.....I always knew that I was mixed with French, British & Indian blood, but it was never a MAJOR factor in my upbringing...I was always considered a "Light-Skinned Black". (m/W)*

Tracey, who grew up in the USA in mixed and white areas, travelled to China – the country of her mother's birth - as a young adult. She finds that, in China, her identity differs depending on the particular community she is in at the time and this causes her to challenge the whole concept of race and mixedness:

*where does east europe end and west asia begin? and is a kazakhi to a vietnamese really ethnically analogous to, say, a german to a canadian or an egyptian to a botswanian? i don't really know, but it seems that the whole concept of race and the way it's presented on forms with checkboxes just seems really archaic and really doesn't even make any sense. (f/W)*

#### *Access to Groups Outside the Family and School, Including Black Groups*

Access to all groups is covered in this section in order to give a balance of experience, though black groups specifically came up as a significant theme.

Surprisingly few participants recall having been involved in activities outside family and school. Where they do guides, brownies and scouts are mentioned and are seen as inclusive environments. Tina describes how she:

*was in girl scouts for a few years. I think every other girl in there was Jewish. Certainly no Asians, ah, yes, a pair of twins whose mother was Mexican and father was Jewish'. (f/T)*

Kathleen describes the same inclusiveness:

*I joined the brownies when I was little and I hated the uniform - but I loved going to brownies - I belonged there - there was no black or white or in between. I went on to become a Girl Guide at 10 and did all the badges and again there seemed to be no colour there. People were just people! (f/W)*

However although Louise experiences the Brownies positively, they were seen by her mother as potentially racist after a comment from one of the Brownie staff:

*I was riding my bike really really late about 10 o'clock at night but I think it was a special night my mum was at a family barbeque and the rules had been relaxed and they passed a comment on the fact that they had seen me. My mum argued with them and I then had a bad relationship with them.....'every time she (her mother) perceived a criticism she would assume it was about mixed race - but I don't know - but as far as I know I got on with them. (f/F)*

As well as participating in these activities several participants enjoyed music, drama and dancing in their spare time, joining clubs and going to events. Louise did ballet and drama, Mary attended a youth club and went disco dancing, Sarah also went to a drama club and was involved in sports. Jack mentions baseball and church and other participants mention that their siblings were churchgoers, suggesting this was also a reasonably popular activity. Both Anna and Sarah talk about going to concerts and festivals. For Anna escaping to rock festivals with the inevitable drugs scene was a real escape from her unhappy home life.

For those young people able to access community activities the data suggest that, in common with all young people, it met a real need in their lives to escape and perhaps be someone or somewhere else, and to feel included. However, identifying with the black community was a key theme for many and several participants describe how this was achieved.

Aileen had access to a Nigerian community group which her father had founded in their home town, making up for her lack of access to her father's Nigerian relatives in the predominantly white area which was her mother's family home. She says:

*I don't have access to any of his side of the family although I have had a huge access to the Nigerian community cos he kind of founded a community group ..... although I didn't have access to his part of the family I did have a huge access to the Nigerian culture.*

(f/T)

Louise had considerable involvement with the black community when she visited her father in inner London but she stresses that her knowledge of black issues is no different to any one else's. Like Suhail she experiences being seen as fully conversant, erroneously, with the cultures of both sides of her heritage:

*it just so happens to be that I have black men in my family but I've never analysed what the relationship is between black men and women and why there are more baby fathers as they're termed and I always find those questions really hard.*

As a young adult she has appreciated having a mixed group of colleagues:

*a group of about four or five of us with different cultural backgrounds but mostly English - I know I found it quite helpful.' f/F)*

For Thomas the experience was also mixed. He welcomed at first the contact with his mother's partner who introduced him to the wider black community but there were other aspects to this man's character which were not so positive as he was regularly violent to both Thomas and his mother, leading Thomas to explain a real ambivalence that he, as a mixed race person, feels towards black men:

*... to this day, I still feel an undeniable discomfort in the company of other black men; it's not intimidation, but the sense that they have an energy and boldness that is beyond me, that I'm ever on the verge of embarrassing myself with my unworldliness and insularity.*

(m/W)

The data relating to Community suggest that those growing up as mixed race in other parts of the UK have experienced more racism and isolation, but this is not a consistent finding as their lives

are affected by class and family cohesion. Secondary school experiences have been difficult for most of this group but the data show that siblings experience similar upbringings very differently. Other factors such as broken families, single parenthood, time in public care must be unrelated to geographical location, although it is tempting to conjecture that the isolation of these families could have been a contributing factor.

Most of the participants growing up as mixed race outside the UK have experienced living in more than one country. They describe being seen as black in some places and white in others. Theo and Kelly were both brought up in places where being mixed was the norm and only experienced being seen as different on going to other places for education. The accounts of these participants act as an important indicator of the way that ethnicity and skin colour play differently in different societies.

#### *How Public Services Respond to Children of Mixed Race*

Participants were encouraged, via the trigger questions (see Chapter 6), to talk about their experiences with services. Few of them had any direct experience other than with education, and these have been fully described above. Where lives had been particularly difficult and participants had been received into care as children, experiences were not positive as they are not for many children. However, whilst the reasons for poor care are not clear, it is noteworthy that Anna feels it could be because she was mixed race and not seen to be 'worth' better treatment. She describes a distressing episode of social services involvement in her life when her Indian father died and she and her brothers were taken away from her German mother:

*...when dad died and that (social services) was a really bad experience and to date I have disliked social workers for a long, long, long time. Well basically I was told that there were no hostels in Winchester for me to go to and there weren't any in Southampton so I was taken 30 miles away. I was only 16 yrs old. As far as I was concerned I was still a child so I was placed in care in some home for subnormal girls*

*which was very distressing as you would hear people screaming and I would also see a girl being held down and being given injections and things and it scared the life out of me. I thought why the hell have I been put in here I'm not mental I haven't got mental problem so why did that social worker put me 30 miles away. My dad had just died, it's coming up to Christmas. I didn't spend Christmas with my mum I was just taken away.....*

*I can't tell if it was specifically because I was mixed race. I don't even know if they saw me as mixed race - maybe they just saw me as Asian and maybe I was worth less than say a white child and that's why they put me so many miles away not thinking it might affect me not being near my mum at an extremely vulnerable time in my life. And for a few years after that I blamed my mother - I actually thought my mother had deliberately done that to me..... I think in my early 20s I tackled her with it and I said 'well why did you do that?' and she said 'it wasn't up to me, it was the social worker came and took you.' In the 70's things were different, they just did things as they felt so what I would say is, in a terribly vulnerable situation like that, to be a bit more considerate of what the child wants. ....The only concern for me was to have like a safe space so whether that would concern my Asian and German background I don't know, I don't know.( f/F)*

This description of how being received into care was perceived by Anna demonstrates the difficulties in extracting the significant issues relating to service response from any narrative. Anna blames the social workers' attitudes which she sees as related to the time of her reception into care in the 70's; her mother whom she felt had somehow engineered her poor treatment; and her mixedness which she saw as making her less equal. This is also a reflective account of a particularly painful time immediately after the death of her father and the total disintegration of a dysfunctional family and is inevitably affected by the trauma of that period.

Whatever the objective truth of this period of Anna's life she remains unsure about the role played by her mixedness. She is unsure whether she was seen as mixed race rather than Asian and whether or not her treatment was affected by this. What is clear is that her mixed heritage was not considered or acknowledged in the way she would have wished it to be.

Whilst this is the story of one participant, the comments made by others underline this need for children of mixed race to be seen as just that and to have their heritage properly recognised and supported. Failure of service providers to understand this is highly likely to mean that the services they provide for children of mixed race, when they are not optimal, will be regarded with suspicion, and prejudice will be suspected.

A number of people suggested ways in which things could be improved for pupils of mixed race. Aileen recognises the youthfulness of the mixed population. As well as feeling more could be done in schools she also wants to see issues for mixed race young people taken up more widely:

*because of the way the mixed race population is – it's very young age structure I think we should look at the provision within the school what they actually do within schools to raise awareness with teachers and also to help young people with a mixed race background, to provide support services really. Someone with a mixed race background has no-one to help them in a school or no-one that they feel they can relate to. They need in school someone they can refer them to so I think that services should be built in especially for young people from a mixed race background. Also I think that steering groups should be set up or some type of think tank that for mixed race adults to kind of speak about their experiences and what they like in the future as well. I think that's an important move that the government should make to try increase the body of research that's out there. (f/T)*

Aileen herself was involved in research in this area for a first degree and also found that school was a major area of difficulty. She would like to see more pressure put on service agencies

generally to make provision for children of mixed race, and reiterates again the need for further research:

*government needs to put pressure to make sure that the public services are equipped and knowledgeable and you know training is provided for people who work kind of forming policies. I think that organisations dealing with young people from a mixed race background, and adult, need more support more capacity building and more guidance for the services they should be providing. I think the main thing is training and kind of like political pressure for organisations to take it on board seriously, kind of like realising that's the way the population's going. 'Cos it's something were going to have to stand up and kind of like get to grips with at one point pretty soon.*

*I think the main thing is to have other people around that you can go to speak to, so I'm talking about peers, friends. I think they should really invest a lot in research in this area.*

(f/T)

In many ways these suggestions for more training, research and awareness raising are predictable responses to the trigger question, (see Chapter 6), but they are no less valid and important for being so. Some of all of these interventions do exist, mainly developed through voluntary projects, but the possibility of their being delivered universally in today's financial climate is slim as, the Big Society<sup>31</sup> notwithstanding, there is almost always a need for some finance to support activities, hire of premises, websites and administration.

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<sup>31</sup> The Big Society is a Tory party policy initiative about helping people to come together to improve their own lives. It's about putting more power in people's hands – a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities. There are three key parts to the Big Society agenda: **Community empowerment**: giving local councils and neighbourhoods more power to take decisions and shape their area. Our planning reforms led by DCLG, will replace the old top-down planning system with real power for neighbourhoods to decide the future of their area. **Opening up public services**: our public service reforms will enable charities, social enterprises, private companies and employee-owned co-operatives to compete to offer people high quality services. The welfare to work programme, led by the Department for Work and Pensions will enable a wide range of organisations to help get Britain off welfare and into work. **Social action**: encouraging and enabling people to play a more active part in society. National Citizen Service, Community Organisers and Community First will encourage people to get involved in their communities. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview>

Help from individuals, both personal friends and professionals, is perhaps more realisable. Noel has been helped by his girlfriend but wishes he could have had more help earlier. In his professional life as manager of a charity devoted to promoting mixedness he is working to make things different. He talks also about the important role of parents:

*My girlfriend has helped me to talk about how I feel and relay my experience. This has given me a new confidence and drive to try and change things.*

*It's a shame I couldn't have gone through this transformation earlier. I want to try and help others do the same.*

*Just starting the debate and discussion would be an achievement at this point. Being mixed race is still a very lonely place.*

*I'm just glad this issue is finally on the radar. I feel the subject has been missing from mainstream debate and discussion and often when we hear about mixed race people it is about our problems - rarely our achievements.*

*We need to be more open. Both about the positives and the potential problems we face. We need to be told that Bob Marley was mixed race, that a number of the top footballers are mixed ect.(sic). We need to familiarise our young mixed race generations with positive role models who have had experiences that other mixed race people can relate to.*

*At the moment. There is no mixed race voice out there - unless you are prepared to search for it. Without parental support this will never happen, and sadly, this is often the case.*

*Don't be afraid to ask questions and never feel like you are alone. These messages should be passed down by parents. My parents did there (sic) best. But I believe society did them no favours. I want to change that and help to create a more open environment for mixed race people and their parents to communicate openly. (m/W)*

Clare echoes some of Noel's ideas and says there should be:

*More raising awareness in schools from an early age, tackle prejudices and discrimination at an early age, more festivals or fayres to promote mixed race and raise awareness.*

*...there needs to be more publicity and awareness to mixed race people, more mixed race people in tv, adverts etc and in the media. Raise awareness and prevent ignorance (f/W)*

She said she would have liked to have joined a group where she could share experiences and meet other people like herself. Suhail also stresses that it's important to have someone to talk to who has had shared your experience:

*There is no single piece of advice that you can give a young person who is having difficulties understanding who they are but I think it is important that they have somebody they can trust who is available to talk to, perhaps someone who has had a similar experience. (m/F)*

He talks about the importance of avoiding a 'them and us' situation 'that leaves the mixed race child in the middle feeling marginalised and lost.' (m/F)

The increasing presence of people of mixed race in the media was seen by most participants as a positive development, but this was not a universally shared perception. What was shared was the sense that more needed to be done to portray people of mixed race in a positive light, in schools primarily but in society as a whole.

This project, in its exploration of risk and resilience, must be concerned with the service provision for children and young people of mixed race. The literature review (Chapter 2) includes a section on service delivery issues and shows that there is very little written specifically about provision for this group. There is an implicit assumption that children of mixed race are black or Asian and will therefore be helped by service initiatives for black and Asian children.

As has been shown in this chapter, young people of mixed race do not feel part of these groups, although they are aware that they are seen in this way. The data, in that they describe painful and chronic experiences of rejection in several cases, suggest that a more nuanced approach to service delivery is needed which ensures that practitioners are sensitive to the additional experiences of mixed race children.

### ***Chapter Summary***

This analysis, following Colaizzi, has attempted an exhaustive description of the phenomena that have been described by the data. In seeking to deliver 'an exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon' and to 'formulate unequivocal statements of identification of its fundamental structure as possible' it has been important to note contradictory data within themes. An example is the attitude of family members which is a significant theme for nearly all participants but within it there are enormously varied experiences. This wide variation also occurs to some extent in relation to school experiences. Whilst these are mostly difficult at the secondary school level, they are not entirely without positive aspects for some participants. As Colaizzi cautions: 'the researcher must rely upon his (sic) tolerance for ambiguity.' (1978 p.61)

This heterogeneity of experience is an important factor in seeking to identify experiences which may or may not develop resilience in young people of mixed race or which might be positively damaging for their mental health. In some circumstances the same experiences will be resilience

promoting, where in others the reverse will be the case. As can be seen from the above analysis difficulties can be surmounted where the family is able to provide strong emotional support to the child. Social-economic factors, particularly class, can also be seen to be playing a part. This topic is further explored in Chapter 9 which establishes proxy indicators of risk, based on the above thematic analysis of the data, to provide an indication of the likely presence of risks to mental health and the factors which may be contributing to the development of resilience.

It has not been possible to fully validate all the contributions by returning to each participant, Colaizzi's seventh step, but there has been some validation and clarification of statements, which have been added to accordingly.

## **Chapter 8: The Obama Election**

### ***Chapter Overview***

Barack Obama was selected as the USA democratic presidential candidate and was elected president as the data for this project were being collected. It was to be expected that this, and the attendant media reporting, would generate some interesting data from the participants in this study, providing further significant contextual data. The data presented in this chapter are not subject to a thematic analysis but provide a micro perspective on a macro context which is both illuminating and significant in that it describes the level of alienation felt by some people of mixed race.

### ***Background***

With his election as president of the USA Barack Hussein Obama's racial origins have been a subject of some considerable and conflicting discussion across the media. Obama is the son of a white American woman and a black Kenyan man, who met at the University of Hawaii. He was born and brought up, mainly in Hawaii, by his mother and, in his teens, his white grandparents. His Kenyan father returned to Kenya when Obama was less than a year old, returning to see his son for a few weeks eight years later. Obama senior had only intermittent contact with his son through letters over the rest of his life, which was cut short in a traffic accident in Kenya.

Obama's mother remarried to an Indonesian man and Barack lived in Indonesia for four years, returning to his grandparents' care in Hawaii to attend school. He has a half sister who is part Indonesian and several half siblings who are part and full Kenyans. Without any doubt, his victory has lifted the hopes and aspirations of black and non-white people across the globe and in the words of my own mixed race daughter it made her feel now she 'could do anything'.

It was, therefore, interesting and illuminating to find out what effect his election victory had on the participants and what it had meant to them as mixed race people. People who had responded to my initial research request were subsequently emailed and asked for their reactions.

Barack Obama seemingly identifies as a black man, and it is evident that that is how the world sees him. However, in his first book he makes reference to his own mixedness asking: 'Don't you know who I am? I'm an individual!' ((Obama 2007 [1996]) p100) He talks about:

The constant crippling fear that I didn't belong somehow, that unless I dodged and hid and pretended to be something I wasn't I would forever remain an outsider, with the rest of the world. (Obama 2007 [1996] p.111)

Disarmingly, when questioned during a press conference shortly after his election about the breed of puppy he promised his children they could take to the White House, he refers to the possibility of it being a 'mutt like me.' Using a term similar to mongrelisation, with its connotations of unregulated animal cross breeding, is seen as deeply offensive by many people of mixed race. But Obama gives a strong message that being mixed race does not prevent you from getting to the top and is not something to hide. In so doing he openly challenges the USA's one-drop rule.

However there was little discussion of his mixedness during the campaign, although – with the death of his white grandmother and his visit to her on the eve of his success – few could have been in doubt of it. The American position on mixedness is different from that in the UK ostensibly as a result of the 'one drop' rule,<sup>32</sup> which would have ensured that Obama would have been identified as black as a result of this historical method of racial categorisation. Clark,

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<sup>32</sup> The one-drop rule is a historical colloquial term in the United States that holds that a person with any trace of African ancestry is considered black (unless having an *alternative* non-white ancestry which he or she can claim, such as Native American, Asian, Arab, or Australian aboriginal). It developed most strongly out of the binary culture of long years of institutionalized slavery. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop\\_rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop_rule)

writing in Society Guardian, points to the contradictions in Obama's own position as well as that of the media:

The fact that he (Obama) is almost always described as such (black), and identifies himself in that way, is another reminder of the reality that racial categories are socially constructed, rather than god-given. (2009 p.2)

In the UK Alibi-Brown has pointed to this ambivalence. Writing in the Evening Standard she says: 'Obama should not let his white clan be forgotten – and he must deny those who insist he is plain black.' (2008 p 12) She has drawn criticism from Michael Paulin , a mixed race barrister, writing in the Guardian newspaper over a week later, who calls her article 'an atrocious piece' (2008a p 32). He suggests that insistence that Obama is half white is racist and something that mixed race people are 'all too familiar' with. He goes on to say that 'The implication is that we are only civilised because we have a white parent.' (Paulin 2008 p 32) His article has inspired a variety of web responses which exemplify the wide range of positions that people take in relation to colour and mixedness, further demonstrating the complexity of this issue and the individualisation of views and positions.

### ***Participants' Views***

Several of the research participants felt strongly that they wanted their white heritage to be fully acknowledged and it was anticipated that this might be reflected in their replies to the email. It is now some months since the participants were contacted and over a year in some cases. The majority did not respond to the request and five emails bounced back undelivered, suggesting that participants have moved on or have shut down or changed their email accounts. The contributions that were received are set out below in their original forms. They are a mixture of the personal and the political and underpin some of the earlier data.

Anna says:

*Thank god america voted in a democrat. High time too. I love the fact that he's worked his way up, and he's not from privileged white middle class background. it's great that he's mixed race. i'm not too bothered about him identifying as black. he was quite obviously very close to his white grandmother. he's very charismatic. it's a historic occasion...and quite thrilling i think. He has a lot on his shoulders...i stayed up late to watch it on tv. sorry have to rush this as i don't have computer at home. (f/W)*

Tina is more cautious and perhaps pessimistic:

*I have watched Obama's victory with interest, but from a distance. I don't feel particularly drawn to him emotionally because I'm not at all sure where he's coming from. I think politicians generally express themselves in a very particular way which I don't readily understand. I certainly don't feel he's one of mine because of the colour of his skin or anything familial or clannish. I suspect the Obama victory has in fact meant more to white people. Everybody in the media seems to be identifying him as black, though his appeal might paradoxically be his whiteness. I haven't heard one person refer to him as mixed, although they do mention his white mother and African relations. Black is of course a far more safe place to be.*

*For me its not a question of whether you should be black or white. If you choose one identification over another, then you are always leaving something out and of course this is the problem. In fact identity is a problem in itself. How about just being human?*

*I await to see what happens in America with interest but I do maintain that change can only come through personal work and not necessarily the political process.*

*I do think there is a danger he might get shot, like all the other black leaders... (f/W)*

Jenny did not respond to the request to tell her story after she contacted me originally but felt motivated to contribute at some length now:

*I found great similarities between the euphoria of the Obama win and that of Blair and New Labour. But, whilst I am glad for a change after the Bush years, I feel as if Obama's personal life and heritage provided more fodder for the overseas press than his actual political beliefs. As an average person on the street, I have little idea what his policies are, but his family tree could be discussed in any cafe! It scares me a little that perhaps many people voted simply to create a historic moment, rather than on considered political views. I sincerely hope that he will provide the changes the Americans desire.*

*On the matter of race, I find it a cultural trait as to how people describe themselves and others. Personally, I was annoyed that not only was Obama touted as the first black president of the USA, but also that in the same week Lewis Hamilton was touted as a black formula 1 champion. To me this feels completely disrespectful of the heritage of their non-black family members – people who I am sure were just as influential and supportive of their achievements. But I have noticed that this does seem to be a prevalent way to describe people in the US and British press and societies. The world is a complex place! Apparently it's ok to describe people this way in some cultures.*

*As a person of mixed race myself (Singaporean Mother and Irish Father) I would never describe myself as Chinese or Irish or even Eurasian. When asked I say that I am Australian. When I can see that people are actually curious about my ethnicity I will elaborate as to my parentage, but essentially I am Australian. I think it is an Australian trait, for the many immigrants that I know anyway, that if you have uprooted your family to start a new and better life in Australia (as we all hope) once you have been through the whole immigration process and then stood up and sworn the oath of citizenship you feel Australian. Not Italian-Australian, not Greek-Australian, not Chinese-Australian. But an Australian who happens to be of varied cultural origins.*

*On the flip side of the coin, and delving into far more complex issues, the Australian Aboriginal cause is fraught with definitions of what constitutes 'being Aboriginal'. That's a whole other discussion, with many questions and virtually no answers!*

*Will Obama's governance change America for the better, I hope so. Will it change America's relationship with other countries for the better, I hope so. Will it have an impact on me, not in any tangible way that I can think of, possibly indirectly? But psychologically it's nice to see all the positivity, and it makes one believe that anything is possible! (f/W)*

Kathleen, like Tina, is concerned for Obama's safety but sees him as a black man and being 'mixed' is the acceptable face of black. She returns to her strong feelings about only choosing a black partner herself, pointing out that this is what Obama has done in marrying Michelle, a black woman:

*I feel that in America they do not really have 'black people' everyone is African American and I have to say that for me personally that is how it should be in the UK. This seems to be the only country where groups of people are identified by the colour of their skin. We should be able to identify ourselves as we choose. If I am asked to identify myself as a particular ethnic group I do not choose Mixed - White/Black Caribbean as the census would want me to. I identify myself as Jamaican Irish (being half Irish and half Jamaican, with the 'black' part of me being clearly visible, hence is listed first). I do not consider myself British, Britain just happens to be the place that I was born.*

*I think it was inevitable that eventually we would see a black man as president of the United States, especially a mixed race one, as being mixed in America seems to be the acceptable face of the black man. It also follows that with the history of America that the people who were brought there by force all those years ago would multiply ( I understand that in 50-100 years there will be more 'people of colour' in America than white people).*

*It also helps that Obama is highly educated and from the perspective of a white person in America does not 'act black' I do however worry that although I think Obama can do good things as president, that like others before him who were visionaries, JF Kennedy, Martin Luther King to name but two, that there may be assassination attempts on his life because he is a black man.*

*It is also interesting to note that whilst he may be mixed race, he is married to a black woman, and I wonder if that is indicative of how he identifies himself. I know that in my personal experience, I would never have married and had children with a white man!*

(f/W)

Carla is pleased about Obama's election and, like Kathleen, points out the differences around the categorisation of race in the USA. She talks at some length about difference epidermal mixes and the possibility of Obama perhaps not being the first black president of the USA. Her confusion is palpable.

*I am very happy about Obama being elected president. It is a great thing. I admit I don't know a lot about his policies or intentions, I am just looking at it from the point of view that he is black and I think he will be a positive person for the world. I was unaware about the fact that there has been criticism that he should be saying he is mixed race. I am in New Zealand on holiday so have not been up to date with the news. I wonder who it is that is saying this, black people, white or mixed race? I think in US it is different as mixed race people like Halle Berry etc are known as 'African American' or 'People of Colour'. Personally I have mixed feelings about it. I don't have any real objection to Obama stating that he is black when perhaps he is actually mixed race. Everyone knows where his family is from so if he sees himself as black that is up to him.*

*My daughter could be described as mixed race but what is she? I am mixed race, but I don't really look it, her father is black so she is probably 1/4 white and 3/4 black but what*

*is she, black or mixed race? There are many mixed race people who are seen as black, maybe it would be a good thing to acknowledge the fact that they are in fact mixed race. It all gets complicated when you you have 2 mixed race parents having a child, if the child looks more mixed race are they mixed race, what if they look black, what if they look more white? I read an article saying that Obama is not the first black president and it stated other presidents that had black blood. I should be able to say that I am black because I am as much black as say Halle Berry, but I don't look it so I can't call myself black. I don't really get it.*

*Sorry I'm not sure what I am saying really, the whole thing is just so complex! (f/W)*

Emile has found the whole campaign and its result a very significant process. He has apparently been completely absorbed by events and his feelings on Obama's election. He wants to be careful not to idolise Obama but the impact this election has had on him is very significant for him and the way he feels about himself as a mixed race young person:

*The last couple of days (or you could even say weeks/months, 'cause I've been following the election very closely) have been very emotional to me. This is something I will remember for the rest of my life and had an impact of large significance on me. It made me think again about myself and life. I've read Obama's autobiography, so I'm quite familiar with his background. I read about his struggles and his 'failures' and his questions about identity (which I could very much relate to) and it made me care about him...and reminded me of the first time I read the autobiography of Malcolm X (I am well aware they are very different and I will not compare them.they both influenced me though).*

*The night of the election, I didn't sleep...I kept the checking the internet & followed updates on national television (the coverage in belgium was extremely poor, I wasn't happy with it at all) and around 6 am it was a done deal and I smiled all day long, I*

*haven't smiled that long in years...I had tears of joy..I bought several newspapers, listened to songs about obama, change & upliftment all day. I listened to his victory speech in awe. He is the man I aspire to be. Two months ago I've quit college because I felt it wasn't for me, or at least it wasn't what I expected it to be...which saddens me 'cause I love to learn..but a combination of irrelevant classes, incompetent professors & unfair judgements made me 'give up'. Now I just spend all day in the library, but I want to study again..but I'm still thinking what I want to do. Now, Obama made me realize again that you can overcome anything no matter who you are or where you're from or whatever people think you to be.*

*He is mixed. The most powerful man in charge on the planet (arguably) is mixed, is a person of color...represents everyone all over the world who felt bad for being who he/she was, he gives hope...he gives me hope...I know he's 'just' a man and idolizing someone can be a dangerous thing...but, what he has done makes me feel like being a part of something.*

*So to answer your question, it makes a difference to me...it really does. (m/W)*

Rosa's comments are more succinct but capture the range of participants' views. She is pleased that Obama's mixedness means that '*he belongs to us all*' but that he isn't the first black president because of this. Her statement exemplifies the inherent complexity of categorising race on the basis of epidermal difference:

*My initial thoughts were "How great to have a person who is mixed race in such a position" and I am glad he has spoken about being mixed race. I don't know if he himself identifies as black or if this is other people's assumption as he "looks black" and chose to marry a black woman. I think that to say I am glad a mixed race person is in the white house could be seen as trying to trying to take ownership of someone many black people see as "theirs". To say that he is mixed race takes away from his blackness but the point*

*is that he is mixed race and so I feel that he "belongs" to us all. I am constantly reminding people that he is, in fact, mixed race when they talk of how great it is that America elected a black president but often that comes across as me saying that it is actually not so great, it is only half great because he is only half black. (f/W)*

These accounts speak for themselves but in every case it is clear that people have formed an emotional connection with Obama, even where there is a denial of this as in the piece by Tina, who admits to watching his victory with interest and being concerned that he might be shot *'like all the other black leaders.'* Somehow Obama's victory has made these mixed race people feel more a part of something, some openly saying that his being mixed race was significant to them. Whilst some are at pains to couch their responses in political rather than race terms, others are just happy for a black man who is also mixed race to be in the White House.

The responses range from the politically measured to the intensely euphoric and contain contradicting views, which enhance the original data. Where Jenny says:

*I would never describe myself as Chinese or Irish or even Eurasian. When asked I say that I am Australian. When I can see that people are actually curious about my ethnicity I will elaborate as to my parentage, but essentially I am Australian. (f/W)*

Kathleen is equally clear that she describes herself through her mixedness:

*I identify myself as Jamaican Irish (being half Irish and half Jamaican, with the 'black' part of me being clearly visible, hence is listed first). I do not consider myself British, Britain just happens to be the place that I was born. (f/W)*

The insecurity of mixed racedness is summed up by Tina who, when considering Obama's 'whiteness' and reflecting on the fact that the media identifies him as black, says *'Black is of course a far more safe place to be.'* Rosa, who says she is constantly reminding people that Obama is mixed race, when people say how great it is that a black person has been elected,

feels this may come across as *'saying that it is actually not so great, it is only half great because he is only half black.'*

As Carla says *'I don't really get it.....the whole thing is just so complex.'* However, what comes across strongly from all these participants is the fact that global influences and happenings, in particular the words and actions of inspired and inspiring leaders, impact on their individualised sense of identity and belonging.

### ***Chapter Summary***

The liminal position of Obama himself, between two races and three cultures and possibly two world religions (Christianity and Islam), has the potential to reach out effectively to many people who do not feel they have an accepted and acceptable identity. The fact of his election touches individuals deeply as the data describe, but also tunes into the sense of a democratic community where there is a belief that everybody is as valuable as the next person, and into the aspirations of parents for themselves and their children. The following chapter examines the data to consider whether factors exist in the mixed race experience that shed light on the development of risk factors for mental health or for the development of resilience. In these contexts, the consideration of an acceptable identity and the intrinsic value of the individual run through much of the material.

## **Chapter 9: Analysis of Risk and Resilience Issues**

### ***Chapter overview***

This chapter discusses the data to show that almost all the participants had experiences in their childhoods which put them at some risk of mental disorders. None was of a sufficient magnitude to cause mental disorder. However if other factors not specifically considered by this project, such as death of a parent and traumatic experience in a war torn county, were present then the factors this project identifies would be of concern in at least one third of the participants.

The chapter deals only with what is in the data as they can be interpreted through the risk and resilience literature in relation to children's health. From the analysis of the themes, features are identified which could be seen as risks to mental health or as factors which may have developed resilience. Proxy indicators of risk and resilience are established, which are derived from the data in this process, and these are tabulated for each participant. An interpretation of the risks to mental health in the experiences of each participant is made. The continuum from risk to resilience is explored.

Again it must be stated that this is not a diagnostic exercise. Participants were not asked about their mental health nor were they recruited on the basis of having, or having had, a mental disorder of any sort. There was no intention to pathologise or diagnose, but rather to look at childhood experiences and observe the ways in which they posed potential risks to mental health and the ways in which resilience might have developed through the experiences described.

Where the words 'mental health' are used these are based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of mental health, namely: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (World Health Organisation 2111). This universal definition combines three facets of health and focuses on 'health' and not 'illness'.

The Health Advisory Service Report (1995) interpreted this definition for the mental health of children and young people as:

- The ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually
- The ability to initiate and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships.
- The ability to become aware of others and to empathise with them.
- The ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process, so that it does not hinder or impair further development. (p 15)

The indicators of risks to mental health and indicators of the development of resilience, that is 'the ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process', come only from the participants' stories.

### ***Grouping the risk factors***

The literature on risk and resilience, as set out in Chapter 3, identifies the characteristics which interact to precipitate or protect against the development of mental health problems. These risks are set out in three groupings – those in the *children*, those in the *family* and those in the *environment*. For children of mixed race risks are highly likely to be similar to those for any child. For example, genetic influences could affect any child, as could the lack of support of a consistent parent, homelessness or socio-economic disadvantage.

For the purpose of this discussion risk factors have been selected across each grouping, set out in Chapter 3, which the data suggest are particularly significant for children of mixed race. They are established factors, which are accepted by the CAMHS community as both theoretical and diagnostic tools.

From the risk factors identified, as existing within the child, ***self esteem*** has been selected.

Whilst this is a risk for the mental health of any child it is a constantly recurring theme in the data.

Similarly this is the case for ***hostile and rejecting relationships*** in the family and ***discrimination*** in the environment. The reasons for these selections will become apparent as each is explained below.

These three themes are used as proxies for the significant themes from the data and a table is created below to give an indication of the level of risk to the mental health of each participant.

### *Poor Self Esteem*

Self-esteem is in many ways an imprecise concept. As it is used here it relates to the confidence or lack of it of the young person and her/his feelings of worth. Self esteem can be thought of as feeling good about oneself, having a positive attitude to life and a sense of control and satisfaction about the challenges life presents. It is comparable with general happiness as described by Layard (2005) and also with general well being. Where the child or young person lacks the appropriate level of self esteem then s/he is likely to feel less happy and less generally confident about life's prospects. For the participants in this project this is evidenced in their confusion about identity and negative views of self and personal appearance as well as the apparent/perceived lack of a clearly identifiable peer group to provide a cultural identity. (See Chapter 7.)

### *Hostile and rejecting relationships*

The experiences described in Chapter 7 demonstrate that the specific support provided by families in relation to being mixed race varied widely. Stable families, which are affirmative of their children's mixedness, help to ensure that children are able to deal with the prejudices they meet and allow them to feel comfortable in their own skins, being proud of their mixedness and who they are. In other families life experiences have been more difficult and support has not been there in a way that the child could receive it, or there has been a lack of acknowledgement of any difficulties which the child has encountered in relation to being mixed race.

Poor family relationships are shown in the data to be highly significant for participants, frequently arising from the fact of their mixedness, in terms of rejection or hostility from the wider family; participant's own rejection of one parent; and rejection between siblings. Where this occurs it further emphasises the lack of belonging. There is a number of descriptions of rejection which are described in the data, for example the experiences of Tina and Anna who lost their fathers to death and divorce and others, like Thomas, who never knew his father, which will be shared by many children generally. However whilst there is little reporting, although there is some, of hostilities between the child and one or both of the parents, there is significant reporting of hostility and, in some cases outright rejection, from grandparents and parents' siblings which is seen by the participants as being directly related to their parents' mixed marriage. Cyrus and Tracey both describe difficulties with wider family, indicating that their parents' marriages did not have the support of both sides of their families. For some, for example Sarah and Thomas, this was a temporary situation which changed positively as time went on.

### *Discrimination*

For almost all participants secondary school education in particular brought heightened experiences of discrimination and racism, from both peers and adults. Where families were affirmative and prepared to face these occurrences with their child, helping to develop their resilience, the insults and injuries are not reported as having had a serious lasting effect. Where this has not been the case the data indicate that participants were dealing with the resulting trauma into adulthood. As has been noted earlier some families were obviously trying to be supportive to their children and found it difficult to know how to do this, possibly not having had this experience themselves. However their children would have appreciated a fuller discussion with, and openness from, parents. Both Mary and Ayesha felt the lack of this.

The prejudice and discrimination experienced by participants from others in the wider community, mainly in school but also experienced elsewhere, sometimes tempered by class and geography, is another well documented risk factor , for example see Ali (2003) and Tizard and

Phoenix)(2002), as set out in Chapters 2 and 3. The data show (see Chapter 7) that as young people the participants were on the receiving end of prejudicial and racist abuse, verbal and physical, from both black and white groups.

### ***Establishing proxy indicators for risk***

In order to explore these risk factors through the main emerging themes (family attitudes, identity, mixed race isolation, racism and appearance) proxy indicators of poor self esteem, hostile and rejecting relationships and discrimination in the childhoods of the participants are developed as follows:

- Identity and appearance are used as proxy indicators for levels of self esteem
- Parents' relationship status and attitudes are used to identify either supportive or hostile relationships
- Experience of racism and isolation are taken as proxy indicators for discrimination

This conceptual framework raises important issues related to praxis and practitioner awareness generally. The specific identification of these risks, within those that might be more generally experienced by all children, would alert the practitioner to the risk of mental health problems related to mixedness. The absence of risk in these areas suggests that the young person has developed or is in a supportive environment conducive to the development of resiliences that could be built on and enhanced. The phenomenological approach taken by this study allows for an in depth recording of experiences and thus both confirming and disconfirming data have their place in this interpretative process.

An over arching issue for this project was the importance of not pathologising mixedness. A format which identifies both risks and resiliences is essential to that approach and is demonstrated in Table 21. Table 20, however, provides a synopsis of the main risk factors identified in the CAMH literature (HAS 1995) and the additional risk factors to emerge from this

research which are specific to mixed race children. These are highlighted in the last two rows of Table 20.

**Table 20: Indicators of specific risks for mixed race young people**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Child</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Community</b>
<i>Potential risks to mental health for all children (HAS 1995)</i>	Genetic influences Low IQ and learning disability Specific development delay Communication difficulty Difficult temperament Physical illness, especially if chronic and/or neurological Academic failure Low Self Esteem	Overt Parental conflict Family breakdown Inconsistent or unclear discipline Hostile and rejecting relationships Failure to adapt to child's changing developmental needs Abuse - physical, sexual and/or emotional Parental psychiatric illness Parental criminality, alcoholism and personality disorder Death and loss - including loss of friendships	Socio-economic disadvantage Homelessness Disaster Discrimination Other significant life events
<i>Potential risks to mental health for children of mixed race (from HAS list)</i>	<b>Low Self esteem</b>	<b>Hostile and rejecting relationships</b>	<b>Discrimination</b>
<i>Specific risk indicators for children of mixed race suggested by the data</i>	<b>Identity confusion and appearance</b>	<b>Negative and unsupportive relationships, for example denial of any issues related to mixedness by close family members</b>	<b>Isolation and experience of racism from both white and black ethnic groups</b>

The specific indicators given in the last two rows of Table 20 are tabulated for each participant based on their stories and set out in Table 21. Whilst inevitably the interpreted data used must be selective, care has been taken to identify both confirming and disconfirming evidence for mental health risk by interpreting experiences as either promoting resilience or creating risks to mental health. In Table 21 the right hand column indicates presence of risk for each participant based on the proxy indicators, using A, B or C to suggest intensity of risk, with A being high intensity = presence of risk in all areas, B moderate intensity = presence of risk in two areas, and C being low intensity = presence of risk in one area only. O = no risk in any of the proxy areas.

These are emphatically not statistically derived categories but serve only to indicate that risks to mental health were present in the participants' childhood experiences at varying intensities.

There are inevitably problems in consigning people to groups in this way and these are specifically indicated in relation Tracey, Rob and Jack (see footnote to Table 21). Within the intensity groupings there are going to be significant differences in the felt experiences of each individual which cannot be satisfactorily captured within this project. However, some broad conclusions do emerge. The table shows that seven of the 21 participants show a high intensity of risk with a further 10 showing moderate intensity. With one exception, all participants experienced some risk to their mental health as children and young people, using the proxy indicators developed in this study.

**Table 21: Proxy indicators showing the presence of risk factors in relation to the significant findings for the selected sample (continued over page)**

Participants	Parents relationship Status (separated = risk)	Family attitudes towards child being mixed race (negative = risk)	Evidence of mixed race isolation	Experience of Racism as a child or young person	Evidence of identity confusion as a child	Feelings about appearance as a child (negative feelings = risk)	Intensity of risk
Tina	Divorced in later years	positive	yes	yes	yes	Wanted to look white	A
Theo	together	positive	no	no	no	positive	0
Anna	together	mixed	yes	yes	yes	wanted to look white	A
Sarah	together	positive	no	yes	no	always positive	C
Cyrus	together	mainly positive	yes	some	sometimes	not significant	B
Aileen	together	positive	yes	yes	yes	aware of difference	B
Noel	together	positive	yes	yes	yes	mainly positive	B
Rosa	Together	positive	no	yes	yes	positive	B
Suhail	together	positive	yes	yes	yes	wanted to be white	B
Carla	mother and step-father together	positive	yes	yes	yes	not significant	B
Emile	together	mixed	yes	yes	yes	rejection of white heritage	A
Clare	single mother/LAC	negative	no	no	yes	grew up as white	B

	for several years						
Thomas	single parent/stable	mixed	yes	yes	yes	aware of difference	A
Tracey	together	mixed	no	yes	yes	passed as white	A*
Louise	divorced/remarried/stable	positive	no	yes	yes	felt ugly, ambivalent about being black	B
Kelly	together	positive	no	yes	no	colour a burden when at school in Australia, but not before	C
Rob	unclear	unclear	yes	yes	yes	tried to 'pigeon-hole' himself	B**
Kathleen	together	positive	yes		yes	wanted to be white and later wanted to be black	B
Jack	together	positive but as black	no		no	grew up as black	C***
Mary	single mother	mixed	yes		yes	aware of difference of appearance	A
Ayesha	together	mixed	yes		yes	appearance made her an outsider	A

\* Tracey describes a happy childhood in many ways but there were some negative aspects to her family life and the 'need' to pass for white together suggest a high intensity of risk

\*\* There is insufficient data about Rob's family circumstances. It is possible that he experienced more intensive risks than are recorded here

\*\*\* Whilst Jack grew up as black and did not have any negative family experiences his mixedness was not acknowledged

Whilst these proxy indicators in themselves do not necessarily suggest serious risks to mental health for any of the participants, the fact that there are highly likely to be other risk factors which this table does not capture, for example other reasons for poor self-esteem such as chronic illness; inconsistent discipline; mental illness in the family which are also significant indicators for mental health disorders, the intensity of the risks recorded here taken together with others may suggest a high risk to mental health. The presence of four or more such risks is likely to produce a mental disorder whilst the presence of three risk factors is also a cause for concern. (DfES 2001) The tabulated risks are those which are most likely to be experienced by all mixed race young people and indicate areas where practitioners need to be especially alert when dealing with children and young people who are mixed race.

### ***Disconfirming Evidence***

Those participants who show less intensive risks are Theo, Jack, Sarah and Kelly. It is significant that their parents remained together and that the family attitudes towards them as mixed race young people are reported as positive. In Jack's case, risk is recorded because, although his parents attitudes to him were positive, he was brought up as black in the American 'one drop' context. Jack did not establish himself as anything other than black until he was in his late 20s. The data that these four participants have provided do not suggest that they felt isolated because of their mixed race or that they were significantly confused about their identity.

In contrast the seven participants who recorded the highest intensity of risk, four recorded that their parents were together although the wider family attitudes were mixed. However, as a group, they all recorded identity confusion, isolation and negative feelings about their appearance; factors that are highly significant in relation to self esteem and subsequently to mental health. (Moore 2010)

The risks for mental health do not, therefore, lie solely in the family or the wider family experience. Factors outside the family are influential, particularly during adolescence when peers frequently exert a stronger influence on the young person than the family does. These factors also need to be fully explored in assessments undertaken by health, social care and education practitioners in order to understand how mixed race young people specifically might experience risks to their mental health.

### ***Racism***

Experience of racism is the most consistently reported factor. The experience of racism is recorded by all but three participants, two of whom, Jack and Theo, grew up outside the UK in communities that were very racially mixed, and the third, Clare, grew up as white. This was their childhood perspective but it is clear that, as young adults moving in different circles racism, in

what ever way it is experienced and defined by the individuals concerned, has subsequently been felt to be encountered. As Carla says:

*I think of it (racism) now more as a parent if I take my daughter somewhere and its all white children. I think she's the only black kid here I didn't think of it then - I just got on with it and didn't think about it so much (f/T)*

### **Identity**

Identity confusion is also recorded by the majority of the sample. Of the four who did not record this, Jack and Theo did not record racism, whilst Sarah and Kelly did. All four of these participants describe a positive attitude towards them from their parents and for Kelly there was no ambiguity. *'My parents are from different countries so I've always been referred to/thought of myself as being 'mixed race'.* (f/W)

### **Isolation**

Of the seven people with the highest intensity of risk all but one (Tracey who passed as white) experienced isolation as a result of their mixedness and their membership of a 'mixed' family. For some this was a combination of factors, which were also about circumstances such as the separation of their parents or the stigma attached to being brought up in a single parent family and, in several cases, where the marriage/partnership had been acrimonious and sometimes violent. This raises many questions about the nature of 'mixed' relationships, and whether in themselves they are difficult and liable to attract more problems than families with parents of the same race. As has been mentioned previously Alibhai-Brown (2001) suggests that mixed families can be much stronger because they have to be able to manage the potential disapproval of their union from family and friends, but also the data from this thesis show that partnerships can be seriously threatened if the outside world or the wider family is unaccepting of the union.

The geographical location in which people grew up is clearly a factor for all participants, with many saying that growing up in London or a large conurbation is easier than growing up in a rural area or small town. This view was sometimes based on a single experience of visiting London as a young person and feeling much more integrated in that setting, seeing people like themselves and being altogether more anonymous. However, people still experienced racism in the 'easier' urban settings as well as feelings of isolation from the surrounding community. This isolation was exacerbated for some by other factors for example Tina, living in a medium-sized town, as shown in Chapter 7 experienced this isolation as doubly difficult after her eminent black father left the family.

### ***Overview of risk***

The picture is mixed, but whilst family attitudes and support emerge as being clear indicators of protection against risk (by aiding the development of resilience in the young person) there are other factors which strongly suggest risk, the most highly reported of which is racism. What also emerges as significant is isolation and poor self esteem, as a result of feeling and knowing oneself to be different and seeing this negatively.

Whilst many participants reported feeling comfortable and pleased about their mixedness as adults, their childhood experiences are reported as very different. Most describe a trajectory which begins relatively positively in early childhood, becomes difficult and isolating in the teenage years but resolves positively in adulthood as resilience develops. In a very few cases the data do not suggest a positive resolution and there appear to be on-going issues related to self-esteem. These less optimal outcomes also relate to other factors as well as mixedness but the data show that mixedness is a significant factor in the minds of the participants.

The above interpretations, which are not correlated with age of participant, can do no more than point to areas where service providers need to be alerted to this potential further dimension of cultural sensitivity and awareness. However, the narratives of most participants' lived

experiences describe a continuum from risk to resilience which spans their early childhood, their adolescent years and their young adulthood, and longer in some cases.

### ***Resilience***

Factors which promote resilience have been described in Chapter 3 as good self esteem, family compassion and good social support systems (Coleman and Hagell 2007, HAS 1995, Rutter 2007). Essentially, in the way in which these attributes are defined in the literature, they are the antitheses of the risk factors and again the data show them to be important for many of the participants. However, resiliencies can operate in some circumstances and not in others and, because they are experience dependent, develop as the young person develops. Secure attachment is the bedrock for the development of resilience, together with consistent parenting and unconditional support for the child into adulthood. Where these are present, children are able to manage significant difficulties and grow emotionally in the process. The inoculation theory, as described by Rutter (2007) and Coleman and Hagell (2007), provides a theoretical framework for understanding this trajectory. One would therefore expect to find that those children whose family experiences have been positive will be able to manage these risks to their mental health with family support and that their resilience will build accordingly.

The stories of Sarah and Kelly bear this out, showing that although they experienced racism as children and young people the support from their families was always strong and helped them to get through these episodes by being consistently affirming of their mixedness. Jack and Theo grew up in societies where there was no pressure to justify their ethnic/racial origins. When Jack, as a young man, comes to embrace his mixedness, he is able to do so from a position of confidence. Theo first experiences racism as a young man when he comes to the UK. However, he hardly defines it as racism and appears more amused than angry at the labels people place on him; yet it is significant that he specifically mentions that he enjoys the anonymity of London and seeing others of mixed race around him, suggesting that he might be more unsettled by racism towards him than he openly admits.

For almost all of the other participants, their difficulties as children and young people in being mixed race apparently resolve themselves in adulthood. A number of factors could be at play here including personal and professional achievements, positive adult relationships and, essentially, maturity. Whilst two participants are clear that they would not recommend inter-racial marriage others are pleased with their difference and experience it positively as adults, enjoying the ability to know and share in more than one culture. In a small number of instances, particularly in the accounts given by Thomas, Anna and Louise, there is an acknowledged need for more emotional stability, but this is accompanied by very positive feelings about identity. Their resilience is developing, but they can all recognise that they have some difficulties in coping satisfactorily with life currently.

Whilst many issues have been resolved, with positive identity and self esteem achieved by most participants, there remain concerns about some. It is impossible to know, other than through a longitudinal study, what the longer term outcomes might be. However, it is very clear that, during childhood and adolescence, young people of mixed race experience real difficulties which, although apparently resolved for many, are likely to be imbedded in their minds. Furthermore, Rutter (2007) argues that this has the potential to negatively influence adult relationships and subsequent parenting if further risks to mental health are experience later in life. The presence of resilience-promoting factors in each individuals' life is crucial in this trajectory.

### ***The Continuum of Risk to Resilience***

The thematic analysis draws out from the data the experienced risks of the participants and evidence of the development of resilience, showing clearly that risk and resilience exist on a continuum. The data show that a significant proportion of participants experience behaviours which damage their self- esteem from the same individuals whom they credit for helping to develop their resilience. This suggests that there is a continuum from those families which are dysfunctional much of the time and offer very little affirmation of mixedness, through those

families who demonstrate both affirming and rejecting behaviours, to those who are always positive, at least in the experience of the participant, towards the mixedness of their children and provide a secure, well-functioning family environment in which these children grow up. This experience of parental support or lack of it and its effect on wellbeing is common to all children as they grow up but, for this group of children, it is the affirmation or otherwise of their (racial/ethnic) mixedness by their parents that is shown by this data to be specifically important.

This continuum is apparent in many of the narratives. School and community experiences both support and undermine the mixed race young person. School friends were described as becoming cliquey and rejecting in early adolescence, after positive childhood experiences with the same young people. The differences melt away again in later adolescence for some participants who make more 'mature' relationships with their peers.

The participants' accounts do not suggest very much current negativity at all about being mixed race, which is in some contrast to earlier research writings that give more pessimistic accounts of being mixed race (Alibhai-Brown 2001). The increasing size and visibility of the mixed race population and, in particular, the high visibility of mixed race people in the entertainment industry, the creative arts and sport could be playing a part, as some participants have suggested. The sampling method used, that is recruiting participants from mixed race websites, and the fact that a significant number of participants are now working in the equalities field, is highly likely to be a factor which encouraged them to respond and to want to comment on the topic being explored. Also it is very evident, from the data collected subsequently, that the election of Barack Obama as president of the USA has made an important difference.

This is not to suggest that there are no negative current experiences reflected in the data. Several respondents describe felt, current, overt and covert, racist incidents suffered by themselves or their own children. Some others mention that parents or siblings have had periods of mental illness, which they subjectively attribute to the hostile environments they experienced

because they were living in a mixed family. However, this study is not a diagnostic exercise but an attempt to present the phenomena described by people of mixed race as they reflect on their childhood experiences.

### ***Chapter Summary***

This chapter has looked at the presence of risk and resilience factors in the young lives of the research participants. It has proposed that there are extra risk factors for young people of mixed race such as racism from both black and white people, isolation, identity confusion and rejection of one side of their heritage which service providers across health, social care and education need to consider in the context of risk assessment, as well as looking at ways of promoting positive identities. It draws attention to the possible aggregation of risk factors for mixed race young people in some very specific circumstances, where additional risks were present, that would give rise for enhanced concern about poor mental health outcomes. It also begins to identify those circumstances which foster and develop resilience such as positive family relationships and positive endorsement of mixedness. It shows that even when difficulties do arise which are related to mixedness, there are circumstances in which resilience can develop as a direct result, exemplifying the inoculation, or steeling, process described by Rutter (2007).

## **Chapter 10: Theoretical Possibilities: an exploration of 'risk' and 'mixed race' from a sociological perspective**

### ***Chapter overview***

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 have explored the data with, in Chapter 9, a specific focus on risk and resilience as these concepts relate to the mental health of children and young people. The personal experiences and stories of the participants have been explicated and exemplified through the raw data. The theoretical and demographic contexts for the respondents' stories have been considered in the introduction and the literature review in order to give a comprehensive picture of the topic under investigation.

This chapter moves away, to some extent, from the raw data to explore some sociological theories about risk and marginality and considers the extent to which they might provide a context within which 'mixed race' could be understood. Theories of marginality and liminality of van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1967) and the wider contexts of globalisation and individualisation, as described by Beck (1992 and 2008) and Giddens (1991), are explored to see whether they provide an understanding of the position of mixed race people in late modern society.

The potential for mixedness to be seen as a threatening risk is discussed, and theories of the 'risk society' are also considered in relation to the clinical concepts of risk and resilience.

These theoretical positions are drawn together with the findings from the analysis in the following chapter.

### ***Theorising mixed race in the context of globalisation and the risk society***

Whilst discourses and behaviours towards people of mixed race have tended to place them in a marginalised and implicitly negative position, the possibility of *liminal* status, conveying agency and positive potential, contradicts these assumptions and is worthy of exploration.

Van Gennep's use of liminality at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was confined to the rituals of life stages, for example the transition from childhood to adulthood, whereas Turner developed a typology of possible places for people who were outside traditional societal norms or, in the case of the liminar, between two social structures. People of mixed race could be seen as occupying a liminal position in society, in the sense of being on the threshold between two cultures or identities. This sense of being between two places is frequently found in the data and is highlighted by Ayesha on her visit to Pakistan to meet her family there: *'I felt as estranged from these people (her Pakistani relatives) and their culture as I was often made to feel in England where I had lived for most of my life.'* (f/W) Ayesha's experience and that of other participants has, at some stages of their lives, left them feeling marginalised rather than in a potentially powerful liminal position.

Whilst this concept of liminality is useful to an extent in theorising the position of people of mixed race in late modern society, other related concepts also deserve consideration. Turner's three concepts of *liminality*, *marginality* and *inferiority* (Turner 1967) provide a different way of exploring the relationship of people of mixed race to the wider society over time and it is suggested here that people of mixed race have inhabited, and possibly do inhabit, all three places.

It is evident from the data that a number of the participants in this study have seen themselves as *inferior* at certain stages in their lives, most clearly during their secondary school years where identities are being refined and in and out groups are formed. For example as Carla says:

*at 14 I think that I just started to feel I didn't fit in anywhere - there were Indian girls, Greek girls, African girls and me, and white girls and I was the kind of ... people mixed more so it wasn't that bad but I just felt as if I didn't know where I belonged....I am one of many mixed race people who I feel are the forgotten ones. (f/T)*

Kelly moved from Papua, the country of her birth, to Australia for schooling and found: '*Suddenly, my skin colour was almost a burden and I was constantly wondering what people were thinking when their eyes so much as lingered on me.*' (f/W)

In her/his place as the out-grouper the person of mixed race may also be seen as occupying a *marginal* position. Turner differentiates 'inferiority' from 'outsiderhood' in which case the person places her/himself purposefully outside the social structure. He gives as examples of 'outsiderhood' shamans and gypsies, examples which in themselves deserve some challenge from a cultural perspective in that they could also equally well be described as marginal, but which have similarity with mixed race status in that they are not in the process of becoming something else. They will remain shamans and gypsies in the same ways that the person of mixed race will remain as such.

The term 'liminar' (the person who has *liminal* status that is s/he is in a transitional stage between one social structure and another) although originating within van Gennep's concept of a ritualised society, could equally be applied to being between one culture and another, and essentially describes a person on a journey from one place to another. To quote La Shure in his summary of Turner's thoughts on liminality:

Just as chaos is the source of order, liminality represents the unlimited possibilities from which social structure emerges. While in the liminal state, human beings are stripped of anything that might differentiate them from their fellow human beings – they are in between the social structure, temporarily fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and it is in these cracks, in the interstices of social structure, that they are more aware of themselves. Yet liminality is a midpoint between a starting point and an ending point, and as such it is a temporary state that ends when the initiate is reincorporated into the social structure. (2005 p.3)

The child of mixed race, in her/his journey towards adulthood, could be seen as a liminar and her/his reincorporation back into the social structure could be seen as the intensely personal place which is attained as the individual establishes her/his identity and feels comfortable with it. Certainly such journeys have been evident from the data collected for this project. However reincorporation could be seen more globally as the point at which all liminars are fully acknowledged by society as the people they are, giving weight to the idea that they are part of the solution to inequality and prejudice. This reincorporation of liminars assumes that a structure exists into which the liminar can be accepted and, whilst the person of mixed race may have come to some acceptance of her/himself, there is no guarantee that late modern society will be an accepting place. Equally liminality may have no meaning outside the process observed in ritualised societies, as described by Van Gennep at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

La Shure asks the reader to consider liminality as a position of mobility and freedom of movement. He suggests that their liminal status allows liminars access to the social structure at a number of points, crossing the borders at will. He concludes however that no-one can remain in a liminal position and at some point the individual will settle into a place in the social structure in a desire to belong somewhere.

La Shure describes a very different person from the one Turner (1967) describes as polluting and therefore dangerous. The Turner concept however does have some resonances with some of the most exaggerated racist prejudices which have been levied at people of mixed race as well as at most incomers from different cultures. The most recent biological research (for summary see Prasad, A 2009) shows the strengthening of the genetics of populations by the intermixing of 'races' and thus undermines the notion of pollution with its negative connotations.

However, the dangerousness of the liminar could be thought of in other ways than as a pollutant. The freedoms described by La Shure and the ability to move between and know more than one culture potentially convey a power to liminars that others do not have. In this way the liminar fits

within the theoretical framework of individualisation and globalisation (Hall 1989, Giddens 1991.) People of mixed race can be construed as global citizens, as well as exemplifying through their unique heritage that they are members of the individualised society that Giddens describes. At the same time they do not fit comfortably into the ethnically based communities that become more defined in late modern society as globalisation takes hold.

The person of mixed race is between these ethnic groupings, potentially creating some insecurity for themselves and others, but possibly conferring some enhanced understandings. For example Nava (2007) in describing the successes of her own mixed race sons as 'the centring of marginality' a phrase she attributes to Stuart Hall, suggests that people of mixed race bring the margins to the mainstream in a unique way.

The flexible and self-defined, albeit within unseen boundaries, person could perhaps be seen as a 'permanent' liminal who is for ever between identities, able to take on an identity which is tailored to late modernity and its industrial and social requirements, and to discard and change that identity by making highly individualised decisions about, for example, education, relationships and place of residence. Whilst La Shure (2005) would question the ability of anyone to remain in a liminal position for ever, if the person of mixed race is seen as a liminal and essentially a person who is able to cross boundaries then this is potentially a positive place to be.

However as Stuart Hall says:

The emergence of new subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new regions, new communities, hitherto excluded from the major forms of cultural representation, unable to locate themselves except as decentered or subaltern, have acquired through struggle, sometimes in very marginalized ways, the means to speak for themselves for the first time. And the discourses of power in our society, the discourses of the dominant

regimes, have been certainly threatened by this de-centered cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local. (1997 p. 34)

Beck-Gernsheim and Camillar (2002) give weight to this idea of 'de-centered empowerment' in their discussion of the potential dangerousness of people of mixed race in relation to the social order. They talk about the trend towards mixedness as a 'politically explosive issue', challenging the state's apparent need for people to 'classify themselves by nationality or ethnic origin'. Beck-Gernsheim and Camillar suggest that life in a bi-cultural family is a life involving biographical uncertainty. With optimism they go on to say:

Biographical uncertainty can be troublesome and irritating; it can make people fearful and lead them to adapt. But it can also throw up new experiences and viewpoints. (2002 p.135)

Participants in this study have, with some exceptions, acknowledged that they enjoy an understanding of those cultures that make up their heritage. Kathleen puts this stridently:

*I am a strong, independent, confident woman - whether I am black or white by other people's definition makes no difference to me anymore. I came to this conclusion somewhere in my mid 20s and once I got it straight in my head it was like a lightbulb going on. I have 'arrived' where I needed to be in order to understand me. I am a product of two cultures, both persecuted in their own way. Both making me who I am and that's cool with me! (f/W)*

However, none of the participants suggested that their mixedness is at the leading edge of all that is good about late modernity and the liberating spirit of globalisation. As young people they have been more likely to show a timidity of engagement and a desire to be more like others, to be

part of a group, as opposed to being individualised and bold conveyors of 'new experiences and viewpoints'.

Set against this is the evidence that for some participants their resilience has been strengthened as a result of their mixedness in that they have forged their own destiny. In this way they could be seen to have the advantages of a liminal status. However, if their experience of one of their 'cultures' has not been strong then it is difficult to see how liminality as described by Turner and La Shure would be attained. The young person who has been discouraged from absorbing any ethnic identity from one or other parent may remain marginalised and without the knowledge to move confidently between two places. Carla describes how this can disadvantage children being brought up within a 'black' or within a 'white' environment:

*I have my experiences of being brought up by a black mum and she bought things to me that - sometimes you can have mixed race children grow up with a white mum and their dad's not around and they don't - they grow up mixed race still but they don't know a lot about their identity - they're very white. My mother's always been very pro black, she's always said I'm a black woman. (f/T)*

The expansion of the mixed population has given rise to the notion that people of mixed race might hold out a brighter future where people are altogether more equal. This notion appears to be predicated on the idea of people of mixed race crossing boundaries, being liminars, and somehow as a result either blending or bringing together different races and ethnicities. This is an idea that is challenged in the current discourse which tends to take a more of a cautious approach. (Mahtani 2009)

The possibility that liminal status of itself embodies risk to society is far different from Beck's analysis of the risk society in the late modern era in which he identifies the growth of individualisation as a necessary support to the developed labour market by providing a flexible

workforce in which individuals operate independently of others and of traditional rules and structures:

As a consequence the floodgates are opened wide for the subjectivisation and individualization of risks and contradictions produced by institutions and society. The institutional conditions that determine individuals are no longer just events and conditions that happen to them, but *also consequences of the decisions they themselves have made*, which they must view and treat as such...One even has to choose one's social identity and group membership, in this way of managing one's own self, changing its *image*. (Beck 1992 p.136)

Whilst such individualisation may seem to offer positive freedoms to those who were previously constrained by inflexible norms of social class, the nuclear family and ethnic grouping, Beck (1992) characterises late modernity as being a 'Risk Society' and, more recently, a 'World at Risk' (Beck 2008), in which new norms, values and social structures can emerge. He counterposes the advantages of late industrialised modern society with its problematic aspects brought about through industrial technological changes such as pollution, potential damage to foodstuffs by use of pesticides and unemployment as modern industry goes through dramatic changes to create a world of greater uncertainty.

Late modernity may free people from some of the 'traditional' structures, offering the possibility that risk can be managed reflectively and individually. However, at the same time uncertainties, outside the control of individuals such as global warming, environmental pollution, terrorism and financial crises give rise to anxiety and a sense of impotence. Whereas the process of modernity has eliminated some global risks, for example the virtual eradication of certain diseases, and has increased food production, albeit still hampered by distribution deficits, it had been expected to bring humankind more control of the world and its processes. In fact there has been a

consequential loss of control with the appearance of these newer global risks which are more invisible, unknowable and potentially catastrophic.

The changed nature of risk renders it impossible to avoid individual exposure, or to calculate or control exposure, because of its scale and magnitude (Tulloch and Lupton 2003). This gives rise to societal changes that impact on and create changes in the family, for example through increased rates of divorce and broken families, which cannot necessarily be ameliorated by state intervention. Although the primary focus of this thesis is risk in relation to child mental health, it is useful to consider risk more globally to give greater definition to its use as a predictor of individual mental health outcomes.

Giddens reminds us that: 'Life has always been a risky business' but suggests that the: 'all pervasive scope of abstract systems together with the nature of the relation between technical and lay knowledge' which exist today separate modernity from the pre-modern world (1991 p.29). He goes on to say:

There were experts in pre-modern societies but few technical systems. Particularly in the smaller societies; hence it was often possible for the individual members of such societies to carry on their lives, if they so wished, almost solely in terms of their own local knowledge, or that of the immediate kinship group. No such disengagement is possible in modern times. (Giddens 1991 p.30)

He refers back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century theorist, Machiavelli, whom he sees as having first identified risk in believing that at least some of what happened in our lives is ours to control, in that we are able to assess the risk in following a particular course of action, pointing out that specific discussion of risk did not come about until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but that it has now become central to society. Whilst insurance companies have been in the business of risk assessment for many years, individuals now employ similar processes in managing their lives. Giddens says:

In milieux from which fate has disappeared, all action, even that which sticks strongly to established patterns, is in principle 'calculable' in terms of risk – some sort of overall assessment of likely risks can be made for virtually all habits and activities, in respect of outcome (1991 p.112).

Whilst risks are seen as amenable to choice a distinction is made between voluntary and involuntary risks, the latter having been described above. Voluntary risks, where people make decisions based on their own 'risk assessment' of a situation such as changing a job, buying a home, engaging in an activity can, given the wrong circumstances, be quite traumatic or very dangerous; for example, taking on a mortgage or riding a horse. Similarly deciding not to do something will also carry an assessment of risk such as not changing a job and facing the possibility of redundancy as a result or not taking part in something which may result in exclusion from an important social group. This assumes an understanding of risks and the outcomes of taking risks which is unrealistic, particularly in relation to child rearing. Whilst the Government is taking steps in its publications to set out the risk factors in relation to children's mental health this is not the same as making them common knowledge and thereby allowing people to make an informed choice.

Although in the reflexive process of assessing risk the individual may be able to make these assessments of the relative risks of different courses of action in her/his immediate environment, this is not the case where risks are imposed by global or significant local circumstances and, as Tulloch and Lupton (2003) show in their attempt to test out Beck's theory, the perception of risk is influenced both by past experiences and geographical location.

In their study of risk, in which they interviewed 134 people in the UK and in Australia between 1997 and 2000, their respondents describe risks to the person from assault through to major global risks over which they have no control. It is interesting to see from their data the way in

which 'fate' still plays a large part in the way people perceive risk in their lives, tying the idea of risk back to Machiavellian notions of our lives being partly in our control and partly fate.

Participants in this (Mixed Experiences) study did not express fatalistic views in this way but, from the data gathered from the participants, there is some evidence of a fatalistic approach to their situation as mixed race people, for example as Cyrus says: '*You're always torn a bit between what you are and what you are supposed to be.*' (m/F), or as Carla says:

*don't bother about what people think of you it's how you think inside and people will try to pigeonhole you and try to tell you that you're... some people might want you to chose and you may have to say you're black to fit in and you might feel you don't fit in anywhere but it doesn't matter what people think in the end it's how you feel about yourself and it takes times to get to that point. You may not feel like that when you're younger but there will come a time when you're older you don't have to explain yourself to people and sometimes you have to but just feel happy within your own skin that you're mixed race and that's something to be proud of and you can just say that you're mixed race and you don't have to put yourself in any other category. You are mixed race and that can be the end of it really. (f/T)*

Significantly, late modernity could also be characterised as the 'resilience' society on the basis that people remain generally optimistic in the face of uncontrollable risk, that is they demonstrate a belief in their abilities and risk assessments to produce a positive outcome. The extensive qualitative data gathered by Tulloch and Lupton suggests that such optimism is quite common in late modernity, especially amongst those who have experienced personal success in their lives. McGuigan picks up this idea in linking resilience to success in relation to migration in globalised society: 'Flexibility in negotiating the uncertain conditions of modern life, being a survivor, becomes the standard of socially approved success.' (2006 p.221).

This survival capacity is perhaps equivalent to Rutter's 'steeling effect' described in Chapter 3, that the exposure to adversity, providing one is effectively supported through it, enables one to survive it again and deal with it positively. From the data gathered for this study it is evident that although the participants experienced significant challenges to their mixedness, such as racism and identity confusion, where they were well supported by their families they dealt with this more easily and embraced their mixedness positively. Kathleen, as has been shown in Chapter 7, attributes her resilience to her grandmother and is passing this on to her own children:

*In a strange way I think that being mixed race made me strong! Whether I would have been that way anyway remains to be seen. I have always fought injustice wherever I see it as a result of the injustices that were done to me growing up. I have instilled in my children a sense of pride in who they are - something that only my grandmother provided for me when I was a child. (f/W)*

It is useful to reflect again on Sarah's explanation of how her family provided this for her:

*my wider family as well but definitely my mum and my dad always brought me and my brothers up to be very proud of who we were. They were always saying that it's good to be different, it's good - you know you should be proud of the fact that you can say that you come from nearly every continent in the world. We were very much brought up to not even think of it as unusual and whenever incidents would come up my parents would be, they would just sort of remind us, that we're perfectly normal. There's nothing wrong and I think we've got a really strong family. (f/F)*

However, even Thomas, whose early life experiences were difficult and sometimes dangerous due to his mixedness, seems to have developed considerable resilience:

*I have never felt the desire to be anyone else. Horror stories of mixed race kids scrubbing their skin with detergent in an effort to be like their white families never rang true for me, and even struck me as a simplistic (and insulting) projection. (m/W*

Douglas (1985), describing risk from a cultural/anthropological perspective, shows how risk also confers blame where free choice exercised in modern society fails to manage risk. The governmentalist view of risk (Castel 1991) is similar in some respects in that neo-liberalism is seen to allow people to make choices which affect societal institutions and in turn their individual lives. The resilient individual makes the right choices for her/his particular circumstances and can only blame her/himself if the results are negative. There is no longer any sense of 'fate' intervening.

Whilst we are all subject to the forces described above, the rising phenomenon of mixed race may be seen as a product of the late modern age of globalisation, de-traditionalisation, privatisation and individualisation. These contemporary social conditions may indeed have played a part in the increasing number of people who intermarry and/or produce offspring with people of different ethnicities. Late modernity of itself may provide a greater opportunity for mixed race people to reflexively forge personal identities beyond the traditional categories of class, race and nationality, which are less bound by racism and prejudice. What becomes important is the ability to flexibly fit in to the structures that the world economy is requiring in late modernity.

When risk is examined in the context of service development, Godin makes the following point about the perception of risk in a public service setting:

The risk discourse that pervades health or social care now overshadows the concept of need. People are perceived as requiring care as a result of their risk status rather than the needs they have. The former is simply assumed to incorporate the latter. (Godin 2006 p.19)

This use of the concept of 'risk' moves away from the self-reflexive model to be more directly linked to governance and safety. Godin describes Armstrong's (1995) definition of 'Surveillance Medicine' in which risk factors in the patients' environments can be calculated to inform the likelihood of ill health. Arnoldi in his chapter on *risk, politics and government* draws attention to the extent to which we can have some control of these processes in that we are:

'exposed to endless streams of information about health – advice and information about which practices pose health risks and which benefit our health.' (2009 p.173) He goes on to say that we are: 'expected to be responsible...for our own health', an idea that may be of little relevance to children who are much at the mercy of their parents and/or carers for the mediation of these risks.

These concepts, which move the focus of risk away from governance, are in many ways closer to the child and adolescent mental health predictive tool in ascertaining individual risks to mental health. The parameters of these risks have been dictated by the changes in social and economic structures which have given rise to the late modern era as identified by Beck, Giddens and others and have been described in different ways by many scholars (Fletcher 1962 and Segal 1983) whose exploration of the inherent contradictions, or risks, in the traditional family can be seen to link the concept of a 'Risk Society' with the risks described by Bowlby and others who relate them to risks for mental ill health in children.

No discussion on the wider aspects of risk can be complete without reference to the money market and the notion of risk that is applied there, with disastrous consequences on occasion.

John Lanchester explains:

Moneymen don't see risk in the same way that civilians do. To most of us, risk is for the most part a bad thing: at best, it's something we seek out under specific circumstances, to generate a feeling that things are just-dangerous-enough-to-be-exciting. In the world

of money, risk is different; it's desirable. That's because, in investments, risks are correlated with rewards. (Lanchester 2010 p. 122)

Whilst this may appear to be an entirely different use of the word risk, this concept of risk resonates with the idea of a steeling effect, that risks are taken because they lead to something better, that they can be coped with and somehow transcended for the benefit of individuals or society.

In returning again to the risk and resilience factors used by child and adolescent mental health services to identify those children most likely to be at risk of mental disorder, a link can be seen with the wider risk theories. The examples cited above of decreasing family stability and the need for flexibility of skills in order to remain in employment which are a direct consequence of late modernity or the 'risk society' are configured in the CAMHS risk factors as overt family conflict, family breakdown and socio-economic disadvantage stemming from the inability to find work in an environment which is constantly demanding new skills. It is possible also to conjecture that genetic influences in the child and the likelihood of chronic physical and neurological illness will be either a consequence of this socio-economic disadvantage or more directly linked to the uncontrollable risk in the risk society such as that created by the on-going toxic pollution produced by the Bhopal disaster in 1984 for example.

### ***Chapter Summary***

This chapter has looked at theories of marginality and liminality, difference and dangerousness as well as globalisation and individualisation in the context of the risk society. These theories provide interesting perspectives on mixedness and, although none is a perfect fit, they suggest ways in which the phenomenon of mixedness might be seen in late modern period as a potential for flexibility and therefore of considerable benefit in socio-economic terms.

Global risk, as conveyed through the theory of the risk society, can be seen as connecting to the micro risks that beset children, families and communities, which have been explored through the data. The risks that are outside the control of individuals, and over which individuals have little decision-making capacity, even through the democratic process, establish uncertainties in society that give rise to problems for individuals, families and communities and, through these, create the contradictions which determine whether the child's mental health is promoted or undermined.

## **Chapter 11: Discussion of Findings and Their Context**

### ***Chapter overview***

This chapter brings together and considers the importance of the thematic findings from this project. These findings are considered in the context of the discourse on mixed race as set out in the introduction; the messages from the relevant literature; the epidemiological and demographic context; the risk and resilience framework and the theoretical possibilities. The methodology of the study is also reviewed.

Policy guidelines and service responses are considered and some of the services which are available to children of mixed race are described. The usefulness of the proxy indicators and the construction of the risk table is considered against the policy and practice framework.

The strengths, limitations and future opportunities of this project are reviewed. Whilst many of the thematic findings from this study support and confirm the findings of previous research, the findings in relation to the CAMH risk and resilience factors are an important addition to other work. Whilst the findings from this study cannot be generalised they open up a significant further dimension of experience for future exploration.

### ***Reviewing and Assessing the Thematic Findings***

The over-arching finding from the data is that young people of mixed race experience difficulties in their childhood that are, or which they perceive as being, centred in their mixedness. These have been thematically described in Chapter 7 and fall in to the following main groupings.

#### ***Identity confusion***

Almost all the participants describe feelings of identify confusion which appear to resolve, at least partially, in young adulthood. They do not identify clearly with one or other parent and it is unlikely that they can identify fully with any others in their peer group. The heterogeneity of their

different identities makes this a practical impossibility. From this arises a strong need to be seen as who they are with the racial mix that they have. As has been shown several people report on the embarrassment and discomfort they felt when their identity was not recognised and they were seen by others to be something that they were not.

In adolescence, when the search for identity is particularly important and when all young people are searching for autonomy from their parents/carers, young people of mixed race find themselves cast adrift from their peers and placed in the role of 'outsider'. They employ various techniques to deal with this isolation, ranging from becoming the class clown to retreating into themselves and resolving to '*just get on with things*'. Some find that they can pass for white and appear to become more involved with white friends. Others see themselves as black and adopt this identity stridently for a period, seeing it as a safer place to be.

The election of Barack Obama to the USA presidency has had a profound effect on the participants who responded to a request to comment on his election, finding it affirming of their mixedness, describing strong feelings of elation and belonging, (see Chapter 8). Although Obama is mixed race he has usually been described as the first black president of the USA. However there has been a small, but significant for this study, alternative voice in the public discourse which has stressed the importance of his being described as mixed race. The mixed race community itself has been divided on this issue with some asserting that he must be described as black and suggesting that the attempt to describe him as mixed race is in itself racist and a denial of the achievements of black people. Unsurprisingly the opposite view, that he is partly white so should be described as white, has not been put. It is tempting to interpret the former approach, that Obama is black, as the continuing application of the 'one drop' rule and the latter, that he is never described as white, as inherently racist. Both illustrate the inherent societal confusion over racial categorisation which might be defined as a form of racism which is the macro context for this study.

In wider popular discourse the position of mixed race people is probably described accurately by Noel, although he admits it is a position he does not find easy:

*I've always identified myself as being black politically and mixed race culturally. The feeling of having to explain this and argue my corner was also a problem for me. It still is.*  
(m/W)

The data show that this struggle for a comfortable identity resolves itself for most of the participants as they emerge into young adulthood and adult life generally. Most embrace their mixedness by this stage, seeing both the benefits of the awareness of more than one culture that this has given them and enjoying their uniqueness. The process of maturation is inevitably a significant factor in this transformation, and the concomitant development of resilience from the participants' varied bases is important.

This adds to the argument, strongly supported by the data from this project, that people who are mixed should be seen and described as such. Even where there has been experience of parents who are also mixed but strongly identify as black the child has seen his/herself as mixed. Throughout the participants' accounts the importance of them being who they are and not categorised by others is clearly stated. This difference of approach between the generations is likely to be because of the increasing numbers and prominence of people of mixed race, as shown in Chapters 1 and 4 for, as Suhail says that as he gets older more people are likely to ask him about his ethnic heritage but that it is his personal identity which is important. He says:

*With certain ethnicities we can make a judgement but mixed race throws up an element of doubt.....what does it matter anyway, I am me and that is the most important piece of information one needs.* (m/W)

For most, but not all, there is a rebalancing of their feelings about their parents and an appreciation of the difficulties their parents probably faced, whether this be in the mixed marriage

as such or the possibility that one parent's culture was subordinated to the other. The data contain some references to mental health problems in the family linked, in the minds of the participants, to their parents' mixed relationship. Two participants, although comfortable with their identity for themselves, make it clear that they feel, from the difficulties that they themselves experienced in relation to their mixedness, that their parents' decision to marry and procreate was ill advised.

An evaluation of the available statistics shows that the academic and social experiences of young people of mixed race are also very heterogeneous, in that they do not follow a pattern of either poor achievement or deprivation. Whilst statistics demonstrate that, in some areas, children of mixed race are disadvantaged, the most striking example of this being the disproportionate number of mixed race children in the care system and to some extent the disproportionate number in in-patient CAMHS, generally they show that the mix of each child is what influences outcomes, for example where Asian children are doing well academically and African Caribbean less so, then mixed Asian/white children are also doing well and African Caribbean/white children are doing poorly.

### *Otherness and isolation*

There are many accounts in the data describing the struggle young people have had about their appearance, wanting to be seen as wholly black or 'passing' as white, but not feeling comfortable in either place. Several participants describe disliking their appearance as young people, mirroring many of the views expressed in a recent anthology *Hair Power Skin Revolution* (Moore 2010) where a number of mixed race contributors describe similar experiences.

The data show that young people experiment with trying to be seen as black or, by default, are seen as white. In being seen as white these young people have difficulties in owning their blackness/otherness, feeling particularly uncomfortable when it seems that their friends have not recognised that they are not 'just' white or 'just' black. Whilst striving to achieve an autonomous

identity is part of the maturing process for any young person, the data describe an additional ingredient for these young people as they struggle to give the ethnicities of both parents the proper place in their own developing adult identity, a key part of which is their self-acceptance of their epidermal appearance.

The sense of 'otherness' is conveyed in the use of self-deprecating language which has been noticeable in the way participants have expressed their views and told their stories, either directly to the researcher, by telephone or in writing through email. People spoke of the 'shame', of lack of 'worth' and that they felt 'wrong' and 'not perfectly normal'. There was a sense that something was 'not right' with how they were, that they saw themselves as 'ugly'. These negative phrases were commonly used to explain how participants had felt as they were growing up. Whilst most, as has been noted earlier, now feel positive about their mixedness as they reach adulthood, the use of this negative language illustrates the lack of self worth, or low self-esteem, which was experienced in childhood and which is evident in the stories of many participants, leading to a sense of isolation and loneliness.

The data show that even where people talk about having friends and close family a sense of 'otherness' and isolation was still experienced by a high proportion of the participants. For some this is pronounced in that their families themselves appear to have no close friends, but in the main the 'otherness' is experienced most strongly at the secondary school stage where, in adolescence, peer groups form around ethnicity and culture in the adolescent search for identity confirmation, leaving those young people of mixed race on the outside as the out-grouper and the 'other'. Whilst many young people from all ethnicities and backgrounds may experience periods of isolation in adolescence as they struggle to achieve autonomy, moving away from family and increasingly identifying with a peer group, the data show that mixed race adolescents are frequently not included in these new groupings and experience rejection by those young people who were their close friends at an earlier developmental stage.

Given the generally recognised emotional and physiological fragility of adolescence, commonly attributed to the hormonal systems and the re-ordering and rapid development of parts of the brain causing varying degrees of turmoil for the young person, this rejection can have profound consequences. Several participants report difficulties with relationships into adulthood, suggesting that this earlier alienation has subsequently had an impact on their ability to form intimate relationships. This has been shown, in chapter 7, to have been expressed most poignantly by Thomas. A longer extract from his narrative is reproduced below.

*I've still never had a sexual relationship, and the issues at the heart of that revolve around distrust and the sense of not belonging that is fading only slowly, a refusal to reach out or accept a personal offer of a helping hand. My attractions have primarily been towards white people, I guess because they're who I've seen most of. Throughout my teens and early twenties I had the definite feeling that I was gay, but I have many doubts and anxieties about exploring those feelings, because in truth I sense that my attractions have arisen from childhood circumstance, maybe a need for a deeper sense of relation to others, particularly confident males who 'belong' where I did not. My greatest longing was and is for brotherhood. (m/W)*

This is a complex passage with many possible interpretations but illustrates the confusion Thomas feels about his identity which he relates to his sense of not belonging.

#### *Secondary school experiences*

For almost all the participants this has been a difficult period, from the rejection by people who were previously their friends, see above, to the racism that they felt was in the system and emanated from teachers. Whilst several people reported themselves as 'being difficult' at school and therefore perhaps not easy for their teachers to manage, it is quite possible that this difficult behaviour was provoked by the felt impact of systemic negativity.

In the primary school years most have not felt the impact of racism, although it is evident in the data that racist remarks were made at them, albeit from children who did not understand the provenance of those remarks. But at secondary school most have been rejected by their peers. Where this has not explicitly happened it is likely, as in Sarah's case, that the status of her black father has protected her from blatant racist behaviour directed at her specifically. The data have shown that class is an important protector and that those participants from working class families struggled against more overt and frequent racist abuse.

Teachers have variously expected that as mixed race children they will under achieve and/or have exhorted them to work harder to overcome a perceived disadvantage. In some cases children have been expected to have a level of understanding of their two or more cultures which they did not have and there seems to have been little recognition or understanding by teachers of their pupils' likely living circumstances. In one case, however, the kindergarten teacher has endeavoured to recognise and value the mixed ethnicity of her part Chinese pupil by inviting the mother into school to undertake an activity with the class. Tracey description of this, already noted in Chapter 7, indicates her pride in the part her mother played in this activity.

*She (the teacher) teamed up with the local librarian who was also chinese and together they managed to produce a nice set of calligraphed cards which my teacher hung up in the classroom – and, or course, everybody knew it was my mum who had done them.*

(f/W)

Two other participants have specifically acknowledged the support they had from particular teachers, but mainly feelings have been hostile and attempts by parents to deal with the racism that children have felt in the secondary school setting have not been dealt with to the child's satisfaction.

As the statistical data show academic progress is uneven across the mixed groupings, tending to follow the levels of progress recorded for the relevant non white group. This has not been uniformly found from the data collected for this project, as some participants have been high achievers and have not exemplified the national data. This is likely to be an effect of the way in which participants have been recruited, in that they may be a better educated sample interested in the ideas under discussion and accessing websites that promote and support that interest. However, whilst there is a number of 'middle class' participants there is also a significant number who have been brought up in 'working class' homes.

The school years stand out within this project as an experience through which society has, as yet, not paid proper attention to the specific issues for young people of mixed race. The opportunities which are presented to support and develop the resiliences of this group are not being realised across the system. This has led to risks for mental health on a micro level where the student of mixed race is forced into a marginal or liminal position. For those who can be defined as liminars, in that they will reintegrate and find their new place, there are others who may remain marginal for a considerable period and possibly for ever.

### *Racism*

Like the phenomenon itself racism has been both overt and implicit in much of the foregoing discussion and findings. Its appearance in school has been referred to above, but it has also been felt in the home and as part of the experience of a wider isolation. Some participants have described racism as being endemic in their families where, in Tracey's case particularly, one parent has seemed to demean the culture and traditions of the other. In two thirds of families it has been possible to identify the dominant parent from which it is reasonable to assume, and it is sometimes expressly stated in the data, that the culture of one parent was suppressed, although it is not possible to attribute any intentionality.

At secondary school racist abuse is experienced from both black and white peers, black peers accusing their mixed race contemporaries of being too white and white peers using racist language and aggressive behaviours. This places the young person of mixed race in an isolated and friendless environment which is not necessarily appreciated by those adults charged with their care and support, many of whom, either through lack of understanding or through politicised ideas about race and colour (Small 1988, Maxime 1986), see these young people as black, thereby denying the complexity of the mixed race experience, exemplified by the data from this project, and its potential to be a significant risk to mental health. Noel's comments illustrate the way he felt he was seen as a young person:

*My experiences were more related to being treated differently because I was black. There was, and I still believe there is little or no, distinction between the treatment of black and mixed race kids. (m/W)*

Where participants indicate that parents had intervened to challenge racism in school there is little evidence that there was any felt improvement for the child.

The statistical data show that people of mixed race generally are more likely than any other group to experience racist abuse. Less overt racism such as a lack of visibility of mixed race people in teaching materials was also identified. Some pupils challenged this but there is nothing in the data to suggest that their actions had any successful outcome. In fact several participants mention that this issue of invisibility is an area where changes need to be made for the future.

The idea that is voiced by some, that mixed race people are the future in terms of the demise of racism and racist behaviours, is not born out by these data and consequently the possibility that people of mixed race might have a 'liminal' status in such a process seems unlikely and must be questioned at this stage of late modernity.

### *Family Support or Lack of it*

The data provide a great deal of evidence to demonstrate the importance of family for all participants. Many participants indicate that their families did not do enough in their view in terms of supporting their mixedness, expecting them to fit in, to achieve unreasonably, being unaware of what they were experiencing and being unable to say anything that was helpful to deal with their personal anguish. Some parents are reported as being racist themselves, albeit unintentionally, and there is significant reporting of hostility from grandparents on one or both sides of some of the marriages/partnerships. Sometimes this is short lived but often it lasts for the lifetime of those grandparents. The strain on the marriage will have been considerable where this is the case, and the data show that, where this has been the case, this has impacted negatively on the children.

Where families have been positive about their child's mixedness the experience of being mixed is positive, establishing the child's identity appropriately and building her/his resilience and self esteem. There is no indication in the data that the main parent was consistently negative towards or about their child. Even in cases where there were periods spent in the care system, there is evidence that, at least for some periods, there was a close relationship with the main parent. However, where parents are not together, and in some cases where they are, the relationship with the other parent has not been good or has not existed at all. In these families there have been examples of a lack of consistent parenting and an increased instability generally. Both of these factors undermine mental health and have been difficult for the participants to cope with.

Several accounts describe strong mothers, both black and white, and strong and nurturing grandparents. These attributes are not spoken of in relation to fathers, although Thomas talks very positively of his grandfather's influence, confirming the importance of mothers generally in the transmission of culture and nurture.

The data on siblings are interesting in showing that the experiences of brothers and sisters who are living in the same family are sometimes quite different. The data show that skin colour and being in different geographical locations at different ages can have a large effect on why siblings' experiences differ. Where siblings have been able to pass as white their friendship groups differ from those who are visibly mixed race or seen as black. Where siblings have grown up in different geographical locations with a different racial mix, the childhood experiences have differed and have been either easier or more difficult for the different siblings.

Tina has had a particularly divided family in relation to appearance, and describes the embodiment of this phenomenon in the perceived physical attributes which are favoured by the dominant (black) parent, according to a racist judgement of beauty:

*I was the lightest. I was very much my mother's, but I had very frizzy hair. My elder sister, who was my mother's not my father's, is very much my mother's and she had very frizzy hair, big nose and big mouth. We belonged with my mother who was white. Whereas the two sisters with the straight and gently curling hair, with small noses, the small feet, the more European features are designated to my (black) father. (f/T)*

This is complex enough but she goes on to say:

*It's to do with whatever's good the father gets it. So this is really the interesting...the white side of the family of course are professionals, they've got plenty of money – comfortable – whereas the black side, of which I am, the black side are relatively poor and despised by the white side. (f/T)*

Tina describes the preferences of the dominant parent which contradict expectations and create differences between siblings and which are highly influenced by a Western idea of beauty. These

data further demonstrate the complexity of the mixed race world and the heterogeneity of appearances and experiences even between siblings.

As has been described previously, geographical location is an important factor for young people of mixed race, with the inner city providing an easier environment than outer suburbs or country districts. London is most frequently cited as the easiest place to be, though growing up in outer London is not experienced as being as easy. One respondent, Theo, who grew up outside the UK and was apparently very relaxed about this mixedness during the interview generally, voiced his feelings of pleasure at seeing people of mixed race like him on the London tube. Others describe pleasurable feelings of anonymity when being in or visiting London. These experiences suggest the possibility of in-group status at some level which other aspects of the data deny.

Socio-economic status is shown to be of over-riding importance. Some participants who grew up in the inner city cite other factors as being isolating such as being in a single parent family and spending some time in care. But socio-economic factors, which affect mono-racial children too, are a significant mediating factor in how children of mixed race negotiate their childhoods. Where families are obviously middle class the experience is much more positive, suggesting that the living environment, friendship groups of parents and themselves are less likely to be racist, at least overtly. Whilst some of the working class participants have also been given very positive messages about their mixedness by their families, others have not had this experience and have grown up in environments where racism has been overt and often aggressive, impinging much more profoundly on their lives, as attacks on their person in some cases and through the lack of support to deal with racism when it occurred.

In all these varied family situations there is a tension around being mixed. Even where parental support is shown to be strong the data indicate that children were aware of the inherent difficulties, or the existence of issues which others did not experience, which are concerns around the mixed relationship situation. In cases where family support has been strong, children's

resilience has been developed in ways that have helped them to establish their identity and to deal with racism. Where family support has been intermittent or weak, as well as more or less non-existent, participants have not spoken with much confidence about their ability to manage racist incidents or to feel good about themselves and positive about their mixed status.

In summary the thematic findings show that, whilst children of mixed race deal with many of the issues that all children face in growing up, there are also additional and different issues around identity, isolation, family support and racism which need to be understood by practitioners in the field who are making needs assessments of mixed race children. The theoretical constructs of risk in late modernity which have been looked at in Chapter 10 do not immediately help to explicate the lived experiences of these young people. Globalisation, which has provided the environment for an increase in the numbers of people marrying across race and culture, and has increased risk generally for children growing up in the late modern period, has not yet delivered any positive places in which people of mixed race can exist. The prospect of being a liminal who could exist at the boundaries of two cultures and find a positive function as a flexible social-economic tool in the service of capitalism in a globalised society is not one that is evidently in prospect for the participants in this study.

### ***Review of the Methodology***

This project has brought together new empirical data about the lives of young people of mixed race. It has set out to listen to the participants' accounts of their childhoods and has examined those accounts in light of what is known about risks to mental health in children and adolescents and what is known about the development of resilience.

The *phenomenological approach* has been used to capture the raw data in as non-judgemental a way as possible, acknowledging the positionality of the researcher but not allowing any pre-conceived ideas to influence what participants wanted to say. The trigger questions (see Chapter 6) were used to give people encouragement to talk or write, but all participants were explicitly told

that it was not necessary to stick to them and they should reflect freely on the significant issues for them growing up as mixed race children. Whilst, as many researchers have acknowledged, reflective accounts will always be coloured by the raconteur's own position, it is reasonable to assume that those issues which have been most difficult and important to people will come out. People are likely to emphasise specific aspects of their life stories, allowing the researcher to gain an understanding about what has been important to them from their personal perspectives.

The *thematic analysis* has shown that participants' experiences of family support or lack of it, school experiences and experiences of racism and the struggle to find an acceptable identity have been phenomena that occur in almost every story.

The analysis moved on to look at factors, identified through the emerging themes, which might have influenced or put at risk the mental health of the participants. These factors were identified using the body of knowledge on *risk and resilience* as it relates to child and adolescent mental health (CAMH), where it can be used diagnostically to measure risk. This knowledge base is constructed from the use of a range of statistical techniques including regression analyses designed to identify causal factors giving rise to risk and resilience associated with quantitative studies as well as from qualitative research.

The issues that arise from the use of data derived from a mixture of methods are discussed in Chapter 5. It is contended by the researcher that the bringing together of these knowledge bases allows for a full and rich picture of the childhood factors which have threatened the mental health, or developed the resilience, of people of mixed race to be developed and understood. The use of the risk and resilience diagnostic framework has enabled proxy indicators to be derived in order to gain a better understanding of the level of risks that participants in this study experienced in their childhoods and has allowed for statements to be made about the significance of these for the on-going mental health and emotional wellbeing of the person.

These proxy indicators are inevitably selected on the basis of the researcher's understanding of risk and resilience indicators and the way in which these are demonstrated by the findings from the thematic analysis. They are not based on any existing work and are used here purely illustratively to alert policy makers and practitioners to their potential importance in understanding and working with the particular issues for, and vulnerability of, children of mixed race.

It is possible that their use could be further refined for future inquiry but, for the purposes of this project, they are employed as a tool to consolidate what has been derived from the data in answer to the research question.

In addition to the use of the risk and resilience framework, available statistical data have been collected to show how children of mixed race compare with other groups in order to create as robust a context as possible for this study, (see Chapter 4). Whilst some statistics stand out, such as the disproportionate number of mixed race young people in the care system, these data do not tell a consistent story and are significant for that fact. What is evident overall is that the statistical positions of mixed race children reflect the statistical positions of their type of mix.

The inclusion of this statistical data is helpful in underlining the lack of homogeneity in the mixed race community and further emphasises the need to assess each child and young person on their particular needs, based on an understanding of the issues which can arise for them.

### ***Policy and Practice Implications***

The literature review identifies the gap in service development which specifically focuses on children of mixed race and, within that, services which support the mental health/emotional wellbeing of this group. This applies across the four CAMHS tiers (HAS 1995 p 63), which include education and social care, in terms of assessment guidance and across youth and education services generally which aim to build resilience. Whilst there is a considerable amount of focus on BME adults and children, with programmes in place in many schools and training for

staff in the public sector to ensure cultural sensitivity, the mixed race child receives no specific attention. In contrast one of the most recent educational concerns has been about white children, boys in particular, of low socio-economic status. (Ofsted 2008).

As the literature review shows, there is now a body of written work in the UK that provides advice and information for individuals working with children of mixed race (Okitikpi Ed. 2005), much of it within work which relates to all BME children (Sewell 2009). Although there are still very few specific programmes which address the particular needs of mixed race children, several of the main conurbations now have a focussed resource for mixed race children and young people, mainly working in schools, such as the Planet Rainbow Project in Exeter; Mosaic in Brighton; the Sheffield Multiple Heritage Service; and the Inheritance Project in Birmingham (Smith 2007).

These resources have usually developed because of the concern and interest of motivated individuals, and provide support which is very much in line with what the study participants are suggesting, that is positive images of mixedness; someone to talk to about mixed race issues; and places to meet others who are mixed race. For example the *Sheffield Multiple Heritage Service*<sup>33</sup> was inspired by a teacher who developed a group work programme in a Sheffield school to allow boys and girls from mixed heritages to look at and discuss issues which affected them. The service has developed to increase mixed race children's welfare generally by raising their self esteem and aspirations, develop their ability to cope with racism and to improve school attendance and achievement.

*Mix-d*<sup>34</sup> is another example of a multiple heritage project working in schools and in the community, developing workshops with young people and also working with professionals, parents and carers. This organisation has expanded to deliver local and national conferences for young people and runs workshops across the country. It has developed on the initiative of one

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.blackparentnetwork.com/mixedrace/goodagency.dwt>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.mix-d.org/>

inspirational individual, much as the project in Sheffield, rather than from a Government-led desire to see mixed race children supported in any consistent way across the whole country.

Numerous practice tools and projects exist to develop resilience in children and young people, for example the Department of Education *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)* programme (DFES 2005), the *UK Resilience Programme* (Challen et al 2009) and *Magic Tricks - Promoting Resilience* programme developed by Hart et al (2004-6). Whilst the evaluations of such projects are complex and, in many cases do not provide unequivocal results, for example the 2008-2011 evaluation of the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) project (DfE 2011), they enhance the understanding of children's mental health in practice. These programmes do not specifically address the needs of children on mixed race but have applicability for all children in all settings, although awareness of issues for children of mixed race could be easily integrated.

Support for young people of mixed race/dual heritage also exists on the web. This is a relatively recent development and one which participants referred to as very helpful, and which they would like to have had more access to earlier in their lives. The main sites, which have been used by this project to identify participants and which are described in Chapter 6, are *People in Harmony* and *Intermix*. The latter has a well-used, interactive web site and both have links to a range of other resources. However whilst these projects are admirable in themselves it is unlikely that Government will invest in developing similar services nation-wide without more rigorous, longer term, evaluation.

In England community based approaches find an echo in *No Health Without Mental Health* (Department of Health), the Coalition Government's adaptation of the previous administration's *New Horizons* which was never published, which identifies positive characteristics of the sustainable, connected and capable communities which form the basis of the Government's Big Society approach, pointing out that such communities are likely to have lower rates of crime, better physical health, higher educational attainment and better mental health.

The new guidance makes a commitment to ensuring equality of access to services and to designing services that address the health needs of groups often previously excluded from primary health care services, through the use of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the new Health and Wellbeing Boards. As a result there is the expectation that there will be:

...better mental health, mental wellbeing and better services (which) must be better for all whatever people's age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, disability, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, or gender reassignment status. These areas constitute the 'protected characteristics' or groups as set out in the Equality Act 2010. ( DoH 2011 p.14)

Integral to the 'protected characteristics' or groups set out in the Equality Act 2010, the section on race offers the following clarification:

Race includes—

- (a) colour;
- (b) nationality;
- (c) ethnic or national origins.

(2) In relation to the protected characteristic of race—

- (a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular racial group;
- (b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same racial group.

(3) A racial group is a group of persons defined by reference to race; and a reference to a person's racial group is a reference to a racial group into which the person falls.

(4) The fact that a racial group comprises two or more distinct racial groups does not prevent it from constituting a particular racial group. (Home Office 2010 )

Paragraph 4 (above) may be of relevance to people of mixed race but there is no specification of racial categories against which this could be tested. Whether this new mental health legislation will focus commissioners on the mental health outcomes for people of mixed race, and specifically young people in that category, remains to be seen.

The picture of service provision varies according to location, and in terms of service usage it varies according to the date of the study and definitions used. There is no focus specifically on risk and resilience in relating to children of mixed race, although there is much in the new Coalition Government policy to encourage the development of good mental health and emotional wellbeing in all sectors of society. (The possibility of the messages from this project, were they to be replicated robustly, influencing policy and practice are considered in the following section on strengths and limitations.)

### ***Strengths, Limitations and Future Opportunities***

The data provided by the participants in this study have been insightful and provoking, but inevitably the study is limited in several ways. Whilst the case study method has provided rich data, the open-endedness of the trigger questions, which sometimes were hardly referred to by participants, means that comparable basic data for all those who responded was not always provided. A more structured approach would have provided for this but could potentially have fettered the telling of the stories by those who did not want to include such information, perhaps guarding their anonymity.

The generalisability of this study is limited by the absence of exclusion criteria. As the recruitment of participants progressed it was evident that a broader range of participants were opting to take part the research than originally anticipated including a higher proportion of older people and also participants resident outside the UK. However, on analysis of the data all the contributors demonstrated interesting and useful insights into what it is to be of mixed race. It had been anticipated that participants would be young adults but some key experiences of the older participants were remarkably similar to those faced by the younger participants, irrespective of the changes in the external environment over the years. It was not expected that people living currently outside the UK would respond, but again those people brought additional insights and also described some significant similarities. These narratives contributed positively to the overall picture of mixedness, both in describing different approaches to mixedness and the similarities in experiences, in the different settings over extended time periods, indicating the enduring nature of some of the core themes across time and place.

The methods of data collection have differed with participants electing to respond through a face-to-face interview, by telephone or via email. The quality of the data varies within these response media as well as between them. The richest data generally came from the email responses, where there was a sense that respondents had reflected on what they wanted to say and therefore produced a more coherent and, possibly because it was essentially less hurried, a more accurate version of events.

As has been discussed in the Method chapter, the researcher will only hear what is important for the participants and what the participant wants to be heard. This project is not exempt from this phenomenon. However, this effect may have been somewhat modified by the fact that many who responded were particularly passionate about the topic and were professionally engaged in the field of mixed race. Several participants expressed the wish that '*something should come out of*' this research and, perhaps as such, would have had a vested interest in accurate reporting.

Whilst the participants in this study self selected as mixed, most of them will be identifiable as mixed by skin colour. This study has not focussed on epidermal difference but this is a topic which is worthy of further exploration.

Whilst the data do not show that these participants had more than moderate levels of risk to their mental health in relation to their mixedness, their mental health would be threatened if additional risks presented themselves at any time. Longitudinal research and analysis of emerging data on mental health outcomes which identify mixed groupings is required before more robust statements about mental health risk can be made. Testing any such factors statistically in future, for their impact on risk and resilience, would refine and sensitise the risk and resilience evidence base to the specific needs of mixed race young people should the specific needs, identified in this study, be subsequently confirmed.

However in order to inform current policy and practice the evidence base needs not only to be convincing but to be seen as such. Much depends on the context and climate of public opinion, underlining the importance of communication and even lobbying in the furtherance of policy and practice change. The findings of a study by Rycroft-Malone (2004):

demonstrate that getting evidence into practice involves more than identifying high quality research evidence. The idea of relevance, organizational 'fit' and adequate resources highlight a dependence on an organization's political and contextual agenda and investment... It is likely that initiatives, which address policy agendas, will hold more appeal to local power holders than those that do not. (2004. p.921)

The comparatively recent focus on innovation diffusion (Rogers 2003) and implementation science show an understanding of the need to manage the products of research effectively. Many organisations currently have a knowledge management facility in recognition of the need to translate research evidence and good practice into the mainstream. Bate and Robert (2002) look at this process through the performance of three NHS 'collaboratives' and show that much still

depends on individual interest in maintaining the momentum. They also draw attention to a different knowledge process:

While the NHS has been vigorously promoting evidence-based medicine and the use of explicit expert knowledge in clinical practice, the private sector has been moving in the opposite direction, stressing the value of intuitive, tacit knowledge in its quest for quality excellence (p 657)

The 'Do Once and share' (DOAS)<sup>35</sup> programme developed by the NHS is an attempt to ensure that good practice is shared, without the need to re-invent the wheel. In the social care world the organisation 'Research in Practice'<sup>36</sup> was set up to provide evidence for social work practice and to offer this in a digested way to practitioners through seminars and publications.

The complexities involved in influencing practice cannot be underestimated but robust evidence has a key part to play. In terms of this project, notwithstanding the prominence of Obama as a powerful mixed race person and the popular discourse that has emanated from his election, the environment for implementation of findings such as mine still seems rather bleak.

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<sup>35</sup> The Do Once and Share programme is working to engage and enable clinicians, healthcare providers and patients to share their knowledge, skills and experience in order to ensure the best available knowledge is easily accessible; to minimise duplication and wasted time; to provide an agreed, best practice, national approach to care; to make optimum use of new IT systems and services being delivered by NHS Connecting for Health. <http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/resources/systserv/do-once-and/?searchterm=do%20once%20and%20share>

<sup>36</sup> Our mission is to build the capacity for evidence-informed practice in children's services. We support our network of Partners to move forward together, fostering a lasting culture shift in using evidence-informed practice to improve the lives of children, young people and families. Our work is about bringing together practitioner expertise with formal research evidence – creating new knowledge, new skills and a new energy to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. We support your people, your priorities and your performance. <http://www.rip.org.uk/about-us>

### ***Chapter Summary***

In this final substantive chapter the themes identified by the empirical data have been reviewed and considered in the light of sociological theory and other available data sources.

The methodological approach has been revisited to show the importance of bringing together differing streams of knowledge about mixed race young people as well as the diagnostic framework used in CAMH to identify risk and resilience in young people. The use of the proxy indicators has been revisited and, whilst there may be a future use for such indicators, it is emphasised that they are used here illustratively only.

Service provision for young people of mixed race has been described and the Current Coalition Government's mental health policy has been considered. Knowledge transfer has been briefly reviewed. The strengths and limitations of the project have been discussed, stressing the need for further research in order to follow up the findings of this project and to evaluate, longer term, the mixed race projects that are already in existence.

## Chapter 12: Concluding Remarks

### *Integrating the data*

The demographic and statistical data presented in Chapter 4 of the thesis illustrates the complexity and diversity of this group of people and does not present a clear picture of the characteristics of the mixed race group. As has been discussed earlier this is not a homogenous group and therefore it is no surprise that the statistical data do not present a homogenous picture. What does emerge from the statistics is that the ethnic mix is significant in explicating the figures. For example the GCSE passes gained by young people of white/Asian ethnicity mirrored that of Asian young people more generally, whereas the white/black Caribbean young people did only as well as their black Caribbean peers (DfES 2004). Possibly this further exemplifies the use of 'black' or 'Asian' as a default descriptor for mixed race people generally, but is more likely to reflect the norms of the non-white ethnic group.

There is, therefore, no obvious single grouping of young people of mixed race. The statistical information does not show mixed race young people as an underperforming or more deviant group *as a whole group*. However in relation to mixed race children in the care system and being adopted (DfES 2007), as well as in relation to in-patient CAMHS (Tulloch S. et al 2007), the statistics show disproportionately high numbers although specific mixes are not recorded. The in-patient CAMHS numbers are small, but the recent East London data (Jones 2010) suggest that there is a rising trend of mixed race children receiving CAMH in-patient services.

The narratives for this study have been gathered from a self-selecting, purposive sample. As people contacted the researcher about the study it was evident that each person brought a slightly different, and sometimes very different, experience of being mixed race. This resulted in an inclusive approach taken by the researcher in order to capture the diverse experiences. It was not anticipated that people who lived elsewhere than the UK would respond but when it was evident that four respondents had grown up in other countries and brought different perspectives from, as well as many similarities to, the bulk of participants who were UK residents it was decided to include them in the analysis. This allowed for some comparisons to be made and for some very different, culturally based experiences to be recorded. The only excluding criterion therefore was that participants had to identify as mixed race.

However the literature reviewed for this thesis only included a small number of studies that related to countries other than the UK. In this way the experience of people from elsewhere is not necessarily fully contextualised, although there has been some attempt to do this by

explaining the position of mixedness in other countries, mainly the USA. It is the contention of the researcher that the inclusion of participants from other countries adds to the understanding of the socially constructed nature of race and of mixedness and is a valuable addition to the study. Similarly the inclusion of people of different ages, whilst they will have grown up in differing external environments in relation to race, is useful in that the data they provide shows how their childhood experiences were similar to those participants who were around the mean age of 25, testifying to the enduring nature of these experiences despite significant social, policy and cultural changes.

In contextualising risk and resilience, as it is understood in the child and adolescent mental health field, the theoretical discussion in Chapter 10 considered the concept of 'risk' in its broadest sense. Whilst there are clear links between some aspects of global risk, for example the fractured, serially monogamous family of late modernity, other aspects of global risk such as terrorism and climate change do not have an immediate relevance other than for people caught up in such situations (Beck 2008.)

The experience of growing up mixed race is described by several participants as having developed their resilience, and the continuum from risk to resilience is evident in most of the narratives. The emergence of a substantial population of people of mixed race who are able to move easily between two or more cultures has been identified in Chapter 10 as a resilient place to be in a globalised society, potentially placing people of mixed race in an advantageous position. Being mixed race, therefore, provides a steeling effect (Rutter 2007) which can increase resilience. However, in common with most of the CAMH literature on risk and resilience, without adequate support at crucial points in a person's development being mixed race can also create risks to mental health and well-being which can persist into adulthood.

The research has identified specific factors - identity confusion and appearance; negative and unsupportive relationships: isolation and experience of racism from both white and black ethnic groups which are set out in Table 20 on page 205. These occur in a way that is unique to the experience of growing up mixed race and create additional vulnerabilities for mixed race children highlighting the need for enhanced support especially if these additional vulnerabilities are combined with other the known risk factors. Given this finding participants therefore, do not generally, in common with findings from other research projects, interpret their experiences as being in the forefront of globalised harmonious development.

This study concludes that, whilst sharing many of the positive and negative experiences of all children, children and young people of mixed race face some different and additional challenges

as they grow up, which they perceive as being related to their mixedness. The findings from this study add to the body of knowledge about the lives of young people of mixed race and help to inform health, education and social work practice in developing a nuanced assessment of needs and potential supports for children of mixed race.

In their search for an identity as young people they have struggled to give place to both, or all, of their ethnic inheritances, some passing for white and some identifying strongly as black during this process. For many participants there are deeply conflictual feelings about their appearance at different stages of their young lives. They have felt uncomfortable that their true ethnic inheritance has not always been recognised, as the validation of their dual or multiple heritages is of great importance to them in terms of being seen as who they ethnically are. Several participants have given examples of situations when this recognition and validation has not taken place, and which have led to awkwardness and embarrassment because either their black/Asian or their white side has not been recognised.

The heterogeneity of ethnic/racial/cultural identity, which causes them to remain as outsiders and individuals, precludes any opportunity to be part of an immediately identifiable group. Whilst they may be part of groupings based on gender, sexuality or ability, their appearance for the most part makes them 'other'; even within these broader groupings.

Almost all the participants report racist abuse, some of which has manifested itself in physical violence but most is more covert and is experienced as isolating and bewildering. They have coped with racist incidents well where families have been strong and supportive of their mixedness but have been more damaged by them where families have either been apparently unaware; have been ineffectual in helping their children directly; or ineffectual in getting the system to recognise, and do something about, their child's experiences.

Whilst this is likely to be the experience of racism for most BME people, there is one significant difference for people of mixed race. The racism towards them has been perpetrated by both black

and white peer groups, inevitably forcing them into a particular marginal or out-grouper position which mono-racial young people can usually avoid.

There has been a growing popular discourse on mixed race, largely as a result of the Obama campaign and subsequent election, but also prompted by sports and media stars and politicians being explicit about their racial heritage, for example Tiger Woods, Ryan Giggs, Oona King and Shirley Bassey. The acceptance of mixed race as an identity is still far from universal and 'black' is frequently the default position in popular discourse. This makes no sense for those people of mixed race who identify as mixed and even less sense to those people who identify as white. Whilst people of mixed race have on the whole found it easier than black people to mix with white people, in extreme cases being used to 'go between' the two racial groups as in the slave trade (Eshun 2005), this has not been on the basis of full acceptance or equality (Seacole 1857).

The discourse on mixed race has from time to time been pre-occupied with the idea that mixed race people are in some sense the embodiment of a solution to problems of racial/ethnic disharmony (Alibhai-Brown 2001). The liminal and flexible status of people of mixed race could be construed as a clear example of the position of the socially and economically flexible individual in an increasingly globalised society, and the resiliencies many of them have had to develop potentially place them in a prime position to take advantages of all that globalisation has to offer. This position is not shared by many people of mixed origins but, while it cannot be concluded that children of mixed race are the future in terms of equality and racial harmony, they constitute a growing demographic category and are likely to be increasingly vocal about the positive and negative aspects of the multiple heritages each enjoys.

The demographic evidence of the young, fast growing, mixed population indicates that greater recognition of this group is warranted, both in research effort and service delivery, which implies policy development. Identifying people of mixed race as black, effectively following the one drop rule of the USA, or in other cases choosing to do this as a political and social statement (Small

1988, Maxime 1986), is no longer acceptable to many mixed race people (Alibhai-Brown 2008, Smith 2007, Ahmed 2007). The 2001 census where people of mixed race were given the opportunity to record themselves as such and to record specific mixes has gradually influenced ethnic recording in other settings. Hence the picture remains patchy in terms of our knowledge and understanding about potential discrimination and service usage in relation to mixed race groupings, particularly as comparisons over time are not possible. It is to be hoped that the 2011 Census data will provide more opportunities for understanding trends in the mixed population.

This study was designed to explore whether or not the current evidence base, as it is applied to service delivery, requires modification to accommodate the specific needs of mixed race children and young people to protect and develop their mental health. Whilst public health policies are developing to meet the mental health needs of all children it is essential that these policies consider and include the specific factors that are important to children of mixed race if this growing population is not to feel isolated and undervalued. In the current climate particularly it is unlikely that many new and specific services can be developed for young people of mixed race, which underlines the importance of thorough, individualised assessments of need for every young person.

This will only be done effectively for young people of mixed race where there is an awareness of the issues, and therefore it is unavoidable that training needs to be in place to ensure this happens. This does not mean that 'new' training programmes have to be commissioned but rather that current facilities adapt to include these aspects. To ensure that this happens requires a political will and appreciation that is currently not evident, leaving it in the hands of the children's voluntary sector to take these messages forward.

I have been privileged, through the contributions of the participants in this study, to gain an insight into their childhood lives to gain an understanding of the issues they have faced which they

believe have arisen from their mixedness. I am deeply indebted to them for their time and their openness.