Bringing the Mix-d: Experience to Leicester College

A Good Practice Guide to Meeting the Needs of Mixed Heritage Students in Further Education

By the Multiple Heritage Project
May 2010
The Research

Leicester College was successful in gaining funding from the LSC for a specific action research project to work with a group of mixed heritage young people on their issues, and to produce this good practice guidance, other resources and staff training. The College advertised for a consultancy to undertake the work and subsequently commissioned the Multiple Heritage Project (MHP) based in Manchester, as they had wide ranging national experience and a proven track record in this area. This is their report.

Background

Leicester College is a large further education college spread over three main campuses and over fifty outreach centres in Leicester. Forty-six per cent of the students on roll in 2009/10 are from minority ethnic backgrounds and this figure also reflects the diversity of Leicester City itself. For this academic year only 2.6% (556) of the students identified as being mixed-race or mixed heritage. The mixed heritage group is classified by statutory bodies for census purposes into four main categories: White/Black Caribbean, White/Asian, White/African and Any Other Mixed Background. The largest group in the UK and Leicester is White/Black Caribbean. There are also wide and varied experiences within and between each of these categories.

In the College last academic year, the overall success rates of mixed heritage students was 72%, 7% lower than the average for the College as a whole.

There is very little research into the educational experiences of mixed heritage students and what little exists tends to focus on compulsory education in schools. The most salient points are these:

- The mixed heritage group is the fastest ethnic minority group in the UK
- Performance data for these groups suggest White/Black Caribbean and White/Black African tend to perform below national averages whilst the attainment for the White/Asian group is above average.
- The differences in attainment cannot be justified by comparing relative levels of deprivation. Although the proportion of White/Black Caribbean and White/Black African pupils eligible for free school meals is around twice the national average and White/Asian pupils is closer to the national average, when differences in free school meal eligibility are controlled by comparing the performance of pupils not eligible for free school meals, White/Asian pupils still out-perform averages and White/Black Caribbean along with White/Black African groups still underachieve.
- White/Black Caribbean and White/Black African groups of pupils are disproportionately excluded from school and disproportionately feature on the Special Educational Needs register for Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties. There is also evidence that social exclusion continues into adulthood and that these same groups are disproportionately represented in the Criminal Justice System and are more likely to become service users of mental health organisations.

*Mix-d: (pronounced mixed) is the term we use throughout this document to describe mixed-race groups or individuals – people who identify as having a mixed heritage.*
In Leicester College, although around 3% of students are mixed race, they appear in higher proportions in some curriculum areas than others eg this year there are 6% in Media and Performing Arts and only 1% in ESOL. As in many educational establishments, Mixed Race students have lower success rates than the average (7% lower in 2008/9). However, the data shows other interesting patterns. For example, White and Black Caribbean students had a significantly higher achievement rates than the other mixed race groups (although they were still 4% lower than the College average) but their retention rate was particularly low (5% below the average).

In 2007/8 mixed race students were slightly over represented in disciplinaries, but this was not the case in 2008/9.

Who we are

The Multiple Heritage Project (MHP) was set up as a body in 2006 to engage in action research with public services, private bodies and third sector organisations. The aim of our work is to create a platform for mix-d: issues and place mix-d: people at the centre of any discussions about how to better meet the needs of this group. We are a group of consultants, educators, academics and mentors who work closely with professionals and young people to move discussions and debates about mix-d: issues forward.

Why we use the term “mix-d:”

We use the term mix-d: to describe people who identify as mixed race or mixed heritage for the following reason:

When we remove artificial additives (commonly known as E’s or E numbers) from food we are left with a fresh, healthy, artificial free product.

Similarly, by removing the letter ‘e’ from ‘mix-d:’ we are left with a fresh, healthy and artificial free ‘mix-d:’

For clarity:

1. Mix-d: is pronounced mixed - at all times.

2. We have taken out the letter ‘E’ and modified ‘mix-d:’ to symbolise the removal of artificial additives (in this case referring to past historical prejudices) and to make way for a fresh new dialogue.

3. The colon at the end of Mix-d: is used exactly the same way it would be used in any punctuation. It means: ‘from the general to the specific.’ The dictionary definition is: that a writer is separating two clauses of which the second expands or illustrates the first. We think of ‘Mix-d:’ as a tree trunk with a number of branches. The colon represents where the branches reach out from the trunk. For example, our franchise in ‘Mix-d: Nottingham’ looks at the specific dynamics of mixed-race experiences within that area which are different in many ways to Leicester, Birmingham, London,
etc. So the colon allows us to convey a message that mixed experiences around the UK are at the same time different and similar.

**Mix-d: is our stem and the branches are our work.**

We also recognise that mix-d: people are not a homogenous group. By its very nature this group is diverse, cutting across cultures, religions, regions, nationalities, histories and ethnicities. There is no such thing as a mix-d: community in the geographical sense. The ties of culture, tradition, history and religion do not bind the mix-d: population as a separate ethnic grouping. Quite the contrary - many of these things primarily bind mix-d: people to other ethnic groups.

**What we do**

In addition to leading seminars across the country and developing bespoke training for multi-agency professionals. Our mission is to remove the awkward silence surrounding the subject of mix-d: people. We provide training, organise youth conferences and develop educational resources with a focus on citizenship, participation and ethnicity. Our aims are:

- To remove the awkward silence surrounding the subject and resolve an unsettled political topic
- To encourage young people to engage constructively with their identities
- To equip professionals with the understanding, terminology and experience to interact confidently with the subject
- To develop carers/parents knowledge in all aspects of developing positive racial literacy for their child
- To share our expertise as widely as possibly through speaking, teaching, listening and developing material
- To return the discussion back to its owners.

**What we did at Leicester College**

- Distributed a questionnaire to all mix-d: students and a number of teaching staff in the College (see Appendices 2 and 3)
- Delivered workshops outlining key areas of research to teaching staff
- Organised 7 group sessions with mix-d: students and worked closely with a selfselected group of students to capture their thoughts on appropriate terminology, discussions about the curriculum and other issues they felt should be addressed around the subject
- Developed a student steering group in leading whole college participative sessions with students who did not identify as mix-d:
• Captured learning from all the work in a written report which includes recommendations
• Assisted students in documenting their findings using a range of media, including film

**What we found out**

At the outset of the Leicester College project, teaching staff were invited to an informal training session and asked the question: “What do you feel are the key issues affecting this group in school and wider society?” This exercise played a crucial role in allowing MHP to gain a broader understanding of staff perceptions. Whilst this list is not exhaustive nor presented in order of priority, it captures a sense of staff opinions (see Appendix 3 for full write up).

• Lack of representation relating to heritage, religion, etc
• Students being pigeon-holed
• Lack of community-based resources - lack of visibility
• Identity
• Little or less support
• Lack of belonging to any one group
• Culture and attitude negative towards education
• Not understood by general public
• Often people expect certain behaviour from certain ‘ethnic group’ - stereotyping
• Fitting in
• Lack of visibility as a group
• Peer pressure to conform to stereotypes
• Possible low self-esteem
• Treated differently
• Language barrier
• Difficult home lives
Mix-d: - a two pronged approach

The Multiple Heritage Project sees the mix-d: discussion as divided into two areas: the sociological and the psychological. The sociological component is the rare discussion that takes place at a government and institution level. Generally, this discussion focuses on the increasing presence of mixed-race individuals and what that means for society as a whole. Debates might raise questions like: Does a growing mix-d: group means that racism no longer exists or, that new forms of racism exist? How should we classify people who identify as mix-d: How do we even define what mix-d: is? If there is no such thing as race, should we identify a mix-d: group?

Needless to say, the sociological and psychological components are inextricably linked. The psychological component, or the way individuals think about their identities, is predominantly shaped by the lived experience of mix-d: people. It is defined by the coping mechanisms for navigating society and it is undeniably unique to each individual.

Commentators may debate whether mix-d: individuals should feel differently than their mono racial counterparts. The mix-d: group and individuals we work with across the country overwhelmingly state that differences exist. The coming together of the sociological and psychological aspects is further complicated by the role of parents/carers, family members and the education system.

By analyzing the sociological and psychological elements of being mix-d: FE settings can help provide mix-d: students with the tools to engage in a wider sociological discussion and these healthy debates will in turn improve the psychology, confidence and esteem of the mix-d: group. MHP through the Mix-d: concept, continues to work with government and educational professionals to provide them with the tools to engage with mix-d: individuals and enhance the psychological environment for them. This guidance looks at ways professionals can better support the discussion of mix-d identities in FE.

Mix-d: on the margins of FE

Mix-d: students are the focus for this good practice guide because the data shows that they increasingly occupy stereotypical positions in society and institutions, are a growing group and are rarely, if ever, acknowledged in educational research. The small amount of research that exists suggests that mix-d: people are often expected to choose one racial identity at the exclusion of another, or are seen as occupying a ‘confused’ middle space.

At the same time, mix-d: people are often heralded as the embodiments of a culturally diverse and post-racial society. As the numbers of mix-d: students entering FE increases, their absence from current race equality policies and invisibility within the curriculum are causing education practitioners to analyse more closely what is currently being offered to those who identify as mix-d:.

Although race is a social construct, the “politics” of race – and the part racism plays - is a regular and unavoidable feature of life for many and should not be confused with ethnicity which simply means belonging to a human group ie White British people also have an ethnicity.

Limited research in the area of mix-d: students suggests that there is a significant number of younger people in this group who are failing to have their needs met. Indications in this area
of work are that socio-economic factors, family structure, stereotyping and lack of appropriate terminology can hinder any positive moves forward.

There seems to be a dearth of policy in this area and low levels of awareness regarding this growing group. Some professionals appear reticent to address issues concerning race and ethnicity and still frequently struggle with appropriate terminology. It is time that targeted and focused research addressed the presence of this growing population.

Key Issues

Mix-d: images have recently gained more popularity - projected on posters selling Marks & Spencer bikinis or sofas for DFS. Mix-d: people have become the acceptable face of ethnic minorities for advertisers and programme makers. It would seem that Mix-d: people are sufficiently exotic for viewers and consumers to recognise as “other”, and therefore convenient shorthand for diversity without the potential alienation associated with using somebody too black, too white.

The 2001 national Census counted 680,000 mixed heritage people accounting for 1.2% of the overall population and nearly 15% of the ethnic minority population - that figure is widely believed to be an underestimate. However, the paradox is that mix-d: people are utterly absent from any public debate on race which affects public services also delivered to them. They still appear to be the elephant in the room: obvious to anybody living in a large British city, yet invisible at a government level. Before 2001, mix-d: people, since they were not counted, were invisible in public sector policy making. The most recent Census showed that more than 50% of mixed-race people are under 16, making mix-d: children the fastest growing ethnic minority group in Britain.

A report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills in 2004 found that mix-d: children were largely ignored in the school curriculum and by local authority policy makers. The report concluded: “Their invisibility from policy makes it difficult for their underachievement to be challenged.” (Tikly, 2004)*1 Furthermore, few publications have been dedicated to student social identity within the FE sector. The aforementioned report (focussed within secondary education) highlighted a lack of awareness about mix-d: issues among teaching staff and persistent negative stereotyping of the families mix-d: students came from. The lack of research in this area, the expanding numbers of mix-d: students in our current education system is further evidence for the need to investigate this subject in more detail.

The politics of race have marginalised mix-d: individuals in debates about public services, such as education. Within the diversity field there has been a consistency amongst practitioners to ignore mix-d: groups. Media discussions on mix-d: issues tend to be negative and unchallenged, and it would seem that mix-d: identities in FE are as hidden and politicised as they are in any other sector.

There is clearly considerable work to be done with public and private bodies on the issues affecting mix-d: groups. Initial research indicates that the following educational and sociological issues are significant for mix-d: groups:

- Persistent under-attainment
- Disproportionate exclusions
• Disproportionate representation on the Special Educational Needs register
• Disproportionate representation in Looked-After figures
• Socio-economic disadvantage
• Mix-d: experiences omitted from policy/guidelines/curriculum
• Debates around same-race placements in fostering/adoption
• Racist experiences
• Low expectations and stereotyping by mono-heritage people
• Professionals reluctance to discuss issues related to race/ethnicity eg ‘colour blind’ approach
• ‘Lone white mothers’ and access to a ‘black culture’
• Gender differentials in terms of achievement
• Lack of appropriate terminology
• Insistence from others that those mix-d: people are inevitably confused about their identity and so suffer low self-esteem
• Insistence from others that mix-d: people must identify themselves as ‘black’ (or other mono-heritage identities) in order to grow and survive.
Using the 3 ‘As’ Guidance model

In our opinion, good practice starts with three key drivers commonly known as the 3 ‘As’: Attitude, Awareness, and Action.

The following is a useful framework for thinking about the key issues relating to mix-d: students within an FE setting. We have discovered that good practice begins by addressing **Attitudes** which extends to building **Awareness** and is expressed through **Actions**.

1. **Attitudes to mix-d: issues**

Many of the negative associations with mix-d: have been inherited from past historical and problematic viewpoints that demonise the mix-d: group. The Multiple Heritage Project has worked with hundreds of young people across the country who maintain they are not confused about their identities, but they are constantly forced into other people’s boxes of how they should think and feel. The work of MHP is based on replacing uncertainty with confidence and tackling issues like appropriate terminology to empower young people and professionals on this subject.

2. **Awareness of mix-d: issues**

Mix-d: students will have a variety of different experiences. Some will be shared with others and some will have completely different experiences of being mix-d:. Basically, one size does not fit all. Having an awareness that mix-d: is not a homogenous group is a good starting point for professionals. How mix-d: students wish to identify is a deeply personal one related to their lived experience. Young people from all over the country inform the Multiple Heritage Project that they want to self-identify and not pigeon-holed to fit other people’s perceptions.

3. **Action on mix-d: issues**

Mixed-race students are largely absent within wall displays, taught and hidden curriculums and public policy. Whilst the language of race equality policy used within the FE sector makes reference to black and minority ethnic groups, there is no specific reference to any mix-d groups which effectively leaves these ‘communities’ invisible. When working on this issue we seek first to understand rather than be understood. In doing so, we ensure that we place mix-d: people at the centre of the mix-d: discussion. FE students are from a wider group than just White/Black Caribbean. Students from a variety of cultures and should feel represented, understood and supported in order for them to feel that included in college life.
Myths and mix-d: students

Many myths exist regarding mix-d: people, the consequences of which can be far-reaching and will inevitably impact the lives of students. The myths are:

The stereotype of the ‘Tragic Mulatto’ or ‘Marginal Person’
A firmly established belief is that mix-d: people are destined to have problematic and unbalanced characters because of their racial heritage. They are classed as people who will be rejected on face value by all ethnic groups and considered to be nearly white or nearly black, but not quite either. Much early writing on this subject has developed, contributed and reinforced the notion that mix-d: people will automatically have issues about their racial identity and thus mix-d: people are often labelled as marginal, confused or “mixed up”. Young people sometimes internalise negative external opinions of their identity and may at times perpetuate these myths. Therefore it is particularly important that professionals and policy makers challenge inappropriate racial labels and categories which limit the possibility of having a racial identity that encompasses elements of both parent cultures, without the exclusion of either parent group. Educators should not make assumptions and “recognise that interracial people are different from each ‘other’, just as all children are” (Wardle, 1989)*2.

Mix-d: people must identify with only one group
There is a common perception that individuals should choose to identify with only one racial group, and usually with the parent of colour, because society will always position them as politically ‘black’. This myth perpetuates the idea that mix-d: people have little choice but to adopt the culture of the parent of colour because society will ultimately view the child this way. This assumption is closely related to the outdated ‘one–drop rule’ whereby a person with any amount of black racial heritage would be identified as black. If a young person chooses to identity with one side of their parent heritage at different stages of their racial development this is their choice, and they should be encouraged to make an informed decision rather than an emotional, misinformed decision. In the past, mix-d: people have been subsumed under mono heritage identity model and refused the option to own a mixed identity. Too many assumptions are made about mix-d: people regarding how they should or should not identify and there can sometimes be pressure from families and peers. Additionally, the offspring of an interracial relationship might not resemble either parent. The racial identity of mixed race children is not often visible but they have a right to acknowledge and feel a part of their community of choice.

Mix-d: people do not like discussing their racial identity
Mix-d: people are rarely given an opportunity to discuss their racial backgrounds from their own perception. Their identity is often negated by assumptions and labels attached to them. If you are unsure about the racial heritage of a person – and you need to know - then ask them. Equally, to ask a person if they see themselves as black or white removes the possibility that they could have a fully cohesive and balanced sense of self which encompasses elements of both parent cultures.

Mix-d: people will have access to and understand both sides of their parent culture
Demographic studies show that the largest category of the ‘mix-d: community’ is White /Black Caribbean. It is also recorded that a significant number of mix-d: children are raised as the only child of colour within an extended white family and have little access to the culture and family of their parent of colour. In many instances, these children are socialised as ‘white’ within the home and treated as ‘black’ outside of the home when in reality they may have little first-hand experience
of a ‘black culture’. These mix-d: young people can find themselves the only child of colour within an extended family - a minority within a minority in their community - and the same within school. They are often separated from their parent of colour and have little access to both cultural heritages.

**Mix-d: people are automatically accepted by the community of colour**
The idea that mix-d: individuals will naturally be accepted by the community of colour is a rather simplistic view. This preconception fails to recognise that mix-d: young people will often experience racial discrimination from the different sides of their racial heritage.

**Mix-d people form part of a visible ethnic minority**
There is a common assumption that we will be able to identify a person’s racial heritage and in many cases this is true. However, there is growing population of mix-d: people whose racial heritage is not clearly recognisable. In many cases they are raised in extended families and often classified as white for racial monitoring purposes. Statistics also suggest that Any Other Mixed Background - one of the largest groups within the mixed heritage category are often ignored. This is the group with the least amount of information available about them.

**Terminology**

How a student sees themselves in college will have a huge impact on how they see themselves in society. Students need to feel as if they belong as if they are included, respected and recognised as part of a group. Many professionals still claim to take a colour-blind approach to issues relating to race. Some are afraid to use the wrong terms, or cause unintended offence, and so many professionals prefer to say nothing and avoid difficult situations rather than open themselves up to criticism. The terms which are used most often to describe mix-d people are: mixed heritage, multiple heritage, dual heritage and mixed race - ‘half caste’ is generally considered to be an unacceptable and derogatory term to use in today’s society.

**Multiple/Mixed Heritage** is commonly used within public services and is probably the most formal term. Whilst this is a popular term amongst professionals, it is often rejected by young people as not entirely reflecting the language they would use to describe their racial background.

**Dual Heritage** is also used in formal settings. However, the term ‘dual’ can be limiting with this subject as many students may identify with more than two cultural groups.

**Half-caste** is still used in certain parts of the UK - usually by older generations. It is generally considered to be derogatory in formal settings but may still used within certain families.

**Mixed race** commonly considered the most appropriate and contemporary term by young people to describe a person from a mix-d: background.
Recommendations

FE College Staff

• Use the preferred term of the mix-d: students themselves - in most cases this is mixed race or mix-d:. If you would like to know how they view themselves or which term they consider to be most appropriate - then ask them

• Recognise that arguments related to the mix-d: discussion are not just about ‘black and white’ issues ie that many mix-d: people hold loyalties to other ethnicities

• Remember to validate students' feelings and their processes in establishing their identities ie do not attempt to impose your ideas of how they should think and feel ie give mix-d: students permission to articulate their feelings if they want to. Create more ‘safe spaces’ to talk about this topic. (Students said that in college they had been ‘talked out of’ their experiences and been accused of drawing negative attention to themselves when engaging in discussion on this area)

FE College Management

• Create a language policy using the students as advisors. Re-visit this area for discussion so policy and appropriate terminology is constantly evolving with new students and staff – giving everyone involved the opportunity to ‘educate’ and develop a broader understanding of the subject. Ensure training for staff on mix-d identities is mandatory and offered on a regular basis.

• Audit the courses/curriculum on offer to ensure they challenge stereotypes and prejudice and take account of mix-d identities in a way that celebrates and raises the profile of the issues mentioned in this report

• Regularly analyse data by ethnicity to take account of different groups and take actions like the ones identified in this report to address issues of disproportionate attainment between different college populations. If necessary allocate responsibility to a member(s) of staff to tackle issues of equality and diversity across the college - making sure they account for any disparity in attainment (or other relevant data) concerning mix-d: groups. These person(s) should also support and challenge staff to be more reflective of mix-d identities in their subject areas

• Be more creative about recruitment procedures and consider where posts are advertised in a bid to attract more mix-d applicants to college positions

• Use the comments young people have made in this report and Appendix 1 to draw up a plan of action that will impact the levels of attainment and disciplinaries in a positive way for mix-d groups across the college


How we found our student group?

Leicester College recruited MHP to work on a short term project aimed at raising the success rates of mixed-race students in FE. A major part of the work was to increase awareness both within the College and in the FE sector generally, of the barriers and stereotypes that dual heritage students face and good practice in overcoming them.

To begin the process MHP invited a self selected group of dual heritage students to an informal induction meeting. A letter was sent out two weeks earlier to form tutors and mixed-race students across all 3 sites. The introductory letter asked students to take part in an action research project.

The initial response was very positive and due to time constraints we decided to proceed with entrants who attended the first meeting- other students came on-board later.

Students attended 5 semi-structured sessions throughout the life of the programme.

Session Breakdown

Session 1 - Introduction to programme and expectations

Session 2 - What are the key issues - student voice

Session 3 - Myths, experiences and learning

Session 4 - Student profiles and Legacy Ideas

Session 5 - Legacy Ideas - Video, Presentations and Report

Session 6 - Wrap up

The programme aimed to give group members an opportunity to talk about the things they rarely get an opportunity to talk about. Students created a video report in which they spoke to other students and asked them to explain their definition of mixed-race. They were also invited to complete a profile and share why they wanted to get involved with the project.
Students were invited to attend a group to discuss the issues and write a personal profile.

**Why I got involved in the project? Justin Lynch**

I got involved with this project to learn more about myself. To help others in my situation and find a level where they feel comfortable with themselves. I don’t know how I see myself. Most times I see myself as Black but never as white. So really I see myself as black... most times this happens to a mixed person because of a certain event that happens in their lives that made feel they need to choose one side rather than the other.

They made me feel that a wasn’t white enough to be white so I decided to become more black in my thinking and way of life.

Sometimes people in my situation don’t know where to see themselves so they connect to just one side, to feel a part of something. If I am in a room of mixed and black people, I feel very comfortable but if I am in a room with white people I feel very uncomfortable because I am different.

As a young father I feel I need to find a way to tell my daughter about her heritage and a way to feel comfortable about both backgrounds but not just one.

Through this project I want to show mixed race people that you don’t have to act white around white people and black around black people - just be yourself.

This project is showing me experience of learning to deal with both sides of me rather than just one...I can move on in my life and create a better future for myself.

A project like this should exist so that more people have the knowledge that being mixed is not one; it is both. And both sides are equal to the other.

What do you think you know about mixed people and how mixed people’s life styles are different dealing with two different cultures?

**Why I got involved in the project? Rachel James**

My name is Rachel James I am dual heritage my mum is black Caribbean and my dad is white British. When I was younger me and my brother attended a two half’s and one whole project for mixed raced children but that only concentrated on are black origin even at a young age me and my brother wanted to be a part of both are backgrounds not just one.

When we were asked to think of role models my brother said David Beckham but he was told to come up with black role models with wasn’t putting the name of the course two half’s one whole to justice. People called mixed race people different names for example mixed race or duel heritage and also a lot of the time people only think of black and white when people say mixed race and I admit I do the same as well but since doing the mix-d project it has made me realise there is more
to people’s backgrounds. I feel this project is important because it can have affect on the way people see mixed race people and realise we’re are own race and we can’t be classed as either black, white, Chinese, Indian etc.

**Why I got involved in the project? Dorrell Phillip-potter**

I am black British/Caribbean. My experience is I have family that live in England, yet I have family overseas that live in the West Indies. My parent’s backgrounds are from the Caribbean however my mum was born in England. I am perceived by others as a black male.

This type of project is important as it helps people know the importance of their heritage and background. Into depth this will then help the mixed heritage to understand the fully of the words they may used for mixed raced. The affect it will have on people once they have understood the meaning will help them to choose their words correctly when speaking, also to be able to inform others who may not understand the meaning.

**Why I got involved in the project? Jinnita Agbasi**

I class myself as being mixed race, this is because my mother is white British and my father is Black African. I have a son who is 18 months old and is also mixed race.

When I was younger I always used to think I was black but in a white persons body, but as I moved to different cities I gradually changed my opinion of myself and have begun to see myself for who I really am which is mixed race. In general I feel more comfortable around mixed race people as the majority of my friends are mixed. I also feel comfortable around black people but I still don’t understand what it is that makes me not as comfortable with white people as I do with everybody else. This could be due to the fact that when I was younger I was always being called white and I was constantly telling people that I wasn’t and this has given me a negative opinion on white people as they were trying to tell me that I was something that I know I am not.

I wanted to be part of this discussion because I like to understand other peoples views and life experiences on being mixed race. This is because most people class themselves as either black or white and forget that they are both. Listening to others opinions helps. I think that this discussion would have on- Black people: my family would most likely see this discussion as pointless as they do not see any issues with race and how people like to be identified. I think that if a black person sat in on a discussion it would open their eyes to what it is mix people think about how they see themselves and how they are accepted by others in society and at home.

White people: my mum would think that its another excuse to get together and talk about how black we think we are. As above Mixed-race people: I think that most mixed race people would be curious to what was being discussed because as a mixed race person in may or may not effect the way they see themselves or let others see them. I think that mixed race people would learn to accept themselves more as they are who they are and no matter what others think of their ethnicity they will always be accepted in this world.

I think that this project should continue as it makes people more aware of the issues surrounding
mixed race people. It gives mixed race people the chance to get together and talk about life experiences that they have been through. It also lets others realise that we are quite similar and that if we just sat down to share our opinions then they would realise that we all had the same issues.

This project has helped me to realise that there are other mixed people out there that have been through the same experiences as me. I have enjoyed this project as I now realise that mixed race culture is no longer the black sheep of the ethnicity family. There is people out there who listen to our opinions and are voices can be heard if we actually got together and accepted that we are who we are instead of trying to fit in with a particular race all the time.

(Profile were left un-edited)
Further Reading


Owen C (2005) Looking at Numbers and Projections: making sense of the census and


Tatum B D (1997) “Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” and other conversations about race. New York: Basic


The aim of the following exercise is for individuals and organisations to reflect on their current activities related to the mix-d concept. The activity personalises the action that needs to be taken in improving outcomes for mix-d young people by working through the matrix arriving all parties involved can arrive at a unique set of recommendations. It is important that parents, carers, children’s services and the young people themselves ask some difficult questions and have a discussion about the issues raised in this reflection exercise.

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<tr>
<th>Mix-d: Young People</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I make an effort to find out about mix-d icons of and their 'journeys' to individual success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to find out about mix-d icons who are famous for more than sports and entertainment.</td>
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<td>I take responsibility for my own learning.</td>
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<td>I can resist pressure from my peers to act like I don’t care about schoolwork.</td>
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<td>I can confidently challenge authority where appropriate without losing my temper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel good about being a person of mix-d:</td>
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<td>I know what qualifications I need to achieve my goals.</td>
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<td>I have a career plan and clear goals for my life.</td>
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<td>I am a good role model for other young people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FE College Staff</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>We are aware of the issues affecting mix-d young people in wider society</td>
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<td>We are aware of the range of mix-d identities in our college.</td>
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<td>We deal confidently with mix-d students by supporting them where necessary.</td>
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<td>We challenge mix-d pupils' inappropriate behaviour.</td>
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<td>We challenge pupils in a way that does not escalate into direct confrontation and/or exclusion.</td>
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<td>Mix-d pupils feel listened to and understood in our school.</td>
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<td>We feel confident in identifying racist incidents.</td>
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<td>Racist incidents are effectively dealt with.</td>
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<td>We discuss issues of race and identity when we analyse achievement data.</td>
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<td>We survey our pupils to monitor levels of satisfaction by ethnicity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We undergo training in issues specifically related to mix-d pupils and their achievements.</td>
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<td>Our Race Equality Policy gives clear guidance on appropriate terminology for mix-d pupils.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We use language and terminology to refer to mix-d people that is appropriate.</td>
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<td>Our curriculum positively reflects the lives and aspirations of mix-d pupils.</td>
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<td>Images used in college reflect the diversity of wider society.</td>
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<td>Our Learner Voice reflects the ethnic make-up of wider society.</td>
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<td>Mix-d: pupils are attaining levels on par with the national average (for all groups).</td>
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<td>(Recorded) disciplinary rates for mix-d: pupils are proportionate.</td>
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<td>Disciplinary rates for mix-d: pupils are monitored by 'reason' and analysed.</td>
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</table>
We are keen to seek the opinion of parents/carers of mix-d students on issues relating to students' time at College.

We create opportunities for parents/carers of mix-d young people to articulate their fears and expectations.

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<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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In Autumn 2009, questionnaires were posted to all students who had ticked a ‘Mixed’ box on their enrolment form, to try to inform the Mix-d: research project, and to invite them to be part of the steering group. 45 responses were received, and this is a summary of those responses.

1. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Responses to this question varied, with ‘mixed race’ being the most used term. Some used the more formal census categories of “Black and Asian”, Mixed White and Black Caribbean.” Three people said they were “Half Black (or Asian), Half White.” Others gave more detailed replies e.g. “Mum and Dad are English. Dad’s parents are Caribbean and Austrian.” “I am half Thai & half English. I was born in Thailand but moved to England when I was very young.” One used the term “Half-Caste”.

2. Do you think your teachers and other staff at the College have a good understanding of the issues for Multiple Heritage (mixed race) students (give any examples)?

The answers to this question were also very varied. Around 50% of students said staff had a good understanding e.g. “Yes, they want everyone to succeed”. “I feel that teachers at Leicester College treat me very well and equally to other students. I’ve never felt that with my teachers my mixed race has ever been an issue.”

Some students were unsure why the question was asked e.g. “I don’t understand why it should matter whether or not I am mixed race. Should teachers really single me out for ‘special treatment’ because of my heritage – No.”

However one student commented “No. I do hairdressing; they know nothing about my type of hair or any products I can use. They only know how to do ‘white’ hair” and several just answered “No” or “Not all of them.”

3. Have you covered anything in your curriculum or tutorials related to Multiple Heritage (mixed race) issues since you have been at the College?

The overwhelming majority of students replied “No” to this question. Two questioned why it would be necessary e.g. “I see no issues being mixed race. You have not defined any issues, so therefore no one has covered anything in tutorials related to mixed race issues.” “No, I don’t feel that my heritage has anything to do with me learning. It’s got nothing to do with Art at all.”
4. Would you like the College to have done anything else?

Several people answered “Yes” to this question, but 4 replied “No.” Ideas included “Yes, only so that other people in my class would understand more about other races. Some people are single minded and don’t know stuff about other races.” “We could talk and learn about other cultures. What people can be called racially or what is wrong to call people e.g. (half-caste).” “I would like to be able to do a Thai GCSE to improve my Thai writing, reading and speaking.”

5. Have your support needs been met in the College?

There was generally a positive response to this question e.g. “Yes 100%”! Others said they had no support needs, and one commented “I don’t feel that I have any support needs. I feel my multiple heritage has not effected me as a person, my intelligence or performance.”

6. Is there anyone who you feel can talk to about any issues that come up for you about ethnicity? If so, who?

Answers to this included tutors, a mentor, family, “a black tutor on my course” “friends, family, others who are mixed race too.” “Everyone is ethnic, and has their own race, so I can talk to anybody about mine.” However, three people said there was no one they could speak to, and one said “If I was going to talk to anyone it would not be a member of staff.”

7. Is there anything else you think the College should be doing to support its Multiple Heritage (mixed race) students?

A range of answers to this question included:
“Raise awareness of mixed students. More people need to be educated on this topic. People usually use the term half-caste to someone who is mixed race. That term should not be used when describing a mixed race person.”
“I feel mixed race students don’t require support. However, if students feel they have identity issues, with who they are, or where they belong, then that requires counsellors, supportive teachers and good parent/student communication.”
Appendix 3

Questionnaire for Staff on Meeting the Needs of Multiple Heritage (Mixed Race) Students

This questionnaire was completed voluntarily by staff who attended a training session on multiple heritage issues.

1. What attracted you to come on to the course today?
   - Previous work with mixed race/multiple heritage students – frustration of stereotypes (negative)
   - Also being multiple heritage / having multiple heritage children.
   - To help young people feel a sense of belonging to help me understand.
   - Personal interest.
   - To understand more about multiple heritage.
   - The importance and its relevance in the society.
   - I have mixed race children.
   - Enhance our knowledge. Ability to further help students.
   - CMQS recommendation.
   - To raise awareness in my department.

2. What do you understand by the terms multiple heritage or mixed race?
   - Of more than 1 cultural/racial background.
   - People with parents from different backgrounds.
   - Of more than one heritage or race.
   - People who come from different parents.
   - A person from different or mixed parent background.
   - Mother and father different ethnic origin.
· Parents of different ethnic backgrounds, heritage, numerous different cultures.

· Multiple backgrounds e.g. Mum African/Dad British. Different cultures at home.

· People with parents from different races.

3. Do you think multiple heritage students in the College have any particular needs, if so what do you think they might be?

· To have positive role models/positive understanding as most of them become identified as negative behaviour/expectations – achievement/retention.

· Supporting them to engage in learning and to be better understood.

· Education and knowledge of their heritage.

· Cultural background, their dietary requirement.

· Being cared for and supported.

· Being seen as individuals rather than a ‘group’.

· Need to be recognised as dual nationality.

· To feel “at home”, same as all.

· There are no staff to identify with.

4. Do you think there are any different outcomes for multiple heritage students in the College, compared to other students-if so what?

· Often low achievement/retention, behavioural issues.

· Yes – concerns over disciplinaries.

· Not about this, but as for learner they feel safe within their own group.

· Not sure

· Not in my area. College stats?
5. If you are a member of teaching staff, do you cover anything in your curriculum content or tutorials relating to Multiple Heritage (mixed race) issues? If so, can you give examples?

*Most people left this question blank or said “no”. *
- History of Rock & Pop – Blues/Hip Hop/Urban/World

6. If you are a member of support staff, do you do anything specific to meet the needs of this group of students currently?

- 1:1 during mentoring – offer young person to discuss background / acknowledge their culture/ background.
- Tried to encourage team to attending available awareness training, as this group of people come from different backgrounds may need more support.
- Try and be helpful as possible by making them feel comfortable to learn in this College.
- Provide resources, display on festivals, faiths etc. Black History collection. Diversity collection.

7. Have any multiple heritage students ever raised any issues with you about this area?

- Yes, often feel they get stereotyped and expectations of failing/ misbehaving/not achieving.
- Yes, in relation to security and their comments/reports about intimidating behaviour. When questioned what they mean by this – could only say they were looking at them.
- Not really because they know I understand the issues.

8. Is there anything else you think the College should be doing to support its multiple heritage students?

- Educate staff appropriately to move away from negative expectation.
- Probably lots – would like to get more involved.
- Same as above by trying making them comfortable and help them feeling settle here.
- Black history month – awareness.
- Use of across the board examples – not just White kids. Use of music on college website of different styles – Hip Hop/World/Blues etc.
- Encouraging success.