

Title

**WAYS IN WHICH THE CULTURAL IDENTITIES
OF MIXED HERITAGE INDIVIDUALS ARE
MAINTAINED IN MIXED ETHNICITY
STEPFAMILIES**

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Abstract

There has been an increasing amount of research into mixed heritage individuals, both adults and adolescents. More recently, some research has emerged on mixed heritage families, but there is hardly any research on mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. As a systemic clinician of mixed heritage, my research interest has stemmed from my personal experience of living in a stepfamily with visible differences, where my father's Nigerian culture was not discussed. In my clinical job, I work with families from culturally mixed backgrounds and have developed a keen interest in their experiences of maintaining the different cultures. I used discourse analysis to examine the various ways in which stepfamilies talked about their differences. Five stepfamilies were recruited. The biological parents (all mothers) and their partners and children participated in the study. The study revealed considerable variation in the talking and maintenance of cultural heritages within the stepfamilies, but four main findings emerged. In some stepfamilies, there was little or no talking, whilst in others, talking about the process of becoming a stepfamily occurred. The stepfamilies had various experiences of living with their visible differences, which included ideas of not having any differences or minimising differences. The extended family's role also played an important part that changed over time. The biological father's

'presence' was particularly significant to the children, most of whom maintained contact with their fathers. The study has revealed stepfamily life's complexities and the numerous ways in which the mixed heritage children/stepchildren navigated the different households to maintain their cultural heritages.

Introduction

'But we go along as if my tears and anger are the most natural things in the world. He talks about how happy I will be to see my old friends in San Francisco, not one of whom he can name. He drives to the airport as if we're going no farther than Yankee Stadium or to visit Grandma in Brighton Beach. I imagine he's looking forward to a break from me and my wars with his wife, my fights with my little brother, the way I complicate the family. In the Larchmont Baskin-Robbins I have overheard a woman marvelling at what a young but capable nanny I am. Walking with my brother and sister down Larchmont Avenue or Chatsworth, I have been asked if I am the baby-sitter, the maid, the au pair. I imagine that my father would like to relax and enjoy his assimilated all-white family without the aberration, the dark spot in an otherwise picture-perfect suburban life' (Walker, 2001: 227-228).

This extract comes from Rebecca Walker's autobiography, *Black, White and Jewish* (2001), and records her experiences following her parents' divorce in her family of origin, in both parents' extended families and in her father's stepfamily. Her mother, Alice Walker, a famous African-American writer, and her father, Mel Leventhal, a Jewish lawyer, were

political activists and part of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (US) during the 1960s. They married in 1967 in New York state, one of the few states that permitted interracial marriages, but they separated and divorced a few years later. The divorce settlement stipulated that they participated in the equal care and parenting of Rebecca and they agreed she would live with them each for two years at a time. Alice Walker moved to San Francisco and Mel Levanthal lived in New York. Rebecca's story tells of the disrupted schooling and friendships this arrangement created, but my main interest concerns her position in her father's stepfamily as a mixed race child living in an apparently white family, a child who outsiders assume is her younger siblings' paid carer.

Rebecca Walker's biography raises questions about: how to share parenting; the effects on the child of divorce and re-marriage and the stepfamily's relocation to a new neighbourhood; the consequences for the child of losing her biological family, adjusting to a new family structure and having new partners introduced. Themes include conflict in a stepfamily, how outsiders perceive families of mixed ethnicities, how family members perceive themselves, and patterns of communication about race and ethnicity in this context.

This research study has been informed and developed by both personal and professional contexts. I share Rebecca Walker's experience of living in a stepfamily with visible and cultural differences. My brother, the son of my Irish/English mother, and my Trinidadian stepfather, had blonde hair and blue eyes, and although we were frequently questioned about our parentage, we never discussed our differences within the family. My brother's blonde hair and blue eyes caused embarrassment, doubt and tension regarding his paternity early on in my parents' relationship. Talking about our obvious differences became problematic due to the possibility of disrupting this new family and was replaced by a troubled silence until my stepfather accepted that my fair-skinned brother really was his child. This shaped our family life and we never discussed our physical differences unless others enquired whether we 'really' were biologically related. My own Nigerian heritage was subsumed within an English/Irish/Trinidadian family and my father and his culture were never talked about. The accurate description of my cultural identity as an English/Irish/Nigerian child raised in an English/Irish/Trinidadian household has been further subsumed by the term 'mixed race'. My stepfather decided to educate me about his Trinidadian culture so that we became a mixed Trinidadian/English stepfamily and I understood Caribbean culture. But this never really

fitted me. Even though my brother had greater visible differences of skin colour, eye colour and hair texture, I felt different; this was complicated because my difference was not acknowledged. This experience led to my curiosity in issues such as the power of silence and physical differences in the family.

As a mixed heritage clinician who works in both a clinic and a community-based setting, I have paid particular attention to clients of mixed heritage and those children who are visibly different from their siblings. I recall my work with Sophia, aged 14, of Caribbean/Macedonian heritage. She was born to her single mother, Ana, and raised in Macedonia until the age of eight, when Ana married Alex, a Macedonian who became Sophia's stepfather and father of Stefan, Sophia's brother. Although Sophia was aware of her physical differences – her skin colour and hair – her racial or cultural origins were never discussed. Ana likened Sophia's darker skin to a suntan. Sophia eventually became aware of her origins during an argument between her mother and stepfather, when he informed Sophia she was not his child. Ana explained that she had met Sophia's father, Henry, when she worked for a family in the Caribbean. Their relationship ended and Henry had already left for Canada when Ana discovered she was pregnant. Unable to contact Henry and continue with her job, Ana had no choice

but to return home, where she endured prejudice and disapproval because she was the single mother of a mixed race child. Ana and her children came to England following her divorce with Alex and her relationship with Sophia became increasingly difficult. In my work with Sophia, she talked of the open racism and hostility she endured as a young child in Macedonia. She could only play with the minority Roma children who also experienced discrimination from the majority. She expressed considerable anger towards her mother, who she felt had been dishonest with her about her biological father. She perceived her mother as having racist attitudes towards her black and mixed race friends. Ana said that she was trying hard to locate Sophia's father, and in terms of her attitude to Sophia's friends, she felt she was protecting her. In our work together, Ana found it difficult to reflect upon her daughter's experience of racism in Macedonia and her difference within her stepfamily.

Although Sophia's family were of a different class and culture to Rebecca Walker's American middle-class family, they shared similarities in being visibly different from their siblings and parents, which led to a silence about their differences and cultural heritages. Aware of the diversity of family formations and how families define themselves, which includes both biological and social relationships, I have become

interested in whether (and how) such differences in families are discussed. Sophia, Rebecca Walker and I are from different generations, but we have shared the same issue of living with differences which are not discussed within our families. Sophia, Rebecca and I were physically different from our younger half-siblings and my half-brother's difference contributed to a silent discomfort. Our mothers had interracial relationships within cultures that frowned upon interracial mixing.

Following their separation, our parents (Sophia's mother, Rebecca's father, my mother) either married or remarried someone within their own culture or, as in my case, to a man of another culture. No consultations with the children took place. In my generation, my mother held the cultural belief that children should be seen, not heard. I was surprised, however, that no talking about differences or acknowledging the lone mixed-heritage child's position occurred in younger-generation families nor discussing the meanings that the silence of their heritage had for these children.

Talking of visible differences in families creates discomfort for some white clinicians. A white colleague asked that I join her in her work with a mixed heritage boy, nine years of age, referred for his aggression towards others. He lives with his single, white English mother; his Jamaican father had left their relationship during his mother's pregnancy.

As a result, he has no contact with his father or his father's extended family and is the only mixed heritage child in his white extended family. His mother had found it difficult to talk to her son about his father as she feared his anger and sense of rejection. Furthermore, the clinician had struggled to discuss with the mother or the boy being visibly different from his family members. Further exploring white culture and levels of the mother's racial and cultural awareness provided insights to support the mother's initial tentative approaches to her son about his differences from his white family and his father.

This study addresses the increasing diversity of cultures and the cultural mixing of relationships. The 2001 Census included the 'Mixed' race category for the first time (Aspinall, 2006). This indicates the mixed population's relative youth, suggesting they will form an increasingly large group of adults (Phoenix & Owen, 2000). Families of mixed heritages will form part of the clinical population whose lived experiences of having mixed heritages will remain silent and invisible if clinicians do not explore their experiences with them. Children's experiences may be silenced in their families. The therapeutic encounter may also reflect this, which, in turn, will impact on the mixed heritage children and their relationship to therapy. Helping children make sense of themselves in relation to others is central to therapeutic endeavours. It is crucial that

important aspects of mixed heritage children's lives are not omitted in therapy. During my training as a systemic psychotherapist I undertook a small research project in which systemic clinicians discussed their attention to the cultural mixing of families (Ayo, 2003). The research's aim was to explore whether clinicians went beyond their culturally mixed clients' racial terminology. For example, did clinicians discuss the specific cultural heritages of their African-Caribbean clients? The main finding was their reluctance to engage with this part of their clients' lived experiences. The clinicians' hesitancy to enquire about their clients' cultural mixing did not fit with (and seemed to contradict) the increasing diversity of the clients who presented at the clinic.

Stepfamilies and stepchildren have also received negative stereotypes for some time in literature and the media, and some believe these derive from perceptions of divorce (Claxton-Oldfield, 2008). Many stepfamilies' characteristics are not shared by those in first marriage families and they are more complex in stepfamilies primarily due to these families being formed following losses and change, which can alter the biological parent-child relationship. The family members come together at different phases in their individual, marital and family life cycles and can experience competing needs. Children usually have a parent living elsewhere who in the imagination or memory has a

presence in the stepfamily. All members of the stepfamily undergo adjustments in their relationships over time. Particularly significant for this study is that adults and children can come together from different cultural traditions and have different values and beliefs (Visher, Visher & Pasley, 2003). The mixed cultures of the first biological family and the ways in which the cultural heritages of the child of the first family are continued, disrupted or silenced are significant. Both mixed heritage individuals and stepfamilies have negative stereotypes and those mixed heritage individuals who move from a biological family to that of a single parent and to a stepfamily of a different cultural experience are likely to be given a doubly negative construction.

In this study, I consider it important to discover if cultural identities from the child's biological family continue or are changed within their stepfamilies to provide a more detailed picture of families with different ethnicities following the ruptures of divorce. This area of study foregrounds the topic of culture within the field of mixed race studies, which I consider is overlooked and will contribute to the clinical work undertaken with complex and diverse families.

This research explores the experiences of stepfamilies of mixed ethnicities and aims to support the development of clinical practice with mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. Clients presenting in our child and family

services are from increasingly diverse backgrounds and include families whose complexities can be easily missed and become invisible if clinicians do not pay attention to this area of study. Within the past 15 years or so there has been increased attention to working with cultural differences (Barratt et al., 1999; Hardy & Laszloffy, 1996; Krause, 1998) and more recent works on whiteness (Nolte, 2007; Wallis & Singh, 2012), but working with mixed heritage clients remains overlooked. Clinical services have addressed the needs of groups such as refugees and asylum seekers, yet the particular needs of mixed heritage children or young people living in families with visible differences remains invisible. This study aims to address the silence around and invisibility of this client group and contribute to developing clinicians' knowledge and skills when working with complex families.

My study includes biological parents, stepparents and children to learn about how they have each addressed cultural differences within their stepfamilies. A stepparent of another culture introduces further complexities into the family system, following separation, divorce and single parenthood. The parent and stepparent's negotiation of their expectations of the new stepfamily form part of the new family system. This raises questions of whether the culture of the non-resident parent will be respected and continued within the stepfamily, and the ways in

which the stepfamily undertake this. The second question is whether the stepparent's culture will also form part of the stepfamily, how this is done, and the effects this might have upon the child/stepchild. This study addresses these aspects of stepfamily life and explores their constructions with each member of the stepfamily.

The study explores the lived experiences of mixed heritage individuals and their biological parents and stepparents to gain knowledge of their communication about living with visible differences, their understanding of the process of becoming a stepfamily, and how their own beliefs have contributed to shaping their new family. It explores the ways in which mixed heritage individuals navigate complex relationships, how they recognise and maintain, or fail to recognise and maintain, their biological parents' culture.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

The literature review consists of three main sections. In the first section, I consider the literature on the terminology of mixed race people, and constructions of mixed race identity, followed by a second section on research into stepfamilies. The final section considers concepts from family therapy on culture and stepfamilies which will provide a systemic context for my research. To contextualise the topic, I will begin by considering recent data on mixed families in Britain.

1.2. Mixed families in Britain

Increasing diversity within British society has been identified in statistical reports (Census, 2001) and the Labour Force Survey (Platt, 2009). In the 2001 UK Census the race category 'Mixed race' was included for the first time. The results revealed that a high percentage of the mixed population were in younger age groups. Of the 14.6% minority ethnic groups under five years of age, the 'Mixed race' group was nearly a quarter (26.2%). The 2001 Census revealed major changes in the demography and provided more accurate data of the mixed heritage

population and increasing numbers of Britons who will be of mixed heritages (Owen: 2007).

More recently, Dunnell's report on diversity for the Office of National Statistics (2013) has noted that the 'nature of diversity within different groups is changing and different groups continue to have different experiences and outcomes' (2013: 3). Other parts of the UK are less diverse. In Wales and Scotland, 97% of the population is white, and in Northern Ireland 99%. England as a whole is 88% white. Ethnic diversity differs, however, within the UK and London. London is the most diverse city, with 65% of individuals coming from white groups that are also diverse, but whose ethnicities remain unidentified. The 'Mixed race' group has the youngest population (52% under 16 years of age). Particularly interesting are inter-ethnic marriages, 26% of which involved a white/mixed couple. Almost 48% of black men who classified themselves as 'Black (others)' and 29% of 'Black Caribbean' men were married to women outside the black ethnic group (Dunnell, 2013). Children of such unions will thus have multiple heritages, similar to Tiger Woods. He referred to himself as 'Cablinasian', recognising his multiple heritages. His father is African American and has American Indian and Chinese ancestry; his mother is of Thai, Chinese and European descent.

The term ‘Cablinasian’ captures more accurately his Caucasian, Black, Indian and Asian origins, which current methods do not.

This data indicates the British population’s increasing diversity with more inter-ethnic marriages whose children will have multiple heritages. These complexities need to be identified so we can broaden our understanding of how family members manage living with and living between multiple heritages. Song (2007) proposes including a number of variables – physical appearance, class, gender and neighbourhood ethnic composition – to more fully capture mixed heritage people’s lived experience.

1.3. Terminology

1.3.1. Culture, Ethnicity and Mixed Heritage

It is crucial to discuss cultural mixing in relation to culture, race and ethnicity. Karamat-Ali (2003) suggests that culture is a concept people are more familiar with than race, and the emphasis on culture has overshadowed thinking about race as a potentially separate and legitimate subject. Akamatsu (1998) also believes that phrases such as ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cultural difference’ often obscure inequality in our society and can prevent culturally sensitive practices. ‘Not having to notice’ is a white majority privilege and ‘noticing’, not surprisingly,

arouses much anxiety and defensiveness (1998: 130). This is a valid point, but I believe that terminologies of ethnicity, race and culture are so intertwined that each term connects to the other, which I will discuss further.

More broadly, culture refers to distinctive ways of life as well as the shared values and meanings common to different groups, nations, classes, sub-cultures and historical periods. Culture is part of everyday social practices by which meanings are produced and exchanged within a group. These practices often take the shape of assumptions about personhood and relationships (Krause, 2002) and are constantly evolving processes. Brah (1996) considers these processes as ‘signifying practices’ in which ‘social meaning is constituted, appropriated, contested and transformed’ (1996: 234). Identities are developed within these practices and individuals are positioned or position themselves in relation to their racialisation, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Mixed race identity has been positioned as transgressive, because it challenges the notion of racial purity (Olumide, 2002; Werbner, 1997) based on ‘scientific racist’ ideas of the nineteenth century which identified white people as racially superior (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002). Interracial unions were considered to produce

degenerate children, an ambiguous group who did not belong to either race and polluted the white race (Olumide, 2002).

Ethnicity applies to everyone and, as a term, lacks precision, but it broadly refers to the definition of cultural and racial groups. An ethnic group's main feature is boundary formation between groups, the sense of sharing common attributes relating to appearance, cultural practices, history, language and culture, where the construction of identities is located (Hall, 1990).

The terminology used to describe people of mixed heritage, such as 'mixed race' has emphasised racialisation and racialised mixing. Many different terms are employed and there is little consensus on the terminology used to describe people of mixed heritages, a highly contentious area because of the diversity of mixed heritage people who do not constitute a homogeneous community (Tikly et.al, 2004). The focus of this study is on cultural heritages, and therefore that is the term I use to identify specific aspects of culture that are maintained and experienced in stepfamilies. I employ the term 'mixed heritage' to stay focused on the cultural aspects of identity's mixedness and to address multiple cultural heritages. However, I am mindful that racial categories continue to have social and psychological importance and much research uses the term 'mixed race'. Barn & Harman (2006) consider the

term ‘mixed heritage’ to be part of the mixed perspective which acknowledges a mixed identity in preference to an identification with black groups. This opposes a politicised black identity and refers to historical factors of preferential treatment for those of mixed heritages, which leads the authors to question whether the mixed race ‘movement’ seeks to dissociate from ‘problematic’ black people (Barn & Harman, 2006). Although Barn & Harman (2006) have located the term ‘mixed heritage’ within the category of ‘mixed perspectives’, they have overlooked the meaning of the term ‘heritage’, which I view as crucial to identity.

However, the negative concepts of identity crisis and identity confusion have been widely used in discussions about mixed race identity. Individuals’ experiences who live within and between two cultures have been researched (Wilson, 1987; Tizard & Phoenix, 2002; Ali, 2002) and these researchers have provided some useful insights into the ways in which their mixed heritage participants experience their culturally mixed identities and how others perceive them. Further attention has also been paid to culturally mixed families and ways in which parents provide their children with a sense of identity and belonging (Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray, 2008).

1.3.2. Research on terminology

The inventory of terminologies includes: ‘mixed race’, ‘mixed parentage’, ‘mixed blood’, ‘mixed racial descent’, ‘mixed descent’, ‘mixed origins’, ‘mixed ethnicity’, ‘multi-ethnic’, ‘dual heritage’, ‘multiracial’, ‘biracial’, ‘inter-racial’, ‘creole’, ‘mestizo’, to more negative terms such as: ‘half-caste’, ‘mulatto’, ‘half-breed’, ‘coconut’ and ‘zebra’ (Ifekwunigwe, 1997).

Personal preferences and specific contexts influence how mixed heritage people refer to themselves, some of which can be creative, e.g. a young man of white and Asian parentage refers to himself as a ‘Wasian’ to describe his ethnicity more accurately. Aspinall, Song & Hashem’s (2006) research provides further details on the multiplicity and complexity of descriptions mixed heritage peoples use themselves. The discrepancy between how groups define themselves and the social categories defined by ‘other’ is significant to those of mixed heritage (Aspinall, 2009). Findings based on 47 responses to questionnaires about categories and terminology showed the varied and detailed responses such as, ‘my mother is Italian and my father is Iranian; my mother is a UK-born Muslim of Irish (mother) and Pakistani (father) parentage’ (Aspinall, Song & Hashem, 2006: 28).

The 2001 UK Census invited people to identify themselves in a specific way which did not describe their everyday lives. For example, the daughter of an Indian mother and white Scottish father may be described as Asian or mixed race on a form, but they may feel their cultural identities and social networks are Gujarati and Scottish (Song, 2007). Song identified the discrepancy between description and classification an important issue for us to consider, because the census is a general document of categories and classifications that does not seek to describe how people live their everyday lives. However, as a member of a group who has frequently been invited to identify myself as 'other' on ethnic monitoring forms, the 2001 Census legitimises the category of 'Mixed race'.

Aspinall, Song & Hashem (2006) also explored responses to terminology and found that mixed heritage participants considered the term 'Dual Heritage' offensive. They explained that 'many of us are more than dual.' (2006:16). Half-caste was regarded as negative, because it sounds derogatory and 'portrays the notion that I am only half a person' (2006: 16). These terms used in everyday language form part of the binary, either/or identity lodged in essentialist ideology. Some participants raised the issue that all the categories used the term 'Mixed' that included 'White', e.g. White and Black Caribbean, but 'White' was

not further defined. This assumed similarities between white people that do not require further explanation, whereas non-white people are categorised (Aspinall, Song & Hashem, 2006). These participants also indicated that the categories did not include those of mixed parentage who are not white, an issue raised by Mahtani & Moreno (2001), who discuss how their mixed cultural heritages of South Asian and Iranian and Mexican-Chinese are marginalised.

Aspinall, Song & Hashem's research (2006) is an important contribution to the field of mixed heritage studies; it raises awareness of the significance of preferred and non-preferred terminologies. It also raises the question of the racialised category, 'White', which ought to be further defined, e.g. Irish, Scottish, French, thus indicating diversity in the white population. Their research confirms the complexity of a multiplicity of cultures in their mixed-heritage participants' lives that is not captured by racial categories on institutional forms. It misrepresents the mixing of this group and reinforces notions of a problematic identity. The research also identifies the complex descriptions of peoples' cultural heritages. One participant referred to living in a stepfamily of a culture different from that of their birth family (Aspinall, Song & Hashem 2006: 13).

Further research (Aspinall, 2009) on mixed heritage people's preferred terminologies revealed a preference for the term 'mixed race', because other terms indicated a dual category such as 'biracial' or 'dual heritage' which were considered less applicable. Further developments in ethnicity classification indicate a shift from categories of colour to categories of culture. The replacement of the 'White British' category with 'English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British in the 2011 Census, highlights the attempt to more accurately reflect mixed groups.

The research points to the importance of terminology that captures multiplicity; 'mixed ethnic groups' and 'multiple ethnic groups' have emerged as possible categories (Aspinall, 2009). I aim to explore the extent to which cultural heritages influence these categories.

1.4. Important concepts of mixed heritage identity formation

Conceptual models for mixed race identity originated with Robert Park's (1928) definition of a 'marginal' individual as a person who lives simultaneously in two separate cultures yet is a stranger to both. He believed this person wishes to belong yet retains a unique, broader view than that of the non-marginal person. Parks considered marginality to have a positive position, but during the 1930s, Stonequist (1937) developed a cycle of marginality in which the first phase is the

marginalised individual's unawareness of their racialised difference. In the second phase, awareness leads to a crisis because it is accompanied by feelings of rejection and isolation due to being between two different cultures. The third phase consists of adjustment and choice as the marginal individual decides whether to embrace white or black society. Stonequist proposed that if the marginal individual chose to remain marginal then they would feel rejected and isolated forever. This conceptual model, renamed 'between two cultures', was not based on any empirical research, but has contributed to the stereotype of mixed heritage people as marginal beings (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002: 45).

Although this view has been challenged, concepts of identity crisis and identity confusion have been widely used in general discussions of mixed race identity. This has resulted in the ongoing idea that children of a mixed relationship are more likely to suffer from identity problems than children from ethnically similar parents. They are constructed as likely to be rejected for being 'too white' for the black groups and 'too black' for the white groups. The terms 'identity confusion', 'identity problems' and 'identity crisis' have entered common usage and are applied to people of mixed heritages based on the work of psychologists such as Erikson (1968). He considered adolescence a developmental stage of crisis through which young people had to pass to become adults, a process

that was mapped onto the mixed heritage identity. Du Bois' theory of double consciousness (1993; 1999) posits the sense of two identities as being ever present because of slavery's legacy. Du Bois referred to the struggle for the African American to merge two identities into one, which would recognise simultaneous African ancestry and American identities.

The term 'double consciousness' applies to mixed heritage individuals who are the product of two or more cultures. The mixed heritage identity has been considered problematic because of the predominant view of mixed race identities based on binary constructions of race as either black or white. Those of mixed parentage do not fit easily into these categories and therefore have been historically classified as different from black and white groups. This has resulted in a pathologising of those who do not fit easily into the categories of black and white, reflected in the various contentious terminologies used to describe mixed heritage people.

The conceptual change to mixed race identity as problematic has been driven by key theorists in cultural identity such as Hall (1990) and Brah (1996), whose works I will briefly outline.

Brah's work (1996) on the concept of diaspora is also significant. Her definition of diaspora (1996) includes the historical movement of particular groups who have migrated to different countries and

established communities with their own specific histories and narratives of migration which are lived and re-lived through memory. Central to the diaspora are ideas of a homeland, real or imagined, which is relived through memory and settlement. Brah (1996) discusses the regimes of power that have contributed to different diasporic communities. Slavery and colonialism are historical regimes of power from which the black and Asian communities developed in England. Brah (1996) points to their arrival and settlement and the subsequent intersection of class, gender, race and sexuality in terms of social difference. Referred to as relational positioning, Brah (1996) suggests that this term permits the consideration of the regimes of power that differentiate one group from another to construct the groups in particular ways based on their similarities and differences and to include or exclude them in terms of having a British identity.

Brah's (1996) term diaspora space identifies 'a point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them' are contested' (1996: 209). She includes those groups and their descendants who have migrated but also those who are constructed as members of settled communities and notes the interplay of their similarities and differences with differentiations of class, gender, racism and sexuality. Their sense of rights to belong, to forge a British

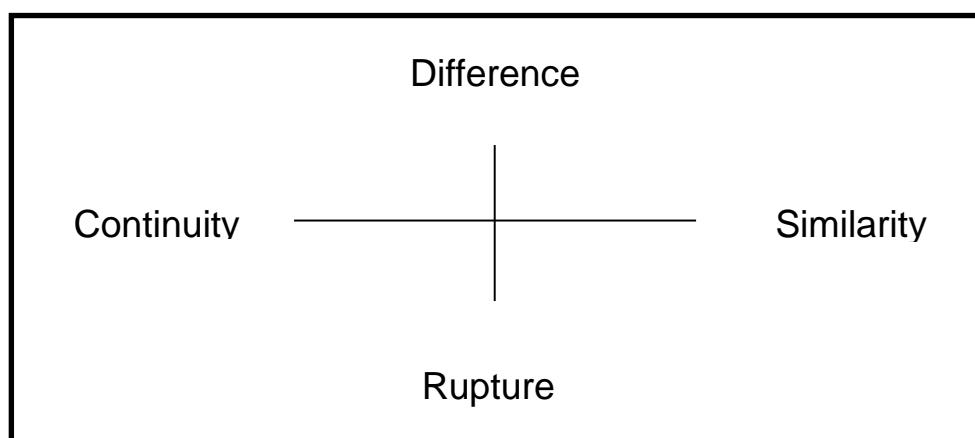
identity that includes other cultures, challenges and transforms the construction of the ‘pure’ English identity.

Brah (1996) provides an interesting example in England’s diaspora space, looking at how different diasporas: African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian and others intermix amongst themselves as well as with the English identity, resulting in a re-definition of Englishness. The English identity has originated from the internal colonialism of Ireland, Wales and Scotland and historical rivalries and wars in Europe. Englishness now incorporates British Asian and British Caribbean identities, which Clifford (1994) refers to as ‘ways to be British and something else’ (1994: 308). The ‘something else’ draws upon shared histories of British and American slavery, racism, survival, hybridisation and political activism and includes the dimension of struggle to the definition of the black diaspora.

The main points that I wish to draw upon in Brah’s (1994) important work is the concept of diaspora space as a site for hybridisation within which mixed groups have become historically embedded in English society. Another significant issue is the subordinate groups that have forged relationships between themselves, but are not always mediated through the dominant culture. My interest is in how these subordinate groups interrelate, intersect and overlap with each

other and how they define Irish, Welsh, Scottish, English and minority groups' identities in terms of differentiating class, race, gender and sexuality.

Hall's work on cultural identity is particularly significant to my study. He considers that identity is 'a production, which is never complete, always in process' (1990: 222). He offered a framework for conceptualising Caribbean identities: two axes that intersect; the vector of similarity and continuity, and the vector of difference and rupture (Hall, 1990).



The first axis refers to the past and the second axis refers to the discontinuities of slavery, transportation, colonisation and migration. It is the dialogic relationship between the two that I believe sets a significant historical context. 'The uprooting of slavery has both unified Caribbean

peoples in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past' (1990: 227).

Slaves came from different parts of Africa, from different communities, with varied languages and religions. This history was silenced and erased during colonial rule until the 1970s. At this time, it became more available through Caribbean peoples' political activism (the 'Black Power' movement and 'Black music'), at the same time as a recognition of their slave ancestry (Hall, 1990). Hall suggests that differences can persist alongside continuity and that the concept of cultural identity is an active transformative process, which he also defined as hybridity (1990). For Hall, the Caribbean's diasporic identities are constantly reproduced through 'transformation and difference' (1990: 235), which is the hybridisation process that I consider applicable to the mixed heritage identity.

Although the term 'hybridity' was historically associated with scientific racism in the nineteenth century, which considered racial mixing transgressive and something that polluted whiteness (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002), it now has a positive meaning and challenges essentialist ideas about identity. Hall (2005) considers identity positional; identities are complex, plural and 'multiply constructed across difference, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'

(2004:4). Both Brah (1996) and Hall's theories (2005) are central to my research. The concept of diaspora space includes a national space of 'England' and local, regional space in which similarities and differences are articulated across axes of differentiation (class, gender, racism). The relational positioning of different diasporic groups by the regimes of power that differentiated one group from another is also significant.

This speaks to my own history where I experienced the shift from membership of a very small African Caribbean group to a larger African Caribbean minority group that was not only settled into English society, but had helped transform English society. Position theory upholds the idea of discourses in which we decide to take up a position or are positioned by others based on our interactions and actions. Discourses construct subjects as well as objects and make positions available within a number of meanings that speakers locate others in or select the position for themselves. Positions consequences are explored in the subjective experience of that position and what emotions are experienced and ideas that are produced from within various subject positions. Another important issue in positioning is power. Positions offered, accepted or resisted in everyday talk are the discursive practices by which discourses and their associated power implications are brought to life.

Brah (1996) refers to relational positioning of those diasporic groups who have migrated and settled in Britain and suggests that they are ‘situated’ in several different discourses, economic processes and institutional practices that bear heavily on their futures. The different groups are, therefore, positioned in relation to each other and in relation to legal and economic processes. Brah (1996) attends to the regimes of power which differentiate the groups, to represent them as similar or different or include/exclude them from British society. Social differentiation (gender, class, religion) and other key ‘signifiers of difference’ (skin colour, culture), as well as the impact of how diasporic groups relate to each other are also important to consider. During the 1960s’ independence movements, I recall the shift in thinking that my stepfather’s group of Trinidadian friends had to go through to accept a ‘Black British’ identity for their children.

The different ways in which individuals position themselves or are positioned depends on their racialisation, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and class. Taking up a position, being positioned by others, and how mixed heritage individuals position others in the discourses of mixed race and stepfamilies will form part of my research interest.

Luke & Luke's (1999) research on 49 interracial couples in Australia highlights the complexities in different ethnicities and the positions taken up by those in mixed relationships. They interviewed couples who were visibly different from each other and argued that cultural theories did not account for the 'multiply situated character of several generations of interracial subjects' (1999: 2). They discovered that 'conventional categories available about ethnicity, race and identity failed to capture the complexity and local specificity of their research participants (1999: 11). Their visibly ethnic participants' experiences were positioned 'outside' of or invisible to the traditional conventions of dualism used in identity theories. One of the participants of Indian ancestry, born in Singapore, who attended Catholic school before his family settled in Australia, identified himself as Singaporean and spoke of his Indian culture being subsumed within his Catholic upbringing.

Conventional categories fail to capture this participant's complexity; his hybridity is identified in the conceptual. Particularly notable is the intersection of the participant's multiple identities, the impact of the dominant societal construct of his Singaporean Catholic identity, his subordinate Indian identity and how this positioned him within Australian culture. This study reveals in detail the interplay between those more subordinated aspects of the lived experience that the participant (his

Indian culture) and those that were privileged (Catholicism, his Singaporean identity). Furthermore, assumptions about his identity were made by both white Australians and those of the local Fijian-Indian community who thought he was of their culture.

All the interracial couples interviewed in their 20s and 30s considered their differences affirmative, 'our own way', 'a different way' (1999: 8), which indicates a shift from the older generation who had lived through colonialism and political activism, but continued to experience others' assumptions regarding cultural origins. The older generation represent the contestation of cultural identities of those who have settled, but who continue to experience a sense of being 'outsiders'. Based on Hall's theories of hybridity, Luke & Luke (1999) propose that hybridity is a dynamic process in which history, culture and power are continually 'reproducing and producing themselves through transformation and difference' (1999: 9). The site of hybridity in which cultural identities are shaped and reworked has revealed complex tensions and disjuncture. It is these tensions and their effects in the everyday lives of family members of different ethnicities that I will explore in my study.

Both Luke & Luke (1999) and Aspinall, Song & Hashem (2006) have identified a greater complexity of terminologies regarding mixed

heritage individuals that are not reflected in conventional categories.

Luke & Luke (1999) also point to outsiders' assumptions of the racialised participants' identities that the researchers refer to as 'the misrecognised experiences of identity' (Luke & Luke, 1999: 11). Further attention to the effects of silencing one identity for another would lead to increased awareness of the impact upon childhood and families.

The silencing of one identity for another is a theme developed from Phoenix's research (2011) into families living with visible differences using intersectionality as an analysis method. The concept of intersectionality is defined as 'an analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to how some identities intersect with other identities and how these intersections contribute to the unique experience of oppression and privilege' (Symington, 2004: 1). Phoenix suggests that 'racialised structures are, for example, partly expressed through everyday cultural practices, whether people are complicit with, reproduce, resist or transform expectations of what it is "to belong" to particular racialised categories' (Phoenix, 2011: 138).

The visible differences within mixed ethnicity families are central to Phoenix's analysis, which supports the exploration of complexity within those who are positioned in multiple groups. Phoenix focused on adults from various ethnic groups who had grown up in families where there

was serial migration (adults who came from the Caribbean to join their parents in Britain), those who became translators and interpreters for their parents, and those who grew up in ethnically different families, which is my main focus of interest. One participant's mixed identity developed 'as a result of struggle and resistance to his family' (2011: 144) and simultaneously he identified with his black father who had separated from his mother and his mother's white working class identity. Themes of disjunction in different contexts, emotional processing of experiences, power relations within the family and with outsiders were reworked in a memory which forged a narrative of simultaneous multiple positions. These findings acknowledge the complexities of mixed heritage adults' family life. The research demonstrates ways in which mixed heritage individuals navigate their different cultures and families.

Root's (2004) study on mixed heritage women in the US identifies three generations situated in different periods of social change. The 'exotic' generation, born before the late 1960s, were part of the monoracial context within which identification as 'mixed' required passing tests of authenticity. Choosing a white partner was considered evidence of an inauthentic identity and an attempt to identify as white. Some mixed heritage women of this generation were from families under strain due to racial bigotry and public animosity towards interracial

marriage. Pinderhughes's (1998) descriptions of her family shame and secrecy of having white ancestry in her mother's family provide poignant substance to interracial relationships. The 'vanguard generation' of the late 1960s and the 1970s experienced great social change, such as the desegregation of schools and the increase in interracial marriages. They 'exercised situational identity' (Root, 2004: 25) in which they would shift ways of interaction which were context dependent. The third group, 'biracial baby boomers', born after 1980, benefit from the Civil Rights movement, which also occurred in England. They are more likely to be educated with culturally mixed peers within a culturally diverse society. This generation claim both their cultural identities and demonstrate the paradigm shift to a multiplicity of identities, but must contend with the racism of those who pursue a monoracial identity and who question the authenticity of mixed heritage individuals' identity.

Root's (2004) generational model is relevant to my study, as I research the monoracial movement in the pre-1960s. The biological parents and stepparents who may have been born during the 1970s and their children/stepchildren, and the biracial baby-boomers born after 1980s, would claim multiple heritages. Each generation will be influenced and informed by these broader socio-political contexts. The participants in my study are younger, and the ways in which they

currently negotiate their cultural identities are explored and how they respond to and manage the tensions between their own ideas of self and societal definitions of mixed heritage people. However, Anthias (2001) indicates the culturally dominant groups' importance and their ability and openness to 'transforming and abandoning some of their own central cultural symbols' (2001: 630). She points out the significance of the dominant groups' power, whose ideas are challenged by hybrids or 'cultural brokers'. This does not, however, prevent hybridity continuing, which I suggest has historically been part of British society (the mixed communities of London, Liverpool and Cardiff), but has remained largely invisible outside these communities (Bressey, 2009).

In summary, cultural heritages in mixed ethnic stepfamilies are located at the intersection of cultural identities, with differences including gender, race, religion, abilities, class, culture, education and sexuality. This process is in tension with and resistant to the dominant culture's racialised conventions. Conceptualising diasporic space (Brah, 1996) within which processes of hybridisation take place (Hall, 1990) forms an important framework for the study. These ideas are particularly significant for my research on cultural heritages in which ambivalence, ambiguity and the recreation of identities intersect with location, race, gender and culture. The operation of these intersections, the ways in

which they overlap and the varied ways in which mixed heritage individuals navigate these intersections within families is of interest, as well as stepfamily members' responses to racism or negative comments about their identity.

I have traced the theoretical concepts of the mixed race identity from ideas of marginality, striving either to be black or white to more recent ideas of identity as multiple, complex and hybrid, as we operate in different discourses simultaneously.

I consider in this study how mixed heritage people position themselves or are positioned within these multiple discourses, and the extent to which their different contexts intersect with each other.

1.5. Constructions of Self and Mixed Heritage

In this section, I outline some key ideas about self, identity and mixed race identity. Social constructionists argue that identity and selfhood are created and recreated through language; this is like Hall's (1990) concept of identity, that it is always in process. The social constructionists challenge essentialist ideology by arguing for the socio-cultural-historical location of identity – in short, that all identities are formed through social interaction and are multi-positioned in different contexts. At times, these identities are experienced as conflictual,

depending on the socio-political contexts that change over time.

Contextual variables such as race, gender, class and religion are a few of the dimensions of self that shape identity (Hardy & Lappin, 1997).

Harre & Gillett (1994) note that we inhabit many different discourses, some of which will conflict and require negotiation and adjustment. We develop a complex subjectivity from participation in various discourses, some of which may be more dominant than others at particular times (1994: 25) that is linked to intersectionality discussed earlier (Phoenix, 2011; Luke and Luke, 1999).

Discourse refers to meanings, statements, comments, metaphors, images, stories and representations that produce particular versions of events in particular ways (Wetherell & Potter, 2001). Using language is a key component in discourse because various meanings are made available through language (*ibid*, 2001). Attention is paid to power, societal institutions and social practices, and wider social processes. (*ibid*. 2001). Dominant discourses privilege versions of social reality that legitimate existing power relations and social structures that lead to an established way of seeing that becomes common sense. Yet discourses can be challenged. For example, European domination during the periods of slavery and colonialism rendered African history and cultures invisible to slaves themselves. For example, the Maroons of Jamaica are

a community of African slaves who escaped from their Spanish masters in the mid-seventeenth century. The Maroon settlements have survived and they maintain the culture of their Akan ancestors in Ghana. Their history of resistance, independence and negotiation provides an alternative response to slavery which remains a source of pride. This community also indicates the extent to which their history challenges the dominant story of slavery, which remains hidden from mainstream education¹.

Within discourses we decide to take up a position or are positioned by others based on our interactions and actions. A person's moral beliefs are demonstrated in conversation, and different types of discourse influence the position taken up by individuals (Campbell, 2006). In conversation, our positions are always taken in relation to one another, and these can alter.

In sum, the constructions of self are located in discourses that we experience as multiple and simultaneously through which we position ourselves or are positioned by others. Dominant discourses privilege versions of social reality that can be challenged.

¹ Their numbers increased with the arrival of another group of slaves and they formed two main groups based on their geographical locations. Both groups found refuge in the mountainous regions of eastern and western Jamaica from which they launched attacks on the property of British plantation owners. Cudjoe was the nominated leader of the western group and under his leadership the Maroons agreed upon a peace settlement with the British in 1739, which enabled them to remain independent. A year later, the Maroons in eastern Jamaica, under their female leader, Nanny, also signed a treaty with the British.

There has been a shift from the negative concept of the mixed race identity as confused and problematic (Clark & Clark, 1947). It has moved to an emphasis on psychological factors associated with strength and integrity of identity amongst those whose identities the dominant society devalues, and whose self-definition may not coincide with the way others define them (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002).

1.6. Research on constructions of self and mixed heritage

Within the past 15 years there have been significant contributions to the field of mixed race/mixed heritage research in the UK, the US and Australia that share histories of interracial mixing, but have distinct political histories. In the US, slavery, post slavery segregation and anti-miscegenation laws were specific structures of oppression resisted by organised political activism. The Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s represented different sections of the black struggle. The British experience is based on the historical experiences of imperialism, decolonisation during the 1950s and the recruitment of those from the former colonies to the UK for employment, which impacted upon settlement and race relations. The political claiming of the word 'Black' became a dominant term for minority groups which, through debate, became fragmented into more specific terms of

blackness such as ‘Asian’, ‘Caribbean’ and ‘African’, but did not permit any intellectual attention to mixedness (Ali, 2012). Increasingly, in both the US and the UK, there are people who claim a mixed heritage or identity and organisations have been established to support mixed heritage individuals and families. Although there are different historical contexts of racial mixing in the US and the UK there are no significant differences in research due to similar shared histories of marginalisation, discrimination and prejudice. Individual experiences of mixed heritage in specific contexts that of family and education, have been explored (Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray, 2006; Tikly, Caballero, Haynes & Hill, 2004). Particular racial and cultural mixes have been researched (Ali, 2003; Barratt, 2007; Bauer, 2010; Goulbourne, 2010; Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Lise, 2008; Olumide, 2002; Root, 2004 & Sims, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Song, 2010; Tizard & Phoenix, 2002); and experience of interracial couples, such as Killian (2001) in the US and Luke & Luke (1999; 2001) in Australia, have been researched.

Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray’s (2006) research is one of the few that explores the everyday lives of mixed heritage people within mixed faith families and found varied responses to parental negotiations of belonging and difference. Some parents preferred the idea of being ‘open’ to both cultures, whilst others stressed the significance of

'mixedness' for their children. Others promoted the idea of belonging to one culture. Caballero (2006) also noted other contextual findings such as cultural heritages being passed on through food, celebrations and wider family support, which influenced family function and the development of mixed identities. Relationships with schools and peers intersected with gender and class were highlighted as significant contexts which the parents and mixed heritage children negotiated.

Belonging in terms of family relationships and culture is particularly significant for the mixed heritage child/stepchild who moves from one family culture to another.

Tikly et al. (2004) found that teachers made assumptions about mixed race pupils experiencing identity problems, although positive images of mixed identities occurred at home. Mixed identities were also subsumed under the category of 'African Caribbean'. Perceptions about a lack of will to succeed and unruly behaviour were also found. High achievers and those who sought success and cooperation were associated with notions of 'whiteness', being 'posh' and/or 'geeky' (Tikly et al., 2004). There was some evidence to suggest that mixed race pupils were over-represented in non-academic activities such as sport and music. In broader terms, mixed heritage pupils' needs were not recognised or understood in terms of the curriculum, leading to an

invisibility and lack of representation of mixed race issues at the policy level in the local authority. Mixed heritage students were made invisible due to teachers' uncertainty about the correct terminology to use and their wish to avoid using the 'wrong' term. These assumptions of terminology, of whiteness/blackness and class led to some professionals who did not fully understand the complexities involved in culturally mixed children and their families (Tikly, Caballero, Haynes & Hill, 2004).

Barrett's (2007) research on mixed heritage students indicates young people's ability to negotiate black and white worlds. Barratt researched identities in young people of mixed heritages. The sample included 126 individuals, of whom 43 were black-white (Caribbean-White and African-White), while the remaining were drawn from a diverse range of mixed heritages. For several participants, having a British identity was significant. They did not equate 'being English' with 'being white' nor was having a black identity more privileged. There was no feeling of being 'between two cultures'. Their identities were fluid and for many the most positive aspect of being 'mixed race' was the ability to navigate and negotiate black and white social worlds. This is a practice of 'hybridisation' in which identity is situational and contextual, and it permits multiple identities to be declared (Root, 2004).

Sims' (2004) exploration of British-Thai families and Lise's (2008) research on those of mixed Japanese heritage demonstrate the importance of Thai cultural resources and Japanese responses to those with mixed heritage. Sims found that with some families' fluency in the Thai language could not be sustained, because there was a lack of Thai speakers in their neighbourhoods. Establishing local support networks, such as Thai supplementary school or a temple, provided important social interactions with other Thai and mixed families (Sims, 2004). Lise (2008) completed a small research project on 'Hafus' in Japan. This term is used to describe those who are both of Japanese origin and another culture – American, European, Korean, and Chinese – and are referred to as half-Japanese and, as a result, are 'Othered'. The research findings include themes of difference, belonging, being regarded as non-Japanese, acceptance and non-acceptance. However, Lise did not include those Hafus who were either African-American and Japanese or African-European and Japanese who may experience significant differences due to their skin colour. Both these researchers extended the field to include cultures other than African Caribbean cultures and provide insights into the constructions of mixed Thai and Japanese identities.

Sims' (2004) research indicates the importance of social interaction with other Thais to maintain a Thai identity. Lise's (2008) research demonstrates the significance of a singular Japanese identity, and how this positions mixed Japanese individuals. Tikly et al. (2004) and Lise's (2008) research indicates how mixed heritage individuals are positioned by educational professionals in the school system and in wider Japanese society, which insists upon a singular Japanese identity. Both these works provide specific cultural contexts that raise questions about the effects on mixed heritage individuals' cultural identity. Barratt (2007) and Sims (2004) both focus on the ways in which mixed heritage individuals identify the resources that support their cultural identities.

Rockquemore & Brunsma's (2004) research in the US on the racial identity of 'biracial baby-boomers' identified a range of responses, which included a singular identity of either being exclusively black, exclusively white, a mixed identity or a situational identity 'sometimes black and sometimes white' (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004: 93) and there were also those who refused to have any racial identity. It is notable that the predominant mixed identity group of the biracial baby-boomers who have grown up in a more culturally diverse society with increased interracial unions, experienced a disjuncture between their individual self-definition and the ways in which others define them. The participants

experienced pressure to identify with a singular identity underpinned by essentialist assumptions about mixed heritage people. The mixed heritage participants were young people and were likely to live in multicultural neighbourhoods and attend culturally mixed schools. They also lived or had lived in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies of cultures different from those of their first family, which added additional layers of complexity within the family structure. It is interesting to note the different ways in which mixed heritage adults define themselves and the persistence of essentialist ideas of mixed heritage in Rockquemore & Brunsma's (2004) research. This mixed heritage research demonstrated different ways in which mixed heritage people self-identify within numerous contexts. Identities for some are contingent and context dependant (Barratt, 2007). Within the same research participants considered a single identity and a mixed identity (Caballero, 2006; 2008; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004) whilst Lise (2008) found an insistence on an exclusively Japanese identity for her mixed Japanese participants. Although the British studies of mixed heritage demonstrated the practices of hybridisation in which identity is contextual (Root, 2004). Tikly et al. (2004) identified mixed heritage students' invisibility in the educational context, where their positions remain largely misunderstood and unrecognised. Although mixed heritage individuals may opt for

situational identities, they experience a disjuncture with the perceptions of others as having a single identity.

Byrd and Garwick's (2004) literature review on research on mixed families in the US provides further analysis relevant to the study.

Particularly significant is the theme of 'being ordinary' (2004: 308), which formed part of the dual reality interracial couples experienced. The claim to ordinariness may permit being simultaneously ordinary and different and form part of the interracial couples' strategies of overcoming racism.

The claim to ordinariness also allowed interracial couples to claim achievement of their relationship in response to social disapproval.

Couples also chose to either emphasise or minimise the importance of race in their discussions, which underpinned their decisions to challenge, ignore or deny social disapproval. The claims of ordinariness and achievement are important constructions for mixed ethnicity stepfamilies in response to outsiders' negative comments.

Killian (2001) interviewed ten couples individually and jointly and reported a code of silence amongst some black participants on aspects of their family histories like racism, racial incidents and having white ancestry to avoid 'discomfort or conflict in their marriages' (Killian, 2001: 33) and protect their family relationships. This finding of self-censorship, avoidance, and silence suggest significant themes in the experiences of

black partners in interracial relationships. Killian's study (2001) refers to adults' avoidance of talking about racism as a strategy to maintain the mixed relationship, which suggests that talking to children may be even more difficult.

Adult mixed race siblings and the different ways in which their visible differences are experienced and racial categories are challenged within families is explored by Song (2010). The ways siblings viewed various markers of difference, their perceptions of difference, their interactions about their differences were researched. Some participants considered markers of difference were less significant due to an emphasis on being British that lessened the importance of their parents' different cultural backgrounds. The siblings that held this view were not easily racially categorised based on their appearance and they lived in racially mixed neighbourhoods where their differences were not considered unusual. Differences in physical appearances between siblings provided differential ethnic options: darker skin colour, eyes and hair of one sibling was positioned as black and the other sibling with a lighter skin colour was positioned as white. Their differences were highly significant due to their racial assignments. In the predominantly white community in which they grew up, the darker sibling's claim to being English was constantly challenged whilst her lighter-skinned sibling's

sense of Englishness was validated. For some participants, different racial identifications between siblings created tension regarding racial authenticity; for example, a sibling regarded as ‘too white’ by other siblings who privileged their black identity. Siblings who upheld a black identity considered a younger sibling white due to his friendships and tastes in music, which they perceived as his denial or reluctance to accept his black identity. This created difference and some distance between the siblings’ relationships as well as a concern that the sibling who embraced ‘whiteness’ would struggle with racism. Some siblings exercised choice about their cultural identifications that created division and tensions when one sibling became a devout Muslim whilst another sibling’s conversion to Catholicism was more accepted by his family. The markers of difference were religion which was privileged within a wider social context in which British Muslims constitute a negative, stereotypical group.

Song’s research (2010) indicates the various ways in which mixed heritage siblings experience ethnic and racial identifications over time. Visible differences between siblings, how these differences are experienced and discussed, others’ perception of differences between siblings and the importance of the wider social context, are important issues that are pertinent to my study. The ways in which the siblings

acknowledged their differences and how this shaped their family relationships and their sense of themselves as racialised subjects are also significant. My study will focus on different family members who will narrate their own stories, but also provide their perceptions and understandings of other family members. Song's (2010) study provides an important focus in my understanding of siblings' racialised positions, the different ways in which they are positioned, and the meanings they give to their differences.

Bauer (2010) researched mixed extended families; he interviewed 34 mixed extended families of White British (English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish) and African Caribbean origins which spanned three generations from 1950 to 2003. Located in London, the families provided insights into current experiences and an historical narrative of migrants' experiences both at local and institutional levels. Many of the first generation African Caribbeans and individuals in the mixed relationships had varied social interactions and encounters in hostile social contexts of workplaces and neighbourhoods. Although the predominant official attitude was one of tolerance, minority groups such as 'Keep Britain White' were established during this time. Despite racial intolerance and the race riots of 1958, the African Caribbeans joined established

organisations such as churches, trade unions, students and sports clubs as well as organising their own local organisations.

The second generation of African Caribbeans experienced social change with a decrease in public racism and the introduction of anti-discriminatory legislation (Race Relations Acts 1975–1976) and the establishment of black political groups influenced by the Black Power movement who socialised among their own group. Some blacks resisted this cultural and political singularity and continued to develop social and intimate relationships with white individuals. These relationships were forged in schools where they had shared interests with whom they became ‘culturally similar’ (Bauer; 2010: 246).

The research indicates the processes of ‘family incorporation’ (Bauer, 2010: 197) which include initial struggles to overcome family prejudices at the start of their relationships. Adjustments to accommodate cultural and familial differences in expectations and child rearing were made and wider family relationships were maintained following divorce and separation. By the final period of Bauer’s field work in 2003 (Bauer:2010) there was extensive social interactions and exchanges with the mixed families, and their neighbours, some of whom jointly organised local activities and groups.

Bauer's research (2010) covers the period of my own lifetime and there are many resonances with my own experiences of being part of a growing community of mixed heritage families. Her study provides an important historical narrative of change for individuals within a wider social and political context, which is relevant to my study. Parents in the study will be of a similar and younger generation to myself and may also have experienced struggles and adjustments of family members and other social groups to their interracial marriages or partnerships. Bauer refers to the second generation as 'agents of change in their multi-ethnic/multicultural spaces' (Bauer: 2010: 246), a term which I consider particularly useful when thinking of mixed heritage relationships who have transgressed cultural and racial boundaries to forge new identities for their children. Bauers' finding (2010) of the maintenance of family relationships following divorce and separation is pertinent to my study as I will explore the extended family's role.

Goulbourne (2010) also researched new ethnicities in family life. His study, based in the UK, explored intra-ethnic and mixed couple relationships and brought into focus other boundaries such as region and differential migration experiences illustrated by British Caribbean and British Italians. Particularly significant for my study is the research of mixed relationships between specific groups.

Although there has been historical mixing in the Caribbean, Goulbourne (2010) explores the mixed relationships between Black-Caribbeans, Indo-Caribbeans and South Asians. Intimate relationships between Indo-Caribbean and South Asian groups with those of other ethnic groups has been prohibitive and unions between this group and Caribbeans of African ancestry can pose problems for the wider family and communities. Similar problems were encountered between African Caribbeans and West Africans couples and their extended families that centred on decisions about the primary culture in which their children should be socialised. Following initial struggles of cultural differences extended family members gradually accepted the unions.

Goulbourne's study (2010) has demonstrated some of the complex issues of mixed families between African Caribbeans, Indo-Caribbeans and West Africans. This is an area that is under researched and it is possible that my research participants could be part of these unions or have had previous relationships that may influence their own or their families' adjustment to their current mixed relationship.

To summarise, the studies have explored the lived experiences of mixed heritage adults, their families and family relationships and wider contexts of education within Britain, the US and Japan. Although most attention is drawn from those from minority cultures in relationships with

those from the dominant cultures, some research on those partnerships between members of minority groups is significant. The studies have revealed different practices of hybridisation where mixed heritage identity is situational and fluid yet the perception of others is of hybridity as a singular identity.

1.7 Whiteness and mixed heritage

Studies on ‘whiteness’ have provided some useful contributions to the field of mixed heritage research. The literature pertinent to this study focuses on white parents, particularly mothers, of mixed heritage children. Mixed heritage children in the care system (Barns, 1999) is one area which has been researched. Official data indicates that 8% of looked after children in England were of mixed heritage parentage (Harman, 2010). Research on white single motherhood (Banks, 1996) has questioned white mothers’ competencies in raising their mixed heritage children. This literature mostly consists of social workers’ experiences with white single mothers (Barn & Harman, 2006; Harman, 2010; Prevatt-Goldstein, 1999). The second area focuses upon white mothers in mixed heritage families and explores their responses to racism, and how they have overcome difficulties within their own and their partners’ extended families (Twine, 1998; 1999; 2004). The third

area is drawn from awareness literature in which professionals examine their beliefs and identify of whiteness as a social category for interrogation and reflection (Gustafson, 2007; Smith & Redington, 2010; Nolte, 2007; Wallis and Singh, 2012). There are implications for clinicians who work with white single mothers and their mixed heritage children.

Prevatt-Goldstein (1999) explores the political agendas that contribute to mixed heritage children's racial identity and suggests that despite marginalisation and racism, a positive identity is achievable. Harman (2010) identified themes of social disapproval, racism and marginalisation for white mothers of mixed heritage children and considered the support systems available to thirty lone white mothers from social service professionals. The theme of maternal competence was related to hair and skin care, a finding similar to Ali (2003). Social workers considered some mothers to have negative or racist views of black people. Tension between parents was sometimes racialised and Harman (2010) pointed out that this finding could overlook the mother's own experience of social disapproval and racism directed towards herself and her children from the father's extended family, neighbours and others.

The themes of maternal competence, professionals' perceptions of mixed ethnicity families, and social disapproval are relevant as white mothers in my own study are likely to have been single parents before their new relationship and may have encountered social disapproval and queries as to their competence in mothering a mixed heritage child.

Social workers also discussed racism from white extended family members (Prevatt-Goldstein, 1999; Twine, 1999). Social workers identified cases in which the white family of a mixed heritage child given up for adoption refused to care for the child, resulting in a lack of support for the mother and high levels of mixed heritage children in the care system. Regarding identity, a number of social workers held the view that the mixed heritage child was black regardless of how the young person identified himself, whereas mothers provided a range of terminologies including 'mixed race' and 'dual heritage'. The research indicates the tension between the singular identity of 'black', a term preferred by professionals, and the mixed identity discussed by mothers. This finding indicates the dilemmas and tensions of white single mothers whose voices are less privileged than the professionals.

From the field of social work Barn & Harman (2006) discuss the different perspectives regarding the mixed heritage identity. Located in the anti-racist discourse of the 1970s and 1980s, black identity became

political and sought to challenge the power of institutional processes which affected minority groups. Mixed heritage children were perceived of as being a minority group requiring coping skills to manage racism. It is argued that the mixed heritage child naturally feels positive about their white identity because of having a white parent in a predominantly white society, so reinforcing the black identity is required to balance this.

Critiques of the black perspective include its inflexibility, lack of choice for mixed heritage individuals regarding their identities, and a lack of acknowledgement of the intersecting variables of class, gender and geographical location. Furthermore, negative images of white people could be offered in mixed heritage families. Barn & Harman (2006) also attend to the issue of prejudice from the black community, who may not accept mixed heritage individuals as 'black enough' (2006: 8).

The mixed perspective within a social constructionist framework views identity as socially produced, multiple and positioned in different contexts. Identities are fluid, depending upon contexts and individuals are often located within different contexts simultaneously, which enables both cultures of the mixed heritage individual to be integrated into their mixed identity. Research by Tizard & Phoenix (2002) and Olumide (2002) indicate that young people can belong to at least two groups and that a positive racial identity does not have to be exclusively black. I

would argue that mixed heritage people negotiate the boundary between being mixed and being perceived as black, and that there is an experience of double racism, from white people and black, which calls for further research.

Twine (1999; 2004) has challenged the assumptions that white parents of mixed heritage children are unable to understand race or racism. In her research, she offers the concept of 'racial literacy' to theorise their parental efforts as anti-racist. Her attention to everyday lives in which racialised languages are negotiated within multiracial families, offers useful insights into how parents address racism. Twine's research (1999; 2004) focuses on white mothers who have developed strategies and practices in response to racism. Her work suggests that white mothers have become racially aware and developed maternal competence from having a mixed heritage child. Anti-racism of white individuals who are not mothers is also taken up by others (Gustafson, 2007; Nolte, 2007; Sue, 2004; Wallis & Singh, 2012) who have reported an awareness of race, racism, the privilege of whiteness and the silence amongst whites about racism (Smith & Redington, 2010). Gustafson (2007) traces her own growing awareness of whiteness, privilege and entitlement, and refers to the 'absent presence of whiteness' (Gustafson, 2007: 155) which made it invisible to her. Sue (2004) develops the

theme of the invisibility of whiteness further and considers its representation of normality in institutions. She believes that whites are ‘taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, average and ideal’ (Sue, 2004: 5). Sue’s work on whiteness presumes a single racial group and does not pay attention to differences between whites.

In summary, the literature on whiteness has focused on two main groups: mothers and individuals. From the social work literature, single white mothers’ experiences of social disapproval, marginalisation and racism from outsiders, and within their extended family, has been identified. From this research (Barn & Harman, 2006; Harman, 2010; Prevatt Goldstein, 1999), debates about mixed heritage and the pressure to conform to a single identity as opposed to a multiple, more fluid situational identity is presented. This literature is based on families working with professionals, unlike Twine’s work (1998; 1999; 2004) which is of non-clinical culturally mixed families and the development of anti-racist strategies and practices of white mothers. Referred to as ‘racial literacy’ Twine challenges assumptions of white mothers’ racial incompetence with their mixed heritage children. The second section in the literature focuses on individuals, some in training contexts (Smith & Redington, 2010; Sue, 2004; Wallis & Singh, 2012), and outlines their growing awareness of whiteness, privilege and entitlement as the

normative position which is invisible. The research of white single mothers is pertinent to this study because some of the white mothers will have been single mothers following divorce and may have experienced racism and social stigma towards themselves and their mixed heritage children. The stage of single motherhood is likely to inform the next stage of stepfamily life.

1.8. Stepfamilies

1.8.1. Introduction

Stepfamilies arise from divorce, separation or death. It is important to contextualise the transition from divorce to single parenthood to becoming a stepfamily. During the twentieth century, legal, social and political changes led to changes in the divorce laws which made divorce easier to obtain, reducing the social stigma and trauma associated with it. The increased divorce rates, rise of single motherhood, births outside marriage and cohabiting relationships that include children indicate the increasing diversity of family forms (Edwards, 2002). In 2011, 11% of the population were stepfamilies (ONS, 2014). One in eight children are born into cohabiting relationships (Osborne, Manning & Smock, 2007) and one in eight children live in a family with a stepparent for some period of time (Edwards, 2002). Research in this area has focussed on

the effects of parental disruption on children (Manning, 2004; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007), underpinned by marriage as the basis of family formation, with little attention paid to mixed heritages of families and stepfamilies.

The literature on separation has produced limited research on African American parental perceptions of their and their children's adjustment to divorce, remarriage and living in a stepfamily (Fine, McKenry, Donnelly & Voydanoff, 1992).

Data from the National Survey of Families and Households in the US (1988) provided a significant sample size of 82 African American stepfather and 415 white stepfather families, 394 African American and 3211 white biological families. Those in stepfather families were found to have less education, more family members living in the household, and were less satisfied than those in biological families. However, African American children were reported to experience less psychological distress than white children. These findings suggest that African American stepfamilies, through marriage, occurred less frequently than for whites, and negotiating new roles was more difficult. The presence of extended kin is more significant in African American families who have been involved in childcare and childrearing during the stage of single motherhood. Thus, integrating a new male partner into the family and

adjusting to the family formation may be more complex than for white stepfamilies.

Regarding the parental perceptions of children as less psychologically distressed in both African American stepfamilies and biological families, parents presented more positive perceptions which may be attributed to there being less stigma of divorce amongst African Americans and higher numbers of single parent families (Fine et al., 1992). This study is one of the few which has researched black stepfamilies, although it is a comparative study which interviewed one member of each family once and did not include a second interview to explore the adjustment to family life. I would consider important the extent to which black families develop racial resiliencies in children as part of their socialisation. The family and the wider social community of extended family and social support, church and neighbourhood resources are used to develop resiliencies in children (McCubbin, Futrell, Thompson & Thompson, 1998). African American families were found to consider three themes important in socialising their children: learning African American culture, coping in mainstream society and dealing with racism to encourage a positive cultural identity (Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

A major challenge for children in stepfamilies is maintaining a relationship with the absent parent, usually fathers, whilst living with another parent, considered ‘ambiguous loss’ (Pryor, 2008: 345), where the person is no longer part of their everyday lives and to whom access remains uncertain. The change of the father’s role post-divorce presents numerous challenges to fathers within a social context of unclear social expectations that leads to role ambiguity and uncertainty (Herscovici, 2002) during the transition from an intact family to co-parenting in two separate households. Research on contact between children and their non-resident fathers has not distinguished between those children living in lone parent households and those living in stepfamilies (Pryor, 2008). The relationship between the child and their biological father may be influenced by a number of factors, including the frequency of visits, the father’s parenting style and the child’s relationship with the stepparent. The child’s age at the time of becoming a stepfamily may be a salient factor; stepfathers are less likely to be involved in a parenting role of an adolescent child/stepchild and more likely to be involved with younger stepchildren (Pryor, 2008).

The racialised construction of black fathers and the perception of them as men who are unreliable, irresponsible and uninvolved in their children's lives is challenged by research in the US (Connor & White,

2006) and the UK (Reynolds, 1998). Reynolds found from mothers' accounts, their ex-partners actively participated in their children's lives. Connor and White (2006) broadened the definition of fatherhood to include social fathers such as teachers, mentors and stepfathers.

In addition, the legal domain of rights, entitlements and justice in which both parents are engaged are part of the divorce process. The loss of status and authority of fatherhood to which fathers had felt entitled, the changes in their relationships with their ex-wives, and the loss of influence over their children is reflected and articulated in the conflictual negotiations of visitation rights and parental authority (Catlett & McKenry, 2004; Olmstead, Futris & Pasley, 2009).

Smart & Neale consider the quest for legal rights as 'ethics of justice' (Smart & Neale, 1999: 129) and distinguish the legal domain from that of fathers' moral and social actions, which they propose is 'ethics of care'. The ambiguity and uncertainty of fatherhood's roles and expectations post separation can lead some fathers to fight for justice as they think it is the only choice available. The ethics of care and ethics of justice codes indicate the division between psychologically/emotionally based ethics of care and the legal ethics of justice in which divorced parents operate.

A moral dimension – the ethics of justice – acknowledges the parents' rights and entitlement, but the ethics of care for their children also needs to be considered. Both parents may operate simultaneously within these domains or one parent may opt for the ethics of justice whilst their ex-partner may continue in the domain of care, resulting in problematic communication. Ethics of care includes the separated or divorced father's continuity of the culture for the mixed heritage child.

Smart (2003) notes from the literature that divorce is perceived as harmful to children and considered a social problem. She suggests focusing on the children to understand their perspectives. Other significant factors include the difficulties children experience if no one tells them what is going on. This suggests that how divorce is managed and discussed by the parents with their children is a significant part of the process. High parental conflict has been found to have deleterious effects upon children within the marriage which may continue following the divorce (Hetherington, 1989). Divorce may be a continuation of a difficult parental relationship, not its resolution. Attention has now shifted to consider the complex qualities of relationships that children experience. Pruett and Barker (2010) identify interventions for divorced families and recognise it is important for children to have relationships with both parents, and for their parents to have a nurturing relationship

with their children as well as to administer discipline during the upheaval. However, this literature does not account for further adjustments the children must make to new relationships formed by either or both parents following divorce.

In summary, the ending of the first family relationship and the emotional impact upon parents and their children forms the context for the transition to becoming a stepfamily. The extent to which biological fathers remain part of their children's lives is significant. Research has indicated fathers' changing perspectives, particularly black fathers, who have been negatively constructed as errant and absent. The changing role of fathering following separation and divorce indicates an ambiguity and uncertainty which impacts upon their relationship with their children.

In addition, new relationships for the biological parents may be formed to which the biological children are required to re-adjust, re-calibrate and negotiate. This complex network of relationships will be discussed in the following section.

1.8.2. Constructions of stepfamilies

In this section I will focus on the development of relationships in stepfamilies. First I will outline the negative constructions of stepfamilies based on the predominance of biological definitions of family. Then I will

describe the theoretical shift from biological to social definitions of family. This shift provides a framework within which stepfamilies' diversity can be explored.

The term 'stepfamily' has had negative connotations in myth, folk tale and literature, the most well-known being Cinderella and Snow White. The term 'step' comes from the old English term 'steop' which means 'orphan' and is used to describe children and parents who form a family unit based on their social relationships. Alternative terms have been introduced in the literature: 'reconstituted', 'blended', 'reconstructed', 'reorganised', 'reformed', 'recycled', 'combined', 'merged' and 'remarried' families, which indicate the difficulties in providing accurate descriptions of family formations. Some parents are also stepparents, and the remarriage of one partner may be the first marriage for the other partner. Some remarry or re-partner more than once and have children with different partners. To overcome the problematic descriptions of stepfamilies, some stepfamily members simply refer to themselves as parents (Ganong & Coleman, 1994) or opt for silence about their stepfamily structure to outsiders (Robinson, 1980). Formed out of failed marriages, this problematic stepfamily stereotype has continued in research and clinical literature (Ganong & Coleman, 1994) and consists of two main strands. The first consists of deficit comparison

research in the early 1980s, which assumed that stepfamilies operated at a deficit compared with relationships in biological nuclear families. Nuclear families were the standard for comparison, referred to as 'nuclear family ideology' (Clingempeel et al., 1987). Deficits were thus seen as differences between the two family groups. The authors claimed the nuclear family ideology constrained research on stepfamilies. Stepfamilies' complexities were less understood, so there was a greater emphasis on stepfamilies' negative and problematic attributes and less consideration of their strengths. Little attention was paid to the relationships that stepparents had with their stepchildren, which were different than those in biological families. For example, studies that compare outcome measures of stepchildren with those of children living with both biological parents found that stepchildren achieved less and had higher drop-out rates (Astone & McLanahan, 1991).

The second main strand is that of the 'incomplete institutionalised' status of stepfamilies (Coleman, Ganong & Cable, 1996), which the researchers refer to as the lack of cultural or legal guidelines for negotiating family relationships of more than two parents, a further example of nuclear ideology constraint. This leads to uncertain expectations in stepparents' roles, kinship terms to describe family relationships, stepparents' rights and obligations that family members

negotiate. Stepfamilies develop from existing relationships of parenthood and extended kin that span multiple households (Sweeny, 2010). In addition to the biological model of the nuclear family ideology is the legal domain, within which divorcing parents sought legal redress for custody of their children, access to the non-resident parent, and financial agreements for their care. The emphasis of biological parenthood overlooks the social ties developed in stepfamilies and ‘the legal position of stepparents is largely one of invisibility and ambiguity’ (Edwards, Gillies & Ribbens-McCarthy, 1999: 79). The Children Act of 1989, the Child Support Act of 1991 and the Family Law Act of 1996 assumed biological family relationships were the basis for family life and ignored stepparents and stepchildren. The Family Law Act’s underlying principle was that raising children is understood as ‘natural’ and therefore undertaken by biological parents (Edwards, Gillies & Ribbens-McCarthy, 1999). The predominance of the biological family as the norm contributes to the stepfamily’s negative construction with continued attention on deficits rather than strength-based approaches to contemporary stepfamily life (Prior, 2008). Bryant, Coleman & Ganong (1988) explored the negative stereotype of African Americans and stepfamilies with 308 white students and 178 African American students. They found that, contrary to their expectations of the ‘double negative’

construction of the black stepfamily (1988: 8), white stepfamilies were rated less positively than African American families. They attributed this to differences in expectations of family structure between white and African American participants. The researchers discussed some bias; white students had been recruited from Black Studies courses, which may have influenced their perceptions of black stereotypes. The effect of the interviewer's race was not explored.

The nuclear family model on which much research has been based did not take into account that children could have more than two parents at a time and researchers had to address differently the complex family formations of stepfamilies. The limitations of previous research on stepfamilies did not permit research into mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, which has remained implicit in the research. Ribbens-McCarthy, Edwards & Gillies' (2003) research refers to the visible racial and ethnic differences between an African Caribbean stepfather of an Irish-Chinese stepdaughter, and how they were 'unable to pass as a traditional family' (2003: 86). Racialised differences were not the research's main focus and the family demonstrated the extent to which social relationships in stepfamilies overcame biological ties. It also indicated the preference for some of the stepfamilies to consider themselves as families due to the

negative connotations of the term stepfamily, which rendered their actual status as a stepfamily invisible.

In the systemic field, race and racism has formed part of the research on stepfamilies in addition to the wider social contexts of poverty and gender differences regarding repeating family patterns. Gorell-Barnes, Daniel, Thompson & Burchardt (1998) interviewed 50 adults selected from the National Child Development Study, a longitudinal study which followed 17,000 children born in one week in 1958. From this study 444 had become stepchildren by the age of 16 and the researchers interviewed 50 participants at 23 years of age who had become a stepchild between 7-16 years of age. Only three of the participants were black or of mixed parentage, and they described their experiences of racism and their methods of resilience. The poor relationship between another participant (English/Indian) and her stepfather, whose ethnicity was not established, contributed to her seeking her biological father from India. The research is one of the few which explored issues of ethnicity, culture and resilience within stepfamilies, areas of potential study which deserve further attention.

Parenting relationships have been explored by Burgoyne & Clark (1984) and Vichinich et al. (1992). Burgoyne & Clark's research identified two main ideological groups. One group drew upon and were

committed to nuclear family norms and considered themselves ‘ordinary’ families. Within this group some participants consciously attempted to create an ‘ordinary’ family life by adopting ‘normal’ mother or father ‘roles’. The second group, although a minority, were described by the researchers as ‘progressive’ stepfamilies who drew upon diverse patterns in family and domestic life and were concerned with ‘personal growth’. They also perceived themselves as making independent choices and saw themselves as asserting positive value to their difference from ‘ordinary’ families. This research differs from the predominant comparative research of the 1980s and indicates the extent to which some stepfamilies worked towards the normative biological nuclear family and others resisted the negative stereotypes.

The processes of the stepfamily development, which includes emotional tasks being resolved before the stepfamily can function successfully, are also significant. Papernow (2008) described seven emotional and developmental stages in the integration process. The first stage, ‘Fantasy’, is followed by ‘Immersion’, then ‘Awareness’. The stepfamily household is divided along biological lines when tensions appear. In the middle stages, ‘Mobilisation’ and ‘Action’, the tensions become increasingly acute between the two adults who struggle to work out their differences. For some families, developing as a stepfamily can

take five or six years, perhaps a lifetime. The final stages, ‘Contact’ and ‘Resolution’, indicate the stepfamily’s increased stability as a viable unit. Although useful to consider stepfamilies’ life cycle, this model describes a linear progression of relationships which can misrepresent the reality of family life and put stepparents under pressure to achieve emotional tasks.

Expectations in stepfamilies have been explored and the idea of ‘instant love’, in which parents and stepparents seek to heal wounds following divorce or death. Pressure to create an ideal family can create feelings of confusion, anger and guilt towards stepparents and stepchildren. However, if stepfamilies can relax their expectations, successful relationships can develop (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Papernow, 1993).

The relationship of stepfathers with both their partners and their stepchildren is central to much of the research (Robertson, 2008), because children live mainly with their biological mothers. Researchers suggest that 1 in 15 families are stepfamilies, most of which involve biological mothers living with a stepfather (Edwards, 2002). The quality of the relationship with the stepchild is dependent on: the child/stepchild’s age; their age when the stepfamily was formed; the child/stepchild’s gender; their partner’s relationship; and the contact and

quality of contact with the biological non-resident parent, stepsiblings from the stepparent and half siblings of the stepparent. The ambiguity of the stepfather role has been explored (Coleman, Ganong & Goodwin, 1994; Hetherington, 1989). It has been suggested that stepfathers may find it hard to establish their role as they adjust to a close mother-child system following divorce or separation and can create distance (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). Baxter et al. (2004) refer to the boundary between the family of origin, which positions the stepparent as an 'outsider' to the family, and maintains an emotional distance to manage potential loyalty conflicts. The position of being an outsider can be experienced by other stepfamily members. The child/stepchild may feel like an outsider to the biological/stepparent relationship at times and the biological parent may also feel excluded from the relationship between the child and the stepparent. Feelings of exclusion can also occur in biological families, however, meanings of exclusion within stepfamilies may be different.

More recent attention has been given to asking children about themselves and how they feel about being in stepfamilies (Levin, 1994; Smart & Neale, 1999). Results indicate that the stepparent/stepchild relationship tends to be contingent. Stepparents have to 'earn' their place in the family by finding ways of taking an active part in the child's

life. One study focused upon closeness between the child and stepfather, and interviewed children/stepchildren between 10-16 years of age (Jensen & Shafer, 2013). The researchers found that the parental subsystem was the most influential factor in closeness of children/stepchildren to their stepfathers, with stepdaughters less likely to attain closeness than stepsons. The limitation of the study was that children were interviewed only once and there is no mention of biological fathers and the impact of their relationship on the child and the stepfamily (Jensen & Shafer, 2013). However, other accounts (Gorell Barnes et al., 1998; MacDonald & DeMaris, 1996) suggest that parenting is gendered with higher levels expected from stepmothers than stepfathers.

In summary, the accepted ideas about forms of family life based on biological relationships have fragmented through divorce, re-marriage, cohabitation and single-parenting, leading to more complex and diverse family forms. The conceptual changes from comparative studies of the nuclear and stepfamily to the exploration of the development of relationships between stepfamily members has contributed to our understanding of stepfamilies' complexities. Research (Brannen et al., 2000; Neale et al., 1998) on children's experiences of stepfamilies has produced some accounts of interethnic stepparenting and further ideas

about differences between family members, adjustment to being in a stepfamily within a context of loss, and the invisible presence of the non-resident parent. Stepfamilies consist of both biological and social relationships in which people chart and negotiate their own personal togetherness and kin obligations (Smart & Neale, 1999) which form part of family practices.

1.9. Family Practices

Morgan (1996) posits that families are not structures or forms, but 'practices' created through processes of 'doing' everyday things, emotional and verbal activities both positive and oppressive, which overlap with other gendered, class and age-determined practices. Morgan (1996) provides a number of criteria for using this term. The first emphasises an active orientation in conceptualising family life. This challenges the construct of 'the family' as a fixed entity. The second is that 'practices' conveys a sense of the everyday ordinary aspects of family life which may be taken for granted, but are located in wider systems of meaning. For example, caring for children is part of parenting, gendered and cultural practices. The third criteria indicates a sense of regularity. Morgan (1996) distinguishes between the term 'practices' which convey repeated rehearsal to ensure perfection and

'practices' which indicate the regularity of everyday tasks and permits a sense of fluidity, the fourth criteria. By this, Morgan (1996) refers to everyday activities that can be described in more than one way, such as caring for children ('gendered' and 'cultural practices') and considers the tension between the intersection of gendered and cultural practices. The fifth criteria recognises that 'practices are historically constituted and the linkages and tensions or contradictions between practices are historically shaped' (Morgan, 1996: 190).

Morgan (1996) attends to the characteristics of family practices, which he links to relationships and suggests that the emotional aspects of family relationships contribute to the recognition of the significance of particular family practices. Although important, family practices can be regarded and experienced negatively by some family members. Morgan (1996) has provided a useful way to conceptualise family life's complexities.

1.10. Race, Culture and Family Therapy

Increasingly, family therapy approaches have been developed to locate culture as central to the field (Almeida, Woods, Messineo & Font, 1998; Falicov, 1995; Green, 1998; Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995; Watts-Jones, 1995). Burnham & Hall (2002) offer a checklist of the Social

GRRAACCEESS (gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality and spirituality) to enhance clinicians and researchers' awareness of and attention to differences. Hardy & Laszloffy (2000) provide strategies for addressing race and racism in family therapy training. They distinguish between racial awareness, the recognition that race shapes realities and racial sensitivity, and the ability to translate racial awareness into action.

Burnham, Palma & Whitehouse (2008) developed ideas about ways in which some differences are identified and others remain undeclared. Gender, race and age are visible and identifiable whereas a disability or sexual orientation can remain invisible. Burnham et al. (2008) discussed how issues of social difference could 'vary between being: visible and voiced; visible and unvoiced; invisible and voiced and invisible and unvoiced, and all movements in between' (2008: 529). This framework links with ideas discussed earlier of intersectionality, invisibility and silence. The Social GRRAACCEES offer a checklist of differences, both visible and invisible, that can be considered within an intersectional framework.

These culturally and racially oriented approaches provide useful frameworks within which to consider the complexities of cultural mixing in families. There is, however, very little attention paid in systemic

literature, particularly in the UK, to working with families of mixed cultures, despite the fact that the 2001 Census indicated that the mixed heritage group was a fast-growing population, a number of whom are represented in our clinics.

My own research (2003) demonstrated the invisibility of mixed heritage groups within systemic training contexts due to clinicians' hesitation or reluctance to discuss the cultures of their mixed heritage families. This resulted in the underdevelopment of this area of cultural competence for systemic clinicians, which this study aims to address.

1.11. Summary of Literature Review

The review of the literature on mixed heritage identities and stepfamilies revealed many similar themes. Within an increasingly diverse society, mixed heritage people have been identified as having a 'problem' identity and are represented as cultural and racial transgressors. Conceptual models of the mixed race identity proposed a cycle of marginality which involved identity crisis when racialised differences were experienced by mixed heritage individuals. The constructions of the mixed heritage identity has shifted from marginality to an increased emphasis on psychological factors of strength. These

self-definitions do not always fit with others', reflected in the range of negative terminology ascribed to those of mixed heritages.

Mixed heritage people represent the complexities of cultural identities. Although mixed heritage people demonstrate hybridisation, in which their identities are contingent and contextual, their cultural identities can remain invisible and unrecognised in some contexts. The complexities of cultural identities do not fit neatly into conventional categories and particular identities are subsumed.

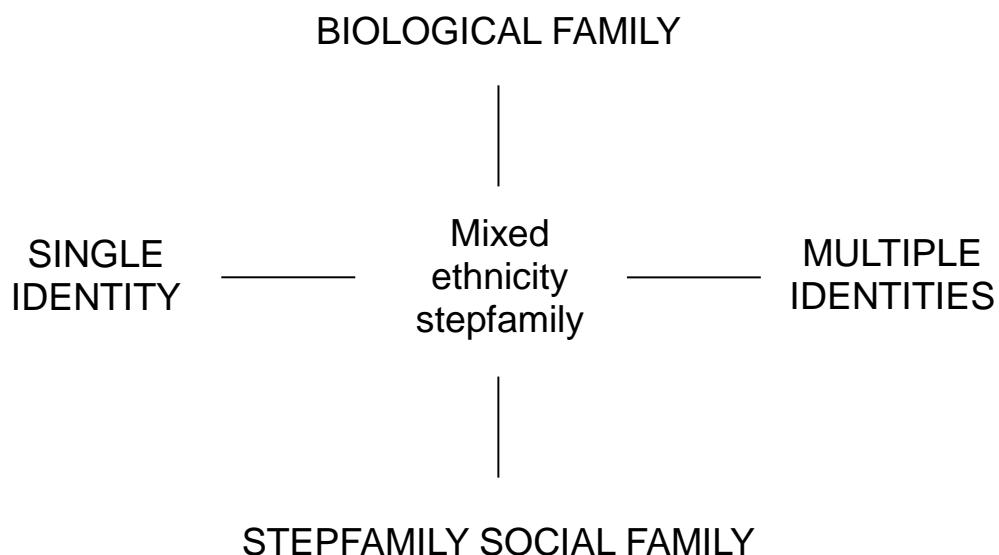
Two frameworks inform the study (discussed earlier). Briefly, Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora space, that is, the site of contestations of belonging, difference and the regimes of power that determine claims to a British identity are significant to the research. The second important concept is hybridity, defined by Hall (1990) as the dynamic processes of cultural identity in which change occurs alongside that of difference from which 'new ethnicities' emerge. Hall's (1990) intersectional model (p.26) overlaps my proposed framework of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies (p.61) which represents the intersection of the biological and social family with that of the single and multiple identities. Both frameworks address the complexities of cultural identities in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, which is applicable to the study. Mixed ethnicity stepfamilies are sites of the interweaving of complex family relationships between biological and

social family members, extended families, the external world and are, in effect, micro diasporic spaces. Within these diasporic spaces race, ethnicity and culture intersect with religion, gender, class and sexualities. It is the intersections of differences and belonging between the mixed heritage child, their biological and stepfamily members that I will explore in the study.

Similarly, stepfamilies have been stereotyped as problematic, because they have been predominantly compared with the biological nuclear family, seen as the norm. A remarried household may be linked by children to another remarried or single parent household. Eight possible dyadic relationships have been identified; if the divorced parents re-marry spouses with children from their previous marriage, up to 22 dyadic relationships are possible (Ganong & Coleman, 1994).

A common issue for mixed heritage people and stepfamilies is the pressure for mixed heritage people to conform to a single identity based on essentialist notions of race, which may render their cultural heritages invisible. The comparison between stepfamilies and biological nuclear families as the norm positions the stepfamilies as problematic. This can lead to some stepparents' preference to consider themselves as parents and to silence their stepfamily status.

Both the constructions of people of mixed heritages and of stepfamilies have been problem identities and deficits. The intersection of mixed heritages and stepfamilies is located between the four axes as follows:



The mixed ethnicity stepfamily is at the nexus of the four axes of the biological and social family structures and their multiple identities are in opposition to the single identity. Depending on social contexts, mixed heritage people define themselves in specific ways and experience simultaneously others' definition of them. The operation of intersectionality, self-definition of mixed heritage individuals and their understanding of and responses to others' definitions within and outside their family have been important areas of study.

This research aims to enable those of mixed heritages, their biological parents and stepparents to voice their stories of navigating culturally different households. The impact of others' perceptions – including the extended families of both the biological parent and the stepparent – on the mixed heritage individual and their stepfamilies will be explored. Following Luke & Luke's (1999) study of interracial couples and Burgoyne & Clark's (1984) study of stepfamilies within a context of social disapproval, I set out to explore the range of mixed ethnicity stepfamily practices and the values, beliefs and personal resources they use. For many clinicians, the culture of mixed heritage clients has remained an unexplored area. This research aims to contribute to their awareness and to generate ideas about working with stepfamilies with visible and cultural differences.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1. Introduction

From the literature on mixed race individuals and their families, little attention has been paid to family structure, their practices and relationships. Furthermore, the cultural heritages of mixed race people are not addressed in these studies. My research intersects the fields of mixed heritage individuals and their stepfamilies, and explores the different ways in which the non-resident biological parent's cultural heritage is maintained. The sample is small, a total of 14 participants, which include four white biological mothers, one black Caribbean mother, four white stepfathers and five mixed heritage children/stepchildren, three females and two males, between 12-37 years of age. It is a sample that does not include stepmothers of mixed heritage children. Although it is a specific sample, there is a wide age range of children/stepchildren and different genders represented. The sample provides diverse data of lived experiences as stepfamilies in both urban and rural settings, which is significant to the study.

Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora space is applicable to mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, which I refer to as micro diasporic spaces, microcosms of society within which difference and similarities are

experienced in their everyday lives. Stepfamily members claim and defend the ordinariness of their multiple family relationships. Hybridity, defined by Hall (1990) as the dynamic, continuous processes of cultural identity is also significant from which ‘new ethnicities’ are formed. Both frameworks address the complexities of cultural identities in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies which applies to the study.

Participants reconstructed past events through semi-structured interviews and visual images, which is the case study method. This method enabled me to collect from memory detailed descriptions of lived experiences from each participant. I selected the intrinsic case study because the participants are ‘interesting in their own right’ (Willig: 2001; 77) and provide a specific narrative of their experiences of living in a mixed ethnicity stepfamily. The case study method is appropriate for this research project that explores different narratives from biological parents, stepparents and children/stepchildren to arrive at a more general understanding of relationships and communication within mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. Each individual is a case study and contextual factors of previous and current family structures, cultural differences between partners, experiences of family life, of separation, new partners, relationships with extended family members and with biological fathers. The ways in which individuals adjusted to changes of the family

structures and how they upheld their cultural values within the new stepfamily is of research interest. Although it is a small, specific sample, it produced rich and varied data.

2.2. My epistemological position

I have located myself within the social constructionist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) that draws upon ideas that our knowledge is relative, partial and culturally and historically situated. Language is central and is understood to be performative, in which meanings and values are produced and constrained through social interaction in specific contexts (Shotter, 1993). Qualitative methods are particularly useful for eliciting complex descriptions as the same phenomenon can be understood from different perspectives. Discursive frameworks (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell et al., 2001) offer ways in which experiences of race and racism can be understood, which is appropriate to this study. I attend to the power of dominant discourses on mixed race and stepfamilies that influence family members' beliefs, interactions and social actions. This study focuses on the meanings created in stepfamily members' language and the ways in which those meanings link to the stepfamily's actions to analyse their constructions of identities and family. Each stepfamily member may recall the same events in different

ways or each person remembers different stories of significance. Agnew refers to ‘memory as an active process in which meaning is created’ (2008:8), a constant process that the interview will stimulate.

2.3. My position as researcher

Troyna (1995) makes a case for recognising and acknowledging the research process as integral to the researcher’s political and ethical values, and highlights the debates between ‘partisan’ vs. traditional forms of research. Partisanship in research ‘takes place in social settings where power relations are stratified by class, ‘race’, gender, age and other structural characteristics’ (Troyna, 1995: 2) and argues that the research properties of ‘objectivity’ and the ‘researcher/researched’ relationship contribute to these inequalities. Troyna (1995) proposes that partisan research should challenge social conventions and contribute to social change.

According to Troyna’s definition, my position as a mixed heritage researcher is partisan, based on my interest in an under-researched area. I hope this will contribute to a counter-narrative for mixed heritage people. My position comes from my background of past community and political activism and earlier professional curatorial responsibilities for representing non-European cultures, where my aim had been to

challenge the dominant views on, for example, African history and cultures, and demonstrate the diversity between and within African cultures and achievements through visual material. My clinical work has included advocacy work with parents of children who have been temporarily and permanently excluded from school and I have mediated between the family and school to provide alternative ways in which schools can understand families. Seeking alternative or hidden stories, and ensuring their visibility, has been a common theme in both my curatorial and therapeutic careers. The predominant narrative of the black presence in England has been based on Caribbean people's arrival during the 1960s. More recent historical, art historical and biographical studies have, however, revealed an earlier presence from Tudor England to the twentieth century in both rural and urban contexts (Bressy, 2009; Bourne, 2010; Bundock, 2015; Fryer, 2010; Gerzina, 1995, 2003; Green, 1998; Marsh, 2005; Oneyeka, 2013). Ali (2012) questions 'what kind of histories, memories and forgetting are authorised in accounts of Britain and Britishness' (2012: 90). The studies represent an alternative view of British identity which supports my interest in making the invisible black presence more visible.

Given my position as a researcher who is older than most of the participants (Jane and Joshua were of my generation), I was aware of

different resonances when talking with the children/stepchildren who were younger. The interview structure was based on my assumption that the reconstructions of past events and their effects might produce anxiety in the interviewees. Drawing upon psychoanalytic ideas, Hollway & Jefferson's (2000) concept of 'defended subjects', participants whose sense of self is formed by unconscious defence against their anxiety, was useful to consider. Being a mixed ethnicity stepfamily was a sensitive topic, and I was mindful of participants' – particularly white parents and stepparents – awareness of how I, as a mixed heritage researcher, might perceive their attempts to reconstruct their stories.

2.4 Memory

The participants' narratives were of their past selves and in the process of 'purposeful remembering and reworking of memories' (Ali, 2012: 95) they presented their perceptions of themselves in relation to others. The narratives are forms of representation (Jackson, 1998). Gergen posits that personal memories are available through the rhetorical conventions which are culturally determined (1994). Accounts of the self are part of social relationships and occur during conversations, in response to questions, and justifications of past events. A number of rules are elaborated in the process of recalling

memories. Firstly, organising information about the self, centred on a specific point, informs the selection of events retold. Such connections can enrich and enliven the unfolding narratives of memory through which the past is recreated (Gergen, 1994). The context and structure of the interview with a mixed heritage researcher on the topic of memories from the past shapes each participant's remembered self.

Fivush (1994) considers the importance of emotions associated with past recollections and children's socialisation to support their coherent personal narratives. At a young age, children and their parents co-construct past events. In the study, Fivush (1994) interviewed parents and their children who discussed specific recent events; the conversations revealed gender differences in communication about the past. Girls engaged in longer conversations, were asked more questions by their parents and developed a more elaborate style of communication. Children were also asked to recall the past event and their emotional reactions; the researchers found that girls more easily recalled the emotional aspects of the past through social interactions. Gender and emotions are important to this study, because the children/stepchildren are invited to recall past events. In this study, the emotional effects of parental separation on them and possible conflicts

with the stepparent relationship may be discussed as they recollect their experiences during the interviews.

There are constraints on memory, those issues which are left unsaid, which occurs in autobiographical narratives so a coherent narrative of the remembered self can be described (Jackson, 1998). In the study, the participants will be asked questions, some of which may challenge the coherence of their preferred narrative, so that I can make sense of their representation of themselves. Participants may also reflect upon their narratives in their reconstruction as they recall their past selves within specific social contexts.

The difference between telling a story 'to another' or 'with another' is significant (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Narratives are shaped in conversation; 'with another' is a collaborative process where others provide refinement or criticism of the unfolding account and different versions may emerge. In the study, my position as the interlocutor is important. The questions produce particular narratives and, from my position, further questions are asked to seek meaning or help clarify the past which, in turn, can stimulate other memories for the participants. 'Tellership' refers to the interlocutors' levels of involvement during narrative accounts which include verbal and non-verbal responses like eye contact, body movements and facial expressions. These are

important aspects of the interview process and are addressed in therapy training that can be transferred to the research interviews. I am mindful of the possible resonances for me as I listen to the participants' memories and the reflections upon my own history.

2.5 Design of the study

This research project focuses on ways in which stepfamilies of mixed ethnicities maintain the cultural heritages of their children/stepchildren. The study explores the different ways in which this is undertaken. My research questions are:

1. How do mothers and their partners talk about becoming a family with a child who is visibly different?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between the child, their biological father and their father's family?
3. How does the child/stepchild experience the transition from being in a biological family, to a single parent household, to a stepfamily in which they are visibly different?

4. To what extent are the cultural heritages of the biological family expressed or not within their stepfamily?

2.6. Rationale

The study's rationale is threefold. First, my personal experiences of living in a mixed ethnicity stepfamily during the 1950s and 1960s, and an engagement with the field of mixed heritage issues led me to think this a significant issue for the well-being of mixed heritage children and stepfamilies. As noted in the literature review, this is not an area that has previously been researched. There are increasing numbers of mixed heritage families from a diverse range of cultures that are attending child and adolescent mental health services to which clinicians pay insufficient attention. I believe this limitation is detrimental to families and to the development of clinical practice. This study aims to identify/foreground some of the complexities of culturally diverse stepfamilies. The sample is small and provides significant data on lived experiences of members of mixed ethnicity, an under-researched group.

2.7. Interviews

I have chosen to explore the research question through individual interviews from three different perspectives, the biological parent, the stepparent and the child/step-child.

Potter & Hepburn (2005) indicate problems in the design, analysis and reporting of qualitative research and challenge the accepted view of the open-ended, semi structured interview as a method of choice. Conventional forms of representations of text for analysis focus on what the interviewee has said, which produces a singular version of text rather than the interviewee's response to specific questions.

In discourse analysis, interviews are viewed as 'conversational encounters' (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 72) where the participant is encouraged to provide as full an account as possible by responding to answers in various ways. I sought clarification of participants' use of language and invited comparisons and enquiries, so they said a little more about the question. The topic of cultural heritages and the ways in which stepfamily members undertook this is sensitive and complex, and a semi-structured interview was required to draw out different meanings for each participant. Noting and responding to the participants' answers informed my questions and my systemic skills of neutrality and curiosity provided me with the ability to participate in and manage the interview process. Both my questions and the interviewees' responses were

analysed and reflected upon. All aspects of the talk between myself and the participants (emphasis, pauses, lowered volume, elongated sounds, outbreaths), have been identified to analyse broader patterns and the specifics of what is going on rather than a reconstructed version of the talk (Braun & Clark, 2006) (see Appendix 9).

There is a requirement to be explicit with participants about the category under which they have been recruited and their understanding of the interview: what it will be about, who it is for and their task. All the participants were sent an information sheet prior to the interview, where I outlined the research to gain their consent (Appendix 2). However, some participants (Ian and Joshua) had assumed that I wished to hear their own narrative about their family background and sought to provide full details.

In all the interviews, I used my skills as a clinician to pose questions appropriately for the participants (Appendix 6). The first questions were about the participants' selected visual images of their family to engage them and link the images to the family genogram which I drew as they identified their family members.

Drawing upon my clinical experience of families' affective responses to visual images, I introduced the images at the beginning of the interview to engage the participants. The selection process of the

participants' images, the range of images available, their criteria for selection and non-selection, and their ideas about how they wished to be perceived by me, demonstrated their attention to the research prior to the interview.

Following questions on the selection of images, I focussed on the stepfamily's family structure, relationships within the stepfamily, and the transition from single parenthood to becoming a stepfamily. I also explored the relationships with the non-resident biological parent and their extended family. I enquired about their descriptions of ethnicities in the stepfamily and whether their different ethnicities were discussed within their stepfamilies. I asked about the extent to which the cultural heritage of the non-resident biological parent of the child/stepchild was reflected in the stepfamily. Finally, there were questions about the wider social context, their neighbourhoods, schools and others' perceptions. The last question sought advice they might give to others who are entering a mixed heritage relationship.

I aimed to be collaborative and transparent with participants throughout the research process. All the participants were interviewed individually, mainly in their homes, apart from two who chose the Tavistock Centre as their preferred location. Two stepfathers were interviewed in their workplaces. One stepfather had booked a room for

our meeting and the second stepfather chose to meet in a more public space (his workplace café). This location had some distractions, the background noise (talking, clattering of crockery). In this context, the stepfather lowered his voice which made it more difficult to hear him. Although this made me a bit anxious during the interview, the recording was better than I thought. I wondered if the stepfather's technological knowledge of and familiarity with the café had influenced his decision to be interviewed there.

2.8. Rationale for individual interviews

The rationale for individual interviews was based on my consideration for each participant and aimed to elicit individual perspectives rather than co-constructed ones. I was aware of the topic's sensitivity for each individual who would have specific recollections that may or may not be shared with stepfamily members. I aimed to explore their individual perspectives and experiences. The biological parents' discussion of their relationship with their ex-partner was not shared with their children, and the resonances for them in recalling past events, particularly post-separation or divorce, were important factors in my decision to interview participants individually. From the child's position, I considered possible divided loyalties and the biological parents' different

perspectives that could have constrained their contribution if interviewed as a family. Talking of the absent biological parent also presented dilemmas for the stepparent if the family were together. Although absent, the biological parent has a presence in the family to which each family member has a particular response. To best capture their views, I chose individual interviews. From the literature (Edwards, Gillies & Ribbens McCarthy, 1999), the stepparent's position was identified as marginalised in both legislation and policy whilst greater emphasis was placed on the rights and responsibilities of both biological parents. The stepparents' invisibility in these frameworks influenced my decision to explore the particular experiences of stepparents' negotiating complexities within their stepfamilies, which maintained the focus of family practices.

2.9. Structure of Interviews

I decided to interview the biological parents and stepparents before the child/stepchild to respect their positions and parental roles, but also to assist in engaging the child/stepchild. The rationale behind this structure was based on an awareness of the parent experiencing a number of significant transitions: separation from the partner and living in a single-parent family before becoming a stepfamily. I thought they

might have developed as a couple as well as developed a parenting relationship with the stepparent, and I considered the implications and effects of the transition into a mixed ethnicity stepfamily on their child. The stepparent was the second participant to be interviewed. This was because the stepparent may also have undergone transitions similar to the biological parent, and may have been a non-resident biological parent. The child/stepchild was the last in the stepfamily to be interviewed. My rationale was that engaging both parent/stepparent in the research would encourage the child/stepchild's participation.

Interviewing parents before children is part of my therapeutic practice. I first give adults the opportunity to share narratives on their own, particularly those who have experienced separation or divorce and may not wish to share it with their children. This helps their own engagement with the therapeutic relationship. This structure was maintained throughout the research, apart from one family, where I interviewed the stepfather first due to his availability. It was the second interview in the study and I was aware of the differences in presentation of his personal history and his experiences of his stepfamily compared to the previous family. I decided to return to my preferred structure of interviews to maintain the coherence of the individual narratives. Hearing different narratives from individual family members – different accounts of the

same events – also occurs in family therapy where systemic concepts of curiosity and neutrality (Cecchin, 1987) are employed in the therapeutic conversation. Using neutrality enabled me to hold onto the different accounts of particular episodes and my curiosity allowed me to explore the episodes' meanings with the participants. In the study, I was particularly curious about participants' accounts of outsiders' negative comments and their responses to these episodes. I was aware of the connections with my own experiences and those of my parents when confronted with racism, and noted the extent to which racist expressions had changed over time.

2.9.1. Interview process

The interview questions and my confidence developed throughout the research. Most of the interviews lasted an hour, apart from two participants whose interviews were an hour and a half. They were interviewed early in the research. Both talked about their life stories and initially I struggled to encourage them to focus on my questions due to my fascination with their stories. The last participant also felt obliged to give me his life story, but I was able to help him focus on the earlier interview questions. During each interview, I used my therapeutic skills

of neutrality and focused on the questions, which helped me to consider each individual's unique narrative whilst simultaneously holding onto my knowledge of other family members' narratives. This process enabled me to maintain the participants' confidentiality.

2.10. Using visual images in the research

I have chosen to use visual images in my research project because of my interest in and experience with the visual arts. I considered it an alternative and interesting way for family members to describe their family relationships, structures and communications. I invited participants to select images of their families to discuss at the interview. I considered their chosen images as prompts to stimulate memories, episodes, emotions and their social relationships, which opened a space in which they could reflect upon the present family context as well as their past as biological and single parent families. I wished to explore the relationship between the images the participants brought to the interview and their verbal descriptions of their stepfamilies.

In my research, the family snapshot is studied as a cultural artefact but the social processes surrounding its production and subsequent display are also recognised as elements for research (Ruby, 2009).

Photographs stimulate memories of past events, relationships and of oneself at a particular stage of life. Edwards (2001) emphasises the link between orality and a historical relationship with photographs, as ‘people talk about photographs, with photographs and to photographs’ and to others in photographic contexts (Edwards, 2001: 21). Research into family photographs has provided useful data which covers the family life cycle (Gardner, 1990), the transition to parenthood (Steiger, 1995; Titus, 1976) and meanings of family photographs to family members (Rose, 2010; Williams, 1997). More recent research on resemblances in families (Mason, 2009) have used visual methods and interviews to develop ideas about kinship, genetic inheritance and identity. Twine (2006) is one of the few researchers who have explored interracial relationships and histories using family photographs.

The photo elicitation method is now used in the social sciences to explore events and meanings in subjects’ lives. There has been a shift from the earlier use of visual images as ‘an objective representation of the other to seeing it as a collaborative enterprise between observer and observed’ (Croghan, Griffin & Phoenix, 2008: 346). This approach permits the researcher to select photographs and provide interpretations and is considered to link the two ‘culturally distinct worlds of the researcher and the researched’ (Croghan, Griffin & Phoenix, 2008: 346).

The researchers distinguish between the visual and verbal as two different modes of representation and designed a research project to examine these in more detail.

Using social constructionist approaches the photographs were considered as forms of self accounting in the wider social context, but they also raised the issue of the limitations of using photo-elicitation as a way of constructing and understanding identities. These were based on the interplay between the photographs as representations of identities, the ways in which images constructed identities, and the participants' explanations and descriptions. The location of the photographs was significant, as was a preference for showing friends from similar ethnic backgrounds or culturally specific artefacts.

Croghan, Griffin & Phoenix's (2008) use of photographs in their research thought it offered the participants an opportunity 'to introduce aspects of their lives that they felt might appear obscure or abstruse to their audience' (p. 353). The photographs were useful for introducing race and culture which for many was the first time their ethnicity was discussed in the research. I was particularly interested in this finding and understood it as enabling participants to talk together in groups or within an interview context, sharing experiences, thoughts and ideas about

race and ethnicity which may not have been elicited solely using interview questions.

To summarise, from the literature on visual images in research I hypothesised that my invitation to bring images to the interview would enable participants to talk more easily about themselves and their family relationships. The selection process of the images, the content and the meanings attributed to them were analysed as part of the participants' talk about their stepfamilies.

A variety of images were brought to the interviews, including printed photographs, images on computer screens, a drawing, a poem and a painting. My initial approach to the images was to request that the participants lay out the photographs as they wished, complete a genogram, identify family members and discuss relationships between the participant and those in their selected images.

The pilot interview with Anuja revealed my focus on the genogram at the expense of the exploration of relationships within the family and the meanings of the images to the participant. The reason for my more focused attention on the genogram lay in Anuja's image of her extended family taken on holiday. This showed a large group of people which I felt it was necessary to identify and discuss. The pilot interview also demonstrated the need to lengthen the time of the interview to include a

discussion about the images. To develop the interview further, I invited Anuja's mother, the second participant, to bring images of her family for discussion. My original aim was to invite only the child/stepchild to bring visual images, but the discussion with Anuja's mother, Jane, encouraged me to extend the invitation to the parents and stepparents.

2.11. Self-reflexivity on the use of images in research

In this section I wish to discuss three images and my responses and interactions with two children/stepchildren; Anuja and Clarice.

Anuja presented three images, the first on a computer screen of her whole family, and two printed photographs of herself with her siblings and of her father and his current partner. The image of her extended family, who are all white, included one black woman, Anuja's best friend since school days. She was not identified until partway through the interview partly due to my conversation with Anuja, which included discussing relationships between her family members and returning to the images to ensure that everyone was identified.

'Then there was Mum and my best friend who came with us, so that's it really. It's nice to see us all together, and also, yeah, my best mate Julia is always kind of around as well in these family'

gatherings, and she's someone who's really great to talk to about all that sort of stuff, erm, she's black and obviously she comes across when people are racist.'

Aware of the time and that I had only allowed one hour for the interview, I soon realised that I had not accounted for participants' need to spend time talking about their chosen images. What is striking about Anuja's image is that everyone is white and her black friend is in the middle of the family group. Race, ethnicity and skin colour are centrally located in the image, which is not fully discussed until later in the interview when Anuja talks about her responses to racist comments.

'I always end up saying something and I think, 'Oh God do people think I am over the top?'

Anuja links racism and her responses to it with her black friend who she describes as 'really great to talk to about all that sort of stuff', which provides the context for Anuja's more detailed description of her friend who has become part of her family. Including her black friend in the photograph provides Anuja with a visual declaration of race and difference which are minimised in her stepfamily. Her stepfather, Ben,

minimised Anuja's visible differences in the stepfamily that he attributed to her lighter skin colour. Anuja's friend's skin colour identifies her as visibly different from others and it is with her that Anuja identifies.

In contrast to my interview with Anuja, where I barely commented on the images, my interactions with Clarice were different:

Y: '*It's just interesting that there's mainly photos of the two of you, as opposed to ...*'

C: '*I mean there's always just been the two of us, just me and my mum really.*'

In this interview, I responded spontaneously to Clarice's images of herself as a younger child with her mother and grandmother, and as an adolescent with her stepfather, Ian. Although Clarice's photographs reflected the significant relationships that she discussed in further detail, the convention of looking at family images was altered by my comment about her being photographed with a significant person.

Clarice's images are of the three main adult figures in her life: of Clarice and her mother, her grandmother, her stepfather and her two

younger siblings. The selection of these images indicates the continuity of their relationships that had, at one time, been disrupted due to disapproval and conflict within Clarice's stepfamily. Clarice was the only child/stepchild who selected an image of her stepfather; he had enabled Clarice to become familiar with his European culture.

On reflection, my lack of attention to Anuja's image informed my approach to the second family, of whom I asked more questions, but my comment about the prevalence of Clarice's images of two people, Clarice and mother, with her grandmother and her stepfather and a photograph of her two younger siblings, lay outside the boundary of conventions of strangers looking at family photographs. I had transferred my use of images in my clinical work, where clients are often invited to select from a series of images. Momentarily, I had overlooked the power of the researcher's position and my analysis's effect on participants. More conventional responses of 'how old were you?' would probably have sufficed, but the prevalence of Clarice's mother and grandmother, who were visually highlighted in her story, reflected their importance, as well as the invisibility of her father.

2.12. Recruitment

The recruitment focused upon two main organisations in the voluntary sector: those who provided national and local informal support for mixed race people and families, and those who researched and developed social policies with families. Members of one organisation maintained an interest in the research and recommended possible participants and the other organisation listed the project on their website page on research projects. Three families were recruited through these organisations and two were recruited through colleagues. Following my initial enquiry an information sheet was sent to all the organisations for inclusion in their publications.

The stepchild's proposed age was at least 15 years and the stepsibling at least 10 years, although there was flexibility. For example, if a stepsibling was eight or nine years old, was interested in participation and had permission from their parents, I considered the child a possible participant. The rationale for this age range was my wish for participants to be living in a stepfamily and able to talk directly from their experience as opposed to retrospectively. The rationale for the minimum of ten years was due partly to their possible involvement in conversations about ethnicities in their families and due to the greater likelihood that parents would give consent to their participation after that age.

Another significant criterion was gender. Gorell-Barnes et al. (1998) have reported the difficulties some stepmothers have in developing successful relationships with stepchildren, both girls and boys, and that stepdaughters disliked one third of stepfathers. I considered it important to produce a balanced sample of both genders, of five families which had two boys. Only mothers and stepfathers were recruited into the study rather than fathers and stepmothers. The study invited members of stepfamilies to participate and the first family member who accepted the invitation then recruited other members. Apart from one stepfather, the main source of recruitment was biological mothers. Enquiries with colleagues and friends and attending conferences was pursued and two families agreed to participate. Four stepfamilies were recruited through professional contacts and one participant volunteered through a national agency.

2.13. Participants

Five stepfamily members including biological mothers, children/stepchildren and stepfathers participated in the research, apart from one family where the mother and stepfather had divorced. The participants are listed below within their family groups with the

child/stepchild noted first, followed by their biological mothers and stepfathers. All names have been anonymised.

Family 1		
Participant Name	Ethnicity	Age
Anuja (<i>Child/Stepchild</i>)	English / Sri Lankan	37
Jane (<i>Mother</i>)	White / English	65
Ben (<i>Stepfather</i>)	White / English	65

Family 2		
Participant Name	Ethnicity	Age
Clarice (<i>Child/Stepchild</i>)	Grenadian / Jamaican	16
Brenda (<i>Mother</i>)	Jamaican	40
Ian (<i>Stepfather</i>)	Greek / Italian / Irish	50

Family 3

Participant Name	Ethnicity	Age
Robert <i>(Child/Stepchild)</i>	St Vincentian / English	27
Sara <i>(Mother)</i>	White / English	54

Family 4		
Participant Name	Ethnicity	Age
Dylan <i>(Child/Stepchild)</i>	Jamaican / English	20
Monica <i>(Mother)</i>	White / English	43
Sean <i>(Stepfather)</i>	White / English	45

Family 5		
Participant Name	Ethnicity	Age
Virginia <i>(Child/Stepchild)</i>	Sierra Leonian / English	12
Katherine <i>(Mother)</i>	White / English	39
Joshua <i>(Stepfather)</i>	Italian / Greek	55

In three stepfamilies (Jane, Sara and Monica) the parent and stepparent had more children who were visibly different from the child/stepchild. Only one stepfather (Joshua) had children from a previous relationship for whom he was their main provider when he became a stepfather. One participant (Jane) was the mother of two children of previous relationships. All the stepfamilies were intact apart from one (Sara) where they had divorced some time ago.

Two children/stepchildren (Anuja and Robert) were parents of young children at the time of the study. Interestingly, all the children/stepchildren in the study were around four years of age when their mothers began their relationships with their stepfathers.

In the sample, two male children/stepchildren (Robert and Dylan) were recruited and three females (Anuja, Clarice and Virginia) of varying ages.

Three of the women (Jane, Monica, Katherine) were middle class and had professional careers. Jane had retired. During the study, Monica was training in social work and Brenda worked in the voluntary sector. Three families (Jane, Brenda and Katherine) lived in London and Sara and Monica lived in rural areas in southern England. Most of the mothers had initiated the research with their families apart from Katherine, whose partner Joshua had told her about the research.

Four stepfathers (Ben, Ian, Sean and Joshua) participated in the research with the exception of Robert's stepfather who had left the family some years ago and settled abroad. Ben, Ian and Sean were single men when they met their partners. Joshua was the only one who had been previously married and had four children. Two men had middle class backgrounds (Ben and Sean) and two had working class origins in London (Ian and Joshua). All the stepfathers had senior roles in their organisations with the exception of Ian who was not working during the project.

All the children/stepchildren had had some contact with their biological fathers. Katherine's father did not see her during her early years, Clarice's father had intermittent contact with her when she was younger which no longer occurs. Robert's father was unknown to him until he reached the age of 20, when his father contacted him through a social network.

The sample is small with predominantly white, English, middle class mothers with mixed heritage children, three of whom were female and two of whom were male. There was some diversity between the participants such as the children/stepchildren who were parents and some white participants were of European heritages (Ian, Joshua). Their experiences of belonging to minority groups was significant to the study.

Most of the stepfathers were single men when their relationship with their partners began and learned about fathering through their initial role as a stepfather.

Three (Jane, Brenda and Sara) of the five mothers in the study revealed their experiences of domestic violence from the fathers of their mixed heritage children. Brenda and Sara talked of this early in the interview when describing their past lives and Jane referred to having an abusive relationship towards the end of the interview. Jane and Brenda continued to support their children's relationships with their fathers and Sara decided against this. Brenda refused contact with Clarice's father due to his inconsistent presence in Clarice's life. There was an ethical dilemma about domestic violence emerging in the data and whether this should be included in the thesis. Three of the perpetrators were black partners and the mothers' recollections contrasted with their relationships with their subsequent white male non-violent partners. Emphasis from the mothers was on their attempts to move on from a conflictual relationship and provide a secure base for themselves and their mixed heritage children.

All the children/stepchildren in the study were of a similar age, about four years old, when their stepfamilies were formed. Two of the sample, one male and one female, were parents of small children and

provided variations in data. They recalled past lived experiences, the focus of my research interest, but also called upon their past in particular ways in response to their children's cultural identities. Both Robert and Dylan were the only children/stepchildren who did not have a good relationship with their stepfathers. Robert's mother, Sara, had divorced his stepfather, David, when he was about 11 years of age and Dylan had a conflictual relationship with his stepfather, Sean, at the time of the interview.

The particular sample has produced a great deal of rich and diverse data for analysis.

2.14. Methods of Analysis

2.14.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this research. Thematic analysis is a research tool which can be applied to a range of theoretical approaches including essentialist and constructionist paradigms. It can produce rich and complex data for further analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The rationale for selecting thematic analysis in a constructionist paradigm is that it permits a range of participants' experiences and meanings attributed to these experiences. Individual interviews with the

stepfamily members yielded complex data from which initial patterns were identified and significant themes produced.

The two main ways of identifying data are inductive, in which the themes are strongly linked to the data and no pre-existing coding frame is used or theoretical framework, which is led by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest. The researcher's epistemological position also influences the inductive method, but it is more explicit in the theoretical approach. Different levels of data analysis are also considered as semantic or latent themes. The semantic approach refers to the explicit meanings where further understandings beyond what a participant has said or written are not researched. In contrast, the latent level identifies the underlying ideas and assumptions that are theorised as shaping the semantic content of the data. Analysis of latent themes is similar to some forms of Discourse Analysis.

I used the semantic approach to outline initial clustered themes of parental separation, the extended family, location and racism. Further analysis produced sub-themes that had been identified within the main themes and I produced a series of maps in accordance with Braun & Clarke (2006), which helped me consider the more dominant and subordinate stories in the participants' accounts. For example, only one mixed heritage child/stepchild was married with children. She talked

about episodes of racism in her husband's family. I initially located this in the main theme of racism in the sub-theme of the extended family.

2.14.2. How I approached my analysis

My aim was to explore the practices families undertook and variations of constructions between each family member about these practices. I transcribed all the interviews, highlighting sections of interest that linked to the main questions. Following the interviews with the third family, I undertook a thematic data analysis.

Following Braun and Clarke's six stage model (2006) I familiarised myself with the data, some of which occurred during the transcriptions of the interviews and noted ideas for coding. Upon completing the transcription, I mapped out an initial list of ideas from the data. Particular words or phrases that interested me were noted, including: 'putting children first' and 'cultural isolation at school' (see Appendix 13). The most prevalent sections of the data were clustered together under initial codes: extended family, location, separation of parents, racism and marriage. This inductive approach produced groupings which were quite large, for example, extended family and racism. Some groupings overlapped or were repeated, for instance, racism appeared in extended

family and marriage. This coding did not fit into a specific coding framework, but allowed me to engage with the initial data analysis.

The second phase included applying the latent approach 'searching for underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 84, which produced more detailed clusters of codes. At this stage I returned to the four questions of the research to inform my coding, which helped me manage the data more easily (see page 100). Themes were then mapped out from each position, that of biological parent, stepparent and child/stepchild (see Appendix 9) to identify specific themes for each group and themes that overlapped. Themes produced were: being a father, extended family, racism, separation, becoming a stepfamily, location, marriage of child/stepchild and values and beliefs. Certain codes were discarded, for example, the theme of location. In the literature, mixed heritage families identified the significance of living in mixed neighbourhoods (Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray, 2007). Some participants had raised that point, but in relation to the research question and themes produced from the data; this was less significant. I also included a discursive approach to the data (discussed below) to refine the identify themes and sub-themes.

The themes were then considered in relation to the research question: how stepfamilies maintain cultural heritages. This produced

two overarching themes of ‘Talking in families’ and ‘Practices in families’ which I used discourse analysis to examine further.

The themes of ‘Being a father’, ‘Extended Family’, ‘Becoming a stepfamily’, ‘Racism’, and ‘Values/Belief systems’ contained further sub-themes within each category (see Appendix 13). At a latent level, the category ‘Becoming a stepfamily’ included themes of ‘Positive talk’, ‘Doing the right thing’, ‘Advantages of a mixed heritage child’, ‘White half-siblings’, ‘Mixed heritage half-siblings’, ‘Visible differences between the children’ and ‘Minimisation of difficulties’. I reviewed these themes looking for prevalence across the data for each group of participants and maintained a close link to the research question: ‘ways in which cultural heritages were maintained in stepfamilies’. Data extracts were identified alongside codes (see Appendices 10 and 11). I then focused more closely on the overarching themes of ‘Talking’ and ‘Practices’. For example, one stepfather spoke about the importance of talking, to reassure, reduce fears, conflict and address difficulties, which included talk of race.

In addition to talking, I explored the relationship between verbal and social practices undertaken by the families. I was interested in talking and action and the ways in which they were undertaken in the stepfamily. Did more talking than action occur? If cultural practices were

undertaken what forms did they take, who took responsibility, and how was it negotiated between the stepfamily members? I examined the transcripts under the research title ‘Ways in which cultural heritages are maintained’, and noted sections of the transcripts that indicated talking and actions. Within the category ‘Talking’ I included ‘No talking’. From the two overarching themes of ‘Talking’ and ‘Cultural Practices’, more themes were defined and refined: ‘Preparations on becoming a stepfamily’, ‘Visible differences within the family’ and ‘Claims to culture’.

I went through the transcripts to look for any inconsistencies, contradictions and absences in the data (Potter, 1997). For example, one mother talked of her response to racism towards her mixed heritage son, when they had lived in a predominantly white community, yet he did not recall any racist experiences during this time. I wondered about their different responses, the mother’s actions and her son’s silence about racism.

The participants recalled narratives of their past selves and reworked their memories (Ali, 2012) as they presented self-perceptions in relation to themselves, their mixed heritage children and to me, the mixed heritage researcher. Their personal memories were recalled in response to questions and participants produced significant episodes in their lives which some participants re-lived in telling their narratives.

Emotional expression also forms an important part of talking about memories as well as physical responses such as changing tone of voice and pauses, which indicate emotional reactions. The importance of stepfamily members' memories is of their lived experiences that spanned 12-37 years and provides evidence of social change, such as increasing diversity of cultures within some neighbourhoods and schools. Some of the participants talked of events in the more recent past, whilst others' recollections were of 20 or nearly 40 years ago. In particular, the parents and stepparents in the study recalled episodes of racism toward themselves and their partners which provided constructions of the changes in the ways racism was expressed in the past and the continuation of racism within the past few years.

2.14.3. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was identified as an appropriate method of analysis for the constructions of cultural identities in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. There are three main topics that form the basis for discourse analysis: the study of social interaction – how people present themselves in their accounts; the study of minds, selves and sense-making, which is identity construction and the process of sense-making and is focused on what people do in discourse; and the study of culture

and social relationships that are historically and linguistically developed over time (Wetherell et al., 2001).

Discourse analysis consists of different approaches. I found the Foucauldian approach particularly useful because of the attention it pays to discourses which construct their objects, including the human subject (Willig, 2008). The particular positions that humans find themselves in constrains their utterances or what can be thought about, felt and experienced. This approach is also useful when considering wider societal discourses of stepfamilies and mixed heritages.

I also attempted to identify the interpretive repertoires participants used to construct their accounts. Interpretive repertoires can be defined as ‘a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon and utilised in the course of everyday social interaction’ (Edley, 2001: 198).

The first stage of analysis identified how particular discursive objects are constructed. In this research, the ways in which each participant constructs cultural heritages were identified. Wider discourses were considered and the differences between different constructions. For example, ‘fatherhood’ and how the stepfathers construct themselves and are constructed by their partners and their stepchildren was examined (see Appendix 13). Next, the function of constructing the objects in particular ways was analysed, followed by

actions that are possible due to particular constructions. This step included consideration of what can be said or done from these subject positions (such as a stepfather's position). The final stage explores the relationship between subjectivity and discourse and considers the implications of taking up subject positions from the participants' experiences. Their thoughts and feelings on their experiences as stepfather, child/stepchild, mother, were analysed (Willig, 2009). I maintained this process of analysis as I examined the transcripts.

2.15. Positions and positioning

Within discourses we decide to take up a position or are positioned by others based on our interactions and actions. In conversation, a person's moral beliefs are collected and different types of discourses influence the position individuals take up (Campbell, 2006). Discourses construct subjects as well as objects and make available positions within a number of meanings that speakers locate others within or select the position for themselves. The consequences of positions are explored in terms of that position's subjective experience, and what emotions are experienced and ideas that are produced from within various subject positions. Davies & Harre (1999) point out that positioning may not be necessarily intentional because people may become enmeshed in the

positions implicit in their talk. But the authors suggest that we should develop an awareness of the potential implications of the discourses we adopt in our discussions with others. Another important issue in positioning is that of power. Positions offered, accepted or resisted in everyday talk are the discursive practices by which discourses and their associated power implications are brought to life. This means that when we position ourselves and others in conversation, the conversation's effects can go beyond the immediate social interaction.

My research interest is in how language is used to talk about mixed ethnicities in stepfamilies, the ways in which mixed heritage identities are constructed, and the practices stepfamilies undertake to maintain the child/stepchild's cultural heritages. I expect different discourses and different subject positions to emerge as I examine individuals' accounts from those positions. Being positioned by others, and how they position others in the discourses of mixed race and stepfamilies will emerge in the analysis. These discourses intersect with those of gender, class, religion, age, ability and sexuality, which will be included in the analysis.

Furthermore, the wider social context of mixed race and stepfamilies in England, and the dominant perceptions of interracial and interethnic unions, will also inform the participants' subject positions. The

sociohistorical perspective that Foucauldian discourse analysis draws upon is significant, because of black people's history. The sociocultural and sociopolitical consequences of the Atlantic slave trade followed by colonialism, social regulation of hypodescent (one drop rule) in the US, apartheid in South Africa and the historical policy of forced removal of mixed Aboriginal children from their families in Australia (Olumide, 2002) form part of the historical trauma of black people's history. These social and political legacies have impacted severely on generations of black and mixed heritage people whose struggles against racism and discrimination continue today. From these wider contexts, participants will draw upon their experiences of racism.

2.16. Co-ordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)

CMM seemed useful for this study because of its invitation to reflect on co-construction in conversations and how this fits our intentions or enables preferred patterns at critical moments (Pearce, 2006). Developed by communications theorists Pearce & Cronen during the 1970s, CMM is located within a broad social constructionist frame and foregrounds the individual's moral dimension. CMM is concerned with the co-construction of our social world, the links between the stories we tell about ourselves to make ourselves and our lives understood by

others (Oliver, 1996). Specific moments of interaction are analysed in this framework where “communication is considered performative, that is, what people do by what they say” (Pearce, 2006: 39) and communication is considered as something with characteristics in itself rather than as an expression of, or reference to, other things. CMM analyses the multiple levels of embedded contexts. The starting point is that meaning is context dependent and that acts of communication occur in multiple contexts, in which stories of identity, relationships, of the episode itself, and of organisations and cultures involved, emerge. Linked to multiple levels are the sequences of speech acts ‘each of which evokes and responds to the acts of the other person’ (Pearce, 1994: 31). Using a third person perspective, a serpentine model representing both participants’ speech was placed into two separate columns and the interactions were linked (see Appendix 14). The relationship between the two columns was then examined and questions such as ‘how does this statement cause this particular response which leads to the next statement’ formed part of the analysis. Lastly, I offer an overall view of the interaction.

The serpentine and LUUUUUTT models were employed to explore different stories of participants. LUUUUUTT is an acronym for stories

Lived, Unknown stories, Untold stories, Unheard stories, Untellable stories, stories Told and story Telling (see Appendix 14).

I used CMM when examining specific texts in more detail to consider my conversation with participants about relationships between family members within the stepfamily, their extended families and the wider social context. Values and belief systems about race, parenting in separate households and new partners were analysed in addition to my interactions with the participants. The serpentine and LUUUUTT models were particularly useful when considering a section of the conversation in which I had struggled to understand the participant's meaning and experienced a lack of coherence referred to by Pearce as 'vertigo' (1994: 28); that is, a disorientation in the conversation which required further analysis.

2.17. Methodological Challenges

The main challenge in the research project was my position as a mixed heritage interviewer, interviewing white parents of a mixed race or mixed ethnicity child. Although participants volunteered out of personal interest, I was aware that questions regarding the mothers' efforts to maintain the cultural heritages of their ex-partners within their mixed ethnicity stepfamilies could be experienced as problematic. They may

have wished to provide the ‘right’ answers to my questions which could have been part of their experiences of maternal incompetence of white mothers as found in studies by Twine (1999) and Harman (2010). Given the social context of the interview parental responses ‘orient towards a particular reading of the questions that they are being asked’ (Willig, 2008:93) and both questions and my racialized position as the researcher may have oriented them towards their responses.

There was a wide range of ages of the children/stepchildren (from 12 years to 37 years) some of whom talked of their past childhoods particularly as young children whilst the younger participants talked of their more recent past. Although most lived in multicultural neighbourhoods, they each constructed themselves as having a particular cultural identity which was often unrecognised by others. The recollections of the older participants were of narratives of their adjustments to their stepfamilies and that past conflicts had been resolved. Younger participants described difficulties within the family that were more recent and, for some, more difficult to discuss. In the interview constructions of particular memories were either uncertain or could not be recalled. This occurs in systemic therapy but, unlike therapy in which families attend numerous sessions over time and past events or experiences can be re-visited or different memories are recalled, the

research interview occurred only once. The structure and time of the interview influenced my decision as to whether to explore the more difficult memories further. Through their re-constructions of themselves and their stepfamilies, the participants provided their preferred narratives about their family relationships.

I asked participants to bring visual images of their families for discussion during the interview. There was no limitation on the type of media and numbers of images. The participants produced printed photographs, a painting, a drawing and online images. Discussion of the selected images took place at the beginning of the interview and formed part of the interview structure. What the participants said about their selected images moved onto discussions about family structure and relationships, which also permitted noticing of the omission of particular individuals from their selection of images. I had transferred knowledge and experience of using visual images in clinical contexts to the research context. Most participants had taken time to consider their selections of photographs, which had a great deal of meaning to them, as the images captured a particular point in their lives. Unlike the therapeutic approach in which time can be devoted to talking about the meanings of images, I found it challenging to both balance the

requirements of the research interview with that of the social conventions of looking at participants' family photographs.

2.18. Ethics

The application for ethical approval for the research study to the University of East London was completed in September 2009 and granted in May 2010.

As agreed, I did not reveal any information from one family member to another, although one mother referred to her partner's family background, which she said he would discuss further. I was aware that parents may have told their children about the questions I would be asking to encourage their participation and alleviate anxieties. Most of the participants were adults and adolescents. The youngest was 12 years of age, and her mother and stepfather encouraged her to share her thoughts and ideas. However, as I transcribed each tape of the interview before the next interview, I was influenced by some of the emerging data. In the first interview, I heard how the mother and stepfather had considered changing the name of the child/stepchild to the adopting family's name, but decided against it. I became aware of the possible significance of this for the participant. Then I included a question regarding their thoughts about changing the child's family

name. I was mindful that there may be more than one stepchild and stepsiblings within a family who may have wished to participate in the research and that each could have a different experience of being in a stepfamily.

The tapes show both interviewer/interviewee in conversation for my analysis. Participants are anonymised throughout the study and their permission was sought regarding publication or public presentations. The interview process may have perturbed family members and I monitored this throughout the research and offered therapeutic support if family members required it.

2.18.1. Ethical Issues when interviewing children

Researching children presents a number of ethical issues, particularly: obtaining informed consent, protection of the child, and the researcher's responsibility for the young participants' well-being. Confidentiality is another important issue as is how to deal with the disclosure of information. Underpinning these factors there are complicated power relationships. The parents may expect to be informed about their children's private lives, or their children's thoughts, although I found that the parents in this study respected their children having their

own space. This may be partly due to the children/stepchildren's ages, either adolescents or adults who could give their own consent.

Thomas & O'Kane (1998) thought that the power imbalance has to be addressed between adult researcher and child in order to enable children to participate in the research on their own terms. Drawing upon these ideas, I produced a separate information leaflet for parents and for children under 18. I checked the information sheet and consent form in detail with two participants and a half sibling who were under 18 to ensure that they had understood the research process. A second principle is that the children should exercise choice about their participation in the research, done through a choice of research materials, e.g. drawings and photographs, which formed part of the interview process. Virginia, aged 12, was the youngest interviewee. I went through the consent form with her to be sure she was fully informed. Her mother is an academic interested in research on race and ethnicity, and I was aware of the frequent conversations about ethnicity that Virginia had had with her mother and stepfather. Although slightly younger than the eligibility criteria I had established, Virginia's parents thought she would find the interview interesting and were confident of her suitability and of the interview process.

2.19. Limitations of the study

This was a very small, specific study of only mothers, stepfathers and children/stepchildren. The topic of study attracted those who were interested in talking of their experiences of living in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. Gender and emotional labour were significant in that most of the mothers were interviewed first and subsequent interviews relied upon their perception of the interview experience, the questions raised in the interview and their encouragement of their partners and children to participate in the study. Prior to the interview it is possible that, each participant could have discussed their experience with their stepfamily members and this, in turn, may have shaped their responses to the questions. It could also contribute to constraints in the interviews if one of the participants has a view that sensitive information of their family has already been shared.

Several of the women had experienced domestic violence in their relationships with their children's fathers, which indicates this sample's particularity. I had decided on individual interviews to explore individual narratives as opposed to joint interviews, which would have produced interactional data. I focussed on the similarities and differences of stepfamily members' remembered experiences and perceptions.

One limitation is the exclusion of the biological father. Participants' cultural heritages were of research interest and their contributions about how they maintained their culture for their children following separation or divorce could have provided further insights.

Another limitation is that members of the extended families were not included. Grandparents particularly had important relationships with their mixed heritage grandchildren. Their responses to the stepfathers and the extent to which their views may have changed over time could have produced further detailed information. Further research is also required on white siblings living with mixed heritage siblings, which this study did not focus on, mainly due to the half-siblings' young age. The sample of mothers and stepfathers is limited and excluded stepmothers and biological fathers which would have produced different data for research. The sample consisted of three female and two male children/stepchildren. An increased number of male participants would have provided more data on the stepfather/stepson relationships. Finally, the time of the interview could have been expanded to explore the participants' selection and meanings of the images they brought. I had introduced the selection of the images early in each interview, informed by my clinical practice where I invite family members to select images from a number of photographs from my collection as part of our

engagement. In the research interviews, participants brought their own images and more consideration to the timing of the questions about the images may have produced qualitatively different information.

2.20. Summary of Methodology

In summary, the research study was located within a social constructionist paradigm in which meanings are created through language which is understood to be performative. Particular attention was paid to societal discourses of mixed heritages and stepfamilies and the impact of these discourses within the stepfamilies. To explore their lived experiences in more depth, individual interviews with the mother, stepfather and child/stepchild were undertaken. Participants were invited to bring visual images of their families to the interviews to stimulate their recollections of the transitions from a biological family to a single parent family to a stepfamily. The first method of analysis was thematic analysis, which produced two main themes of 'Talk in families' and 'Practice in families'. These were analysed further using discourse analysis. My position as a mixed heritage researcher and my assumptions of using visual images has influenced the research process in ways that I have outlined. I shall now move on to discuss the research findings.

Chapter 3

Findings from the research

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the main findings from my research. The most important issue in becoming a stepfamily is that of difference, that the child/stepchild was of an ethnicity and culture different from their stepfamily members. The study revealed the various ways in which conversations occurred within the stepfamily and the reasons stepfamily members gave for not talking about their differences. The theme of living as a stepfamily, how parents constructed their new families and the ways in which children/stepchildren responded to parental constructions, demonstrated stepfamily life's complexities.

The role of the extended families of the biological parents and stepparents emerged as an important theme. Their responses to and support of the new stepfamily and their continued relationships with their mixed heritage grandchildren were important social and cultural contributions to the mixed heritage children's development. Extended family members adjusted to the new stepfamily, which changed over time.

Finally, the biological father's ambiguous presence was a key feature in the new mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Mothers and their partners

held different views of the biological father from the mixed heritage children/stepchildren that created continual tension. The study revealed the ways in which the mixed heritage child/stepchild navigated the complex relationships between the biological father and their stepfamily.

This section explores the different methods families used to maintain the cultural heritages of children/stepchildren in their new stepfamily.

3.2. No Talking

Introduction

The research explored the ways of communication about visible differences in stepfamilies and the participants' accounts demonstrated the extent to which talking within families either did not occur or was limited. This section outlines the different accounts of these conversations between parents.

3.2.1. No need to talk

In response to my question, two of the mothers, Jane (who lived with her partner Ben and daughter Anuja), and Monica (who lived with her partner Sean and her son Dylan), discussed their lack of conversation on becoming a mixed ethnicity stepfamily.

Jane constructed a familiarity between herself and her white partner, Ben. 'I knew Ben,' she said, offering an explanation about why there had been no need to talk about Jane's daughter's ethnic difference. Both she and Ben knew each other as friends prior to the start of their relationship and a sense of their like-mindedness was created. Ben, however, felt less certain about Jane's understanding of him. She 'sort of knew of me,' he said, but he 'knew Michael' (Jane's husband). The construction of Ben being familiar with Michael suggests that both men were part of the same social circles, and that Michael was the link between Jane and Ben. Jane came to know Ben through his friendship or contact with Michael. As a result, Ben was familiar with Jane having two children of different ethnicities. 'He knew my situation,' she said, which he accepted. Familiarity with each other is linked to the idea of there being no need to talk about differences during the early stages of their new stepfamily. The non-talking about racialised differences within the family represented an attempt to normalise their family formation and reduce further differences. Jane's talk privileged acceptance by Ben of her position as a single mother with two children over that of her having children of different ethnicities.

Monica provided another response to the idea of preparing to be a new family:

'I don't think we've ever considered there to be differences because Dylan's always been very much with us erm ...

Even though there are racial differences, visible differences?

Yes, but you've got to remember Dylan's family are very English.'

This text constructs sameness in two ways. First Monica disclaims the idea of difference within the family to justify her reason for the lack of talk. From Monica's position the notion of difference excludes and separates Dylan from the family, and she attempts to ensure against this by privileging sameness. Her declaration of the Englishness of Dylan's paternal Jamaican family draws upon the discourse of assimilation. Within this discourse European values and beliefs are privileged and conformity to these ideals form part of the social expectations of black people. Adopting English habits, and ways of speaking, were required to be accepted into the dominant white society (Burck, 2005; LaFramboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K. & Gerton, J., 1993).

Two of the stepfathers, Ben and Sean, provided different reasons for their limited preparatory talk on becoming a stepfamily. Ben's political

beliefs underpinned his ideas regarding cultural heritages: '*being very anti-racist, being involved in anti-racist work ... that was the key for me, not necessarily the kind of ethnicity of the parent/carer, you know, that was the way.*'

Political ideology in the form of anti-racism was central to Ben's views, and he distinguishes between race and culture regarding placing mixed heritage children in the care system. Drawing upon the racialised debates in social care in the 1980s about placing mixed heritage children with adoptive families with black or mixed race families, Ben identifies culture as a more significant factor than a carer's ethnicity. He claims that knowledge of mixed heritage children's cultural backgrounds is more important than the carer's ethnicity:

'Well I am my view was i..it w..what was important was not so much the ethnicity of the parents or carers but erm (...) understanding the kind of cultural backgrounds of the children and the importance of valuing and talking about in a positive way the cultural background'

Ben's claim of certainty and activism draws from the anti-racism discourse of minorities' empowerment, and his text avoids a direct

response to the question about whether he and Jane had talked about coming together as a family with children of different ethnicities. Ben makes a claim for positive talking about culture and locates it within an anti-racist framework, which is given greater emphasis and value in his text. Ben's text contradicts Jane's, whose claim is of their friendship and familiarity, that she attributed to there being no need to talk of differences within their stepfamily. From Ben's position, talk of Anuja's Sri Lankan heritage forms part of his wider political discourse.

Monica's partner Sean's account for his limited preparation for becoming a stepfamily stems from his idea of colour-blindness in the family. Monica was a single mother with a mixed heritage son when she met Sean.

'It just seemed to be part of the package of Monica. I didn't have any thoughts about, erm, Monica and Dylan. That was the deal. This sounds rather glib but it didn't matter at all. I didn't really comment on it to people, and say, 'Oh I don't see colour,' which is insane, but it just didn't matter at all.'

Sean's construction was of racial blindness and the subsequent silence of Dylan's visible differences to Sean and Monica when they

started out their life as a family. Ethnic differences were not acknowledged in his relationship with Monica and within this construct is the assumption that differences were unimportant. Sean's acceptance of both Monica and her son was an important part of their decision to live together and they did not talk together about Dylan's visible differences. In relation to Monica, Sean was positioned as not being an expert, which he attributed to Monica, who:

'was more aware of the issues that you can have of a mixed race child than I was because she'd obviously grown up with it and she's experienced both sides from the black community and the white community 'cos I hadn't'

Sean was silenced in terms of his racial awareness and sensitivity due to Monica's knowledge and experience as he claimed that Dylan's racialised difference was unimportant. Even when faced with the idea of colour-blindness, which Sean considers 'insane', he remains committed to silence. Sean's position as a non-expert regarding race absolves him of any responsibility regarding any potential racialised difficulties that Dylan may have experienced. Sean's discourse was that of a new

partner to Monica and not of a father substitute, as Dylan continued his relationship with his Jamaican father and extended family.

Dylan confirms the silence in his white stepfamily about his visible difference. In response to a question of his stepfamily's recognition of his Jamaican heritage Dylan responds:

'In this side not really at all, no not at all really, but then, I dunno, yeah just not really (clears throat)'

The construction of sameness within Dylan's stepfamily from his mother and his stepfather's colour blind approach to his mixed ethnicity stepfamily is reflected in Dylan's response of constraint, uncertainty and perhaps some discomfort in his recollection of his family's silence of his visible difference.

In sum, limited preparatory talk occurred in two stepfamilies based on a need of their not having to talk. Shared political values, familiarity and acceptance underpinned the lack of talk in one stepfamily and a construction of sameness and inclusion informed another stepfamily.

3.2.2. No time to talk

Brenda gives a different account for her limited preparations on becoming a stepfamily. She lived with her partner Ian and her daughter Clarice. Ian and Brenda ‘talked about it but very briefly’. Brenda later explained their lack of talking was because she became pregnant early in the relationship: ‘two months later I was pregnant after the relationship started.’

Although ‘brief’, Brenda sought to justify her preparations. The pregnancy propelled the couple from having to think solely about Brenda’s daughter, Clarice, to that of being parents of a new baby while, at the same time, adjusting to a new relationship. The rapid changes they experienced warranted Brenda’s claim that the unexpected pregnancy cut short their brief discussions. Her construction of the early stage of their family was of an interruption due to the unexpected event, which impacted upon their transition from couple to parents.

Ian also discussed his and Brenda’s limited talking together about their preparations: ‘we had choices sort of marginalised very early on you know.’ Ian presented a discursive construction of himself as powerless. Their choices were limited by time, but also by circumstances, which led to a lack of choice and power in trying to control their talking together. From his subject position of

disempowerment, Ian was unable to prepare Clarice for the transition to a new family.

Ian and Brenda's accounts of powerlessness and presenting themselves as victims of unforeseen circumstances and prejudice can also be understood in terms of Pearce's LUUUUTT model (1994). The story of powerlessness forms part of the stories *Told* and in the story *Telling* of Ian, who presents himself in a specific way, leaving other stories untold and silent. The family's visual representation produced an *Untold* story of conflict within the stepfamily that led to Clarice's departure for a few months. The painting that Ian selected of the family had not included Clarice, who had left the family home at that time, but a space was allocated for her in the belief that she would return to her family. Ian refers to:

'The conflict was from me to Brenda about how (.) Clarice (.) can get between us (.) and has the power to do so.'

Conflict between the couple counters Ian's preferred stories. These are *Told* stories of his powerlessness.

In summary, some mothers produced accounts of assumptions of having shared values, having insufficient time in their new stepfamilies,

and not having to discuss visible differences in their stepfamilies. One mother drew on the discourse of normalisation as a stepfamily within which differences were rendered invisible. Stepfathers shared their partners' views. Cultural heritages were subsumed within a stepfather's wider discourse of political activism and anti-racism. The discourse of white privilege or not needing to know or be aware of racialised differences underpinned a stepfather's colour blindness. The theme of a stepfather's powerlessness and marginalisation contributed to a lack of time to prepare himself, his partner, and the child/stepchild on becoming a stepfamily.

3.2.3. Preparatory talk

Introduction

Some parents prepared themselves and their mixed heritage children for becoming a new family. Past experiences of prejudice, being a biological father, being a white single mother to a mixed heritage child, sensitised some parents to the future racist encounters of the mixed heritage child.

The two examples demonstrate the talk between parents and talk between a mother, her partner and her mixed heritage child.

Two mothers, Sara (Robert's mother) and Katherine (who lived with her partner Joshua and her daughter Virginia), attended to the issue

of racialised differences within their new stepfamilies with their partners and children. Sara talked with her then partner David who had been '*picked on for being a Jewish boy*' and said '*he had suffered a lot of prejudice (...) he didn't say "therefore I know what Robert's going to feel" (...) but I added that in.*'

Sara's discursive construction is of hope that David would identify with her due to his past experiences of prejudice. Her claim is of David's knowledge of the racism which Robert would experience and that, as a white English stepfather, David would be able to support her and her son. Sara's talk constructs herself as a mother who is fully aware of the importance of the different ethnicities and skin colours in the family, as she ensures that David is also of a similar view. The story was not an explicit claim that David would understand the racialised difficulties Robert might have experienced, but Sara created this meaning for herself. As a single mother who had fled from a violent partner, her son's father, Sara placed a high value on her son's protection and considered the importance of racial awareness and racial sensitivity (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2000). David's experience of prejudice deconstructs whiteness in terms of cultural, religious and skin colour differences in his grammar school. The talk of differences within whiteness is used to connect David as a member of a minority group with Robert, David's stepson, a visible

member of another minority group. An assumption is created that David will support Sara, that he will know how to respond and what actions to take if Robert should experience any racism.

Sara's construction of David is drawn from the discourse of marginalisation, which Sara assumed would enable David to identify with and respond to Robert's future experiences of racism. Sara's ideas counter those white mothers who find it difficult to comprehend racism towards their mixed race children (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). Sara's racial awareness and David's subject position produced confidence in David's ability to provide emotional and psychological support for Robert.

Katherine's discussions with her daughter, Virginia, on becoming a stepfamily led to 'a conscious decision that

'I wouldn't have any more children because it would be something (...) she (Virginia) always saw it (her mother and stepfather's baby) as a child we would have preferred because they (her mother, her mother's partner and their baby) would be white.'

Katherine provides an account of her awareness of her daughter's position within the family if she and Sean had decided to have a child together. Another child who would have been white would have

increased a sense of difference and exclusion for Virginia within her stepfamily. Although Katherine claims initial responsibility for the decision not to have another child, the process of decision-making is apparent. There were personal considerations and consultations with Virginia, who was able to voice her feelings about having another child with a skin colour different to hers. The meaning that Virginia gave to differences of skin colour was not only that of her increased sense of difference, but also her mother's possible preference of a child who would be white. Drawing upon the discourse of racial awareness Katherine centralised Virginia's position and reflected upon the implications for her daughter if she were to have another child.

Unlike Ben, Jane's partner, and Ian, Brenda's partner, Joshua took an active role in preparing Virginia for two transitions, that of becoming a family and of a move to a new home: '*we talked about that because she didn't have a place to play. She had a very small little patio in her old house.*' He also reflected upon Virginia's position: '*It's been really difficult for her, erm, having two white parents, I think.*'

Joshua makes the claim that because of their joint preparation and including Virginia in their family, of which talking formed one component, her needs were recognised and taken into account. Joshua's account reveals his recognition of Virginia's position as the only mixed race child

with two white parents, his acknowledgement of Virginia's central position in the family and his racial awareness and sensitivity (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2000). Joshua's text also indicates the continuous talking about Virginia's position in the family.

To summarise, preparatory talk between partners and the mixed heritage child were powerful forms of communication that increased confidence in forming the stepfamily and in the parents' racial awareness of the mixed heritage child's position.

3.2.4. Effects of preparatory talk

Introduction

Virginia (Katherine's daughter) and Robert (Sara's son) provided different accounts of awareness from their transition into a new family. In this extract, Virginia talks about the effects of a preparatory talk on her:

'I sometimes used to ask my mum 'oh who do you love more' (...) I don't know if I got jealous but they were like sleeping together or something I don't know why.'

Virginia presents an account of her feelings about her mother's relationship with Joshua and how Virginia's position changed due to her

having to accommodate another person to share her mother's love. The question 'who do you love more?' is used to monitor and regulate the mother/daughter relationship and to avoid possible ambivalence.

Robert is the only child/stepchild whose father was not present during his life until he reached adulthood. Both he and his mother were unaware of his father's cultural origins during Robert's childhood. Here he describes how his cultural knowledge developed:

'The only thing I remember is my Mum, she would constantly be buying me this black history book and saying, 'oh did you know about this person or ... ?' to the point where it was just like, 'Oh shut up mum.' Do you know what I mean? Like I know.'

Robert's constructs a version of his cultural identity in two ways. Firstly, his mother used literature on African historical achievements to elevate Robert's cultural origins.

'You know my first book of Africa (.) talking about the wonderful kingdoms of Africa (.) and actually I just thought if that's our starting point and the root of all the people that had gone to the Caribbean (.) is from Africa I knew about the Caribs and Arawaks'

(0.1) it was actually just (.) as long as Robert had as much information to counterbalance (.) all that information he would get every day.'

Their lack of specific knowledge about Robert's father's culture led to Sara drawing on general aspects of African history so Robert could claim a more positive identity. Sara's experience of racial insults whilst living in a rural part of south England during Robert's younger years led to the idea of preparing Robert for prejudice and discrimination. African history was used to instil racial and cultural pride and to challenge the stereotype of black people. Robert was visibly different from his peers and Sara drew upon the discourse of African historical achievement to support Robert's claim to a black identity.

Robert's second construction is of his response to the attempts for him to make this claim for identity. The subject positions available to Robert through African literature were limited or did not fit with any of his own ideas as he experienced pressure and expectations to sign up to the identity his mother sought to provide. Drawing from her increased knowledge of black history and politics, Sara used African history to compensate for her lack of cultural knowledge regarding Robert's father.

To summarise briefly, both Virginia and Robert were the only two children/stepchildren in the sample who did not refer to the maintenance of their cultural heritages through their fathers. For Virginia, her primary concern was of the change to her position, divided loyalties of her mother who may have preferred her white partner, Joshua, to herself. His father's absence led to Robert being offered information on his black identity through historical sources.

To summarise, two of the mothers (Sara and Katherine) demonstrated the effects of having conversations with their partners and/or their children about becoming a mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Early experiences of prejudices, for Sara's partner, supported a construction of him as a racially aware stepfather. Particularly significant is the preparatory conversations between a mother and her mixed heritage daughter that demonstrated her increased awareness of the significance of her having another child.

Four stepfathers (Ben, Ian, Sean and Joshua) were interviewed for the project. All were single men before they met their partners, apart from Joshua who had been married with four children. Drawing on his experience as a father, one stepfather undertook detailed preparations about the change of the family home and expressed an awareness of his mixed heritage stepdaughter's position having two white parents. Other

participants provided a range of responses within the theme of minimisation of cultural heritages.

3.2.5. Minimised talk

Introduction

This section provides accounts of the mixed heritage children/stepchildren talking of their heritages in their stepfamilies and demonstrates the various strategies they employed to recognise and acknowledge their cultural heritages.

Three of the children – Anuja (Jane's daughter who lived with her mother and her mother's partner, Ben), Clarice (Brenda's daughter who lived with her and Ian, her mother's partner) and Dylan (Monica's son who had lived with his mother and her partner, Sean) reported the minimisation of expressions of their cultural heritage in their families. The continued presence of Anuja's father contributed to her claim of access to a Sri Lankan identity, which '*would have disappeared if my dad wasn't around*'. It is through her father that extended family members were made available and visits to Sri Lanka were undertaken as cultural reminders of Anuja's heritage. Anuja used her surname to legitimise her claim of Sri Lankan inheritance. Her claim is twofold in that it also forms an explanation for differences in skin colour between Anuja and her half

siblings. Differences between family members are made more available to enquiry by using a foreign surname, which locates Anuja as a member of another group. Names, naming, origins and meanings of names, and who carries particular names in families are significant features of culture and identity. In some cultures, women carry both their father's and partner's names, in others a choice of married or single (father's name) or interchangeable use of either surname is possible.

Later, Anuja refers to ways in which her Sri Lankan heritage is maintained:

'Sometimes there were things, like when you started your periods they give you a bangle and they give you jewellery and lots of presents.'

Anuja claimed that her Sri Lankan culture was minimised due to her construction of the meaning of Sri Lankan culture and her understanding and expectations of her response to questions about the maintenance of that culture. This is contradicted by her continued wearing of a bracelet from a Sri Lankan aunt, visits to Sri Lanka with her father, and the maintenance of her father's name, all of which form part of Anuja's Sri Lankan identity. These form a number of family and

cultural practices undertaken during Anuja's childhood in which she has become embedded, yet Anuja considers herself to be less culturally Sri Lankan and the bracelets to be less substantial cultural objects. The discourse that Anuja draws on is cultural markers that contribute to a Sri Lankan identity.

Clarice also minimised her Grenadian heritage which she connects to her Grenadian father:

'I don't know anything about my dad (.) I just think it would have been nice to have that influence with my own biological dad.'

Clarice's talk has a number of discursive constructions. Firstly, from her position of a young person on the cusp of adulthood she makes a claim to have no knowledge of her father's Grenadian heritage during her childhood. The construction of childhood in which she must accept adults' decisions produces the discourse of powerlessness in children who undergo parental separation. Decisions regarding contact, frequency of and access to absent fathers are made by either or both parents over which children have little control. The result is of loss and missed opportunities for Clarice about her Grenadian culture. Loss of cultural knowledge of Grenada is amplified by the absence of talk with

both her mother and stepfather who ‘never brought it up.’ However, Brenda provides a counter claim:

'I tell everyone I'm Jamaican,' she (Clarice) says, 'cos that's what I am.' I (Brenda) said 'but you are half Grenadian, so you are mixed race.' I said, 'I know it's not blatantly as obvious 'cos you know when we talked about mixed race and how we feel about (.) that I said 'in th.. more wider context we're all mixed'. I said 'you know that Gar... my granny is a black Chinese woman'. I said 'we're all mixed race Clarice I said and granddad's family's got Ara ... Indian'. I said 'why do you think your hair's the length it is?' I said 'you saw granny look at granny's hair.' I said 'she's got curly hair'

Drawing upon the discourse of mixed race Brenda challenges Clarice’s claim to her Jamaican identity and the exclusion of her Grenadian heritage. A disclaimer to Clarice’s own claims to a singular identity is achieved by using Chinese and Indian ancestry in Brenda’s own family, which produces physical proof of Clarice’s ancestry. Hair is a signifier of Caribbean ancestry, and Brenda constructs a more accurate and complex claim to Clarice’s identity as mixed race. Brenda also

provides talk of similarities between Grenadian and Jamaican cultures which minimise her daughter's Grenadian heritage in their stepfamily:

*'It's important to her how she talks about foods or pronounces food
(.) that's an issue or a theme... how sort of African or Grenadian
people identify that ... or the way they use language slightly
differently.'*

Brenda's text constructs similarities between Grenadian and Jamaican cultures and within this construction identifies linguistic differences between the two cultures.

Dylan's Jamaican heritage is minimised in his white stepfamily:

'I think it has come up briefly but never in any conversation that I've remembered (...) never like in any serious conversation.'

The discursive construction through Dylan's talk is of constraint when attempting to talk about his Jamaican heritage. There is little recognition, though it 'comes up briefly.' But Dylan is unable to recall any discussions. The topic is not discussed as part of a 'serious' conversation within the family. From Dylan's subject position his cultural

identity in the family is of less significance for his white family members.

This draws from the discourse of whiteness as the invisible norm. As long as white people are not seen or named, they function as a human norm: ‘other people are raced, we are just people.

Three participants, two mothers and a stepfather minimised the children/stepchildren’s claims to their cultural heritages. Sean dismissed Dylan’s claim to his Jamaican identity by citing it as an inaccurate description on Dylan’s Facebook page.

‘I mean Dylan’s Facebook page says he’s from Jamaica but actually he was born in London.’

Sean considers Dylan’s preferred construction of himself as Jamaican as a literal description as opposed to a cultural heritage which Dylan may draw upon. Later, Sean talks of Dylan’s extended Jamaican family in terms of dilemmas that he attributes to identity confusion.

‘I think there’s a real dilemma that he lives in a pretty middle class white background and yet he has this link into, if you like, a very different world.

I'm sure it can be quite confusing.'

Dylan's navigation between the two cultures of his white stepfamily and his Jamaican extended family is framed as a 'dilemma' which is 'confusing'. This idea links to a stereotype of the mixed race identity as a confused identity (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002). Dylan's mother, Monica, talks of her awareness of Dylan's racial identity after reading an article by Twine (2004) on racial literacy in which the author discussed the need for mixed heritage children to be exposed to black culture:

'I thought that was all (Twine's ideas about racial literacy) going a bit too far, being politically correct, till I walked into Dylan's bedroom and realised it was full of black iconic stuff I didn't even know about.'

In this context, Dylan uses visual means of communicating his Jamaican identity within the family and the research context. Dylan did not select any images of his stepfather and provided photographs of his white half siblings, his maternal grandfather, his father as a young man and a photograph of his parents on their wedding day. Dylan explained:

'when you were young you didn't realise have an idea of what it was like for your parents to be together so it's quite an interesting photo (.) I like to look at in that situation'.

From his mother's position, Dylan's differences within the family are evident, which counters the family script of sameness. As a result, there is a minimisation of Dylan's blackness in the family to which Dylan responds with non-verbal communication. Despite Monica's claim that she openly talks about ethnicity within the family there are aspects of Dylan's cultural identity about which he remains silent. Dylan's emphasis of his biological parents' relationship suggests an idealisation and also indicates their past togetherness as a family.

To summarise briefly, three of the children/stepchildren recalled little talk of their cultural heritages in their ethnically mixed stepfamilies, and their accounts are challenged either by their family practices or by another family member. Constraint underpinned minimisation of Dylan's cultural identity due to his parents' colour-blind approach. For some, minimal talk was closely linked to dismissing cultural heritages, which is discussed in the following section.

3.3. Disclaiming cultural identity

Introduction

Disclaiming cultural identity is further explored in this section and provides an account of a mixed heritage participant's position regarding her cultural heritage.

Of all the participants, Clarice (Brenda's daughter who lived with her mother and her mother's partner, Ian) was the only one who talked about disclaiming her Grenadian cultural identity:

'They (her mother and stepfather) don't really talk about my Dad. They don't like my Dad. My Dad's done a lot of things to them so they don't really like him very much.'

In this text, Clarice draws upon the effect of the biological father's presence on the stepfamily members, and their relationships with each other. Clarice's position as her father's daughter living in a family who has had negative experiences of him brings forth issues of family loyalties. Earlier Clarice had talked about her position as a child between conflictual adults, her parents and her maternal grandmother:

'Then my mum stopped me going to my Grandma's house because whenever I went to my Grandma's house, my Gran would'

sneak my Dad over and then, yeah, they (Clarice's mother and grandmother) fell out.'

Clarice's maternal grandmother's position as her family's matriarch drew upon the discourse of rights and entitlement from which she exercised her grandparental rights to enable her son-in-law Clive to see his daughter. I considered her position as 'kin-keeper', someone who wishes to maintain family relationships when broken. Her belief in the importance of including Clive in Clarice's life opposed Brenda's position. Brenda pursued his exclusion due to his inconsistent contact, some of which Clarice reported to her.

From Clarice's position, the three adults involved in her life were in conflict. Brenda used her position to withdraw Clarice's contact with her mother to maintain her rule of exclusion from Clive. From this position, Brenda experienced her mother's betrayal and disrespect and she established a boundary regarding her mother's contact with Clarice. Respect formed an important part of Brenda's identity as a survivor of domestic violence from Clarice's father, about which she had been previously silent, and in her mind her mother transgressed an important boundary in maintaining the father/daughter relationship. Central to the

family relationships, Clarice's talk concerned the difficult adult relationships around her.

Clarice constructed herself as a person who had experienced difficulties which she had overcome through silence. From her position as a young child she revealed her maternal grandmother's facilitation of seeing her father that resulted in the enforced withdrawal of her grandmother and father from her life for some time. Clarice's disclosure resulted in changes within the family which would have affected her greatly and for which she felt, or was made to feel, responsible. Early in the interview Clarice talked about the effect of her conversations with her father as follows:

'And then he was like (.) he would... er ... I don't remember exactly what he told me, but he put things in my head that I then went home and repeated to my Mum.'

'Like?'

'I don't remember (.) I really don't remember. Apparently they weren't very nice things at all and (...) then my mum stopped me from going to my grandma's house because whenever I went to

my grandma's house my gran would sneak my dad over (0.2) and yeah so they fell out'

Clarice's text further explains Brenda's reasons for excluding Clive and Clarice's grandmother from their lives. There had been a transgression of Brenda's principles about Clive's non-contact with Clarice and during the visits the type of information Clarice received from her father was unpleasant: 'they weren't very nice things at all'.

Ian provided an account of Clarice's talk during at that time:

'A'..and she (Clarice) turned round one day she said 'I don't like white people' which increased the conflict between Brenda, her mother and Clarice's father'

Protection of her newly formed family and her young daughter led to Brenda's decision to make a stand against Clive and her mother by withdrawing the visits. From Clarice's position, meeting with her father and her statement of disapproval of white people caused further conflict between Clarice's mother and her grandmother.

To summarise, disclaiming her Grenadian heritage was multifaceted. Similarities between two Caribbean cultures supported the

claim for a singular cultural identity, yet within a society with historical racial and cultural mixing. Disclaiming her Grenadian cultural heritage intersected with the biological father's troubling presence and what he represented in her stepfamily.

The following section provides a visual method of communication about cultural identity when living in a mixed ethnicity stepfamily.

3.4. Images selected

Introduction

Participants were invited to bring images of their families and it provided a different method to explore their family relationships and to communicate the meanings of family life.

Clarice chose photographs of herself with different members of her family. These were of her maternal grandmother and mother with Clarice as a baby; with Sean; and with one of her two younger half-siblings. She had no images of her father, who remained an invisible presence in her life. Sean confirmed Clarice's removal of her father from her collection of photographs in her room:

'She wanted to remove her father from the photos and erm we just noticed that this sort of collage moved along and there was a deletion of pictures along the way'.

Clarice visually exercises choice about those who are included and excluded from her life. Sean's description of Clarice's continuous alterations of images suggests Clarice's ongoing evaluations of her relationships with family members. Clarice explains her selection:

'My mum and my gran are very... important erm role models in my life'

Clarice identifies the past family conflict for which she holds her father mainly responsible. However, Clarice had also felt or had been made to feel responsible for the maintenance and revelation of secret meetings with her father and her comments indicate the contradictory positions that she has taken up regarding the family conflict and the meaning of her father's presence in her life. The inclusion of her grandmother in her group of photographs indicates Clarice's ability to overcome difficult relationships within her family and of a gendered story of female role models.

To summarise, meanings of inclusion and exclusion, significant relationships in the stepfamily and extended family members over time are communicated through selected images. The lack of images of the biological father further articulate the troubled relationship between a father and his daughter.

3.5 Summary

This section has explored the different ways in which stepfamily members talked of their mixed heritage child/stepchild's cultural heritages. Minimising cultural heritages was based on shared political ideology or in pursuit of sameness. Silence underpinned the different practices of minimisation that some family members linked to powerlessness. Role expectation was challenged by multiple transformations that occurred simultaneously: being a couple, parenthood and stepparenthood. The focus on 'doing' family did not permit space for reflection and talking about adjustments to new roles and relationships with extended family members. Constraints in talking about differences formed part of the practices of minimisation and silence.

Indirect and direct talk about becoming a stepfamily formed part of family practices. Membership of a white minority group, marginalisation

and discrimination were combined with prejudice experienced as a single parent of a mixed heritage child. The double experience of prejudice contributed to assumptions of increased racial awareness and sensitivity. In contrast to limited talk, direct preparatory talk produced a challenge to ideas about family structure. The effects of increased visible differences for the lone mixed heritage child and the foregrounding of the position of the mixed heritage child emerged from direct talk.

Politics and racial awareness underpinned the use of newly available educational resources to communicate particular cultural heritages. Boundary maintenance of some families and disclaiming of the cultural heritage occurred in response to social disapproval and conflict within the wider family which talking over time resolved.

The ways in which the stepfamilies forged their new lives together will be discussed in the following section.

3.6. Family Practices

Introduction

I have chosen the term 'family practices' (Morgan, 1996) discussed earlier to focus on the everyday things, actions and activities that families **do**. Family practices attend to the ordinary parts of family life that may be taken for granted, but are also located in wider meanings

and overlap with gender, class and culture. The ways in which parents brought their own practices from their families of origin and, in the case of all the mothers and one stepfather, brought previous practices of their first families to their new stepfamilies, is discussed.

3.6.1 Living as a stepfamily

Introduction

Four of the children/stepchildren lived in stepfamilies in which they were visibly different from their siblings and stepsiblings, which they discussed. This section focuses on the meanings that stepfamily members attributed to their differences and the ideas that contributed to parental constructions of stepfamilies. Contestations to the stepfamily constructions from mixed heritage children and wider society are also discussed.

3.6.2. Living with resemblances

Robert was the only participant who others assumed was the biological son of his stepfather, David. He said, '*people often actually assumed that I was his son and my two stepbrothers were my Mum's children*'. Sara confirmed this and admitted to feeling '*defensive if people assumed that my son was the one that didn't fit the family. I hated that*'.

Two assumptions were made about Robert, that he was David's son due to similar skin colour and hair or that he did not fit in. There were two constructions of the family by others: one as a biological unit, which linked Robert with his stepfather and linked his mother with his two stepbrothers, and the other which made Robert different from the rest of the family.

To summarise, others' mis-recognition of the stepfamily relationships linked with the mother's preferred family identity in her quest for normalising the stepfamily.

3.6.3. Constructing sameness within the stepfamily

Introduction

Constructing sameness through a light skin colour is reflected in one stepfather's discussion.

Anuja's stepfather, Ben, talked about not having to discuss ethnic differences in the stepfamily because of Anuja's skin colour. He noted:

'In fact she didn't have too many difficulties because she is quite light skinned, so she didn't stand out particularly, you know, as being black, and also the cultural mix was changing in our neighbourhood.'

Ben claims that Anuja's lighter skin colour made her ethnicity less visible, because she was not identified by others as English/Sri Lankan, or even as a mixed Asian girl within the neighbourhood's multicultural context, where the African Caribbean community was becoming a dominant group. Within this context, Anuja's skin colour was less visible and Ben equated less visibility with that of less racism or being less troubled. It was Anuja's family name that signified her difference.

'And that name made her sort of different, but I think there were sufficient numbers of kids of other ethnic backgrounds in her school not to make it too big an issue.'

Ben sought to justify his claim of minimising Anuja's visible differences with the description of their neighbourhood's diverse community. Within this context, Anuja's skin colour was less visible, less significant, but her name made her difference more visible to others.

To summarise, multicultural social contexts are identified as sites of multiple differences in which a mixed heritage child with a lighter skin is assumed not to experience differences from others. Within this

context, the specific Sri Lankan cultural heritage is unrecognised and unacknowledged.

3.6.4. Resistance to invisibility and sameness

Introduction

The mixed heritage children/stepchildren were encouraged to bring images of their families and their significance was discussed.

Anuja presented an image on her computer of her extended family on holiday that showed visible differences. Her extended family are white European and in the middle of the photograph is her African Caribbean friend who is immediately noticeable, but whom Anuja referred to last in her initial description of her family. Anuja felt visibly different from her white half siblings whom she considered 'quite fair', although her stepfather, Ben, found Anuja to be 'quite light skinned' who 'didn't stand out particularly' and so minimised differences between the children.

Having a close friend who is black highlights and legitimises Anuja's differences from her white family. Anuja's ethnic invisibility led to assumptions of whiteness. A moral dilemma ensued when Anuja heard racist talk. Her denouncement of the racist talk was declared alongside her announcement of her own ethnicity 'oi, that's offensive you know, my Dad's black', which changed the social context in which this occurred.

In sum, the visual image represents an identification with blackness and contests the construction of the lighter mixed heritage child as having a less troubled experience of racism. The account reveals the moral dilemmas of the lighter skinned individual and how they are positioned.

3.6.5. Visible differences

Introduction

The children/stepchildren who lived in stepfamilies where they were visibly different from their stepfamily members held particular meanings for the children and their parents.

Virginia and Dylan live in stepfamilies where they are visibly different from their mothers, stepfathers and, in Dylan's case, his siblings. Katherine talks of Virginia's experience of being in public with her mother and Sean, '*because she feels people will think she's adopted.*' In the text, Katherine's talk is of Virginia's sense of her not belonging or connecting biologically to her white mother. Having two white parents, others assume she is adopted. She described the persistence of these assumptions and the importance and need for ongoing talk within the family.

'But then of course her good friend at school, Shayda, said to her the other day 'oh when my mum met your mum and Sean and you at parents' evening she thought you were adopted.'

Virginia's friend's mother had seen them at a parents' evening and concluded that due to differences in their skin colour Virginia was adopted by Katherine and Sean. In Katherine's talk, Virginia's identity is under question due to Virginia's friend's mother's inability to recognise a white woman as the mother of a mixed race child. Virginia and Katherine are constructed as not belonging together. Reparation talk was required to enable Virginia to re-position herself in relation to her parents and her friend. The need for continued talking forms part of the 'emotional labour' (Guneratnam & Lewis, 2001) involved in ensuring Virginia's well-being.

Dylan talked of his visible differences as 'unique', but disclaimed its significance as little attention was paid to it at school. He socialised with students from other cultures and within his family his differences were normalised.

To summarise, four accounts of living in families with visible differences provide evidence of others' assumptions about family structure and relationships. Family practices included acceptance of others' assumptions of biological relatedness as part of the claims to

being an ordinary family. Challenges of belonging also occurred and the assumptions others made about the stepchildren and their parents created uncertainty in belonging. In some stepfamilies, talk of their difference was only prompted by outsiders' perceptions and comments. Assumptions about the neighbourhood's multiculturalism minimised understanding of the specific Sri Lankan heritage's importance for the mixed heritage child/stepchild. Citing uniqueness as a response to his difference is a reframe the mixed heritage child/stepchild developed over time.

Having discussed the effects outsiders' perceptions have on culturally mixed children/stepchildren, I now wish to focus on the responses of and the relationships with their extended families.

3.6.6. Claiming culture via extended family

Introduction

Extended family played a key role in maintaining cultural heritages of the mixed heritage children/stepchildren and in the stepfamilies' daily lives.

All the children/stepchildren, with the exception of Robert, maintained links with their paternal extended families, although Clarice did not do this through her father. Anuja visited Sri Lanka with her father

throughout her childhood and Dylan visited his father during his time in the Middle East; Virginia's father took her to see his sister and his parents when they visited the UK from Sierra Leone, and Clarice had regular contact with her paternal grandmother. Anuja was the only participant who developed relationships with her half-siblings from her father's relationships following her parents' separation.

To summarise, relationships between the biological father's extended family members were maintained in different ways over time either through the father or the mother.

3.6.7. Extending family networks

Introduction

Another extended family of half siblings was created to ensure their social relationships and extend the meaning of 'family'.

Jane utilised the Sri Lankan networks and those of her daughter, Anuja's, half-siblings. Jane and two white English mothers who all had children with Anuja's father, Michael, brought their three children together following their separation from him. Drawing upon a discourse of sisterhood, female support was available for each mother, which contributed to the development of sibling relationships. As white mothers of mixed English/Sri Lankan children, their cultural consciousness

contributed to social relationships with Anuja's white half-siblings, and Ben, who also socialised with Anuja's mixed siblings. Jane's belief of putting the children first was shared by the mothers of Michael's children, who came together 'for the sake of the children' and formed an extended family.

In effect, the mothers created new forms of support for their mixed heritage children and for themselves based on the biological link with their children's father. Their network was developed and extended further by other children in the family.

3.6.8. Living with extended family: a cultural resource

Introduction

Some participants were able to live with their extended family members and engaged in family and cultural practices different from their stepfamilies that was considered beneficial.

Dylan also maintained a relationship with his father's family. Dylan attended a university in London near his grandparents' home and he spends a lot of time with his Jamaican extended family. This family supports his cultural development as part of their everyday lives.

'A bit of it is through music and talking to my grandparents about where they go in Jamaica and stuff like that (...) read about stuff, I suppose, is how I like keep up with it and like make sure it is part of me.'

Dylan's act of living with his Jamaican family supported his connection to Jamaican culture that did not rely solely on his father. Being around his family, being aware of music and gaining knowledge through his grandparents and through reading helped Dylan embed Jamaican culture in his life. Dylan acknowledged that through music and conversations he was accessing his grandparent's experiences of their Jamaican heritage. Dylan's decision to live with his Jamaican grandparents also helped him resist his mother and stepfather's ideas of sameness. His mother and stepfather shared the same view about how their mixed ethnicity family should be constructed, which did not require any discussion of cultural or racialised differences. Dylan's extended family demonstrates the significance of their cultural contribution to Dylan's Jamaican heritage. In other families, intergenerational tensions can occur.

In summary, to access a Jamaican cultural heritage, silence within the stepfamily was employed to simultaneously maintain a relationship with the wider family and the stepfamily.

3.6.9. Social disapproval within families

Introduction

The stepfamilies experienced outsiders' social disapproval as well as from their own extended families, some of whom struggled to adjust to the new family. This section provides accounts of these difficult encounters.

Both Virginia and Clarice experienced tensions in their extended families. Virginia's father took her to visit his sister, who is religious, and wanted Virginia to attend her church. The gender expectations of Virginia's Sierra Leonean aunt created tensions for Virginia, who did not fit the identity of a feminine girl as constructed by her aunt. In addition, Virginia's difference was notable through her skin colour, as recounted by her mother.

'Virginia finds that difficult 'cos she says, 'I'm the only person there who's not black.'

From her position, Virginia's visible difference was evident in her clothes and skin colour which set her apart from the black church community. Family obligation underpinned Virginia's visits to her aunt, for which she exercised limited choice. From her aunt's position, Virginia was the only young female in the family and expectations of how the family was represented in terms of Virginia's attire, attitude and behaviour were important cultural signifiers of Sierra Leonean identity. Tensions were evident when Virginia confronted her aunt's expectations and her visible difference in the church, which could not be negotiated.

Tensions between family members occurred in Clarice's family when her maternal grandmother took on the cultural surveillance of Clarice. Ian explained:

'There was a need for her hair to be done, you know. It needed to be plaited so her Grandma would say, 'has your hair been done? Who's looking after your hair?'

Ian's text makes clear Clarice's grandmother's surveillance of Clarice's hair, an indication of his and Brenda's parenting of her granddaughter and their acknowledgement of her black culture. In black culture, hair is a visible signifier of culture and politics. The Black Power

movement of the 1960s focused on the natural beauty of black hair and having natural hair, the Afro, a political statement of black identity.

Clarice's grandmother's concern was whether Clarice's black identity was being maintained within her family with her white stepfather, and whether Ian was capable of caring for Clarice as required. Previously, Ian talked of Clarice's queries from her grandmother:

'She was interrogated about me (...) what do I do? what do we eat? what food do we eat? what is he like? what does he wear around the house, you know?'

Food and Ian's behaviour with Clarice signify the quality of his care. Ian understood that the family might be concerned about Clarice's care – *'I suppose it's fear, I suppose, you know'* – because their relationship was the first mixed relationship with a white person in Brenda's family. He acknowledged the grandmother's position of concern about him. Their relationship posed a challenge to Brenda's mother's belief system about marriage partners. Brenda confirmed this:

'She always said to me, 'don't marry no African man, don't you ever bring an African man here, and don't you marry out, you know, you've gotta choose someone who's black.'

Brenda's mother's rule about marriage draws on beliefs and ideas about marriage within the Caribbean community to maintain cultural identity. The identification of an African as the least favoured option forms part of the longstanding animosity between those of African and Caribbean heritages. From Ian's position as a son whose parents had married out of their cultures, he experienced being different to white English people, and not fitting into mainstream culture. But he had some familiarity with aspects of black culture. '*I've grown up in black families. I've done weekends. I know the pot food. I know culture. I know about skincare*', he said, which contributed to Ian's claim of knowledge and engagement with Caribbean culture. His position as a member of a minority group and his socialising with black friends and their families contributed to Ian's claims of his cultural credentials. However, he attributed the interrogation of his parenting of Clarice as racism, following her statement: '*I don't like white people.*'

Clarice acknowledged these difficulties within her family and was aware of her position. Clarice's declaration derived from her position as

the child in the middle of conflictual parents attempting to mediate between both sides of the family (Ian and Brenda on one side and Clive and Clarice's grandmother on the other). From Clarice's grandmother's position, Brenda had transgressed a boundary in her choice of partner, which could have adversely affected Clarice, by weakening her black identity. Ian's position as a white man posed a threat to the family's culture, in her view.

To summarise, tensions occurred between the stepfamilies and their wider families regarding their cultural values and the extent to which cultural heritages were maintained in the stepfamily.

3.6.10. Summary

Extended family members play a significant role in the children/stepchildren's lives. Four extended families demonstrated different ways in which they responded to cultural mixing and developed relationships with their stepfamily members. New ways of 'doing family' through half-siblings, was another way of maintaining Sri Lankan heritages.

An alternative method used by one adolescent to support his cultural identity is living with the paternal extended Jamaican family that remained invisible to his white stepfamily. Both English and Jamaican

cultures are simultaneously experienced and lived which are navigated using silence within the stepfamily about the extended family.

In two families, conflicts occurred regarding cultural expectations and disapproval of the mixed relationship from their extended families which resulted in avoidance and the stepfamily's development and demonstration of resilience. Cultural expectations of females and visible difference led to conflicts which resulted in avoidance and silence. This 'culture clash' was based on beliefs about expectations of children who exercise individual choice in Western cultures, and conformity to adults' expectations required in African cultures.

An extended family rule of only marrying men of particular cultures was transgressed when the mixed couple came together and disapproval and critical surveillance was experienced. Black identity of the mixed heritage child was maintained by a secret alliance between a maternal grandmother and the biological father that questioned a stepfather's competence.

3.7. The invisible 'presence' of fathers

Introduction

The presence of the biological fathers, frequency of contact and the relationships that they had with their children played a significant part in the lives of their children and their mothers in their stepfamilies.

Four of the mothers (Jane, Brenda, Monica and Katherine) were active in ensuring that their children's fathers maintained contact, apart from Sara who prevented this due to a history of domestic violence. Jane and Brenda also endured physical assaults during their relationships, but encouraged or attempted to encourage contact between their children and their fathers. Although violence was not part of the initial research enquiry it is a significant finding that three of the five mothers in this small cohort had experienced domestic violence, and two of the mothers left their partners for this reason. Although fathers were not part of the research project, I would argue that it is worthy of some attention because of the position of the black fathers of mixed heritage children in the research and their efforts to remain part of their children's lives.

Drawing upon the concept of societal stress from literature on violence (Johnson & Ferrano, 2000) and its intersection with divorce and separation (Smart & Neale, 1999), moral dilemmas (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997) occur in families. I would include racialisation at the intersection between divorce and separation and mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. This

results in a complex interweaving between these contexts for violent black fathers of mixed heritage children which changes over time. Whilst not condoning their violence, I would like to consider whether the fathers' wishes to maintain their relationships with their children indicates a level of racial and cultural responsibility. This does not ignore the ongoing conflict with the mothers, fuelled by some mothers' decisions to have white partners. This occurred in Clarice's stepfamily and in Robert's case. Robert's father was contacted via a social network when Robert was a young adult and he wrote of Robert's mother's decision regarding non-contact. Some of their discussion was available on the network site. Three fathers demonstrated different views regarding their decisions about their children post-separation.

Jane had suffered physical abuse from Anuja's father, but this did not influence her ideas about contact with his daughter.

'But I mean Michael was awful to me he used to knock me about.'

Although Michael was physically abusive towards Jane she did not tell her daughter, but a contradiction was created when Jane recognised that, '*I know I've tried really hard not to slag off Michael but I know I've done it, Anuja will tell me that I have*'. During the period of their post-

separation when contact was negotiated, Jane endured difficulties with Michael. Anuja also experienced some negativity towards her mother when she was with Michael and his new partner:

'I hear from Anuja that you know he (Anuja's father) and his new partner apparently were constantly putting me down, well what can I say?'

Jane's construction of Michael is of a violent partner who involved children in his negative construction of their mother, but she also shared her negative ideas about Michael with Anuja. Michael also experienced the loss of his relationship with his two children from his first marriage and this had influenced his decision to ensure that he maintained contact with Anuja, which she confirmed:

'Yeah I think he's always been really sad about losing touch with them.'

Here, Anuja makes a claim about Michael's powerlessness as a father who lost touch with his first two children due to their mother's decision for him not to have any contact with them. Jane talks of his

gradual lessening of contact when his daughters were in south-east Asia. She said 'he gradually lost touch with them'. According to Jane, having left his first marriage, Michael endured the pain of powerlessness due to his increasingly limited access to his children from his first marriage, from whose lives he was eventually excluded. According to Jane, he made the decision to 'cut them off' because this allowed him to take up a position as an active agent in the process of decision-making, as opposed to the position whereby he was a passive recipient of his ex-wife's decision not to have contact with him.

From Jane's account, sometimes both Michael and Jane were able to put their hostilities aside for Anuja's welfare and at other times conflicts occurred, leaving Anuja in the middle of parental arguments. Contact arrangements were organised between the parents with no legal course of action, which may not have been available to them at that time because they were not married. Their decisions about Anuja were based on their ideas about her care. However, Anuja's report to her mother of her father and his new partner's criticism of Anuja's mother, indicate some of the difficulties that children of separated and divorced parents experience in terms of loyalty binds and adults' uncaring attitudes.

Brenda did not describe episodes of violence in detail, but noted their effect on her daughter:

'That episode was very violent and unfortunately Clarice was there. She doesn't recollect exactly what happened but I believe she does retain a lot of the fear that was just transferred.'

The assault upon Brenda was one of several that occurred during her relationship with Clive. After this episode, Brenda sought refuge with her mother. Brenda believed that her father's violence affected Clarice who she thought distrusted men and was anxious when Brenda and Ian argued. Her parents separated when she was two and Clarice saw little of her father until she was seven.

'It was really sporadic, intermittent, and it was really quite damaging for her.'

Brenda, whose own parents had divorced, had maintained a good relationship with her father and her belief was that Clarice should repeat her positive script. Initially, she made many attempts through Clive's family, particularly his mother, with whom she maintained a good relationship, for Clive to see his daughter but his visits were inconsistent and Brenda decided upon conditional access, on the grounds that Clive

should be more consistent. When Clive did not conform to Brenda's requests Brenda stopped his contact with his daughter and later discovered that her mother had facilitated his meetings with Clarice.

'He (Clarice's father) was uncontrollable, even by his own mum. I made efforts, you know, we always sustained that relationship with her Nana (Clarice's paternal grandmother) (...) he tried to come, he tried to be more of a presence. He'd be at my mum's more, when he knew Clarice was going to my Mum's.'

Brenda talks of the moral dilemmas presented when an absent father makes contact through a significant family member without the mother's consent or knowledge. Clive and Brenda's mother challenged Brenda's maternal authority, which resulted in Brenda feeling betrayed. Clarice's grandmother took a position as the enabler of contact between her son-in-law and his daughter and her actions from this position had adverse consequences on her relationship with Brenda. Clarice's position was of the child caught in the middle of adult conflict due to voicing her father's presence in her life. Brenda claims that both her mother and Clive shared a racist view of Ian which, according to Brenda, her mother denied:

'Because as far as I was concerned it's 'cos of his Ian's colour. She (Clarice's grandmother) said it wasn't but I know it was.'

Later, when she told her mother of Ian's European heritage, her mother replied:

'Couldn't you have done better?' I (Brenda) said, 'I have done better,' I said 'he's (Ian) not gonna hit me,' I said, and Clive did, so as far as I'm concerned I've already done better.'

From Brenda's position, as a survivor of domestic violence, safety and protecting Clarice and herself were paramount and Ian's ethnicity was less significant. From Brenda's mother's position, Brenda had transgressed a racial boundary that intersected with a concern about Ian fathering her granddaughter. She also took a neutral position regarding Brenda and Clive's conflictual relationship. Brenda explained a little about Clive's views of white people:

'He had a chip on his shoulder, erm, in terms of how black people were treated generally or black men.'

In this text, Brenda offers a wider social context (societal stress) of black men's treatment in British society as a means of explaining Clive's hostility towards Ian. Whilst recognising the issues of how black men are regarded and treated in white society, Brenda takes a position different to Clive's based on gender. From this history and personal experiences Clive took a stance in relation to whiteness and wished to re-establish his position as Clarice's father.

Sara's partner, Marlon, was violent towards her before Robert's birth:

'When I lived in southern England that was the first time that Marlon really beat me up badly.'

Sara feared that her small baby might be put into care because of not paying council rent and possible eviction, and she sought legal advice to retain the family home. A few months later, Marlon, having left his family, re-appeared in their lives and the police were called when he tried to leave with Robert. An injunction followed and Marlon sought full custody of his son, which was not awarded due to Marlon's lack of facilities and provisions. Marlon operated within the legal realm and

articulated the importance of his mixed race son being raised by his black father as opposed to his white mother.

The three fathers demonstrated different responses to the separation process, their sense of loss over the couple relationship and the relationship with their children. Fearing erasure from their children's lives, the fathers made efforts to continue their relationship with their children. Marlon sought justice and articulated the importance of his mixed heritage son being raised by his black father as opposed to his white mother. Sara noted Marlon's ability in presenting his case:

'When he wants to do his talk he is very professional, you know, pacing the room, hand in the pocket, you know, commanding this sort of authority, and I think it would have freaked the judge out 'cos it was an issue he'd never considered in his life, this idea that a black boy needs to be brought up with a black father.'

Their court hearing was in 1974 in a rural town in southern England. For an articulate black man to be making a case to raise his son on the grounds of race and culture would have been unusual. Sara talked of how she would have been perceived by society at the time.

'I think there's the perception that if you're white and if you've been with a black man it's almost like you deserve what you get because you're some sort of slut or whore.'

Looking back, Sara saw herself as others perceived her and felt disadvantaged by class and education but, more powerfully, by Marlon's case of caring for his mixed race son. In the legal domain, both parents were positioned as adversaries, unwilling and unable to hear the others' views. Although Marlon presented a strong case in court, his living arrangements were deemed unsuitable and Sara was granted full custody. Marlon was served injunction papers and was not allowed any contact, to which he adhered until Robert was 23.

He went on to have three children by different mothers and, like Michael, has remained in contact with them. He also shared Michael's experience of separation and the loss of his first child. From his position as a black father, Marlon may have considered that the system disadvantaged him, causing him to be excluded from his son's life. Robert made the following claim:

'I don't remember ever meeting my father. I don't feel I have ever had a positive black role model.'

Marlon is blamed for his absence from Robert's life as well as from his mother and her subsequent partners. Marlon responded as follows:

'He won't remember of course, as he was still a baby when we were separated by force against my will.'

Marlon's claim was that a loving father's son was taken from him because of Sara and her family. He recounted his version of events and claimed that Sara had been 'brainwashed' by her family and the community, in which he was the only black man. Police had to be called and remove him from the home in handcuffs. Marlon also claims that Sara married a white man and 'studiously kept his location from me despite any appeals – this remains the most painful episode of my life.'

Marlon's written account (to which I had access) illustrates some of the difficult emotions arising from a father's experience. From Robert's position, losing his black father left him having to work out his identity through his white mother. Marlon believes that Sara married a white man and kept Robert hidden from him to cause him stress. However, from Sara's position, she sought to protect herself and Robert.

Another mother, Brenda, attempted to establish a boundary regarding non-visitation rights which were disrupted due to the facilitation of Clive's visits by the maternal grandmother. Family conflict ensued and this led to ruptures in the family relationships of which Clarice was aware. Clarice's response was to disclaim her father's Grenadian identity and engage with her stepfather's Greek culture. Clarice recounted: '*I know more about Ian's Greek ... side and I'm more ... involved in that side than I am of my Dad's side.*' Later she considered that:

'It's always nice to develop a new culture and learn about a new heritage. I mean I'm very grateful for (.) Ian's heritage that I got to adapt (.) and learn about and stuff and I just think it would have been nice to (.) have that influence with my own (.) biological Dad'.

Having disclaimed her father's Grenadian culture, Clarice has been able to adopt her Greek stepfather's culture, one of the two stepfathers who declared their European heritage.

In summary, some fathers maintained contact with their children and others withdrew or had to withdraw from their children's lives, but remained an invisible presence. Some fathers may have wished to

maintain a relationship with the mothers through their children. Fear of their possible erasure and their culture was indicated by some fathers. This is not to ignore other significant aspects of post-separation hostility between the parents. Although some of the children/stepchildren had good relationships with their stepfathers, only Clarice took on the stepfather's culture.

The next section will explore the practices that family members undertook to maintain the mixed heritage child/stepchild's cultural heritages.

3.8. Cultural Practices

Introduction

The research interest is in the ways stepfamilies talked of cultural heritages and the practices and the actions they undertook regarding the maintenance of cultural heritages. Many of the family and cultural practices have been outlined earlier. In this section, I focus on family names which emerged as a significant finding.

3.8.1. Keeping father's family name

Introduction

Family names was a theme common to all the children in the sample. For the child/stepchild, keeping their father's surname, or having their mother's names, or that of their stepfather's, presented them with some dilemmas. The issue lies in the extent to which their family name is maintained or negotiated when the family becomes a stepfamily.

Three of the children/stepchildren had their father's surnames (Anuja, Dylan and Clarice), although Clarice wanted to change this. One child/stepchild had her mother's family name (Virginia) and one changed from his stepfather's name to his father's (Robert). Anuja was the only child/stepchild with a first and second name that signified her father's cultural heritage.

'My name is Anuja, erm, but if people call me Ann, he's a bit kind of disappointed about it.'

Anuja's first name and her father's surname construct her Sri Lankan identity. Although Anuja has a full Sri Lankan first name it is shortened from Anuja to Ann. The change from Anuja to Ann makes it sound more like an English name.

In the interview, I noted that Anuja's mother called her Ann. Anuja's father, I was told, was 'disappointed' by this attempt at assimilation. My

view is that the Anglicisation of foreign names forms part of the discourse of assimilation into English society that migrants experience. Foreigners are encouraged either to change or adjust their names to be accepted and sound less foreign. I recall a Serbian student who introduced herself to the training group with her Serbian name, then invited us to call her by a shortened name, because it was easier for the predominantly English speaking group to pronounce. Anuja talked further about her name:

'But often, you know, it's Ann, and I don't mind it, it's sometimes easier. Say if we're booking builders or anything like that, it's easier to say Ann.'

Anuja draws upon the discourse of survival by making her Sri Lankan identity invisible within particular contexts. Her skin colour also contributed to her ability and choice to privilege her English identity as noted by Wallis & Singh (2012). Maintaining her father's name in her stepfamily differentiated her from her siblings and identified her as Sri Lankan, which reduced curiosity and the assumptions made by others about her cultural origins. Anuja moved between using both her family and married names, which depended on the context and demonstrates

flexibility in moving between the invisibility and visibility of her Sri Lankan culture.

Dylan and Anuja held strong views about retaining their family names. On being asked whether taking Sean's surname was discussed, Dylan responded:

'That wouldn't have happened.'

Was it ever thought about?

I dunno, but if it had been I would have been back to Robertson (his father's family name) ... and I think my Dad would have been mad about it as well.'

The presence of Dylan's father in his life, and his and Dylan's combined fury at the possibility of changing Dylan's surname, supports Dylan's claim of certainty and non-negotiability. He was aligned with his father on this issue and had alternative actions arranged if his name had been changed. The change of Dylan's father's family name was not raised for discussion in his stepfamily. Dylan did not seek sameness with his siblings but claimed his difference by maintaining his father's name.

Interestingly, it was his mother, Monica, who sought to include Dylan in the stepfamily by changing back to her maiden name to minimise Dylan's difference so that everybody had a different name.

To summarise, family names were markers of difference for the children/stepchildren within their stepfamilies and a number of strategies were used regarding the use of family names. In one case, fluidity of identity occurs with the use of different first and family names that is context dependent. Attempts to minimise differences for the mixed heritage child was undertaken by using the mother's own family name, which created multiple names in the stepfamily.

3.8.2. Keeping mother's family name

Introduction

One child/stepchild in the study had her mother's name that she discussed in relation to the possibility of changing her family name and of how others might perceive her. Virginia's rationale for not changing her mother's family name to that of her stepfather's name was linked to the possible increased sense of difference from her family, which she explained:

'Well I really wouldn't have wanted like, erm, Mummy and Sean to get married or something, and then she would have a different surname and then they would have had a different surname from me. I wouldn't really have liked it that much.'

The construction of her family and her position as the only mixed race child with two white parents is significant for Virginia. She assumed that the marriage would involve a change of surname of her mother, which would have excluded her from the family construction. Sensitive to others' perceptions, Virginia suggested that their sense of themselves as a family would be undermined or devalued by marriage. Virginia's mother was a single parent when she had her daughter:

'For her sake as much as anything else ... so to then say, 'well you know you she (Virginia) can have your (Virginia's father) name,' well I just thought 'well actually no.'"

Virginia's father had been largely absent during her early years and Katherine's claim regarding Virginia's surname regarded her rights and entitlement as a single mother to give her daughter her own family name. Virginia's absent father, who had 'disappeared' from their lives,

apparently had no entitlements regarding Virginia having his family name. However, Virginia queried others' expectations because of her name, which Katherine described when discussing her transition to secondary school:

'She said to me, 'will they be disappointed when they hear my name?' because her name is Carter ... they'll assume that I'm white middle class, and I'm not, so you know she reads a lot into it.'

Virginia was faced with dilemmas as to how she should respond to and manage her sense of difference. Virginia was moving from a predominantly white middle-class primary school to a mainly black secondary school, yet her past experience of visibility and difference informed her about others' perceptions and expectations based on her name, which she constructed as white and middle-class.

In summary, different family names were used in this stepfamily and further differences were identified if marriage between the mother and her partner were to take place. Differences, belonging uncertainty and others' expectations were continuous preoccupations during the transition to a more multicultural secondary school.

3.8.3. Seeking to change father's name

Introduction

The wish to change a family name from that of a biological father to a mother's name created tension and conflict within Clarice's stepfamily and had implications for the wider family of the biological father. Clarice was the only child/stepchild who talked of having some discussions about her family name in her stepfamily:

'I wanted to (change from her father's surname) and then my Dad got involved and shut the whole idea down ... but I'm not sure if I would want Ian's surname. I think I would rather have my Mum's surname.'

Clarice's surname sets her apart from her stepfamily, in which her siblings have Ian's surname and her mother has her own name. Her mother and Ian discussed changing her surname, but it was not pursued after Clarice's father's reaction. Her need to fit into the stepfamily was one of the reasons Clarice wished to change her family name. However, Clarice presented a contradiction when she referred to a preference for having a surname of someone she 'knows', even if there was a conflict.

Currently, she carries her father's family name and there has been considerable conflict between her parents and her maternal grandmother around her contact with her father, which Clarice witnessed. Clarice may also have been seeking to change from her father's name to her mother's, with whom she has a greater affinity. Her mother, Brenda, referred to Clarice's intention to change her surname:

'She said, 'I've lost you, Mum, because you're Dad's (Ian) partner when we go out. People see that.' She said, 'but people don't see me.' She said, 'because they wonder where I fit, and I don't have the same surname as you.'

Clarice's sense was of the loss of her relationship with her mother, and the difference and visibility represented by her paternal surname. Her mother challenged this idea:

'I said, 'you need to think about the impact this will have for your Nana (paternal grandmother) and your Dad."

Brenda widened the system that would be affected by Clarice's request to change her surname as a means of avoiding further conflict

and providing an explanation to Clarice with her obligations to her father's family, by including her paternal grandmother with whom Clarice had a good relationship.

To summarise, differences from the stepfamily members would be minimised if the family name was changed. Furthermore, a change to the mother's name would support a sense of belonging to the stepfamily and acknowledge the lack of relationship with the biological father. The contestation of the change of family name took the form of implications for the wider extended family and their responses to the decision.

3.8.4. Changing the family name

Introduction

Robert was the only one whose family name was changed from that of his father to his stepfather's after his mother's marriage.

'Yeah I was Rob Schneider, yeah, for a few years.'

Robert's surname was changed to Schneider to protect Robert and his mother from his father, Marlon, from whom she had separated.

However, by making him invisible to his father, Robert's Jewish surname made him highly visible within his small, predominantly white town.

Following his mother's divorce, at the age of eleven, Robert had three surnames from which to choose, and his recall of his reasons for choosing his father's name is of interest. Both his stepfather and mother's surnames are unusual and Robert already had experiences of having a Jewish surname and being highly visible. In seeking to be less visible, Robert chose his father's family name, which demonstrates the fluidity of his identity. He reclaimed a part of his identity.

To summarise, Robert is the only child/stepchild who changed his surname twice. His mother wished him to be invisible to his father, and he later chose his own name following his mother's divorce from his stepfather.

Family names are significant as claims of belonging and identity and become increasingly so when decisions are contested or changed when the family system is transformed from the biological to the stepfamily.

3.9. Summary

This chapter has demonstrated different ways in which stepfamily members constructed their families and the extent to which the stepfamily members either talked or did not talk or had limited conversations about becoming a family living with their visible differences. Shared political beliefs, assumptions of past experiences of being in a minority group, the impact of external pressures upon the mother and their new partners contributed to the extent to which they talked together.

Some mixed heritage children/stepchildren experienced either a silence or a minimisation of talk of their cultural heritages. For some, minimisation of talk of cultural heritages occurred in relation to numerous cultural practices undertaken which enabled the mixed heritage child/stepchild to become embedded in the father's culture. Parental racial awareness was raised of the mixed heritage child's position living with two white parents when the stepfamily members talked together. It supported the experiences of outsiders' continuous negative perceptions of the mixed heritage identity.

In the study, a great deal of attention has been paid to the importance of talking within stepfamilies, yet silence has played a significant role in the lives of some mixed heritage children. There are various meanings attributed to the use of silence that include the

biological father's troubling presence. Silence has developed in response to the troubled history of some biological fathers whose culture has not been discussed or maintained in the stepfamily that has enabled some mixed heritage children/stepchildren to access their white stepfathers' cultures. Some stepfathers had experienced past difficulties as a member of a minority group and were sensitised to the mixed heritage stepchild's position.

In other stepfamilies, silence of visible differences was a strategy of inclusion of the mixed heritage child/stepchild, underpinned by a privileging of the biological connections of the child/stepchild and the half-siblings. Including half-siblings by the same father enabled others to extend the membership of the family.

Silence has also been used by some mixed heritage children/stepchildren to maintain and navigate the relationships with both the white stepfamily and the black extended family, although their moving between two cultures and belonging to both cultures simultaneously has been constructed by one stepfather in terms of assumed identity confusion. The fluidity of the mixed heritage identity and their navigation of two social worlds was also Barratt's finding (2007).

Family names were significant ways of belonging for the mixed heritage child/stepchild and the study revealed how individuals considered their family names. For some mixed heritage children, the idea of changing their father's family name was not negotiated. The changing of names indicated different meanings for individuals. Some stepfamily members addressed belonging and their visible differences by having different names, whilst others pursued a belief in sameness and inclusion by using different names. The transition to becoming a stepfamily raised questions about ways of belonging together with visible differences.

Chapter 4

Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This study set out to explore the different ways mixed ethnicity stepfamilies dealt with the cultural identity of the stepchild's biological parent. Drawing on ideas from Hall (1990) and Brah (1996), I will discuss the analysis further.

In considering mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, I propose to extend the concept of diaspora space to micro diasporic space that is located at the intersection of the biological and multiple social family structures and relationships. This intersection is a site of contestation of the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion, and of belonging and otherness experienced by mixed ethnicity stepfamilies and diasporic communities and their descendants who have settled in the UK. Themes of transgression of cultural and racial boundaries and cultural identity have emerged in the study and reflect similar themes of diasporic groups. The mixed heritage child navigated the various family households, negotiated the different relationships and developed strategies to manage the differences between them. The relational positionings (Brah, 1996) of the mixed heritage child/stepchild and the mixed ethnicity stepfamily are also considered in terms of the regimes of power that construct them in

particular ways and challenge the legitimacy of their family formations and cultural identities. Mixed ethnicity stepfamilies developed their own unique micro diasporic spaces despite others' negative perceptions and constructions and, in so doing, challenged the predominant biological view of family structures.

Cultural identity is an active transformative process and new identities, particularly those of African Caribbean and Asian cultures, have emerged. The processes of hybridisation, the ways in which identity and differences are articulated and intersect with relationships, class and gender within mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, is the focus of my research interest. The social interactions, perceptions and responses of stepfamily members to these intersections has been explored in the study. Participants recalled memories of episodes and events that had continually shaped their cultural and family identity over time. I will discuss this further in this chapter.

There are four main findings. The first is that there was considerable variation in the amount of talking about the maintenance of the mixed heritage child's culture which included limited and preparatory talk.

The second main finding is the varied ways in which stepfamilies lived with their visible differences. The mixed heritage child/stepchild

was often the only child in an all white stepfamily and the mother and stepfather constructed their identity as a family in ways that accounted for their physical differences. Perceptions and assumptions of outsiders had a powerful effect upon the family members.

The third main finding relates to the extended family's role. Some extended families were considered supportive, and others struggled to adjust to having a racially mixed family.

The fourth main finding was the powerful 'presence' of the biological father, who remained in most of the children's lives.

The findings indicate the numerous ways in which cultural identities of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies were 'worked out' or 'worked upon' through family practices. The lived experiences of the mixed ethnicity stepfamilies included living with visible differences and families developed strategies to account for and demonstrate the ordinariness of multiple differences in families. Families were able to construct themselves as simultaneously ordinary and different as an achievement of family life and in response to racism. Claims to ordinariness normalised visible family differences. Families formed 'instant' families that incorporated the added dimensions of differences. Most of the families overcame adversities internal to and external to the family through their resiliencies that mostly supported the mixed heritage

children/stepchildren's cultural identities. However, there were some children/stepchildren who did not consider their parents and stepparents to actively support their cultural identities.

The next section will further discuss the study's significant themes.

4.2.1. Hybridisation: The Role of Talking

Hall (1996) considers the discursive approach to identification as a 'process never completed – always 'in process' (1996: 2) and proposes that the concept of identity is 'multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions' (1996: 4). Different ways of talking within the stepfamilies demonstrate the importance of ongoing talk together to ensure the continual processing of the new family's identity: understanding their togetherness with differences, raising parental racial awareness and resolving family conflicts.

Preparatory conversations between adults occurred in some families and were important inclusion strategies. I propose a distinction between explicit and implicit preparatory talk. Explicit talk involves all the stepfamily members and includes psychological and emotional preparedness for the transition to becoming mixed ethnicity stepfamily as well as addressing practical issues. One stepfamily's internal

sensitivities and awareness were disjunctive and disrupted when others perceived them as an adoptive family or questioned their belonging together.

These contestations of difference and belonging form part of the micro diaspora space (Brah, 1996) of the mixed ethnicity stepfamily produced through language and social practices over time. The concept of belonging refers to a ‘sense of relatedness and connection to a group or system in which the person feels he or she is valued or an important member’ (Neville, Oyama, Odunewu & Huggins, 2014: 415). Walton & Cohen (2007) posit that social belonging is significant for all individuals, but can be experienced as uncertain and inconsistent by those minority group members who have a history of stigmatisation and discrimination. Within a social context of disapproval and racism for the mixed heritage child/stepchild a sense of belonging, of togetherness, may be more sensitised in those mixed ethnicity stepfamilies where physical differences are more apparent. Biological relationships are privileged in relation to the mixed ethnicity stepfamily’s social relationships and others misrecognise the mixed ethnicity stepfamily’s lived experiences of multiplicity and difference (Luke & Luke, 1999). Continuous talking, or ‘emotional labour’ (Guneratnam and Lewis, 2001) forms part of the

hybridisation process and is required to achieve and reinforce a sense of belonging when living with differences.

Some mixed heritage children are located between two positions of belonging uncertainty: having more white half-siblings in the stepfamily and being the lone mixed heritage child with two white parents. My research reveals that within ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, outsiders question the belonging of the mixed heritage child. For example, one mixed heritage child/stepchild with her white mother and white stepfather was assumed to be adopted by an Asian mother. This raises further questions of the enquirer's ethnicity; the person's understanding and experiences of family may be culturally different and skin colour differences within families may be less familiar.

The contestation of belonging forms part of the experiences of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies' micro diasporic spaces. These stepfamilies' processes of hybridisation – the ways in which the mixed heritage child/stepchildren and the mixed ethnicity stepfamilies' cultural identities are developed through discursive practices – articulate the intersections of the biological and social relationships, race, ethnicity, gender and class within the stepfamilies and in relation to wider social discourses of racism, prejudice and discrimination. Talking together regains, recalibrates and revalidates their construction of themselves as a family

living with multiplicity. The question of belonging is similar to that of Song (2010) who noted that skin colour differences between siblings was more heightened if the family lived in a predominantly white neighbourhood and less highly noticeable in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods (Song, 2010: 280). The diversity of neighbourhoods also appears to be an important criterion for mixed families in Caballero et. al. (2008) and Twine (1998). However, my study reveals some of the contradictions that occur between diasporic groups within culturally diverse neighbourhoods.

Implicit preparatory talk in stepfamilies also featured in the study. Assumptions about understanding the mixed heritage child's position were made based on previous experiences of discrimination of the white parents and their partners. These white individuals' historical experiences contributed to ideals about constructions of the new stepfamily. Bray & Kelly (1998) and Papernow (2008) refer to 'instant love' being required within an ideal stepfamily. The ideological constraints of the ideal family's construction demonstrated by the acceleration of one couple relationship to that of stepparents, and the white partner's lack of racial awareness, creates pressure for an 'instant perfect family' to be formed. The idea of 'instant family' informed ways in which family members managed the fluid experiences of belonging/non-

belonging within families. The couples' limited preparatory talk may have been caused by privileging the parental roles in their adjustments to the new stepfamily's multiple relationships. However, even though talk between mothers and their partners was limited, white mothers challenged racism towards their mixed heritage children and demonstrated ways in which they simultaneously held both positions, of limited talk within the stepfamily and talk to challenge those outside the family. This finding supports Killian's research (2001) with interracial couples, which found they did not talk of racism in their families of origin; this was reflected in their limited talk to their children about racism and their mixed heritage identities.

From the study, talk of racism helped family members join together against adverse situations and may have been a more familiar topic for discussion than talking of their maintenance of cultural heritages which participants may have found more difficult to recall.

Another strategy used in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies in the study is minimising skin colour. For example, ambiguity is chosen as a position for a light-skinned mixed heritage woman, further amplified by the Anglicisation of her first name. If the family name is also European, the mixed heritage identity is not identified or categorised, but is subsumed and embedded into British society assuming whiteness. In the study, the

mixed heritage female exercises choice regarding whether she disclosures her cultural identity as well as faces dilemmas of self-disclosure when confronted by racism.

This finding is reflected in Cunningham's work (1997: 376), in which an ambiguity is created by those who 'can look white but be black'. Minimising difference is linked with the invisible/unvoiced model (Burnham, 2007), where light skin colour is likened to whiteness. Further ambiguity and invisibility is created by Anglicising first names. 'Passing' as white is a common experience for lighter-skinned mixed heritage individuals. It invokes slavery and colonialism, times where lighter skin colour was the preferred identity. Ali (2003) distinguishes between 'being able' to pass, choosing to pass and 'being passed' by others (2003: 13) that indicates the identity shifting defined by the mixed heritage individual (as mixed heritage or black) and as constructed by others (as white). Some lighter-skinned individuals in Song's study (2010) employed a language of choice if they leaned towards whiteness that their siblings – who identified more as Black – did not consider problematic. For some of the mixed heritage women in my study, cultural identities are achieved through navigating the complex interweaving of culture, ethnicity and race.

The study revealed the construction of white single mothers of mixed heritage children as deficient and their new relationships met with disapproval and racism (Harman, 2007; Twine, 2004). Their efforts to ensure a positive life for their mixed heritage child and other siblings are informed by these experiences and a range of inclusive strategies were pursued by the white adults in the stepfamilies to support the lone mixed heritage child's belonging and cultural identity.

In the study, the theme of not having time to talk occurred at the intersection between the extended family and the mixed ethnicity stepfamily's micro diasporic space. Recalibration of relationships occurred that reflects Edwards's (1999) idea of the relationship between stepfathers and their stepchildren being achieved through social practice. The stepfather's culture is also made available as part of the hybridisation of the mixed heritage child/stepchild who negotiated three different cultural households (her maternal, paternal and stepparent's families).

The intersection between the mixed ethnicity stepfamily and the wider family extends Papernow's (1993) developmental model of stepfamilies in which different emotional stages in the stepfamily form part of the gradual process of adjustment. The model does not take into account the impact of wider extended families upon stepfamilies when

the stepparent expresses disapproval. Transgressing the racialised border (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008) to create a diaspora space in which different subjectivities and ethnicities were located led to conflict and exclusion. Multiple conflicts between the mixed ethnicity stepfamily and the maternal extended family were significant turning points. These are major events that are transformative for any family, negatively or positively, and are identified as 'sites of developmental changes in relationships' (Baxter et al, 1999: 294) but has particular significance for families living with racialized and cultural differences.

Family conflict and disapproval of the mixed relationship by extended family members has also been found in the literature on mixed families (Caballero, 2008; Twine, 2006) during the early stages of the relationship. This literature focuses primarily on responses from white extended family members with little attention paid to African Caribbean responses to the mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Goulbourne (2010) has researched family responses to mixed relationships of diasporic groups. His study, as discussed, addresses differences and tensions between them and demonstrated that despite historical ethnic and cultural mixing of the Caribbean groups, there were tensions between the different groups. Diasporic identities are reproduced through the dynamic process of differences (Hall, 1990) that intersect and overlap as cultural borders

are crossed. Contradictions form part of the process of reproducing cultural identities. For example, my Trinidadian stepfather was proud of the Asian writer V. S. Naipaul as a Trinidadian national, but disapproved of Caribbean Asians as a group.

My study revealed the extent to which talking occurred to defend the mixed relationship and to challenge racism, which enabled the power relations to be readjusted and the boundary of the stepfamily to be established. The black grandmother's initial disapproval of her new white stepson changed over time by talking. This formed part of the emergence of the stepfamily's new identity, a repositioning of both the mixed ethnicity stepfamily and the maternal extended family.

White mothers in the study also challenged their mixed heritage children's representation or the racism their children experienced in schools as they found themselves repositioned as white mothers of mixed heritage children. Their experiences are reflected in the study of Tikly et. al. (2004), in which parents were sensitive to teacher's negative perceptions made by teachers about their families.

In summary, within the mixed ethnicity stepfamily's micro diasporic space of different strategies of talking, explicit, implicit and minimised talk, were used to support belonging and in response to challenges of the family's identity or that of the mixed heritage child.

Cultural or visible differences, were defended so the mixed ethnicity stepfamily could recalibrate their relationships, avoid exclusion and increase the role of the stepfather and his culture. Responses from extended family members included initial conflicts and talking was used to support the mixed ethnicity stepfamily.

4.2.2. Hybridisation: the role of silence

In the study, silence was used in different ways. Strategic silence was employed to achieve hybridity by the navigation of different households based on constraints of understanding within the mixed heritage individual's stepfamily. Silence enabled the relationships to be preserved and contestations avoided as the mixed heritage individual moved between differences of class, race, ethnicity, and culture. The predominance of the transition to young adulthood and the change of living circumstances were intentionally voiced, leaving the significance of access to Caribbean heritage intentionally unvoiced (Burnham et. al. 2008).

Simon (2014: 245) refers to silence which 'takes place in the relational space between therapists and clients'. I wish to extend this idea to the use of relational silence, by which I suggest that within the micro diasporic space of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, cultural identities

are double edged, actively transformed over time through border crossing of two cultural contexts which resists the construction of ‘identity confusion’. Each cultural identity is silenced within the context of the other cultural identity to develop and maintain both cultural identities (Phoenix, 2011).

Silence was also used in response to the construction of sameness in the research context by using visual images. One participant chose an image of her white extended stepfamily and her close friend, who was African Caribbean, to claim her racialised identity within her stepfamily that had been minimised due to her lighter skin colour. Another participant had posters of black icons in his bedroom to claim his cultural identity, which he had not discussed with his white stepfamily members. Using images to convey difference silently were also reflected in the research of Croghan, Griffin & Phoenix (2008; 72). Selecting the image amplified the marker of the participant’s difference. The black presence in the photograph contained multiple meanings. The image signified a friendship over time which became likened to a family member and represented the family’s involvement with and connection to black people. The photograph also represented the identification of the participant with a black identity which had been subsumed under other discourses within the stepfamily.

Some participants' family life was shaped based on sameness and relatedness, in which strategies of silence were deployed. Silence is reflected in Killian's study (2001) of some interracial couples who opted to minimise discussions on race; this underpinned their decisions to challenge or ignore social disapproval that was context dependent.

The construction of silence occurred at many levels, some experiences were voiced and then silenced, whereas others were never voiced. The silence was intentional and unintentional or used as a form of power (Fivush, 2010). These different silencing practices produced some of the constructions of identity, roles, a sense of belonging and enactments of whiteness in some families. Burnham's framework (2008) of social differences of visible/voiced, visible/unvoiced, invisible/voiced and invisible/unvoiced is applicable to mixed ethnicity stepfamilies in the following ways. The mixed heritage child is visibly different, but remains silent about cultural heritages in the white stepfamily in order to belong (visible/unvoiced). A white stepfather's silence about difference is based on a desire for sameness for the family (invisible/unvoiced). Silence is constructed by a white mother in order to accept her own position as the mother of a mixed heritage child (visible/unvoiced). A white stepfather's voice is silenced in relation to the mixed heritage child who refuses to acknowledge his authority (unvoiced) within the family quest for

sameness (invisible). These scenarios play out in the material of this study.

Fivush (2010) makes the distinction between ‘being silent and being silenced’ (Fivush, 2010: 90). Meanings of being silent include a shared sense of silence: as reflective or respectful; or as impositional. Being silent can also be a form of power in which no explanation or justification is required or undertaken. Silence has multiple meanings for the white adults in the mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Silence was a preferred strategy to avoid talking of differences which could disrupt their construction of their identity as a stepfamily and increase the position of difference or belonging uncertainty of the mixed heritage child/stepchild. In response to sameness, silence has emerged as a strategy used to deny difference and maintain relationships across different cultures (that of the biological parents and the stepparent’s) and multiple households (the stepparent’s extended family, the maternal and paternal grandparents) that the mixed heritage child navigated. The simultaneous multiple positions of the mixed heritage children/step children were maintained and reworked in memory which contributed to the stepfamily’s construction.

In the study, self-silencing also developed in response to family conflict. The disclosure of adult secrets with powerful emotional content

led to the silencing of the child, who may have felt, or was made to feel, responsible for the maintenance and exposure of the adults' secrets.

Self-silencing is discussed by Fivush (2010) who refers to the self-silencing of those individuals who have endured traumatic and painful experiences, to the extent that they cannot recall these experiences themselves (Baddeley & Singer, 2010). The literature reflected the recounting of the participant who struggled to recall past details of the emotionally powerful experience of the revelation of adults' secrets.

The process of consecutive interviews of the family members may have caused silencing of some individuals who may not share ideas about what can be revealed about their family.

In summary, the study has demonstrated the strategies of silence utilized within the stepfamily in numerous ways. Resistance to the family narrative of sameness to articulate their racialised differences through their selected images provided one strategic use of silence. Having a lighter skin colour and an Anglicisation of names enabled ambiguity of cultural identities to be manipulated by the individual who could exercise choice about racialised self-disclosure. Silence was also deployed to navigate two culturally different households that maintained both the relationships and the border of the stepfamily and the extended family. Finally, impositional silence was experienced to protect adult narratives

of secrecy. These are the transformative strategies of the mixed heritage individual within the diaspora space of the mixed ethnicity stepfamily in which certain aspects of identity are foregrounded in particular contexts.

4.3.1. Living with Visible Differences

A second main finding of the study relates to how mothers, stepfathers and the mixed heritage children/stepchildren responded to the visible differences within their stepfamilies. White mothers' ideas about the stepfamilies they wished to create were based on deficit constructions of being the single mother of a mixed heritage child (Ganong & Coleman, 1994). The double negative construction of having been the single mother of a mixed heritage child and having children of different ethnicities and different skin colours produced various devices of sameness. One such strategy was the use of different family names that was constructed as an inclusive practice in order for differences between family members to be shaped, reworked and reduced. Having different names enabled family members to experience similarities with as well as differences from each other. In the micro diasporic space, multiplicity and differences were recognised and used to create and maintain the new ethnicities in the stepfamily. Sameness was achieved through social practice and a recognition of difference.

Political awareness and activism enabled the white mothers and a stepfather to counter racial prejudice as part of the mixed ethnicity child/stepchild and their siblings' socialisation. This approach fits with Phinney & Chaviras' (1995) research on ethnic minority parents' socialisation of their children, and the coping strategies used when faced with discrimination. Tizard & Phoenix (2002) also found that the extent to which families talked of 'race' and racism sensitised mixed heritage children to wider social discriminatory practices. Political awareness contributed significantly to the mixed ethnicity stepfamily's resiliencies and increased their sensitisation and articulation of specific racisms toward their mixed heritage children/stepchildren.

Sameness based on having lighter skin colour occurred for some participants, which led to assumptions about the construction of whiteness explored by Nolte (2007). Her view is that 'white is a colour too' (2007: 381) often overlooked by white people who understand whiteness as normative and, therefore, an invisible ethnicity (Sue, 2004). Moral dilemmas occur when racist talk happens in the presence of the light-skinned mixed heritage person assumed to be white. Cunningham (1997: 380) refers to 'ease' of life for light-skinned blacks, who are protected from racism, but I would suggest their position is fraught with the dilemma of choosing silence, being silenced or challenging racism,

which involves exposure. This dilemma also applies to white people who are in relationships with black people who also experience racist comments and have to decide on the particular position they take, of silence or self-declaration.

In sum, numerous strategies were deployed to overcome the multiple negative constructions of the position of white single mothers and a mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Ideas of sameness, minimisation of differences and political beliefs formed part of the transformational strategies that supported the dynamic processes of the mixed ethnicity stepfamily's micro diasporic space.

4.3.2. Resemblances

Family resemblances are significant indicators of biological relationships, genetic inheritance and belonging. The term 'resemblance' is defined as 'being similar to' or 'looking like' and is of particular importance in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies who live with racialised differences. Resemblances are 'publicly perceived, constructed, commented upon and speculated about' (Mason, 2008: 30). Mason (2011) suggests an unsettling confusion of the tangible (physical appearances) and intangible (characteristics), and the term 'must' emphasises the need to make the intangible more apparent (Mason,

2011: 13). Resemblances can also be disputed or perceived differently by family members, and a lack of resemblance can be important when a particular characteristic or behaviour is not recognised by other family members.

4.3.3. The quest for resemblances

Assumed physical resemblances between stepfamily members by others occurred for some participants in the study. The reason for their privileging of assumed resemblances lay in the rejection of the alternative negative idea that a mixed heritage child living in an all-white family is an adopted child. In this study the privileging of resemblances led to the invisibility and silencing of a white mother as the biological parent of her mixed heritage son, due to others' construction that she was the biological mother of two white stepsons and the adoptive mother of the mixed heritage child.

In this case, resemblances can contribute to a sense of likeness and togetherness in the construction of the mixed ethnicity stepfamily. Seeking likeness is reflected in Howell & Marre's study (2006) of transnationally adopted children in Europe. They noted the extent to which European adoptive parents created a narrative of resemblance for their adopted children from non-European countries. Parents actively

sought a likeness of “physiological or psychological characteristics” (Howell & Marre, 2006: 308) of their adopted children. To naturalise their family relationships, differences were negated or ignored. This study and Mason’s work on resemblances (2011) indicate the extent to which resemblances are sought, captured and declared in shaping identities within families and is particularly significant for mixed ethnicity stepfamilies who construct themselves as a biological family.

4.3.4. Social Discourses on Resemblances

Resemblances are linked to relatedness, a belonging together based on physical similarities, or other aspects, such as voice. Similar appearances to family members or shared habits and ways of doing things are a source of general interest. Tracing genealogical histories, media programmes that trace the family histories of celebrities, software packages for historical research into families, all indicate the increasing desire for individuals to find knowledge about past family members that provides them with a sense of rootedness and connection (Mason, 2008). I link these ideas to using the family genogram in systemic practice in which family structure, relationships and interactions are explored. Enquiries about who the child resembles or is likened to in the family, who they think they are most or least like in their families, and

which family member they resemble, past or present, are posed.

Meanings of resemblances within families form family stories about individual identities which become part of wider societal discourse.

My interest here is in the reasons for silencing, why or how it occurs in stepfamilies and in society. Marginalisation of the stepfamily was produced through the construction of resemblances, which rendered actual stepfamily relationships invisible and unvoiced (Burnham, 2007). The stepfamily occupied two positions of invisibility as a mixed ethnicity stepfamily: between the predominance of the nuclear ideology (Clingempeel et al., 1987) in which stepfamilies are often compared less favourably to nuclear families; and the mixed heritage child/stepchild as an adopted child. Both these constructions were avoided due to the predominance of their perceived physical resemblances. Constraints and contestations of this family identity occur within the mixed ethnicity stepfamily.

In summary, white mothers' experiences of social disapproval informed the ways in which they attempted to construct their stepfamilies and were attuned to their mixed heritage children. Visible differences were reframed in the pursuit of belonging, based on biological links between the stepchild and their white half-siblings lighter skin colour and physical resemblances, which formed part of the strategies of

sameness. This is an aspect of hybridisation, the transformational processes of cultural differences in which new identities emerge. Similar to Luke & Luke's research (1999), in this study cultural differences are subordinated in the quest for sameness within stepfamilies.

Theme 3

Cultural Practices

4.4.1. Introduction

There were numerous ways in which stepfamilies maintained their children/stepchildren's cultural heritages, and I have made a distinction between talking and practices; that is, what actions stepfamilies undertook. Pearce's (1994) concept of the lived experience that is possible to talk about, and the stories of our lives that are less talked of, or not talked about at all, has influenced my distinction between talking and practices. Based on Morgan's ideas (1996) of family practices discussed earlier, I focus on the ordinary, everyday actions that can be taken for granted. Morgan (1996) defines practices as an indication of the regularity of everyday tasks, of 'doing' everyday things, emotional and verbal activities which overlap with other gendered, class and age-determined practices. Practices are located in wider systems of meaning. Such actions can be described in more than one way and

multiple meanings are produced by different family members which I will discuss further.

4.4.2. Cultural Practices of single parent families

The four white mothers in the research described their experiences of racism coming from black and white people, some within their families. Twine's work on the white mothers of mixed race children (1999; 2004) is particularly significant because of her attention to the ways in which white mothers engage in 'everyday antiracism' (1999: 729). She has coined the term 'racial literacy' to describe white parents' varying responses to racism (2004: 881). However, this term refers primarily to racialisation and does not fully encompass the emotional component of experiences of racism.

I suggest that white mothers' racist encounters provoke an emotional reaction, and they develop resilience on behalf of their mixed heritage children as part of their emotional labour, Guneratnam & Lewis, 2001) their political beliefs and growing racial awareness. In the study, they challenged educational professionals' perceptions of their mixed heritage children, and some prepared their children for negative comments from others they might experience during adolescence. Twine (2004) considers this the 'labour' of white parents who 'translate and

transform the meaning of whiteness, blackness and racism' in their families' (2004: 881). The labour to counter racism includes discussions of social interactions within school, access to supplementary schools and resources, providing materials, e.g. books, toys and symbols, to promote a positive identification with black culture. From these racialised social practices pride and resilience are produced over time as white mothers and their partners create their new identities within their mixed ethnicity stepfamilies.

4.4.3. ‘Doing’ Family - Extending and extended families

The extended families of the participants played a significant role in maintaining the cultural heritages of the children/stepchildren. I use the term ‘Extending’ to refer to new ways in which the mixed ethnicity stepfamily was broadened to include those with whom family members had social relationships and were ‘like family’, to differentiate them from those with biological connections. I have adapted this phrase from Mason (2008: 35) who discusses important relationships for children outside their biological relationships to people who ‘seemed like relatives’. Based on the selection of their parents’ affinities with selected people, a relationship was already established before the child’s birth within which they developed their own relationship with the particular

individual. Mason refers to this process as ‘creating fixity’ (2008: 35), which I understand to mean that the biological family is broadened to include important social relationships. This is also evident in Bauer’s research (2010) on mixed extended families over three generations that demonstrated the complexity of kin relationships, informal child fostering and the use of kin terms based on personal connections rather than biological relationships. Relationships based on social rather than biological connections occurred in my own family. Friends of my parents bought a large house within which our family and their family lived; in effect, as an extended family who socialised regularly. My relationship with my parents’ friends was that of aunt and uncle who shared some of the child rearing tasks with my parents.

In this study, the family was extended in numerous ways, which took into account the mixed heritage children/stepchildren’s cultural heritages to form new ethnicities and new families. Their practices are reflected in Burgoyne & Clark’s research (1984), which identified a group of parents in stepfamilies who considered themselves as enlightened and independent in pursuing their own values as a family. The family practices and emotional labour of mothers (Lewis, 1996) of some stepfamilies in my study created shared meanings of motherhood, belonging and supported their mixed heritage children’s cultural

identities. This is reflected in Bauer's work (2010) where innovative strategies are used to overcome past adversities and forge new families.

Theme 4.

4.5.1. Ways of fathering in a separate household

The fourth finding relates to the powerful presence of the biological father. In this study four were present in their children's lives at different times. Biological fathers did not take part in the study, and constructions of the biological fathers came predominantly from the mothers and some children. I had assumed that some biological fathers may be negatively constructed, but I was surprised at the power of their presence even when they had been separated from their children for most of their lives.

Fathers evoked different ideas. From mothers' accounts, some were constructed as troubled and conflict-ridden and others were constructed as irresponsible, invisible, absent, with no rights or entitlements. From the study, only one father remained physically absent throughout his son's childhood. Other fathers had varied contact with their children that ranged from intermittent to regular visits over time, but the responsibility for maintaining their children's cultural heritages lay mostly with the mothers supported by some of the stepfathers. The constructions from the mothers is countered by some children who held

different views of their fathers. An alternative view of divorced and separated biological fathers is outlined in the literature of Connor and White from the US (2006) and Reynolds in the UK (1996). The maternal accounts of fathers in their studies were as active participants in their children's lives, but who suffered from structural inequalities of employment, low incomes and difficulties with accommodation.

Fathers were also present in their biological connections to their children, and in children's resemblances to fathers, which reminded mothers of previous relationships discussed in the earlier section on resemblances. It is a common feature in clinical work that single mothers often fear their adolescent sons will inherit their fathers' characteristics and behaviours due to their resemblances. The fathers are constructed in particular ways by mothers who also present constructions of themselves in the past. The act of remembering past events creates particular meanings and stories about the fathers are told in relation to the mothers and their children, though the children may tell a different story. Irresponsibility was one construction of a father, yet his son retained a positive view of him, which enabled him to, according to his son, continue in the fathering role in the stepfamily.

The transition from a biological family to a single parent family, followed by the formation of a stepfamily, is complex and stressful for all.

Disputes between the parents regarding fathers' contact with their children take place as part of the process of adjustment of parenting across two households. Arnaut, Frome, Stoll & Felker (2000) found that parents continued to be very influenced by the first marriage and the divorce process. Their experiences of separation and divorce were of a multitude of emotions, including guilt about the effects on the children, anger and pain due to parental conflicts, and grief at the loss of the family, all of which were experienced simultaneously. The need to protect their children from physical harm, which concerned some of the mothers, heightened emotions. The multiple stresses of divorce, the rupture of family life, adjustments to a new family structure, changes of location for the father, the single parent family, financial rearrangements, and implications for the wider families of both parents required renegotiation.

Following divorce, fathering becomes more ambiguous and difficult if the child does not live with him (Olmstead, Futris & Pasley, 2008; Smart & Neale, 1999). Boss (2004, 2007, 2010) refers to the ambiguous loss of those who are physically absent from families, but remain psychologically present through either catastrophic occurrences such as war, kidnapping and natural disasters, or more usual events of divorce, migration, relocation or leaving home. Families are left confused about

the absent father's membership of and role within the family. Ambiguity is a key feature of stepfamily life, because of a biological parent who may be absent and a stepparent who is not biologically related, but present in the stepfamily (Daniel & Thompson, 1996). The biological father represents the past family, marital disruption, conflictual contact arrangements and, for some, physical violence, which accumulate to intensify the emotionality of the separation process. In this study, mothers' emotions were evoked during their retelling of past lives with their ex-partners, which may have been resolved in some ways by starting a new life, having a new partner, having more children, but in other ways remain unresolved and unspoken.

Smart & Neale (1999) suggest that divorce involves 'ethics of care' and 'ethics of justice'. Fathers may resort to the legal system to seek rights of access to their children. This is deemed a reasonable course of action, but the child's welfare also has to be considered.

In summary, there are a number of possible explanations for the continued powerlessness of the biological father in the stepfamily, which can be traced back to the marital relationship. Parents continue to be influenced by their first marriage. The divorce process may not fully resolve heightened feelings, and these may be evoked repeatedly during negotiations about visitation rights. The biological father also represents

the past, their culture and resemblances between the father and child represent the father's presence in the stepfamily. The biological fathers' presence in the stepfamilies was reflected in other significant ways, particularly that of paternal family names.

4.5.2. Naming Practices

All the stepchildren in this study had a view about their biological fathers' family. For many, family names remain the same until choice is presented by marriage or divorce. Migration has also led some families to adjust or change family names to assimilate, and names are changed to protect identities at times of war or oppression. Edwards & Caballero (2008) have considered the first names of mixed heritage children with different racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds. Family names' significance, particularly families that are changing, remains under-researched.

Multiple family names represent the new stepfamily and indicate practices of inclusion discussed earlier. The change from one family name to that of another arose out of a need to avoid stigmatisation (Harman, 2007) and for legitimisation (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984). Family names are key signifiers of the identity of the self. They form connections across the generations and claims to relational identities.

Being named after a family member can be a cultural practice (and is a frequent occurrence in families). Cultural identity is often determined by having the names of one or both cultures in mixed relationships. Cultural identity can be ambiguous and invisible when a name is Anglicised and the individual has a lighter skin colour. Families who live with visible differences in this study claim to be the same and do not rely on sharing the same family name to claim sameness. This hybridisation strategy forms part of the transformation process of achieving a new identity as a mixed ethnicity stepfamily, challenges the meaning of sameness, and allows the mixed ethnicity stepfamily members' different positions to emerge through their naming practices.

4.6. Talk and Silence

The mixed ethnicity stepfamilies in this study demonstrated different ways in which they achieved the continuous dynamic processes of hybridisation through talking, silence and numerous family practices. Luke & Luke (1999: 9) proposed that a site of hybridity allows for identities to be re-shaped and re-created 'through transformation and difference'. They defined the site of hybridity or diaspora space (Brah, 1996) a place where identities are entangled and dominant constructs of family, race, culture are challenged, which permits other positions to

emerge. This study indicates the different ways of talking that occurred in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, and the varied family practices regarding the maintenance of culture for the mixed heritage child/stepchild.

Positioned at the nexus of the biological and social relationships and three different cultures (those of both biological parents and the stepparents), the interplay of talking and silence is demonstrated in the material. The diasporic space of the mixed ethnicity stepfamily is created through changes, challenges and resistance through which the cultural heritages of the mixed heritage children are developed and achieved.

Talking was a central component in supporting the feeling of belonging experienced by the mixed heritage child, which also increased racial awareness and literacy (Twine, 2004). The social meaning of belonging revolves around a sense of relatedness to others, how one is regarded and treated, whether one is able to share similar experiences and a cultural background (Ahnallen, Suyemoto & Carter, 2006).

As described in the literature review, in a study of difference and belonging in mixed heritage and mixed faith parents, Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray (2008: 23) found that parents employed three approaches: 'individual', 'mix' and 'single'.

In my study, most families were in the mixed category and used various ways of talking in developing the child/stepchild's cultural

heritages within three family groups. Unlike Caballero, Edwards & Puthusseray (2008), my study included mixed heritage children/stepchildren who produced various strategies of resistance to outsiders' assumptions and to the construct of family sameness. Talking was sometimes considered a rupture to a narrative of sameness, but families found ways to discuss their differences, such as talking about experiences of and challenges to racism, termed 'racial literacy' (Twine, 1998). Racism may have been a preferred topic of discussion as family members shared their experiences but talk of their internal visible differences was constrained or silenced.

Silence played a dual role in the lived experiences of some mixed heritage individuals, sometimes as a symptom of living with visible difference, as if differences could be invisible. Silence was also strategic and used to experience both cultures in two households. This strategy of hybridity allowed the mixed heritage individual to maintain those relationships in which sameness was predominant whilst simultaneously experiencing a different culture. The ability to move between two cultures, embrace and experience both cultures, is reflected in Root's 'situational identities' (2004). The ability to negotiate and navigate both cultures is one of the features of hybridity.

The complexities of living with visible difference has also been researched by Phoenix (2011: 142) whose adult participants referred to frequent ‘disjunctions that led them to develop identities through struggle and suggested that visibly different households were unusual. This was the case in my own family during the 1960s and 1970s. My half-brother has a lighter skin colour than I do and our sibling relationship was often questioned by both black and white people and caused tensions between my mother and stepfather. Belonging uncertainty was created and remained a feature of our family life. My study has demonstrated the extent to which talking and silence were used in response to others’ constructions. Outsiders’ perception had a powerful effect on stepfamilies and provoked uncertainty of belonging in the mixed heritage child which talking resolved. These mixed heritage individuals developed a range of strategies to shape their identities of living and moving between two or more cultures.

Chapter 5

5. 0. Reflexivity

The reasons for undertaking this research lay in my own experiences living in a mixed ethnic stepfamily during the 1950s and 1960s with visible differences and a powerful silence about my Nigerian cultural heritage. Belonging uncertainty shaped our lives and questions of our relatedness were raised by both black and white people. The notion of 'instant family' was significant due to my mother's then unmarried pregnancy with my brother and her strong need to be legitimised as a married mother. The intersection between the construction of her failure as a woman responsible for the ending of the couple relationship (my father left her), her perceived sexual irresponsibility, and her transgression for having a mixed race child, were powerful constructs that contributed to her need to develop an 'instant family'. This experience led to my curiosity in clinical work with stepfamilies on issues such as the power of silence, physical differences in families, and pressures, if any, to become an 'instant family'. Stepfamilies with visible differences are a more common feature in my clinical work in a generic child and adolescent mental health service and I am aware of the little attention that clinicians pay to it. Other professionals refer to mixed heritage children as having an 'identity

problem' as the only source of their difficulties. These constructions of stepfamilies and mixed heritage children prompted me to explore this further with non-clinical, ordinary stepfamilies with differences in order to provide accounts from stepfamilies that may counter negative constructions.

Throughout the study, I was aware of my own position as a mixed heritage researcher and the extent to which this may have influenced the participants. On the one hand, I was of some of the parents' generation and on the other, I was of mixed heritage, as were the children/stepchildren. I found myself moving from the position of the child when talking with parents to that of a parent when listening to the children/stepchildren. I came to the conversations with the children/stepchildren with their parent's experiences, but at times, was drawn to the parental position. I was aware of this and found the idea of multiple perspectives, thinking from positions of those other than my own, a useful way to manage my responses to the interactions.

I had also wondered about ideas that parents might have about how I might hear their stories and whether they had thoughts about 'getting it right' for me as a mixed heritage female researcher of a similar generation.

The research has also questioned my own assumptions about the stepfamilies. For example, Ian had experienced a sense of marginalisation during his adolescence due to his family's European origins and endured some openly racist comments. His story of difference had influenced his friendships with African Caribbean peers. Joshua, who was of mixed European heritage, had a stepfather of Caribbean origins and half-siblings who were of European/Caribbean heritages during his adolescence in the 1970s. I sensed that both Ian and Joshua wished to share their stories of difference with me to indicate how white men can experience difference and discrimination. I also gained a sense of validation of my own family upon hearing Joshua's upbringing in his mixed ethnicity stepfamily. We were considered unusual as a family and Joshua's lived experience, albeit ten years later than my childhood, made me aware of other stepfamilies similar to mine. Constraint was also a theme of my experience of interviews and the section of text mentioned previously in which I used the LUUUT model was an example using my therapeutic skills to hold onto the conversation whilst having an internal dialogue about the participant's comment.

Constraint may also have been a feature of one participant who may not have volunteered for the interview but was volunteered by his

mother. Adherence to her wish for his participation may have been more significant for him than our conversation. The topic of being in a stepfamily may also have been particularly difficult because of his poor relationship with his stepfather at the time of the interview. This is a limitation of individual interviews and recollections in families because of the particular family relationships and the effects that the relationships and interactions have upon the individuals at the time of study.

My own views were challenged by Ian (Brenda's partner and Clarice's stepfather) who defined his two mixed heritage children as 'black', because of his dislike of the term 'mixed race', and I enquired about his idea given his own European mixed heritages. My reflective diary notes:

'Finally got around to phoning Ian to see if he had any further thoughts about the interview which he had discussed with Brenda. His main issue was the definition of black for his mixed race children. He had wondered why he had been so adamant about it and reckoned that it was his 'own stuff' about not knowing his own cultural heritage because he had been immersed in white British society. Ian began to explore his own heritage when he was older.'

The research topic had resonated with Ian and I became more aware of some of the dilemmas of white identities and also of the interviews' perturbing nature. Within Ian's social context, in which he had described a number of his friends as black, he had assumed this identity for his mixed heritage children with which I had initially felt was inaccurate. However, in the interview, I was able to explore the meaning of Ian's description that was linked to his own European mixed ancestry and his preferred terminology of his children having a black identity. He was visibly different from his brothers, had lighter skin colour, but experienced the disjuncture of being described as 'English' by his father and of his marginalisation within English society. This interaction reflected the limitation of the term 'black' for Ian's mixed heritage children who were able to access their European and Caribbean cultures.

A feature of the research that I found significant is retaining or changing the children/stepchildren's family names. The participants provided varied accounts about retaining the biological father's name that included: changing the family name upon the marriage of the mother and her new partner, exercising choice about which family name to have following the divorce of the mother and the stepfather, rejecting the

biological father's name, and the way in which one participant retained her biological father's name upon her marriage.

I was struck by two issues. The first was the participants' varied accounts about this topic and the second was the powerfulness of the topic that affected the stepfamily members. Most of the children/stepchildren were still living within their stepfamilies when the issue of changing their family names was raised which, for some, caused tension. Retaining the biological father's name also indicated the cultural origins of the mixed heritage child/stepchild. Marriage between mothers and their partners prompted discussions and, in some cases, decisions about changing the family names of the children/stepchildren. Some children/stepchildren in the study participated in discussions in their stepfamilies about the possibility of changing their family names whilst for other children/stepchildren, the changing of the family name was not negotiable in recognition of the biological father, his extended family and his culture.

The sense of difference due to family names was significant for the children/stepchildren. This part of the research resonated with my own experience, although a little differently. In the quest for 'instant family' and working towards the normative family construction, my family name was changed to that of my stepfather's. I reclaimed my own name years

later out of a need for a more authentic identity and as a way of resisting my stepfather's construction of our family. In my clinical work, I began to explore names in stepfamilies more closely than before.

The impact of the research has helped me to better understand the ambiguous and 'invisible' position of the stepfather whose position is not recognised in family law discussed earlier. The disempowerment linked with discrimination that my stepfather experienced as a black man with a white wife, spurred him on to develop an 'instant family' to legitimise both he and my mother from their different racialised positions that intersected with gender and class. The study has sensitised me more to fathers, both biological and social, in my clinical work. I also explore the social pressures and the parents' expectations regarding their constructions of their stepfamilies.

I discuss clinical and training implications in the next section.

Chapter 6

6.0. Implications –

Stepfamilies

Within the micro diasporic spaces of the mixed ethnicity stepfamilies, cultural identities are continually transformed through a dynamic process that is always ‘in process’ (Hall, 1996: 2) to create new ethnicities. Similarly, family identities of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies are also actively transformed through discursive and family practices to create their new families. Located at the intersection of the biological and social family, mixed ethnicity stepfamilies experience multiplicity, differences and sameness in their quest for an ordinary family life. The study has demonstrated numerous ways in which mixed heritage children/stepchildren and their stepfamilies managed these processes. In particular, the mixed heritage children/stepchildren used numerous strategies to maintain their cultural identities in the face of parents and stepparents not always facilitating this, but would benefit greatly from adults’ support.

The research has revealed a number of important issues for stepfamilies. Talk between the biological parent, stepparent and their mixed heritage child/stepchild about coming together as a stepfamily with their racialised differences in the family was significant. Talking

increased awareness and understanding of the meanings of visible difference and supported the mixed heritage child's sense of belonging, particularly when parents went on to have their own white children. Parents may wish to acknowledge children's sense of their differences of which they are aware at a young age, and encourage conversations about their racialised differences so the children can develop their identities with increased confidence.

Contestations of family identity from others also occurred, which prompted parents to resist and counter those who challenged the family's identity and belonging. Parents could benefit from talking with their children about how others perceive them to prepare them for such comments and support the development of both their own resilience and that of the mixed heritage child. This would contribute to their affirmation of their family identity and the normalisation of their multiple differences.

The construction of the 'ideal' family and 'instant family' was experienced by some parents. The study revealed that little talking was done between some mothers and their partners before coming together based on assumed mutual understandings or lack of time. Parents would find it useful to consider their assumptions about becoming a family, whether there is an awareness of pressures to become an 'instant family', where these pressures originate, how they are to

respond, how they wish to go forward with their new respective roles and responsibilities and allow time to prepare for becoming a new family.

Preparing the wider family members for the experience of being in a new stepfamily was also important. Biological parent and stepparent, mixed heritage child/stepchild, siblings and extended families of both biological parents and stepparents had to adjust to the new stepfamily.

Responses to the stepfamily from extended family members that change over time are influential in developing the relationships between the mixed heritage child, parents, stepparents and their wider families.

Talking between stepparents and their wider families increases understanding of their position as a stepfamily living with racialised differences. Stepfamily members would gain important support from the wider family who could advocate on their behalf when faced with negative comments from outsiders.

The study indicated the fluidity of biological fathers who moved in and out of their children's lives, that changed over time, and the emotional labour (Lewis and Guneratnam, 1996) of mothers who wished to ensure the continuity of the father's relationship with their child.

Excluding some fathers from their children's lives occurred due to past violence resulting in the loss of the biological father and child's relationship and his culture. These fathers remained a silent presence in

the mixed ethnicity stepfamily whose culture was unrecognised. This may be a particularly sensitive topic for mothers and their children, but would benefit from some exploration. The paternal extended family also plays an important role in the life of the children of divorced parents and can support their cultural identities. This strategy enables cultural awareness of the mixed heritage child to be developed within a wider social context regardless of the biological father's changing role.

Although this is a very small and particular study, there are a number of clinical and training implications which can be drawn from this research.

6.1. Implications –

Clinical

This study raises implications for clinicians. Clinicians' attention to the complexities of mixed ethnicity stepfamilies could be helpful. Exploring family structures and relationships of both biological and social families, the extended families, stepparents and siblings, could inform them of complex life experiences. Therapeutic conversations about visible differences and use of family names would enable clinicians to explore meanings of belonging and togetherness for the mixed heritage child.

From the research, three family phases have been identified: the biological family, the single parent and the stepfamily. The stage of single parenthood seemed to increase the racial awareness of the white mothers of a mixed heritage child, which informed their ideas about the construction of their mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. Further exploration by clinicians could increase their awareness and the extent to which it informs the next phase of becoming a stepfamily. In my own clinical work, I now attend to this stage in greater detail than before and enquire about the divorce processes' emotional impact on the mothers, their children and their extended families.

The process of becoming a stepfamily is also complex and clinicians' enquiries about how mothers and their partners prepare the mixed heritage child for its new family could encourage the mothers and their partners to explore this further with the child. Exploring feelings about changes in the family, their hopes about becoming a family and their views about having half-siblings who may be of a different skin colour and ethnicity would be very helpful. Also, enquiries into the decision regarding maintaining or changing family names could support stepfamily members as they face many important decisions.

As this study demonstrates, the mixed heritage child and his/her mother may very have different answers to questions about their

experiences. In a session, a mother of eight-year-old twins who planned to marry her partner assumed the twins would change their father's family name to their stepfather's. In discussion, it emerged they had no wish to change their names, which caused the mother some surprise. I now attend more closely to the issue of whether discussions have taken place regarding family names, whether they will be maintained or changed on becoming a stepfamily.

The stepfather's role was also ambiguous. In this study, most of them were single before becoming part of a stepfamily and later became biological fathers. Questions about how rules are developed, how stepchildren refer to their stepfather and how the relationship has developed may be useful. Particularly significant is the discussion about becoming a stepfather to a mixed heritage child. This could form part of the therapeutic practice of working with stepfamilies. One of my clients, a 15-year-old boy who lives with his mother, stepfather and younger half-sibling, and has no contact with his biological father, has shared his changing views of his stepfather. He had previously held a negative view of his stepfather but, more recently, has reached a stage of acceptance. This view has enabled my client to be open to the more positive aspects of his stepfather, such as his financial contribution, his fathering of his biological child and his extended family.

In this study, some professionals' attitudes were concerning to mothers who felt that they were constructed as a deficit family due to having children with different skin colours. It is important that family support and educational services are encouraged to consider the complexities of mixed ethnicity stepfamily life and avoid essentialist thinking about those with mixed heritages.

Clinicians' attention to the relationship between the child and their paternal grandparents, frequency of visits, conversations about their culture, homeland and family background, could increase knowledge of culture and a sense of belonging in the mixed heritage child.

A further implication is the sense of difference that the child/stepchild experiences when half-siblings of a different skin colour are born into the stepfamily. The clinicians' curiosity about the meanings that parents and children/stepchildren have of their differences, and how such differences are discussed, could help clinicians consider ways in which stepfamilies develop resilience.

6.2. Implications –

Training

Systemic training programmes address culture (Falicov, 1995; Green, 1998; Hardy and Laszloffy, 1995) and working with differences of

gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, ethnicity and sexuality (Burnham and Hall, 2002), yet trainings on working with mixed heritage individuals and families remain invisible to the systemic discipline. Systemic training could be developed to include a curriculum on mixed heritage individuals and families. The black historical presence in UK would provide a more accurate account of black and mixed ancestry before, during and after slavery and challenge the dominant view of the black presence as an exclusively twentieth century phenomenon. The history of race mixing, biographical and autobiographical accounts would also increase trainees' awareness of mixed heritage people through time.

Training programmes could be more rigorous in the application of social differences identified above and the intersectionality of some of the differences. The cultural genogram is a fundamental part of systemic training and this technique can be developed further with all families with enquiries about how families describe their own family identity, their culture, ethnicity and so on. Further information about the family can emerge and more questions about how others perceive them and how they respond to these perceptions would produce complex data on internal and external relationships, communication, beliefs and values that can be further explored. Such questions could counter the possible

silences that occur in individuals and families about perceived ‘difficult’ issues and normalise the families.

Using the therapist’s self has become increasingly important in systemic therapy when working with cultural/racial differences. The study revealed the extent to which mothers experienced disapproval from some professionals who they felt constructed them as deficit. The training for therapists could explore more specifically trainees’ beliefs about mixed relationships (past and current), e.g. ‘How do I feel about inter-racial relationships; how do I perceive mixed race couples?’ (Banks, 1996; 27) – a helpful way for clinicians to explore their views and feelings about mixed relationships. These questions can be linked to the influences of the wider discourses on mixed race and connect these ideas to the families with whom they are working. Within the training context trainees feel constrained to enquire about race and culture with families because of a fear of ‘getting it wrong’. The ability to ask these questions will develop more confidence in their clinical skills and knowledge of their mixed heritage families.

The study revealed some of the alternative narratives of living in families to the dominant negative constructions of mixed heritage individuals and stepfamilies. Questions to explore mixed heritage individuals’ unique experiences, probing for subjugated stories and the

ways in which mixed heritage individuals have responded to this. For example, a therapist might bring to the attention of the mixed heritage client an episode where they have challenged a person who invalidated their preferred definition of themselves. Were they aware that this was an exception to the story they have told? Once discovered, the exception can be further developed with questions such as, what made this possible on this occasion but not others, what was the experience like and so on. This process produces the complex stories of clients' lives and helps clients build on their personal resources to create a new narrative of themselves.

As a mixed heritage researcher who has undertaken research with parents of different cultures and the mixed heritage child/stepchild, my awareness of myself in relation to the research and the participants is significant. From my own background of my father's culture being silenced in my stepfamily, I was interested in exploring the extent to which silence occurred in other mixed ethnicity stepfamilies of a younger generation. Although some families reflected my own experience, the ways in which some mothers thought about their mixed heritage children indicated high levels of racial awareness and sensitivity.

To summarise, systemic training would benefit from a curriculum of mixed heritage history in the UK that informs practitioners that the mixed

heritage group has a valid and established presence, which can be traced back in time. Training with the cultural genogram can be expanded to incorporate enquiries about the intersections of social differences that would produce complex pictures of mixed heritage individuals and their families' lives, but would encourage the idea of the value of having conversations about a perceived 'difficult' topic. The use of self could incorporate a series of questions on mixed relationships to explore therapists' beliefs and values and clinical work with mixed heritage individuals could utilise narrative approaches to encourage alternative stories of how mixed heritage individuals overcome adverse constructions of their identity as they forge new identities that need to be recognised.

Chapter 7

7.0. The use of visual images

The invitation for participants to select images of their families for the interview demonstrated some issues of clinical importance. Using images in therapy is not practiced widely, yet it is a powerful way of communicating meanings. In my clinical practice, I provide a collection of images for discussion and am aware of the qualitative difference, the change in the clients' affect, the ease with which they describe and link the images to their own family relationships. In the study, I requested participants bring their own selection of images, which provided a rich source of information that applies to clinical practice. The process of who to include or exclude from the participants' selection was, in their minds, linked to their significant family relationships both past and present. They had carefully considered the types of images and media in which they represented themselves and their family members. The selected images had affective responses from the participants who expressed a range of emotions from warmth to unhappiness. The visual images stimulated their memories. The images enabled the participants to capture and discuss their family lives more easily than without visual prompts. The process of selection formed part of their planning for the interview. The

invitation to bring images enabled engagement which could be applied to the therapeutic context.

The presentation of participants' visual material demonstrated some of the tensions. Statements of race, the significance of particular relationships and the representation of the experience of being in a mixed ethnicity relationship created dilemmas of expectations. The images were individual statements about their relationships. The extent to which comments and observations were expected, required or permitted indicated the importance of negotiation about their preferred methods of enquiry.

Chapter 8

8.0. Conclusion

This study set out to explore ways in which the cultures of mixed heritage individuals are maintained among members of their mixed ethnicity stepfamilies. The aim was to discover whether and how stepfamily members talked together about their cultural and visible differences, and the extent to which they represented the culture of the non-resident biological parent. It is a very small, particular study, but has highlighted the significant complexities in interactions and constructions of self, relationships and belonging in mixed ethnicity stepfamilies in current social contexts. The study has demonstrated the ways in which cultural identities were developed in the mixed ethnicity stepfamily's micro-diasporic space. Key findings were that the biological family continues to be privileged in how others construct families with visible resemblances and the ways in which mixed ethnicity stepfamilies have responded to these constructions over time. Ongoing interactions between adults (parents and stepparents) that explored meanings with children of self-definitions and a sense of belonging were achieved as children moved between up to three families (those of the biological parents and stepparents) families and three cultures. Children lived with

their sense of difference from their stepfamily members and developed their own unique ways of claiming their multiple identifications. Located at the intersection of the biological and social family structures, the study has also demonstrated the ways in which mixed ethnicity stepfamilies constructed themselves as ordinary families. Strategies of inclusion, a sense of sameness, minimising differences and silence were employed to forge family identity. The interplay between talking, cultural practices and silence indicated the ways in which mixed heritage individuals navigated their different families to maintain their cultural identities.

Using visual images in the study permitted individuals to articulate their family relationships both past and present and, for some, provided counter-narratives to those of their stepfamilies. The study contributes to the view that we must increase the competences of clinicians whose clients are likely to be in culturally mixed relationships. Their increased awareness of and attention to the position of the mixed heritage child on becoming part of a stepfamily would enable stories of difference to emerge and support the development of their identity.

Appendix 1



Charlotte Burck
Tavistock School

ETH/11/96

14 May 2010

Dear Charlotte,

Application to the Research Ethics Committee: An exploration of ways in which cultural identities of children of mixed heritages are maintained or Negotiated in step-families of mixed ethnicities. (Y Ayo).

I advise that Members of the Research Ethics Committee have now approved the above application on the terms previously advised to you. The Research Ethics Committee should be informed of any significant changes that take place after approval has been given. Examples of such changes include any change to the scope, methodology or composition of investigative team. These examples are not exclusive and the person responsible for the programme must exercise proper judgement in determining what should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

In accepting the terms previously advised to you I would be grateful if you could return the declaration form below, duly signed and dated, confirming that you will inform the committee of any changes to your approved programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simiso Jubane".

Simiso Jubane
Admission and Ethics Officer
s.jubane@uel.ac.uk
02082232976

Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET ON RESEARCH INTO MIXED ETHNICITIES IN STEPFAMILIES

This is to invite you to support a small research project on families where there are people from different ethnicities who have come together from previous relationships.

My name is Yvonne Ayo and I am a researcher and family therapist working at the Tavistock Centre in London doing research into ways in which individuals of mixed race/ heritage talk about their cultural heritages of their families of origin when they live with their parent and their parent's partner.

This research adds to an increasing body of knowledge on mixed race/heritage individuals and families and the research aims to help professionals who work with mixed heritage families.

I would like to individually interview family members of different ethnicities who have come together from a previous relationship and been living together for at least three years. The child from a previous relationship should be at least 15 years of age. If there are any children from the current relationship who are at least 10 years of age and the parent/s consider an interview appropriate, I would also be interested in seeking their views.

Each interview will last about an hour and will be recorded. Confidentiality of those families who participate will be maintained throughout the project. The interview will be carefully approached and wishes and comments of the families will be respected at all times. They can choose not to answer questions and can withdraw from the research project at any time.

If you know of any family whom you think may be interested in the research project, can you please contact me on my direct line or my email address as follows:

0208 938 2218
yayo@tavi-port.nhs.uk.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO READ THIS.

Appendix 3

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

This is to invite you to take part in a small research project. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If you wish, discuss it with friends or relatives.

Who Am I?

My name is Yvonne Ayo and I am a family therapist working at the Tavistock Centre in London. I am also doing research into ways in which people of mixed heritage talk about their cultural heritages in step-families.

What is the purpose of the study?

My particular interest is in finding out ways in which cultural heritages of mixed heritage people and families are maintained or changed when a family becomes a step-family.

Why it is important

Mixed heritage identities and stepfamilies have often received negative attention in both research and popular media. More recently, there has been a change from previous ideas and it is important that the voices of mixed heritage peoples in stepfamilies are heard. The research will help professionals who work with mixed heritage families.

Who will be asked to take part.

I would like to interview the following family members: a parent, step-parent, step-child and step-sibling(s) who have been living as a family for at least three years. The step-child should be at least 15 years of age and the step-sibling should be at least 10 years of age although I can be flexible about this if a step-sibling is younger, say 9 years, and you consider an interview appropriate.

What it will involve

The interview will last about an hour and will take place at your home or a place of your choice. I will remind you of the purpose of the interview and request your signature on the consent form. I will tape the interview in order that I can think more about what we have talked about. I will erase the material at the end of the research project. The interview will

be transcribed and all names and identifying details will be removed, so that you and your family cannot be recognised. I will ensure that any findings from the study which will be published will not identify your family in any way.

If we touch upon sensitive topics we may need to think it through together about how to proceed and will only do so once you feel sufficiently assured.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO READ THIS.

Appendix 4

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN

Invitation to take part.

My name is Yvonne Ayo and I am a researcher and a family therapist working at the Tavistock Centre in London. I am carrying out a study into ways in which people of mixed heritage talk about their cultural heritages in step-families. Mixed heritage peoples and stepfamilies have often received negative attention in both research and popular media. As our society is rapidly becoming more multicultural I think it is important that we hear more from of mixed heritage children and their families are heard. My interest is in finding out about people in mixed heritage stepfamilies themselves talk about their cultural heritages.

I have talked with your mum/step-dad or dad/step-mum who have agreed that you might be willing to meet with me to help me with my research project. This will mean talking to me at your home or any other place of your choice where we can talk and I can record our conversation. I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your family.

If you are able to take part it will help me a lot with my study but no-one will be made to do this. You can change your mind or not answer any questions at any time.

If you say yes, I would like to talk with you for about an hour and record our conversation. The questions will not be too hard. I will also ask you to either draw or use photographs of your family members to help our discussion.

If we touch upon sensitive topics we may need to think it through together about how to proceed and will only do so once you feel that's OK to do so.

What you say will be private and I will not let your parent/step-parent know details of our conversation. I will type out the interview so that I can think about what we talked about more but your name and anything that can identify you will be changed. When the findings are published I

will make sure that you will not be identified. I shall erase the tapes at the end of the project.

The interview will be carefully approached and your wishes and comments will be respected at all times.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO READ THIS. DO TALK TO YOUR MUM OR DAD IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AND I'M HAPPY TO TALK MORE TO YOU ABOUT THE STUDY IF YOU WOULD LIKE.

Appendix 5

CONSENT FORM

Title of project: An Exploration of ways in which cultural identities of children of mixed heritages are maintained or negotiated in stepfamilies of mixed ethnicities

Name of Researcher: Yvonne Ayo

Contact phone number: 0208 938 2218 (daytime).

1. I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. My participation is voluntary and confidential and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason or legal rights being affected.
3. I understand that any recording made will be destroyed at the end of the research.
4. I understand that any photograph made of my selected image for discussion will be destroyed at the end of the research.
5. I understand that any publication resulting from this research will not identify me in any way.
6. I agree to take part in the study.

Name

Date

Signature

Address of informant

Researcher

Date

Signature

I for informant; 1 for researcher

Appendix 6

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

Project Title: An Exploration of ways in which cultural identities of children of mixed heritages are maintained or negotiated in stepfamilies of mixed ethnicities.

Young person/child/step-child/step-sibling to circle all they agree with:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| Have you read (or had read to you) about this project? | Yes/No |
| Has somebody else explained this project to you? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand what this project is about? | Yes/No |
| Have you asked all the questions you want? | Yes/No |
| Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand that it is OK to stop taking part at any time? | Yes/No |
| Are you happy to take part? | Yes/No |

If any answers are 'no' or you do not want to take part, do not sign your name!

If you do want to take part, you can write your name below

Your name

Date

The person who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name

Sign

Appendix 7

Date:

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENT (Sara)

**First set of questions is to find out about Sara's own family,
Robert's father's culture and family.**

Suggest that I should let her know that I have read her paper on a social network website. This will help me to use some of the information her text.

Can you tell me who is in your family?

Where does everyone live? What are their occupations?

When was Robert born?

How would you describe Robert's father's cultural identity? His occupation?

How did your family respond to your relationship with Robert's father?

His family's response to you?

And when you had Robert?

How long were you and Robert's father together? Are you able to tell me what led to the ending of the relationship?

Is there much contact between Robert and his dad after the end of the relationship?

Is there any contact with Robert's father's relations?

Are they contact today?

Where do they live?

How would you describe the community in southern England where you first lived with Robert? (Based on Sara's comment of 'living in a cocoon' in initial telephone conversation).

Some families talk about race and culture, what happened in your family?

How did you help Robert explore his cultural heritage?

Questions are to explore the expectations of the new relationship, living as a stepfamily, the extended family, the move from London, effects of racism within the stepfamily.

When did you meet your ex-partner? His employment?

Can you tell me a bit about his family background?

Can you tell me a little bit about his two sons? (*paper mentions that he had two young sons*).

How did you think about the two families coming together?

Did you see/visit his family members? How often?

How did they respond to Robert? How would you describe your relationship between Robert and his stepfather, between you and your partner, between you and his children, between Robert and his sons, between you and his family members?

What hopes had you for the relationship?

Did you talk together about the similarities and differences within your new family re. race, culture, values?

In some mixed race families, race is often openly discussed, what happened in your family?

Questions to discuss the effects of the ending of this relationship upon the parent, her child and their relationship. Also to explore the wider social context, social networks.

When did you first become aware that your ex-partner was prejudiced?

Which prejudices emerged? (*this term is used in her paper*)

How was this managed in the family?

Were his children, their mother also prejudiced?

Was this expressed towards Robert?

Are you able to tell me about how the relationship ended?

Can you tell me of yours and Robert's experiences of prejudice in southern England?

Were there other mixed heritage families in your neighbourhood?

What helped you decide to set up the organisation?

Appendix 8

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH CHILD/STEP CHILD.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Who are in the photos?

Your reason for selection of these images?

What was it like having to choose the photos?

Were there any you would have liked to include that you couldn't/didn't?

FAMILY

1.I've done a family tree based on my conversation with your mum but it needs completing. Can you please help? Circles are female and squares are men.

2.How do you get on with your: Mum's family

Dad's family

Mother's partner's family

3. Do you visit your Dad?

4. Do you see other members of your Dad's family?

5. Can you say a bit about what it is like visiting your Dad in (take out - confidentiality)? Do you notice if people look at you?

6.How would you describe yourself in terms of your ethnicity?

Culture?

6. How old were you when you first knew Steve? (your Mum's partner?)

7. What changes happened when your mum and Steve (Stepfather) came together as a family?
9. Was your cultural heritage of Sierra Leone here in your stepfamily, like any food, books, images, any talk of Sierra Leone with your Mum or Steve?
10. If not, are there any aspects of your cultural heritage you would have liked to retain?
11. What was it like for you moving to this area. What did you notice about your primary school? Were you the only one who was mixed? Were there other mixed children?
12. And secondary school, are there mixed children at the school?
12. Which family name do you have as your surname? Do you have any thoughts about this?
13. If you were able to give some advice about your mother and stepfather from your position now how would it have been helpful to manage issues in the family around ethnicity and culture, what would you say?
14. Are there any questions that I might not have thought about that you would have liked me to ask?

Appendix 9: Methodology Map

Stage 1			
Extended Family	Location	Parental Separation	Racism

Stage 2					
Extended Family	Location	Parental Separation	Racism	Being a father	Becoming a Step-Family

Stage 3				
Step Father	Mother	Children / Step Children	Becoming a step family	Values and Beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a father • Keeping in touch • Loss of children, relationship • Being active • Shared child rearing • Secular upbringing • Helping to access culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting children first • Non-blaming of father • Keeping children in touch • Mothers support each other • Maintaining cultural links • Contact visits with father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in the middle • Stating own position • Keeping fathers name • Visits to fathers family • Knowledge of culture • Emotions • Invisibility of cultural identity • Loyalty to father • Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive talk • Doing the right thing • Advantages of mixed-heritage child • Having white siblings • Having mixed-heritage half siblings • Visible differences • Minimisation of difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being one big family • Professional's beliefs • Non-blaming of biological father • Social justice • Naturalness of family life • Doing the right thing • Naming racism • Loyalty to parents • Taking things personally.

Stage 4	
Talking	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not-talking • Claims to culture • Visible differences • Preparations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names • Biological father • Preparation

Appendix 10

Transcript Notation from: Hollway, W. & Jefferson, T. (2001). *Doing Qualitative Research Differently*. London: Sage.

- (.) A full stop inside brackets denotes a micro pause, a notable pause of no significance.
- (0.2) A number inside the bracket denotes a timed pause, long enough to time and show in the transcription.
- () Where there is a space between brackets denotes that the words spoken were too unclear to transcribe.
- (h) When a bracketed 'h' appears it denotes that there was laughter within the talk.

Appendix 11

Extract of my interview with Dylan
 Initial themes in bold

Location: Settled in London	D: Me and Mum like I dunno moved round loads so that was another reason I didn't want to go because I was like settling into school (<i>clears throat</i>) in London I'd just moved from one school in () West London to another and then we went to the Middle East and that was this thing was like having to do my last bit of primary school in another school then having to go to secondary school I didn't I didn't really like that too much 'cos you're having to like change friend groups and stuff like all the time that's one of the things but other than that it was OK it was fun
Moving between during transition to secondary school	
Absence of Jamaican heritage	<p>Y: So thinking about your cultural heritage of English Jamaican how much of your Jamaican heritage is present in this family in your current stepfamily?</p> <p>D: In this side not really at all no not at all really but then (.) I dunno yeah just not really (<i>clears throat</i>)</p> <p>Y: So how do you connect with Jamaican heritage and culture how do you do it?</p>
Brief talk in stepfamily Jamaican culture not talked about	D: I dunno I never really think about it like that when I'm with like my dad's side like I don't think any of them have been to Jamaica apart from my grandparents and one of my aunties so like I don't think any of us really think of it like that I dunno I (.) I don't really listen to so much Jamaican music but I always I
No visits to Jamaica	
The way the family think of themselves	

<p>Privileging music as a way of being part of the culture</p> <p>Having knowledge of Jamaica Grandparents</p> <p>Sharing knowledge</p> <p>Keeping up with Jamaican news</p>	<p>know the places and stuff like that so when my friends who are Jamaican talk about it I always know what's going on and stuff like that I suppose that's how I know I don't really listen to music but a bit of it is through music and talking to my grandparents about where they go in Jamaica and stuff like that reading about stuff I suppose is how I like keep up with it and like make sure it is part of (.) me Y: Is any of that talked about in this family with your mum or your younger brothers?</p>
<p>No thinking of difference</p>	<p>D: Erm (0.2) I think it has come up briefly but never in any conversation that I've remembered like never (.) like in any serious conversation or like maybe like maybe something about Jamaica or like Jamaica comes into it but it's not like really relevant to like on a wider spectrum of how they relate to my like Jamaican side of the family never like that</p> <p>Y: So what's it like for you being the only mixed race person in this family?</p>
	<p>D: Erm I never really think about it erm (.) it's a bit weird I dunno it's I didn't mind it at school because then I was like one of the only ones so maybe like</p>

Appendix 12

Extract of my interview with Virginia
Initial themes in bold

Having a white sibling	But erm my Mum even if he could (0.1) my mum said that she wouldn't have done that 'cos she wouldn't want me living like because i...i..it would have got even worse if there was a child who was a different colour and stuff (.) because then that child would have been white and
Feelings about having a white sibling.	<p>Y: It happens though in families doesn't it how would you have felt about that</p> <p>V: I wouldn't have been happy</p> <p>Y: You wouldn't have been happy why would you not have been happy about that?</p>
Being different How others perceived them as a family	<p>V: Well if,if,if we went out together then (0.1) I don't know (.) it's just like in that I might have looked more like or the..odd one out or something than when I'm just going out with them</p> <p>Y: Hmm but would you have liked to have a brother or sister or is it the skin colour that would have been the problem?</p>
Importance of name	<p>V: (0.2) Well (0.1) when I lived with just my mum I think have wanted to have a brother or sister but I don't really anymore</p> <p>Y: Hmm you're happy now?</p>

<p>Names and meaning of family</p> <p>How others perceive them</p> <p>Having different family names</p>	<p>V: Hmm</p> <p>Y: Ok, now another question I wanted to ask you about is erm the surname that you've got is your Mum's surname is that right?</p> <p>V: Hmm</p> <p>Y: Some people t's interesting how I've interviewed some people the surname they have is very very important erm whether it's the Dad's name or the mother's name, do you have a view about that?</p> <p>V: Well, I really wouldn't have wanted like erm (0.1) Mummy and Steve to get married or something and then she would have had a different surname and then they would have had a different surname from me I wouldn't really have liked that that much</p> <p>Y: Right</p> <p>V: And then if I'd had my Dad's surname then we'd all have different surnames and then that might have been a bit</p> <p>Y: And what would you have thought about all that</p> <p>V: Well (.) people might think that we're not really like a family</p>
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Appendix 13

Initial themes of becoming a stepfamily from mothers

Separation of parents
Putting the children first
Blame of fathers
Maintaining links with father's family and or culture
Talk with partners

Initial themes of becoming a stepfamily from children/stepchildren

Being in the middle
Stating own position
Keeping father's name
Being with extended family
Loyalty to father's culture

Appendix 14

Constructions of fatherhood from transcript of Ian's stepfamily

Talking

No talk	No talking between Ian and Brenda
Becoming part of the family	Ian's introduction to Brenda's father
Fleeting talk	No real time to talk together
Fathering	Being a good father – talking to Clarice
Fathering	What to be called by Clarice
Fathering	How to be a father to Clarice
Disapproval Brenda's	External responses to relationship (from mother)
Becoming a stepfamily name	Talk regarding changing Clarice's family
Talk	The value of talking
Talk children's heritages	Talking to others regarding their
Visible Differences colour	Having a family with differences in skin
Different practices	No talking of culture in family of origin

Appendix 15

Below an extract of my interview with Monica to demonstrate the serpentine model. The interview is in boxes and my thoughts are in italics.

Y. Well there is that issue about it not being important that it doesn't impinge on his thinking on his relationship I just wondered whether you know when some people come together and they start having their own children then it's clearly there's more differences in the family I just wondered whether you ever talk to him about?

The question is to explore the extent to which Monica and Sean talked about the visible differences between themselves and Dylan when they came together as a stepfamily and whether they thought about racial differences between Dylan and his white siblings. I wish to find out if there were any preparatory conversations

which included racial and cultural differences between Monica and Sean.

M. I don't think we've ever considered there to be differences because Dylan's always been very much with us erm

Monica denies the idea of difference which she may understand here as a way of distancing her son from their family. In order him to 'fit in' with this stepfamily sameness is privileged. Talking of difference may be difficult for Monica who has experienced racial harassment from young black women when she was out with Jo's father, and has also witnessed racial abuse from white youths towards him. Monica's response to verbal racial assaults was to try to ignore them at the time and to forget about them. Although racially aware in her interview she considers sameness as a significant part of family.

I am puzzled by this response and ask more specific question. I want to find out

how they manage to avoid talking about it and how is the idea of avoidance created between Monica and Sean

Monica is reminding me of the Englishness of Dylan's Jamaican extended family most of whom were born in England. Monica claims Englishness as their birthright and that they have assimilated into

Y. You mean culturally they're English

English culture making them Black and English as defined by Monica. Jamaican cultural origins are less significant than the Englishness of the second generation

of Dylan's extended family.

I am trying to make sense of two things. The first is that of being reminded of something that I should know 'you've got to remember' and the statement, 'Dylan's family are very English'. These two sections of text, sited next to each other, are part of Monica's insistence of assimilation with which I am struggling to find some meaning for myself. Has Dylan's family signed up for this definition? How would they feel on hearing this about themselves? What are Monica's rights and obligations in declaring this definition of assimilation? The only link to Monica's idea that I can make is that of culture and a suggestion is offered. I use the second person in response.

Y. Even though there's racial differences, visible differences?

M. Culturally they are English

Monica agrees but is the agreement out of politeness or to move the conversation on? A shared understanding now seems possible.

I continue with talk of differences in the family because Monica's ideas are unsettling and the topic of talking of difference is being avoided. I remain unconvinced of Monica's agreement regarding culture.

Monica presents a challenge to me of reducing the significance of the issue of difference with this question which states her position of not caring about this issue.

Y. But what about the difference in skin colour?

M. Who cares?

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