

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: London South Bank University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Social Work and Social Policy</p>
<p>Title of case study: Facilitating relationship support for ‘mixed’ couples and families: a collaborative approach, delivery and evaluation.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) This impact case study demonstrates how research has benefitted mixed couples in their relationships as well as charitable and other organisations engaged in supporting ‘mixed’ couples.</p> <p>Impact relates specifically to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) development and deployment by charities and professional agencies of e-learning resources to support people in ‘mixed’ relationships and families; (ii) increased awareness and understanding by ‘mixed’ couples and families, and professionals, of issues relating to specific ‘mixed’ relationships in difference to those faced by all couples; (iii) the improved efficiency and effectiveness of charities and professional bodies in dealing with ‘mixed’ couple matters.
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) This case study is underpinned by related research from two separate projects funded by the ESRC and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) respectively, during the period 2002 and 2008.</p> <p>The Families & Social Capital Research Group (the Families Group (www.lsbu.ac.uk/families)) was funded by the ESRC (RES-189-25-0115; £2.84million; 2002-6; Director: Rosalind Edwards (Professor of Social Policy at LSBU until December 2010, now at Southampton University).</p> <p>The Families Group programme involved a number of multi-disciplinary, multi-themed projects, two of which explored transnational family relationships – ‘families that have members elsewhere, yet retain a sense of unity’; (i) Transnational African-Caribbean families project, led by Dr Tracey Reynolds (Senior Research Fellow, LSBU, 2000 to date) and (ii) Transnational Italian Families led by Dr Elisabetta Zontini (Research Fellow, LSBU 2003 until 2008, now University of Nottingham). Both projects focused on the ways in which families from different ethnic groups maintain relationships across distances, and the different ways in which they do so.</p> <p>The related project funded by the JRF Parenting ‘Mixed’ Children (PI: Professor Edwards, Co-I: Dr Chamion Caballero (Research Fellow); £122k, 2006-2008) aimed to provide insights about parenting mixed children to inform debates about family life and offer professional strategies for support. Focusing on ‘mixed’ mothers and fathers living together, it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigated how parents from different racial, ethnic and/or faith backgrounds give their children a sense of belonging and identity; • examined parents’ approaches to cultural difference and how they pass on aspects of belonging and heritage across generations; • explored the opportunities, constraints, challenges and tensions in negotiating a sense of identity and heritage between parents. <p>Key insights and findings from the above projects identified a range of important issues around ‘mixed’ couple relationships, where dis-junctures in expectations, between partners themselves, their families and the wider communities can surface. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially complex shifts in how ‘mixed’ couples understand difficulties between them as rooted in cultural difference or personal attributes and viewpoint (1-6). • Caribbean-origin and West African-origin mixed couples can experience tensions in raising children between them and their extended kin in terms of culture and language issues. However, couples also feel that they appreciate their differences and have access to wider social resources (1, 2, 6). • The findings from the African-Caribbean and Italian Families studies indicated that ‘mixed’ families experience challenges of adjustment, but also opportunities to bridge ethnic

and racial divides. The opportunities are often taken for granted and are rarely considered (1, 2, 6).

- Findings from the **Parenting 'Mixed' Children** study showed that 'mixed' couples use a variety of approaches to give their children a sense of belonging and identity which are not necessarily associated with particular racial or faith combinations (3, 4, 5).
- Approaches include: *Individual*: children's sense of belonging not rooted in their mixed background; *Mix*: all aspects of children's mixed background are emphasised; and *Single*: one aspect of children's mixed background is stressed (4, 5).
- Couples whose approaches differed are not necessarily in conflict. For some, divergent approaches are complementary. Others see difficulties between them as humanistic, political or personality choices (4, 5).
- Supportive or constraining resources and relationships for parents' ability to create a sense of belonging include neighbourhoods, schools, and grandparents. What is supportive for some can be a drawback for others, depending on context (3, 4, 5).

The above research findings have significant implications for helping mixed race families and associated support agencies to understand, address and resolve relationship and social ethnicity-related issues.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Goulbourne, H., Reynolds, T., Solomos, J. & Zontini, E. (2010), *Transnational Families: Ethnicities, identities and social capital*, Routledge, London.
2. Reynolds, T. (2011) "Birds of a Feather Stick Together"? Negotiating Community, Family and Intimate Relationships between 'Established' and 'Newcomer' Caribbean Migrants in Britain, *Community Work and Family*, 6 (4), 537-553.
3. Smith, D., Edwards, R. and Caballero, C. (2011), 'The residential patterns of mixed-ethnicity couples and families in England and Wales: 'hidden' and 'emerging' local geographies of contemporary society?' in *Environment and Planning A*, Vol 43, No. 5, pp1455-1476.
4. Edwards, R., Caballero, C. and Puthussery, S. (2010), 'Parenting Children from 'Mixed' Racial, Ethnic and Faith Backgrounds: Typifications of Difference and Belonging' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 33, No.6, pp 949-967.
5. Edwards, R and Caballero, C. (2008), What's in a name? An exploration of the significance of personal naming of 'mixed' children for parents from different racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds', *The Sociological Review*, 56:1, 39-60.
6. Reynolds, T., (2010), Transnational Family Networks, Cultural Belonging and Social Capital among Second-Generation British-Caribbean 'Returning' Migrants in Special Issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* on 'Young People, Social Capital and Ethnic Identity', 33 (5): 797-815
7. Bauer, E., Houlston, C., Coleman, L. and Edwards, R. (2012). An Academic And Voluntary Sector Collaboration to Facilitate Relationship Support for 'Mixed' Couples and Families: Project Report. Families & Social Capital Research Group Working Paper No. 31. Families & Social Capital Research Group: London South Bank University.
(<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/ahs/downloads/families/finalrep2007.pdf>.)

1. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In response to the ESRC directive for its funded research to be transformed into useful materials offering benefits in the wider world, LSBU approached and collaborated with OnePlusOne (www.oneplusone.org.uk), a leading voluntary agency concerned with personal and family relationships support. Through an ESRC-funded Follow-On project (PI: Prof Ros Edwards; Co-I: Dr Lester Coleman (OnePlusOne); £100k; September 2010 - December 2011) LSBU and OnePlusOne worked with three key voluntary organisations that support "mixed" couples and families: viz. People in Harmony (www.pih.org.uk), Intermix (www.intermix.org.uk) and Mix Together (www.mixtogether.org).

The Impact reported to the ESRC from the above follow-on project is available at (1).

The project adapted findings from the two linked research projects on “mixed” (racial, ethnic and faith) couples and family relationships into on-line support texts, video and e-learning resources, specifically for:

- individuals, ‘mixed’ couples and their families who wanted to strengthen their relationship (via OnePlusOne’s theCoupleConnection.net);
- voluntary agencies involved in counselling and supporting couples and families (via theCoupleConnection.net); and
- training for professionals who work with ‘mixed’ couples and their families (via OnePlusOne’s [e-Learning](#) training resource).

The resources were launched initially as a pilot during July/August 2011 and re-launched on theCoupleConnection.net web site in November 2011.

Resources from the project have been piloted through 60 front line practitioners, specifically aimed at helping parents deal with conflict in ways that minimise harm to children. The resources have become part of OnePlusOne’s e-learning training programme delivered to 4000 Children Centre professionals and workers nationally (1).

Independent consultants have confirmed the following impact (2):

- Awareness raised and established norms challenged: misperceptions of stereotypes of mixed couples have been contested, providing awareness of the diversity of such relationships (three conferences held (Edinburgh, Nov 2011; London Feb 2012; Cardiff Jul 2012), two seminars (London, Dec 2011; Jan 2012), plus review of the resources in eg The Runnymede Trust Bulletin (3)). The ESRC also used the project as an exemplar of Follow-On funding.
- Improved social welfare, equality and social inclusion: through the provision of new targeted resources for OnePlusOne which are more feature rich, widely distributed and collaborative with key higher education and other key partners (1).
- Reach of the resources and understanding: the resources have gone beyond just use by the immediate collaborators and beneficiaries, e.g. Sure Start and Health Start centres, midwives, GPs and the professional body, the Royal College of General Practitioners, have all made use of the resource materials.
- Frontline practitioners working with couples and families who undertake the OnePlusOne training programme have shown robust evidence of its effectiveness.

In summary, OnePlusOne stated that, in addition to reinforcing their approach of transforming research findings into useful resources, this Follow-On project with LSBU has also extended the scope of their services into new areas of couple and family relationships (2).

Other collaborators in the Follow-On project stated that:

- *“the existence of the materials makes me and my other 8 colleagues at Intermix 20% more efficient – that means the resources are doing the job we would have had to do and therefore we can see greater numbers of people and we are seeing better outcomes” (4).*
- *“as a result of using the materials on our site Intermix is seeing better outcomes and increased conflict resolution” (4).*
- *“the resources are just as useful for people that support mixed couples as mixed couples themselves” (5)*

Recognising the value and importance of its interactions with universities, Intermix has appointed an academic (Dr Caballero, LSBU) to the role of research director.

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The 'mixed' families' resources derived from the underpinning research were evaluated at the end of the project (2011) by the couples involved in the making of the resources, users ('mixed' couples), and academics and representatives from 'mixed' race organisations. Feedback via surveymonkey shows the 'mixed' couples resources to be useful, relevant to issues that 'mixed' couples and their families face and have encountered, and are helpful in understanding their situation better.

Email testimonials received by the research team about the resources include:

"I watched the videos you made with the couples and read some of the materials. I found the viewing material to be of great interest and was most fascinated to see that a lot of the opinions and feelings that the couples had regarding being in a mixed race relationship were very similar to the opinions held by myself and my husband".

"I did watch the video clips and read some of the responses. It helps a lot knowing that there are more people out there like me. I think that the videos and comments of couples are accurate on the stresses we face ... all in all I believe what you have done is an excellent job" (6).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-189-25-0115-A/outputs/Read/cd891108-60c4-4932-b9f6-dfa89a008deb>
2. Visit Report of Independent Consultants (The Innovation Partnership), 2013. Contact: Managing Director, The Innovation Partnership - relates to an interview with a Director of OnePlusOne.
3. Review of the resources in The Runnymede Trust Bulletin (www.runnymedetrust.org Issue 367, 2011).
4. Statement: Manager, *Intermix*.
5. Statement: Trustee, *People in Harmony*.
6. Confidential emails from users of the OnePlusOne resources. (can be provided by LSBU subject to confidentiality being preserved.)