A qualitative exploration of the process of relationship formation between mother and child in interracial families

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Abstract

Objective: To identify whether racial differences between mother and child in interracial families produce a perceived lack of resemblance, and whether this affects the claiming and relationship formation processes.

Design: Data was collected through semi structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

Participants: Nine white European women, in an interracial relationship with at least one child under the age of four.

Results: Four themes were generated: 1) anticipated lack of resemblance 2) the reality of having a mixed-race baby 3) challenges faced by the family 4) creating a multifaceted identity.

Conclusions: The women anticipated a lack of resemblance between themselves and their baby. This could have served to affect the claiming and relationship formation processes. However, the women actively searched for similarities between themselves and their baby which aided the claiming process. This, in combination with other factors, helped the women begin to form a relationship with their baby.

Keywords: Interracial families, claiming, relationship formation, physical similarities, multifaceted identity
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Empirical Paper

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Introduction

The addition of a new member to the family system is considered a significant event, members of the system must adjust and adapt to how this changes their role and position within the system (Norris, Tindale and Arthur 1994; Cicirelli 1995). Relationships are considered essential in establishing and maintaining a well-functioning family system (Carter and McGoldrick 2005). Consequently, the process of forming a relationship between parent and child is considered one of the first and most important tasks for new parents (Carter and McGoldrick 2005).

As part of this transition, it is argued that new parents undergo a process of claiming, in which they identify the child as their own and acknowledge them as a member of the family system (Fahlberg 2012). Fahlberg (2012) argues that parents conduct an in-depth assessment of the ways in which the baby resembles each parent and their wider families of origin. Perceived physical similarities between the child and their families of origin are considered to aid the claiming process by enabling the parents to identify them as a member of the family and establish a relationship (Rubin 1984; Fahlberg 2012; Bunce and Rickards 2004). Therefore, a lack of perceived physical similarity between the baby and family could affect the claiming process (Fahlberg 2012; Rubin 1984; Bunce and Rickards 2004) which in turn could affect the parent’s ability to provide sensitive and responsive care. Accordingly, it has also been argued that claiming is associated with attachment (Rubin 1984).

Attachment refers to the quality and function of the reciprocal relationship between parent and child (Thompson 2008a). Bowlby saw the primary function of attachment as providing a sense of safety, security and therefore survival for the baby. When this is threatened the baby’s attachment system is activated. Bowlby describes attachment as relational and reciprocal. In normative attachment the baby and the attachment figure are motivated to
maintain proximity to each other. Distress is experienced when separation occurs. During separation, the attachment system is activated and, in normative attachment, the infant exhibits proximity-maintaining behaviour such as crying in a bid to end the separation (Bowlby 1969).

Ideally the attachment figure becomes a secure base, from which the baby explores the world, interacts, and establishes relationships with others. Children develop internal representations and working models of relationships based upon their experience of their primary attachment relationships (Thompson 2008b). These are associated with the development of our sense of self (Sroufe 1988) and relationships with others (Smith, Cowie, and Blades 2015).

Furthermore, our attachment experience is believed to contribute to the development of emotional resilience (Crittenden 1990; Main, Kaplan and Cassidy 1985; Howe 1995). Attachment experiences therefore affect socio emotional functioning and mental health across the life span (Thompson 2008a).

The factors associated with creating a secure attachment are numerous and complex (Thompson 2008a). However, maternal sensitivity and care that is responsive to the needs of the baby has consistently been identified as one of the most influential factors (Bowlby 1969; Crittenden and Ainsworth 1989; Wolff and van Ijzendoorn 1997). In contrast, to the vast literature on attachment there is relatively little literature on claiming. However, claiming is deemed a relevant concept in fostering and adoption, and children with visible difference and disability. Research has shown that the presence of foetal anomaly, disability or disfigurement can serve to disrupt the claiming and relationship formation process (McKechnie, Pridham and Tluczeck 2015; Ashton and Ashton 2000). Barden et al. (1989) suggested that the presence of facial disfigurement may affect the parents’ ability to respond sensitively to their babies needs as the disfigurement may affect the baby’s ability to express
their needs or to engage in proximity seeking behaviours such as smiling (Walters 1997). Moreover, disability and disfigurement may reduce the level of perceived physical similarity between parent and child, which may disrupt the claiming process (Rubin 1984; Fahlberg 2012). Sandelwoski, Harris and Holditch-Davis (1993) and Timm, Mooradin and Hock (2011) found that adoptive parents actively sought out similarities in terms of temperament and physical appearance between themselves, their partner and their adoptive child despite knowing that this was not biologically determined. Furthermore, Sandelwoski, Harris and Holditch-Davis (1993) found that this actively aided the claiming process.

Attachment therefore refers to the quality and function of the reciprocal dynamic between parent and child. In contrast, claiming refers to the process of identification by parent of child. These two constructs, have been conceptualised as discrete. However, they are clearly related and as argued by Rubin (1984) difficulties with claiming could affect attachment by impairing the parent’s ability to provide sensitive and responsive care. Furthermore, strategies employed by foster and adoptive families to promote claiming have been shown not only to contribute to claiming but also to the development of secure attachments (Kottman 1997; Frey et al. 2008; Schofield 2002; Sandelwoski, Harris and Holditch-Davis 1993). It is therefore possible that racial differences between mother and child in interracial families may lead to a perceived lack of physical similarities between mother and child which in turn could disrupt the claiming process. This is the focus of the present study.

To date no research has examined the impact of racial differences on the claiming process. However, two studies have highlighted concerns mothers of mixed race children have about the potential impact of racial differences on their relationship with their child (Banks 1996; Twine 1999a). Women interviewed by Twine (1999a) expressed concerns about their ability to support their children to manage issues related to race, and that their inability
sufficiently support them with these matters may result in their children rejecting them. Furthermore, women who consented to having their therapy sessions recorded by Banks (1996) also reported fears that the relationship will become disrupted if their child identifies as black. The women reported that they would interpret this as an act of rejection of them and their ‘whiteness’. In both studies the women’s concerns did not seem to be specifically associated with differences in appearance between mother and child that could be attributed to racial difference, but rather what racial identity and difference might mean for their relationship and their ability to manage the challenges faced by their child as a product of their race.

Research has demonstrated that interracial families experience unique challenges and needs (Twine 1999a; Banks 1996; Morley and Street 2014; Wilt 2011). This includes experiences of prejudice, discrimination and racism (Harman 2010, 2013; Twine, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; McKenzie 2013; Morrison 1995; Banks 1996; Lester Murad 2005; Tyler 2005). Research has also identified that mothers of mixed race children adopt a range of strategies to overcome these challenges. Twine (2004) developed the term ‘racism-cognizant’ to describe approaches used by parents to prepare their children to manage racism. The approaches include: equipping their children with analytical skills to analyse the role of race in society; and increasing access to black children, adults and culture (Twine 2004; Harman 2010).

Research has also documented challenges associated with racial identity development for mixed race children (Jones 2000). Cauce et al. (1992) argued that mixed race children have multiple racial groups with which they could identify. However, they also face being rejected by multiple racial and ethnic groups and therefore are at an increased risk of isolation. Several factors affect the racial, ethnic and social group mixed race children chose to identify with, and the groups that offer friendship and a sense of belonging to them (Sebring 1984;
Phoenix and Tizard (2005) found that young people that were described by others as ‘looking white’ did not identify themselves as ‘black’. Skin tone has been shown to influence which parent and/or siblings the young people identifies with (Jones 2000). Jones (2000) reported that mixed race young people with darker skin tones felt forced to identity with their parent from a minority group as they did not feel able to legitimately pass as a member of the majority group. It is possible that in this scenario the parents identifying as belonging to a majority group may have experienced feelings of rejection, as the women reported in their therapy sessions with Banks (1996).

Interracial families therefore experience unique challenges including managing experiences of racism and the development of a racial identity (Byrd, Garwick and Williams 2006; Lawton, Foeman and Brown 2013). Women have reported specific concerns that these challenges could affect their relationship with their child (Twine 1999a; Banks 1996). Moreover, appearance, specifically skin tone and the degree to which their skin tone resembles the majority/minority, has been shown to affect the relationships mixed race adolescents form and how they define their racial identity. Given this, is it possible that the perceived physical difference of mixed race children, could adversely affect the claiming process of their mother, and consequently the relationship between parent and child? To the best of the researcher’s knowledge no research has explored the possible impact of racial difference, including perceived differences in appearance, between mother and child on the initial process of forming a relationship.

The decision to focus on mothers is because this has been the growing focus of research with interracial families. It is hoped that the current study will contribute to the understanding of the experiences, needs and challenges faced by mothers of mixed race children. However,
this does not mean there is not a real need to capture the voices of fathers and other members of the wider family and support networks.

Aims:

- To explore women’s experiences of forming a relationship with their mixed-race baby, including identifying the factors associated with this process.
- To identify the level of perceived similarity/difference between mother and child and where there is perceived difference to explore the meaning and impact of the difference for the mother, and in particular whether this affected their ability to ‘claim’ and form a relationship with their baby.

Research Question:

To explore whether racial differences, between mother and child, affect the claiming and relationship formation processes

The present study is framed within the theoretical perspective of claiming. However, as it is a qualitative study it uses the word ‘relationship’ when describing the experiences of the women as this is the word that made more sense to the women in the study and reflected the terms they used.

Method

Design

The study employed a qualitative design using inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006). Data was collected through semi structured interviews. The analytical approach and data collection methods reflect the epistemological position of the researcher, of social constructionism. It is believed that there is no universal truth but rather that language and our interpretation of language is created in a relational context, influenced by many factors (Burr
Consequently, the researcher did not seek to find out ‘the truth’ about mothers’ experiences of forming a relationship with their mixed race child, but rather to bear witness to their stories and acknowledge that the language that was used by mothers and the meaning attributed to this by the researcher and others is influenced by several factors, including aspects of the researcher (Blaikie 2007). Therefore, attention was paid to the language used by the women to refer to their experiences of forming a relationship. The language used was explored to ensure the researcher developed an informed understanding of each participant’s experience.

**Participants**

**Recruitment Strategy**

Participants were recruited via:

- posters at children’s/community centres across Croydon and West Sussex and on campus at the university of Surrey (Appendix A)

- the researcher’s social media account (Appendix B)

Snowball sampling was also used as participants introduced the researcher to additional participants.

**Inclusion Criteria**

In an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular group of similar people (Cohen and Crabtree 2006) the initial inclusion criteria was: white women currently in a relationship with a man of black Caribbean heritage with whom they have had their first child and whose child is between the ages of 6 months and 4 years of age.
However, due to initial difficulties with recruitment the inclusion criteria was widened to include women of any racial background in interracial relationships with men from any racial background and who had one or more child. If the participant had more than one child during the interview they were asked, as much as possible, to reflect on their experiences of forming a relationship with their first child.

The preference for first time mothers who are still in a relationship with the father of the child is because research suggests that parental separation and birth order can affect the process of relationship formation (Woodward, Ferguson and Belsky 2000; Van Ijzendoorn et al. 2006).

**Participant information**

Nine participants were recruited through: posters at university (n= 3); social media (n= 3), posters at children’s/community centres (n= 1); and snowballing (n=2). Seven of the interviews were conducted face to face and two over the phone. Three of the participants were already known to the researcher and approached the researcher to volunteer to take part via social media. One woman was recruited, but then later removed from the study as she identified as mixed-race and the other nine women identified as white European.

**Participant demographics**

All participants identified as white European women aged between 20 and 40 years of age living in the South East of England. All participants were employed and had been educated to a minimum of degree level.

**Procedure**

Once a potential participant contacted the researcher they were sent an information sheet (Appendix C) and a consent form (Appendix D). Then, if after further discussion they were still happy to take part they were offered a face to face (university of surrey/in their own
home) or telephone interview. Interviews were conducted during Spring-Summer of 2017, and were audio recorded to enable transcription.

In the interview it was confirmed that the information sheet had been read and understood, and informed consent was obtained. Within a semi structured interview schedule (Appendix E) an embedded vignette (Mandy’s story) was used to introduce and normalise the experience of struggling to identify resemblance between yourself and your baby, in the hope that this would make people feel more comfortable to talk about this topic if it was of relevance to them (Finch, 1987). The interview schedule and vignette were created collaboratively in consultation with a social worker, health visitor and mother of mixed race children. The schedule started with some introductory questions about themselves and their family. The vignette was then introduced. Mandy’s story provides information about her experience of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood. It concludes by describing how Mandy is struck that her daughter Amelia looks more like her husband than her and how she wishes she looked more like her. The vignette included a wide range of information about motherhood to disguise an exclusive focus on Mandy’s experience of feeling as though her daughter resembles her husband more than herself.

Participants were invited to comment on this as they read it, focusing on aspects of the vignette they could relate to and those they could not. The interview schedule also included a list of additional prompt questions for the researcher to ask if the topics had not already been covered through the discussion. For example: What has your experience of building a relationship with (baby’s name) been like for you? What has affected this process?

The semi structured nature of the interviews allowed flexibility in the order and nature of topics discussed, ensuring that topics pertinent to the research question and those of importance to the participant were discussed. At the end of the interview, the researcher
asked the participant how they were feeling and whether anything we had discussed was likely to play on their mind or upset them. This was discussed with each participant to ensure they were not distressed. The researcher had information about charities that support interracial families to provide the women with if it was deemed they could benefit from further discussion about any of the topics that arose during the interview. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by an official transcription company and an assistant psychologist known to the researcher. All transcribers completed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix F).

**Ethical Considerations**

The study received favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences ethics committee (Appendix G). See Appendix H for ethical considerations for the study.

**Analytical Strategy**

Inductive thematic analysis was employed following the Braun and Clark (2006) process. The following steps were taken: familiarisation with the data by repeatedly and simultaneously listening to recordings and reading the transcripts; highlighting all data related to research question; producing codes to summarise items of interest; grouping codes together manually; re-examining codes to identify themes; re-reading data to check coherence and consistency of themes; and defining and naming themes.

See Appendix I for a worked example of the analysis process and Appendix J for further detail of the analysis process.

**Credibility**
Whilst all data was collected and analysed by a single researcher several credibility checks were put in place. The coding process, final codes and themes were shared and checked with the research supervisor and peers conducting qualitative research. A reflective log (Appendix K) completed by the researcher, and reflective discussions within supervision helped the researcher identify any assumptions they held and the possible impact of these throughout all stages of the research process. Please see reflective statement for further information on the researcher’s reflectivity and reflexivity (Appendix L).

The use of pseudonyms

Pseudonyms are used for the mother’s names to preserve anonymity. The husband and babies’ names are replaced with (husband’s name) or (baby/child’s name) to avoid any assumptions about the cultural significance of their names and attempts to find comparable pseudonyms.

Results

The women provided in depth accounts of the process of forming a relationship with their baby which started before the birth and continued through the child’s early years. Analysis created four themes: 1) anticipating a lack of resemblance 2) the reality of having a mixed-race baby 3) challenges faced by the family 4) creating a multifaceted identity. Figure 1 shows the four main themes and the subthemes subsumed by each main theme. Quotes are used to illustrate each theme, see Appendix M for additional quotes that further support each theme.

Prior to the birth, the women described hopes, fears and expectations about what their baby would look like and the extent to which their baby would resemble themselves and their partner. Once the baby had arrived, these experiences appeared to drive an active process of searching and finding a degree of resemblance between themselves and their baby which
helped them to start to form a relationship. The women described this process of forming a relationship as an ongoing process and identified challenges they experienced as an interracial family either presently or that they believed they would face in the future. In response they employed a range of strategies to facilitate the development of a multifaceted identity for the family to protect against the challenges they faced.

Much of what the women described did not appear to specifically relate to becoming a parent of a mixed-race child and was of relevance to all families. Only information that appears to relate specifically to their experiences of becoming a mother to a mixed race child will be presented.
Figure 1. Final Thematic Map

1. Anticipating a lack of resemblance

| A belief that their baby is more likely to resemble the father |
| The anticipated impact of a lack of resemblance |
| Developing preferences regarding their baby’s appearance |

2. The reality of having a mixed race baby

| Actively searching and finding resemblance |
| Forming a relationship |

3. Challenges faced by the family

| An awareness of difference |
| Noticing a focus on the child’s appearance |
| Experiences of prejudice |
| Defining their child’s ethnicity |
| Family expectations about cultural practices |

4. Creating a multifaceted family identity

| Celebrating difference and appreciating diversity |
| Creating a multifaceted identity - acknowledging the role of race and ethnicity in their identity but also emphasizing other aspects in addition to their race, ethnicity and appearance |
| Negotiating cultural differences – creating a hybrid approach |

Theme 1: Anticipating a lack of resemblance

The first theme captures the fears and concerns the women experienced in the lead up to becoming a mother. Most of the women described a belief that their baby was more likely to resemble their partner, which produced feelings of sadness and concern. Including concern that this may affect the process of forming a relationship and concern that people would not immediately identify them as the mother. As a result, the women hoped that their child would possess a mixture of characteristics from both parents, so that both mother and father could see a resemblance and be easily identified as the baby’s parent.

i) A belief that their baby is more likely to resemble the father
Most of the women spoke about a belief that their baby was more likely to resemble the father than themselves. For example, Emma who had a one-year old daughter, and was pregnant with her second child, with her husband who she identified as Asian stated that she expected her daughter to look more like her husband:

“I thought about that before I had her, cos I said to (husband’s name), I was like, oh she’s always gonna look more like you” (Emma)

For some of the women this belief was held or generated by the father, for example Kelly who had a one-year old son with her husband of Ghanaian heritage relayed a conversation she had with her husband, who believed that their child would not resemble Kelly:

“I remember (husband’s name), my husband, saying to me when I was pregnant are you sure you’re going to be okay? And I was like with what? And he goes the fact that your child won’t look like you” (Kelly)

The belief that the child was more likely to look like the father than the mother was driven by several factors. A factor considered to be unique to interracial families is a belief expressed by two of the three women, who described their partner’s ethnicity as Asian, that their partners genes would be more dominant.

“I always thought like because he, erm, he was Asian like, his you know genes would be stronger or whatever” (Emma)

ii) The anticipated impact of a lack of resemblance

The belief that their baby would look more like the father often generated a concern by the women that people may not immediately identify them as the mother. Phoebe described how if her daughter had been ‘really dark’ skinned this may prompt people to question whether she is the mother:
“I guess if she’d been really dark, it would have been a bit weird, you know I don’t know I’d be like, she, do people think she’s mine or not” (Phoebe)

The widespread belief that their baby was much more likely to resemble the father than themselves left the women with feelings of sadness. Emma spoke about feelings of sadness and a sense of loss and that she would be missing out on a process of others identifying her child as ‘a mini version of you’:

“it made me sad, cos I, before she was born, erm, cos like I say, people say ooh it’s like a mini version of you I thought like I want to be with her and everything, and I wouldn’t get that like, oh she’s got your eyes, she’s got your erm, so that did make me quite sad” (Emma)

The women appeared to be concerned about the impact this could have, for example Helen spoke about not feeling attached to her baby during pregnancy and fears about forming a relationship with her baby once they were born. Helen attributed the lack of ‘attachment’ during pregnancy to being busy and not identifying herself as ‘maternal’. However, she stated that the image she had formed of her baby and the expectation that she would not look like her was contributing to the fears she had about experiencing difficulties forming a relationship once her baby was born:

“I was so worried about it and I think I was more worried than I probably let on... having a really formed image that she wasn’t going to look like me particularly”

(Helen)

Furthermore, Rachel recognised that she would not be as concerned about this if her relationship was monoracial:
“if I was having baby with a like, a white person I don’t think you'd worry so much cos you'd there wouldn’t be, be so much like possible variation, like it would just kind of look, in the middle of you both I guess” (Rachel)

### iii) Developing preferences regarding their baby’s appearance

Some of the women expressed a desire for their child to possess characteristics which could be obviously attributed to them, and therefore allow others to identify her as mother. For example, Helen expressed a desire for her daughter to have her eyes:

“I remember saying, ah it would be really nice if she had my colour eyes, obviously (husband’s name) got brown eyes, I’ve got grey bluey eyes, erm, she doesn’t…and I guess I thought that would be quite an obvious characteristic that’s of mine” (Helen)

Despite the women expressing a desire for the child to resemble them, and for people to be able to identify them as the mother, they also wished for the child to resemble the father. The women acknowledged that it was also important for the father to identify similarities between themselves and their child, and for others to be able to identify them as the father of the child. This is highlighted by comments made by Kelly, she reported comments made by her husband expressing concerns that if their son is ‘too fair’ he won’t be easily identified as his son’s father:

“I think it bothers (husbands name) quite a bit more…he said…because (husband’s name) dark, that he’s quite dark, it’s kinda like he won’t look like my son if he’s too fair” (Kelly)

Laura described how she wanted her daughter to resemble both herself and her husband and acknowledged that having children that resembled their father was particularly important for
her husband as he was adopted and grew up in a family in which he did not resemble his adoptive parents:

“I wanted them to have a mix of our features...but I suppose I'm also affected by (husband’s name) being adopted...I think it's terribly important to him that his children do look like him for the first time in his life, erm, and so that something, I was really mindful of, I didn’t want them coming out and looking like, just completely like me” (Laura)

However, this was not the case for all the women. Stacey and Kelly spoke about a preference for their child to resemble their partner. For Stacey who had a six-month-old daughter with her husband, who prefers not to define his ethnicity, spoke about how she actively wanted her child to resemble her husband as she finds aspects of his appearance or characteristics associated with his heritage desirable:

“To be honest I really wanna’d her to look like (husband’s name) and I really wanted her to have like, skin tone and the hair and I was like, I say I'm gutted she hasn’t got an afro, but I'm only messing” (Stacey)

Kelly stated that she believed her preference was due to negative feelings she had about her own appearance:

“I’m like god I don’t want him to look like me. I want him to you know, if he looks like me, he won’t be as good looking I guess” (Kelly)

Maria spoke about how her and her husband actively tried to not form any expectations about their sons’ appearance as they recognised that if he did not meet these expectations they would feel disappointed:
“I don't think we had any kind of like expectation... We were just kind of like guessing... you want him to be some way that you think is right and then he's not that way... then you kind of crash there a bit” (Maria)

**Theme 2: The reality of having a mixed race baby**

Theme two captures the women’s experiences of becoming a parent and the tasks associated with this. These include seeking out and finding similarities between themselves and their baby, and their partner and their baby. This process appears to be undertaken in response to the fears the women had about a lack of resemblance between themselves and their baby and people identifying them as the mother. This appeared to enable the parents to identify the child as their own and generate feelings of ownership and belonging. Furthermore, the process of searching and finding similarities appeared to be part of a wider process of forming a relationship with their baby. The women identified numerous factors that aided this process, some of which appeared to apply to all families. However, some of the women spoke about actively trying to form a relationship and how the process was different and took longer than they expected which could be related to fears they had about forming a relationship or a lack of resemblance to them when the baby was first born.

**i) Actively searching and finding resemblance**

Because of the concerns the women had regarding the extent to which their child would resemble them, they described undergoing a process of actively assessing the extent of resemblance between themselves and their baby and between their baby and their partner to identify whether their expectations were correct.

Some of the women struggled to identify any resemblance to themselves initially. Laura describes an expectation she had that when her daughter was born she would recognise her, be able to identify a resemblance and have a sense that she belonged in the family:
“I remember when (baby’s name) was born, she didn’t look like she belonged in my family, I didn’t recognise her as the someone, I thought that my baby would come out and I would think, I know and I love you and I didn’t feel that…I thought I was going to recognise her, it was weird, I was going to see something in her that was like me I suppose, but I didn’t (Laura)

Over time all the women found similarities between themselves and their baby. The women reflected on how identifying similarities between themselves and their baby increased the likelihood of being identified as their mother. Stacey stated that she believes that certain aspects of her daughter’s appearance help to identify her as the mother:

“yeah I did think people will look at us sometimes and be like, well she quite clearly has not got my features but, I think, I think it is obvious she is mine sometimes because of the way she looks not just certain features about her but yeah” (Stacey)

However, for Sarah whilst she was able to identify similarities between herself and her child in time, she remained concerned that people would not identify her as her baby’s mother. She spoke about the lengths she went to in order to show them she was her baby’s mother:

“I suppose I must of been worried about it enough to point it out to people…and I used to breastfeed quite a lot as well, and obviously if you’re in a new baby group and you’re, the baby that doesn’t really look like you very much, and you’re actually sat there breastfeeding it kind of gets away anyone thinking that you know, that you've got a different relationship, rather than the mother to that child as well, and I do remember a few times, like I consciously did it” (Sarah)

ii) Forming a relationship
The women described their experiences of forming a relationship with their children thus far. For some of the women this had felt like a natural process, that had begun during pregnancy. For others it was something that required effort; took longer; and differed from their expectations. Sarah spoke about how she made an active and conscious effort to ‘bond’ with her baby:

“I was very very conscious, to, to create that bond with her... I suppose there were particular things that we chose to do specifically to make sure that we bonded with (baby’s name) erm, and, I, it made my mum quite cross actually because, when we got home, I remember saying to my family and to (husband’s name) family, we want a week basically, we want a week at home, just us, we don’t want, anybody round, basically and we did say to everyone, well you know you can’t come round I’m afraid, so we’re gonna bond” (Sarah)

Laura describes how the process of forming a relationship differed from and took longer than she had expected, which may be a product of the feelings she described above:

“I thought my baby would come out and I would think, I know you and I love you... both (husbands name) and I have talked about, it was interesting that we didn’t have this, oh my god, I love this child the instant we saw it, he did too, he said we both needed a few days just to kind of, come to terms with what I happened I suppose and then thought wow this child is amazing” (Laura)

The process of searching and finding resemblance appeared to facilitate the process of forming a relationship with their child. The women spoke about how searching and finding resemblance, in combination with others being able to identify both themselves and their partner as the parents of their baby appeared to result in feelings of ownership and a sense of
belonging. This is highlighted by the use of the term ‘mine’ when referring to their child. In addition, Stacey said:

“I feel that, that’s why we've always had a strong bond because I was like, I've made this, and its perfect, and even if she had something, that made her need extra help, she'd still be perfect cos I made it. R: Yep, so there’s that yeah, that real sense of achievement {} (S: Yeah) and kind of, almost ownership, {} (S: there is yeah) R: Ok. S: Yeah there is ownership yer” (Stacey) R: Researcher S: Stacey

**Theme 3: Challenges faced by the family**

In theme three the women identified challenges they face as a family which could serve to affect the relationships within the family. This includes an awareness of difference, and a consideration of the impact of their child feeling ‘different’. The women reported a sense that people tend to focus on their child’s appearance, particularly those which set them aside from their mono racial peers. Furthermore, they described examples of prejudice experienced by themselves or their partner and concerns that their child will experience prejudice in the future. The women reported being faced with a dilemma regarding how to define their child’s race and ethnicity and the meaning of this. Some of the women also reported experiencing pressure from their wider families to adopt certain cultural practices.

**i) An awareness of difference**

The women spoke about an awareness of difference. This included an awareness that their child was different to their monoracial peers and different to the norm. Emma described noticing how different her child was to the other babies in a baby massage group:

“we did this baby massage one once all in their nappies, laying around in a circle and it kind of struck me like, how different she looked to all the other babies cos she was born with
like, huge hair, huge dark hair, and I mean they were all like full white babies, and then, it only struck me then like, how different she looked from them” (Emma)

Some of the women also spoke about their child being aware of the difference in skin tone between themselves and their mother.

“she made some comment about her skin being different to mine, and I sort of felt I needed to do this whole big explanation, and this, and she must have only been like eighteen months or something, and I remember, going, oh I really need to explain it, and she was just like, oh that’s just it for me, you know, and she wasn’t looking at it, attaching any kind of emotion to it or any sort of label, or any sort of positive, negative or erm, or anything like that, so she was just noticing that things were different” (Sarah)

ii) Noticing a focus on the child’s appearance

The women reported a sense that other people tended to focus on the appearance of their child, particularly those that set them aside from their peers. For example, Kelly described receiving a lot of comments about her son’s skin tone:

“we get a lot of comments about that like ever since he was born. He’s very fair isn’t he, Oh he’s very pale. Oh he’s very fair. I can’t believe how pale he is. And that bugs me, and I don’t know why it bugs me but it’s like, so I don’t know if it’s like I would want him to be a bit darker because it’s, it would I don’t know, show more that he is mixed race? Um or if it’s just the people saying it and I’m like, why does it matter?” (Kelly)

iii) Experiences of prejudice
The women reported experiencing prejudice in a range of forms, including assumptions and racist comments. For example, Stacey reported feeling angry about assumptions people make about her husband’s place of birth:

“one of the biggest things that bugs me and they've said it to (husband’s name) face as well and this is what really, really irritates me... they look at the baby, they look at me and they look at (husband’s name) and then they go to (husband’s name) so where are you from and I, it, he’s from (name of town in Northern England) for god sake and that annoys me, because it’s like, how dare you look at him and assume he is anything other than English because he’s not white” (Stacey)

This coupled with an awareness that their child was ‘different’ appeared to result in concerns about the future and whether their children would experience prejudice. Emma reported feeling concerned that people might make assumptions about her daughter and her husband based on their appearance and associate them with a community they may or may not identify with:

“it does worry me sometimes like I know it’s all been in the news at the moment, like these terrorists attacks and things and then people just turn on certain communities and I think oh god, you know, like if they were like out together...I would hate for anyone to kind of like see her like that” (Emma)

It appeared that these concerns could be understood in the context of instances of racism either they or their partner had experienced.

iv) Defining their child’s ethnicity

These concerns appeared to present a dilemma for the women in terms of how to define their child’s ethnicity and the meaning this may carry. Phoebe spoke about how her husband refers
to their daughter as black and how she prefers the term mixed race as this acknowledges both aspects of her heritage:

“he says like you know, she’s black, and I'm like she’s not black she is mixed race...it is kind of weird that for society, if there’s any black in somebody it sees them like they’re black yeah I said, yeah I couldn’t say she’s white and I wouldn’t you know, cos and I said, if she’s black where who am I then, where am I in this, you know

(Phoebe)

Rachel spoke about how their decision to identify their son as white British was influenced by his skin tone:

“So we, I think in the end, we did tick white British, cos he looks, that’s what he looks like, but we were, yeah, we weren’t, sure, we did actually question that didn’t we”

(Rachel)

v) Family expectations about cultural practices

Sarah and Maria identified a challenge in the form of expectations from family members that they would adhere to certain cultural practices. Maria described differences between her family and her husband’s family regarding the point at which you chose a name for your child:

“when they-- when-- in his tribe when they're born seven days they don't, um-- oh, this is a good one actually, that we-- we did have to kind of negotiate because for them they don't name the baby, um, until seven days after they're born... for me it's like you get pregnant and you start thinking about the baby's name” (Maria)

Theme 4: Creating a multifaceted family identity
Theme four describes how the women manage the challenges they face by adopting an attitude that celebrates difference, appreciates diversity, acknowledges the role of race, ethnicity and culture in their identity but emphasizes other aspects of their identity too and negotiates cultural differences and familial expectations to create a “hybrid” approach and multifaceted family identity.

i) Celebrating difference and appreciating diversity

Sarah spoke about how she lived in an area where the majority of people were white. She was aware that this reduced the likelihood of her daughters encountering difference and diversity and as a result they made an active decision to spend time as a family in places with greater diversity:

“I was, very aware that actually, she could go, her whole life... not really seeing that much difference or variation or diversity at all... but I've actively sort of sought that out and made sure that she’s in situations with that level of diversity, we do go to London a lot” (Sarah)

Laura spoke about how she actively sought out positive role models and promoted the idea that difference is good:

“I do that sort of thing I really over promote, erm positive role models...I talked to (child’s name)a lot about how good it is to be different... trying to, not, encourage this idea of a princess being the only version of what’s beautiful and I obviously try to talk about how being beautiful is not the most important thing but it’s amazing how pervasive that message is, even in three year olds” (Laura)
ii) Creating a multifaceted identity - acknowledging the role of race and ethnicity in their identity but also emphasizing other aspects in addition to their race, ethnicity and appearance

Helen spoke about aspects of her daughter’s identity that they will try to emphasise in a bid to ensure that she and others do not focus on her ethnicity and/or race when defining her identity. Furthermore, she speaks about how best to explain all aspects of her heritage to her and support the development of a positive narrative about her heritage:

“you’re so healthy and fit and strong and you know, this is what your reading, this is what you like, those are the things that make her, as much as part of her identity as much as she looks like, and I think for children that are a bit different from the norm in terms of their race or heritage, it’s kind of adding that into that, you know, answering any questions she’s got when she’s older, possibly going to Hong Kong if she wants to, you know those kind of things, she develops that story in her head that it’s a positive thing, I think (Helen)

iii) Negotiating cultural differences to create a “hybrid” approach

Sarah spoke about undergoing a process of negotiation with her husband to create a ‘hybrid’ approach that was respectful of his family’s traditions and preferences but also felt comfortable for them:

“me and my husband had conversations about it, and my first reaction was like oh a bit ridiculous, I'm not gonna do that, and then I sort of thought ok, well let’s have a look at that and we sort of worked out erm, like a hybrid way of doing it so, you know I ate a lot of chicken and ginger soup, and I also ate other things, erm and I certainly washed my hair and washed the baby and I did that, but, erm, you know we weren’t out of the house loads, you don’t want to be when you've just had a baby” (Sarah)
Discussion

The findings will be summarised and then contextualised through reference to existing literature and theory.

It is argued that claiming plays a central role in the process of relationship formation, and that a lack of perceived physical similarities between parent and child can disrupt the claiming and relationship formation processes (Fahlberg 2012; Rubin 1984). The present study aimed to explore whether racial differences between mother and child in interracial families resulted in a lack of perceived physical similarity and affected the claiming and relationship formation processes. The interviews identified a widely held belief that, because of the racial difference, their baby was more likely to resemble their husband than themselves. The women were concerned that a lack of resemblance may mean that people do not naturally identify them as the mother of their baby. As a result, the women described preferences for their baby to posses a mixture of characteristics from themselves and their husband so that they could both be easily identified as the baby’s parent. However, some of the women expressed a preference for their baby to resemble the father or actively tried to avoid developing expectations. The anticipated lack of resemblance produced feelings of sadness and loss. One of the women reported concerns that the lack of resemblance might affect their ability to form a relationship with their baby.

Once their baby was born the women described undertaking a process of assessing the baby’s appearance and the degree of resemblance to themselves, their partner and wider family. Whilst some of the women struggled to identify a resemblance initially, this process appeared protective and in time enabled them to identify a degree of resemblance. For most of the women identifying a degree of resemblance satisfied them that others would easily identify them as the mother. This appeared to facilitate feelings of ownership and belonging, which in
turn seemed to aid the process of relationship formation. For some the initial stages of forming a relationship with their child was described as natural, for others it was a more active, lengthy and complex process than expected. The women adopted a systemic, life cycle approach to the formation of a relationship. They acknowledged that this was a dynamic process that spanned their baby’s childhood, and is influenced by the relationships within the wider family system (Carter and McGoldrick 2005). They identified a number of challenges they faced as an interracial family, including: ‘difference’; prejudice; dilemmas regarding how to define their child’s ethnicity; and expectations that they would adopt certain cultural practices. The women had given a lot of thought to how they would manage these challenges and described an approach of constructing a multifaceted family identity that celebrates difference, appreciates diversity, acknowledges all aspects of their child’s identity and negotiates cultural differences to create a ‘hybrid’ approach.

Therefore, with reference to the research question the racial difference between mother and child created an anticipated lack of resemblance and concerns about the potential impact of this. In accordance with existing theory and research on claiming, the anticipated lack of resemblance could have served to disrupt the claiming and relationship formation processes (Rubin 1984; Fahlberg 2012). However, the process undertaken by the women in which they assessed their baby’s appearance and identified a degree of resemblance, appeared to protect against this and facilitate the claiming process. Which in turn, in combination with other factors, appeared to aid the process of relationship formation. Therefore, the anticipated lack of resemblance could have served to disrupt the claiming process. However, the processes of searching and finding resemblance appeared to protect against this and enable them to claim their child, which, in combination with other factors, aided the process of relationship formation.
Creating hopes and expectations about your baby during pregnancy is considered an essential part of preparing to become a parent, that occurs in all families (Gallinsky 1987; Ashton and Ashton 2000; Rubin 1984). However, what appeared to be unique to these women, and their experience of having a mixed race baby, was the belief that the racial difference would result in a lack of resemblance between themselves and their baby. This expectation resulted in feelings of sadness and loss. The loss appeared to be associated with: the belief that their children were unlikely to resemble them or the images they had generated of their children prior to meeting their partner; and a sense that they would miss out on having a ‘mini version of yourself’ in which people attribute aspects of your child’s appearance to you as the mother.

Previous research with adoptive families, parents expecting and living with a child with a disability or deformity has highlighted the role of expectations and the association between expectations, reality and feelings of grief and loss (McKechnie, Pridham and Tluczeck 2015; Ashton and Ashton 2000; Smith and Howard 2000; Kottman 1997). McKechnie, Pridham and Tluczeck (2015) found that these parents had to undergo a process of adjustment and accept the new reality of their family, and how this differed from their expectations, which produced feelings of sadness and loss. The findings of the current study suggest that the women in the current study underwent a similar process. Interestingly, McKechnie, Pridham and Tluczeck (2015) found that claiming appeared to aid the process of adjustment and help with feelings of sadness and loss, suggesting that claiming may serve a protective function. This appears to mirror the women interviewed in the current study’s experience of claiming.

The process of actively searching and finding resemblance is consistent with the approach described by Fahlberg (2012). Furthermore, in line with Rubin (1984) and Fahlberg’s (2012) predictions this process enabled women to identify a degree of resemblance which appeared to aid the claiming process. Feelings experienced by the women, as a result of an anticipated lack of resemblance could have served to disrupt the claiming and possibly relationship
formation process. Research has shown that the knowledge of foetal anomaly disability or disfigurement prior to birth can serve to disrupt the claiming and relationship formation processes (McKechnie, Pridham and Tluczeck 2015; Ashton and Ashton 2000). However, for these women the process of searching for and finding resemblance once their baby was born appeared to protect against this and enable the women to claim their child. This suggests that as in previous research, claiming served a protective function that helped the women adjust to their reality and overcome feelings of sadness and loss associated with their expectations. This, in combination with other factors, appeared to contribute to the process of forming a relationship. Therefore, the study provides support for the current notion of claiming, the importance of the process of assessing for similarities, the role of claiming in the process of relationship formation and the unique significance of this for interracial families.

It has been proposed that visible difference and a lack of perceived physical similarity may affect parent’s ability to provide sensitive and responsive care, which is one of the key factors associated with attachment (Bowlby 1969; Crittenden and Ainsworth 1989; De Wolff and van Ijzendoorn 1997). Therefore, it is possible that a lack of resemblance may have affected the women’s ability to provide sensitive and responsive care, which may have affected the attachment relationship. Whilst this highlights potential theoretical implications, at this stage this is speculation. Further research would be required to identify whether there is a link between difficulties with claiming and sensitive and responsive care and whether this affects attachment.

Whilst the women described how they had started to develop a relationship with their child they also identified challenges they faced as an interracial family, either currently or that they anticipated experiencing in the future. The women appeared to be concerned about the potential impact these challenges would have on their child’s sense of self, racial identity and
the relationships within the family. These challenges were presented as they are deemed to be relevant and related to the process of forming and maintaining a relationship according to the definition of and approach to the process of relationship formation demonstrated by the women during the interviews.

The challenges described, the interpretation regarding the women’s concerns about the possible impact of these challenges and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges map onto previous research with mothers of mixed race children. Mothers of mixed race children have consistently reported experiencing prejudice, racism and discrimination towards themselves and their children (Harman 2010, 2013; Twine 1999a, 1999b, 2004; McKenzie 2013; Morrison 1995; Banks 1996; Lester Murad 2005; Tyler 2005). Furthermore, women have described concerns about how best to protect their children against and help them manage experiences of racism (Twine 1999a; Twine 2004; Harman 2010). The women interviewed by Twine (1999a) reported concerns about their ability to equip their children with the knowledge and skills to successfully manage these experiences. These women described being fearful that not successfully equipping them with the knowledge and skills required to manage these experiences could serve to affect their relationship. Whilst not explicitly stated by the women interviewed in the present study it is possible that these fears were also experienced by the women and in part served to motivate them to adopt the approaches described in theme four ‘creating a multifaceted family identity’.

The approaches to the challenges demonstrated by the women in the current study provides support for Twine’s (2004) concept of ‘racism cognizant’. She argues that ‘racism-cognizant’ parents are aware of the possibility that their children will experience racism in the future and that as a result they aim to equip them with certain skills and experiences to prepare and help them manage any future racist encounters. The strategies identified in the current study are
consistent with strategies used by mothers of mixed race children in previous research. These include: developing analytical skills that allow them to analyse the role of race in society including social interactions and media representations of black people; exposing their children to ‘black culture’; fostering relationships with black children and adults; seeking out schools and residential areas that provided access to positive role models, other mixed-race children and interracial families and multicultural resources; creating a positive narrative about being mixed-race (Harman 2010; Twine 2004; Phoenix and Tizard 2005).

In summary, the racial differences between mother and baby produced an anticipated lack of resemblance, which could have served to disrupt the claiming process. However, the women engaged in an active process of searching and finding resemblance which appeared to be protective and facilitate the process of claiming. This, in combination with other factors, helped the women start the process of forming a relationship with their child. Whilst all of the women reported being able to form a relationship with their baby, some of the women identified this process as dynamic, long term and more complex that they had expected. The women identified several challenges they faced as a family, which they felt were unique to interracial families. In response they adopted a range of strategies to foster the development of a multifaceted family identify that promoted difference, appreciated diversity, acknowledged all aspects of an individual’s identity and negotiated cultural difference to create a ‘hybrid’ approach. This study therefore contributes to our understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by mothers of mixed race children, including the factors associated with the processes of claiming and relationship formation.

**Methodological limitations and areas for future research**

There are a number of limitations with this study that need to be addressed. All participants identified as white; cohabiting/married; educated to a minimum of degree level; and working
in professional roles. Inevitably, given the qualitative methods used, the findings may only represent the experiences of the nine women interviewed and may not be generalisable outside of this group (Leung 2015).

Women in the current study reported a range of factors that aided the process of relationship formation, most of these were not discussed in detail as they are known to aid the process of relationship formation and are not deemed to be unique to interracial families. This included support from their partner, wider family and friends. Social support is known to be a protective factor for new mothers, and to contribute to the process of relationship formation (Crockenberg 1981; Negron et al 2013). However, previous research, with single mothers of mixed race children, has consistently reported a lack of social support (Harman 2010; 2013; Twine 1999a; Banks 1996; Mc Kenzie 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider factors such as this which may have positively affected the women in the current study’s experience of relationship formation but may not be present for all women in interracial relationships.

The participants were aware that the study was about the process of relationship formation. Therefore, it is fair to assume that they were comfortable talking about this topic. The vignette appeared to serve its desired purpose and the women seemed to speak openly about their experiences. However, the social setting of the interview, coupled with knowledge that the researcher has the intention to publish the study, may have resulted in participants providing a more censored, socially desirable or politically correct version of their experiences. A possible way of managing this is by conducting repeat interviews, in the hope that over time as a relationship develops the participants will feel more able to provide a less censored account of their experiences (Murray et al. 2009).

Participants that already knew the researcher were aware that they were in an interracial relationship and therefore that the research may be of personal interest and significance to
them. Some participants asked the researcher why they were interested in the topic. A decision was made to provide an overview of the reasons, stating that there are a number of interracial couples within the researcher’s family but not identifying the researcher as a fellow white woman in an interracial relationship. This decision was made in a bid to avoid participants not fully explaining their experiences because they assume that the researcher understood what they meant or could automatically relate to their experience without providing a fleshed-out account of their experiences in their own language. However, had this been divulged it may have made participants feel more comfortable, as though the researcher may be able to relate to some of their experiences and therefore more likely to provide a less censored version of their experiences. This is something to consider in future research.

It is possible that the issues raised by the women in this study are experienced by a wider range of women in interracial relationships that did not volunteer to take part as they did not feel comfortable talking about their experiences. Furthermore, reluctance to talk about the topic may be because they have experienced the issues more acutely which has resulted in difficulties with claiming and forming a relationship, which they would have found difficult to talk about in a research interview.

As a result, it is important for future research to continue to explore this area with women from a range of racial groups, in relationships with men from a variety of racial groups, with a range of relationships statuses, levels of education, employment and support to establish whether the findings apply to a larger group of mothers of mixed race children.

Furthermore, the women alluded to the fact that this was also an issue for their partners. Therefore, it is important to conduct research with fathers of mixed-race children to gather information about their experiences of becoming a father to a mixed-race child.

Clinical Implications
Whilst it is important to bear in mind the generalisability of the findings, the challenges described by the women may be experienced by a large number of women, who might find the subject very difficult to talk about.

The findings may be of particular relevance to women in contact with perinatal mental health services. Mental health difficulties experienced by women in the perinatal period are often associated with difficulties in forming relationships, whether this is a causal factor or as a product of the difficulties they are experiencing. Furthermore, some of the women in contact with specialist perinatal services will be experiencing additional social stressors that may also affect the process of forming a relationship with their child (British Psychological Society 2016).

The findings could be used to inform practice when working with interracial families, particularly during the perinatal period. Professionals may want to explore women’s expectations about their baby and whether the baby’s appearance and the degree of perceived resemblance is affecting the claiming and relationship formation processes. Therefore, the findings may be of particular relevance for midwives, health visitors and professionals working in perinatal mental health services, as part of their role is to promote the development of a relationship between parent and child (National Institute of Health Care Excellence 2014; Royal College of Midwives 2012; British Psychological Society 2016).
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## Appendix

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Appendix A

Are you a first-time mother to a mixed-race child?

I am looking for women in interracial relationships, whose partner identifies with a different racial or ethnic group, who have a mixed-race child aged between 6 months and 3 years of age.

Would you be willing to share your experiences of motherhood with me during an interview?

The study has received favourable ethical approval from the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences (FHMS) Ethics Committee. The research is being completed by Charlotte Cousins a Trainee Clinical Psychologist and is supervised by Professor Jane Ogden at The University of Surrey.

The interviews can be held at a location of your choosing, I am happy to come to your house, to meet at the university or speak over the phone.

For further information, with no obligation to participate, please contact Charlotte Cousins on [mobile number and email address removed]
Appendix B

Recruitment Post on Researcher’s Social Media Account (with updated inclusion criteria)

A few weeks ago I made a post about a research project I am completing as part of my doctoral training course in clinical psychology at the University of Surrey.

I have recently changed the inclusion criteria for the project so wanted to make another post with information about the new criteria in case this now applies to you or you know someone you think meets the criteria and might be interested in taking part.

I am looking for first time mothers who are either currently in or have been in an interracial relationship with a partner who identifies with a different racial or ethnic group and have a mixed-race child aged between 6 months and 3 years of age.

Would you be willing to speak to me about your experiences of motherhood? The interviews can take place at a location of your choosing, I can come to your home, we can meet at the university or speak on the phone.

Or do you know anyone that you think might be interested in taking part? If so please share this post and pass on my contact details or ask me for a poster and more information. This research has been granted ethical approval from the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Surrey.

For more information with no obligation to take part please contact me on [mobile number removed] or [email address removed]

Thank you in advance, anything you can do to help is very much appreciated!
Charlotte
Participant Information Sheet
Version 6 (26/04/17)

Relationships between mother and child in interracial families

Introduction

My name is Charlotte Cousins and I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Surrey. As part of my training to become a Clinical Psychologist, I am required to carry out some research. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project into the process of forming a relationship between mother and child in interracial families. To help you decide if you would like to take part, please read this information sheet carefully, so that you know what you will be asked to do and why the research is important. Feel free to contact me using the telephone number or email address below if you have any questions.

The research

I am interested in speaking to women in interracial relationships, whose partner identifies with a different racial or ethnic group, who have a mixed-race child aged between 6 months and 3 years of age. I would like to hear about your experiences of motherhood and forming a relationship with your child. Women's experiences of forming a relationship with their child vary greatly, with some mothers finding this a positive and relatively hassle free process and with others finding this a much more negative experience with lots of challenges along the way. I would like to have a conversation about the process, focusing particularly on what helped or hindered this process for you.

This study has received a favourable opinion from the Ethics Committee of the University of Surrey’s Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am hoping to talk to mothers of mixed-race children. Ideally this will be your first child, you will still be married or in a relationship with the child's father and the child will be between 6 months and 3 years of age.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is completely up to you whether you take part in the research or not. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me, when answering your questions, you will not be pressurised to take part. If you do decide to take part, then I will ask you to complete a consent form.

What will I be asked to do?


We will arrange to meet at a mutually convenient time and in a mutually convenient location, I am very happy to visit you at your home or alternatively we can meet at the university or speak on the phone if you would prefer.

I would then like to have a conversation with you about your experiences of motherhood and forming a relationship with your child. I will have some specific questions in mind but am also very happy to talk about whatever feels relevant and important to you regarding the topic. I anticipate that the conversation will last between 30-60 minutes. I would like to record the conversations to ensure I have an accurate record of what was said.

I will also ask you to complete and information form to provide some demographic information such as your name and age and your child’s name and age. Every person that participates will be allocated an anonymous code, any identifiable information will be stored securely and separately to the typed copy of our conversation.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

Understandably some people may find it difficult to speak about their experiences of motherhood and forming a relationship with their baby; especially if they have experienced difficulties along the way. As a result, if you agree to take part you will be encouraged to only share information and experiences you feel comfortable talking about. In addition, if you become distressed during the interview you will not be pressurised to continue.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Some people may find talking about their experiences of motherhood and forming a relationship with their baby enjoyable and/or therapeutic. If a woman’s experience has been more difficult they may also find it therapeutic or cathartic to discuss this in a safe, supportive and non-judgemental environment. Furthermore, taking part allows you the opportunity to directly contribute to research which will hopefully further develop our understanding of the process of relationship formation between mothers and mixed-race children.

**What happens after I take part?**

After our conversation everything we discussed will be typed out by myself or a third party and the audio recording will be destroyed. Made up names will be used in the typed version to preserve your anonymity. The content of our conversations will not be discussed with anyone other than the project supervisor or in peer supervision with my colleagues. Made up names will always be used during such discussions. The only time I would need to discuss the content of our conversation with anyone else is if I had serious concerns about your safety or the safety of your child. In these very rare cases it would be my duty to discuss my concerns with my supervisor and if deemed necessary with professionals from support services or agencies.

If a third party is used to type out the conversation they will only be provided with the audio recording and will not see the consent form and therefore will not know your full
They will change any identifiable information such as the names of any family members, professionals, nurseries etc. mentioned to preserve your anonymity. The individual typing out the conversation will be bound by a confidentiality agreement which states that they will not pass on, divulge or discuss the contents of the audio recording with anyone other than myself. They will ensure that the audio and typed versions are held securely and password protected. The individual will return the typed version of the conversation to me when completed and will destroy any audio and electronic files held by them at the earliest time possible after the typed version have been provided to me.

The consent and information forms will be kept separate to the typed version of our conversation, so that the information collected during our conversation cannot be traced back to you. These will be kept for at least 6 years in line with the University of Surrey policies.

If you decide you would like to take part in this research it does not mean you cannot change your mind later. You will not need to say why you have changed your mind. You can also choose to have the information you gave during the study removed, up to the point that the research is analysed in the summer of 2017.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the research study you can contact either myself or my supervisors at the University of Surrey, Jane Ogden. Our contact details are given below. You can also contact Professor Derek Moore Head of School of Psychology, who is independent to the research team. His email address is d.moore@surrey.ac.uk

**What do I do next?**

If you have any questions about or would like more information about taking part in this research please contact me [mobile phone number removed] (this number will be monitored from Monday to Friday, 9-5) or via email, [email address removed]. If I am not able to answer the phone straight away then please leave a message with your contact details and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet

Charlotte Cousins

Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Supervised by Jane Ogden (contact details removed)
Appendix D
Consent Form

Relationships between mother and child in interracial families

Please initial each box

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. 

- I have been advised about any disadvantages/risk to my well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I agree to comply with the requirements of the study as outlined to me to the best of my abilities. I shall inform the investigators immediately if I have any concerns about participating.

- I give consent for the interview to be audio recorded and transcribed (typed out) by myself or a third party. I have read and understood that if a third party is used to transcribe the conversation they will be bound by a confidentiality agreement.

- I give consent to anonymous verbatim quotations being used in reports.

- I understand that all project data will be held for at least 6 years and all research data for at least 10 years in accordance with University policy and that my personal data is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the {UK} Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study up until the point of data analysis in Summer 2017 without needing to justify my decision, without prejudice and that following my request all data already collected from me will be destroyed.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation.

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS)

........................................

Signed
Date

Name of researcher taking consent

(Block Capitals)

Signed

Date

....................................................
Appendix E

Interview Schedule

I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself and your child to allow us to get to know each other a bit better, then I would like to share Mandy’s story with you to discuss other people’s experiences before asking you about your own experiences of motherhood and forming a relationship with your child.

Introductory/warm up questions

How old is your child?
What is their name?
How are you finding motherhood so far?

Mandy’s story

Mandy is a White British 30-year-old primary school teacher, her husband Anthony is a 32-year-old black male who was born in Jamaica and moved to the UK aged 15. Mandy and Anthony have a 6-month old daughter called Amelia. Mandy and Anthony’s relationship is good, Anthony works full time as a carpenter and returned to work after two weeks paternity leave. Anthony is a very hands on father, whilst he works long hours he is very involved in caring for Amelia when he comes home and at weekends.

Mandy is coming towards the end of her maternity leave, she has struggled with the first 6 months of motherhood. Mandy had a relatively straight forward experience of labour. Mandy finds it difficult to remember the very early days but remembers feeling very tired and spending long periods of time staring at Amelia once Anthony had gone back to work. Mandy said that she knew that she loved and wanted Amelia but was struck by how much she looked like Anthony and whilst Anthony and relatives said that Amelia had her eyes and her mouth she couldn’t help but notice all of the ways in which she looked like Anthony, most noticeably in terms of the colour of her skin, and wish that she looked more like her.

What do you think about Mandy’s experience?
Is there anything about her experience that you can relate to?
Do you think this will affect Mandy’s ability to build a relationship with Amelia?
What has your experience of building a relationship with (babies name) been like for you?
What has affected this relationship? (whether positive or negative explore the factors behind this)
Did/has (babies name)’s appearance, skin tone or colour affected this process at all?
Is this something that you noticed or thought about at all?

How have you managed this?

Is the process of building a relationship something you have been able to talk to people around you about (husband/partner, friends, family, professionals)?

Do you feel as though you have been perceived or treated differently to mothers without mixed race children?

Do you feel that having a mixed-race child has affected your overall experience of being a mum?

Is there anything that you would like to ask or discuss that we haven’t touched on in enough detail or at all?
Confidentiality Agreement for the Transcription of Qualitative Data

Name of Study: Relationships between mother and child in interracial families

Researcher: Charlotte Cousins

Course/organisation: Clinical Psychology Doctorate/University of Surrey

In accordance with the Research Ethics Committee guidance and approval of this study all participants in the above-named study are anonymised. Therefore, any personal information or any of the data generated or secured through transcription will not be disclosed to any third party.

By signing this document, you are agreeing:

- not to pass on, divulge or discuss the contents of the audio material provided to you for transcription to any third parties
- to ensure that material provided for transcription is held securely and can only be accessed via password on your local PC
- to return transcribed material to the research team when completed and do so when agreed in password protected files
- to destroy any audio and electronic files held by you and relevant to the above study at the earliest time possible after transcripts have been provided to the research team, or to return said audio files.

Your name (block capitals) ________________________________

Your signature ________________________________

Date ________________________________
Appendix G

Chair's Action

Proposal Ref: 1261-PSY-17

Name of Student/Trainee: Charlotte Cousins

Title of Project: Relationships between mother and child in interracial families

Supervisor: Professor Jane Ogden, Dr Laura Simonds

Date of submission: 19th January 2017

Date of confirmation email: 7th March 2017

The above Research Project has been submitted to the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences Ethics Committee and has received a favourable ethical opinion with minor conditions. Confirmation has been received that the conditions stipulated after ethical review have now been addressed and compliance with these conditions have been documented.

The final list of revised documents reviewed by the Committee is as follows:

Ethics Application Form
Detailed Protocol for the project
Participant Information sheet
Consent Form
Risk Assessment (If appropriate)
Insurance Documentation (If appropriate)

All documentation from this project should be retained by the student/trainee in case they are notified and asked to submit their dissertation for an audit.

Signed and Dated: 07/03/2017

Professor Bertram Opitz
Please note: If there are any significant changes to your proposal which require further scrutiny, please contact the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences Ethics Committee before proceeding with your Project.
Appendix H

Ethical Considerations

Freedom of choice

It is important for the participant’s consent to be entirely voluntary, and that their decision to participate was free from pressure or coercion. Barker, Pistrang & Elliott (2002) state that this process can be complicated when there is already an established relationship between the researcher and participant. Whilst three of the participants were already known to the researcher they were not directly approached and asked to participate, they approached the researcher and volunteered to take part after seeing the researchers post on social media.

Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. On two occasions the husband of the women being interviewed was present for part of the interview and contributed to the discussion. Consent was sought from both men to be recorded and for their comments to be included in the analysis.

Risk

A risk assessment was completed as follows

Risk to researcher

As the researcher will be conducted some of the interviews alone at the participant’s home, the researcher informed a named person of their location, time of arrival and expected time of departure so that they could raise concerns if they have not heard from the researcher within the agreed time frame.

Risk to participants
The interview covered sensitive and potentially emotive topics which participants may have found uncomfortable at times. The researcher explained to participants that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable to and that the interview can be terminated at any point should they feel distressed and/or as though they no longer wish to continue.

It is also important to consider possible social risk, in terms of the implications of the participants’ responses. For example, if a participant discloses difficulties in forming a relationship with their child there are likely to be strong emotions attached to this, such as shame or guilt. Furthermore, if participants discuss difficulties associated with being in an interracial relationship or mother to a mixed race baby they may understandably have concerns about how other people in their lives and similar situations would respond to this. It is hoped that assurances around confidentiality and anonymity will protect against this and allowed the participants to feel able to speak freely. Furthermore, the researcher used their clinical skills to engage with the participant, establish a good rapport and a space in which they feel comfortable to speak about their experiences. In addition, the vignette was used as a way of introducing the topic and normalising the experience of having difficulty forming a relationship with their child, due to the differences between them in terms of skin tone and colour and therefore overall similarity in appearance. It is hoped that the use of the vignette will also allow the researcher to demonstrate, through their body language and tone of voice, that they are not shocked and have not made negative judgements about the women’s experiences in the vignette; which will hopefully overcome the participants fears of being judged negatively.

Confidentiality
The boundaries and limits of confidentiality were explained. Participants were informed that the only time Participants were informed that the information provided would be anonymised through the use of secure research codes that will be separated from the data, that pseudonyms will be used in any publication, how the data will be stored and who will have access to it and when it will be destroyed.
**Appendix I – Worked Example of Analysis Process**

Interview 2 – Laura

that we didn’t have this, oh my god, I love this child () (C: Yeah) the instant, we saw it () (C: Ok, so he had that same experiences as you), he did too, he said we both () (C: Ok) needed a few days just to kind of, come to terms with what I happened I suppose () (C: yeah) and then thought wow this child is amazing and I suppose, and in the first day or two, they just sleep, and you don’t, () (C: yeah)

so it’s completely, it is pretty overwhelming, erm, I feel like that would have been true, completely regardless of her ethnicity. () (C: Ok) erm, but I can’t obviously be certain. () (C: Yep) had she been white and I had had white husband she might have looked more like me, but () (C: yeah) but but she also might not have done, erm, I mean [husband’s name] and I don’t look particularly similar, but you can have white people that don’t look very similar, erm and actually () (C: yeah) and she could have looked much more different to me, () (C: yeah) but there’s something about new born babies, are meant to look more like their

---

*the name Laura is a pseudonym*
Appendix J – Details of the Analysis Process

The following steps were taken:

1) **Familiarisation with the data set:** this involved listening to the recording and reading the transcripts repeatedly, including simultaneously. The researcher noted any initial thoughts that arose during this process on the transcripts.

2) **Coding:** the researcher highlighted all data that was related to the research question and/or was of interest (Braun & Clark, 2006). For each ‘chunk’ of data the researcher produced a code, in the form of a few words, that described the nature of the content of the ‘chunk’ of data. Several codes were applied to chunks of data if the researcher felt that the ‘chunk’ of data related to a number of different codes. The researcher then re-examined the entire data set and grouped data into codes. This was done manually by cutting up transcripts and forming a pile made up of several chunks of data for each code. The title of the code was revised repeatedly as the process evolved to ensure it accurately captured the content and context of the coded data. This was a fluid process, chunks of data were moved around as the code developed. Furthermore, chunks of data continued to be coded in multiple ways, when this occurred the chunk of data was photocopied and placed in multiple code piles.

3) **Searching for themes:** During this stage each code was examined individually and in relation to other codes to start to identify relationships between codes and how they may combine to form a theme. Several thematic maps were drawn to aid this process, see figure for final thematic map.

4) **Reviewing themes:** Once the candidate and sub themes were generated all chunks of data were re-read to ensure that there was a coherent pattern across the extracts. Each transcript was then re-examined to ensure that the themes fit with the data and that all
data that relates to each theme had been included in the initial coding process. In addition, during this process not all codes were included in the final list of candidate and subthemes. During this stage data continued to be recoded, moved from one code to another and the name and content of themes also continued to change and evolve.

5) **Defining and naming themes:** During this stage the data from each theme was examined to create a name which satisfactorily captured the content of each theme. Furthermore, the content of each theme was examined to construct a coherent description of each theme individually and how it relates to other themes and the data set as a whole.
Appendix K

Reflective log entry

Removed due to personal nature of the information included
Appendix L

Reflective statement

Removed due to the personal nature of the information included
Appendix M

Additional Quotes to Further Illustrate Themes

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<th>Theme Subtheme</th>
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| **Anticipating a lack of resemblance** | Phoebe who had a 9-month-old daughter with her husband of black Caribbean heritage spoke about how she did not expect her child to look like her because of the racial difference between her and her husband:  

“I didn’t really expect her to look like me, cos he’s black, do you know what I mean” (Phoebe)  

Helen who had a 9-month-old daughter with her husband who she identified as British Chinese described predicting that any children she has with her husband are unlikely to resemble her:  

“You know I’d make reference to the fact that erm, any children I have with (husband’s name) aren’t going to look remotely like me at all” (Helen)  

Likewise, Sarah who had two daughters, aged one and a half and three, with her husband who she identified as Chinese reported a conversation she had with her husband in which he appeared adamant that their daughter would resemble him:  

“His response right from the minute I got pregnant was well it doesn’t matter she’ll just look like me, and he was absolutely convinced and right as it turned out that they were gonna look like him” (Sarah) |
| **The anticipated impact of a lack of resemblance** | Theories about lack of resemblance  

Genetics  

“He was very much like well you know my Chinese gene pool has not been altered in anyway whatsoever and so its, you know it’s a very strong gene” (Sarah)  

Helen reported that before having her daughter she believed people would assume that she was her adoptive mother:  

“I’d say you know when I’m walking alone with the baby people will think I've adopted it” (Helen) |
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| **The reality of having a mixed race baby** | Similarly, Rachel who had an eighteen-month-old son with her husband who identified as mixed race described a desire for people to be able to identify her as the mother:  
“I just knew I wanted him to look like me…for people to be able to tell he was mine” (Rachel)
Sarah struggled to initially identify resemblance between herself and her daughter and spoke about the role her expectations of what her children would look like played in this. Sarah spoke about how before meeting her husband she had generated images of what her children would look like and how her daughters differed from this:  
“you have some sort of view don’t you of what your children are going to look like in you know, when you first think about having children, where before I even met before my husband I suppose in my head, I always had this view of you know, I would have this with white blonde curly haired, children erm, and then er, and then yeah, I ended up with two very beautiful, but erm, you know two children that don’t really look very much like me at all” (Sarah)
Some of the women spoke about how identifying a degree of resemblance reassured them that people would identify them as the mother. Phoebe described feeling glad that people would be able to identify her as the mother:  
“I'm glad, you know when she’s with me, like, yes she could be, mine, and when she's with him she could be mine do you know what I mean she’s not like black or white, you know cos I think he'd probably find that hard as well” (Phoebe) |
| **Challenges faced by the family** | Laura described an awareness that her child will never look like the princesses that her daughter looks up to:  
“(Child’s name) refers a lot to princesses with blonde, long blonde hair and I am really aware that she’s never going to look like that” (Laura)
In addition, on occasion the children had acknowledged aspects of difference between themselves, their peers and family members. Laura spoke about how her daughter has identified a difference in skin tone between herself, her mother and her father and has alluded to being proud of her skin tone:
“she says she has brown skin, and I have white, pink skin erm, and brown skin is better. Did she say that? She said something,
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| Themes with details | Noticing a focus on their child’s appearance | Sarah spoke about how her daughter was aware of her skin tone and that it was different to her mother’s skin tone from a young age. In addition, her daughter was able to identify the members of the family who identify as Chinese:  
“when she was very little, she was aware of her skin tone and she was aware of her skin being different from mine and she was aware of, erm you know, like I say the members of her family, who are the Chinese and who are the non-Chinese ones” (Sarah) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                     | Experiences of prejudice                      | Helen spoke about how people would joke about how ‘cute’ her and her husband’s babies would be. Helen described feeling as though people tend to focus on her appearance and attribute it to her husband:  
“it has been a running joke but, we would have cute babies because of (husband’s name) genes, erm and that’s what is always comes back too. Is that it comes back to, her appearance is, is because of him and his side…ah that actually, sounds pretty, pretty sad in a way (Helen) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                     |                                               | Similarly, Sarah described how people would react to her daughter’s hair:  
“I mean (baby’s name) just looked ridiculous, she looked like she was wearing a wig, it was just crazy, erm, and I actually had people, people used to cross the street… people used to cross the street and point out how much hair she had” (Sarah) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                     |                                               | Sarah described comments made by a professional which suggested that they were making assumptions about the family’s diet based on her husband’s Chinese heritage:  
“I think it was sort of a health visitor or something that made some comment about erm, cooking lots of rice or something, oh your daughter will be eating lots of rice, and all of that, and then yeah, people made sort of a few comments like that.. so there were assum, assumptions around erm, around that” (Sarah) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                     |                                               | Rachel and her husband described prejudicial comments made by her nan: |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
### Defining their child’s ethnicity

“my nan, before we, before we, had (baby’s name) didn’t she, my nan like made a comment, like oh well its not gonna look white, it’s not gonna look like a white baby” (Rachel)

Helen shared concerns she had regarding how she protects her daughter from racist attitudes expressed by her mother in law: “how do I protect her from the racism that comes out… if I were (baby’s name) and heard my grandmother, talking very very negatively about another race and then in my head I'm thinking oh but hang on, dad is a different race, I'm a different race, what does that mean, you know that’s so confusing, erm, (.) so I, at some point I don’t know, there might be something to challenge there” (Helen)

Fears about experiences of prejudice in the future

Rachel described her fears that children will make racism comments to her son at school:

“I would always worry like someone would say something like offensive or horrible to him” (Rachel)

Laura acknowledged that this was possibly more likely to happen if her children go on to develop a darker skin tone:

“I'm aware that the darker they are they potentially the more difficult their lives will be” (Laura)

Laura described a recent experience in which someone shouted racist abuse at her husband:

“he had a recent, racist experience in the park with (child’s name), near him, which I found devastating, which is too young, yeah, she was too young to, really understand it, she just knew a man was shouting at (husband’s name)” (Laura)

Helen shared her frustration at having to define our race and how she feels this does not contribute to the development of an inclusive, ‘non-selective’ society. Helen also stated that she is likely to decline to answer such questions regarding her daughter’s ethnicity and/or race in the future:

“We are still having to keep- having to tick boxes to say what race we are and I kind of think if you truly want to be erm, non-selective why you making people tell you what race they are you know, erm and I think coming back to an earlier question, I think I'll probably tick a prefer not to say, I don’t know,
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<td></td>
<td>Family expectations about</td>
<td>whether that’s, that even doesn’t sit comfortably with me, but I think that, probably sits more comfortably then having to define something like that” (Helen)</td>
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<td>cultural practices</td>
<td>Sarah spoke about expectations from her husband’s family that she would adhere to a traditional practice referred to as confinement: “there were a few things…which were different because it was inter-racial relationship…basically the mother and child are supposed to confine themselves erm for four weeks, erm, and there’s all kind of things around, not washing, not washing your hair not washing the baby, erm, and only eating chicken and ginger soup erm and so there was a bit of discussion, I know that my husband’s dad was sort of talking to my husband about, oh you know, so you know this is the recipe for the chicken and ginger soup, this is erm, you know this is what Sarah should only eat for the first four weeks” (Sarah)</td>
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<td>Some of the women stated that they believe there could have been greater cultural differences and possibly unique challenges if their partner had been born in a different country rather than the UK. For example, Sarah said: “and I was thinking on my way over, about, that, cos obviously this is very much focused on bonding, isn’t it, with the child and whether that’s, been different or not, being an inter-racial family and…I wasn’t conscious that it did erm, so but yeah, whether, whether it did or not, but I, I think that was probably cos my husband is British Born Chinese and actually, erm, that might have been a different situation if he’d come over from China, you know, later on in his life and actually very different upbringing himself” (Sarah)</td>
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<td>Likewise, Phoebe stated: “so my husband was born here his parents erm were both born in Barbados erm, but moved here, yeah he was born here, so, obviously that bit no, cos I'm sure someone who moved here when they were fifteen, you know culturally will be a bit different I mean obviously there’s cultural differences to an extent, but not like that” (Phoebe)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a multifaceted</td>
<td>family identity</td>
<td>Kelly spoke about feelings of pride about being in an interracial relationship and mother to a mixed-race child, she considered society becoming more diverse a very positive thing:</td>
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<td>Celebrating difference and</td>
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<td>appreciating diversity</td>
<td>“I'm very happy to be in an interracial relationship. And very proud of my family… I just like -- just kind of making the world more colourful -it’s just a beautiful thing” (Kelly)</td>
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<td>Creating a multifaceted family identity</td>
<td>Stacey described how she does not want her ethnicity or race to define her and how she hopes that she will be defined by other aspects of her such as personality traits:</td>
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<td>“it’s just one aspect of her, and its, it shouldn’t be defining what should define it, is her personality, her attitude her approach to others that is her defining features…. if I have to define her. I do say she is a mixed-race baby, because she is, it’s a spade is a spade, she’s mixed race, there’s no denying that. It’s as plain as the wall but, I, I'm I will teach her that. She is a mixed-race baby, but, I would not teach her that that is what makes her…she is like a little box of chocolates, she’s a variety box there’s lots of different parts that make up a whole all delicious” (Stacey)</td>
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<td>Negotiating cultural differences to create a ‘hybrid’ approach</td>
<td>Maria describes the challenges associated with merging cultures and finding a way to combine the important aspects of each culture:</td>
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<td>“it's a bit more difficult I would say because you have to kind of, um, merge the two cultures. So it has done really because, um, yeah, it's-- it's difficult. It's about the language, um, it's about like food, it's about cultural, um, rituals and how you have to merge the whole-- how you have to combine the both of them and, um, that's the difficult part. So whereas I think it is on a monocultural family, um, you don't think about it, because it's just-- it's what you're used to. You do what you're used to and what's around you in the society” (Maria)</td>
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*all names are pseudonyms*
Appendix N

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Literature Review

**Title of review:** Identifying the social and psychological factors associated with mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood: a review of the literature

**Abstract**

**Aim:** England and Wales are becoming more ethnically diverse, with an increase in interracial relationships and mixed race children. In recent years researchers have started to explore the experiences of mothers of mixed race children. The aim of this paper is to review the current literature and identify factors associated with mothers of mixed race children experiences of motherhood.

**Method:** Seven electronic databases were searched using terms relating to motherhood and mixed race children. Titles and abstracts were reviewed, data was extracted and the sources were systematically reviewed for methodological quality.

**Results:** 32 articles were identified in the original search and seven additional articles were identified throughout the process. In total 22 articles were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria and two were excluded at the quality appraisal stage due to a lack of information and transparency about the data collection and analysis process. Ten qualitative articles were included in the review which were described and assessed for common themes. Four themes were generated from the findings: experiences of prejudice; racial identity and ‘whiteness’; appropriation of cultural knowledge; and practices and social support.

**Conclusion:** Results identified that mothers of mixed race children experience a range of challenges but employ a variety of strategies to enable them to manage the challenges they face. The review also highlighted a continued lack of high quality empirical research in this field and concludes that further research is required.

**Key words:** interracial families, mixed race children, motherhood, racial identity, prejudice, social support
**Introduction**

Data from the most recent census, in 2011, showed that England and Wales are becoming more diverse, with an increase in inter-ethnic relationships and more people identifying as belonging to mixed/multiple ethnic groups since the last census. Furthermore, the mixed/multiple ethnic groups category has the youngest age profile of all other ethnic groups and constitute the fastest growing group of young people (Office for National Statistics 2011; Morley and Street 2014).

Research exploring inter ethnic or interracial relationships\(^1\) has found that interracial couples, interracial families and mixed-race children have very different experiences to their peers of mono-racial descent or in mono-ethnic relationships and therefore experience unique challenges and needs (Morley and Street 2014; Wilt 2011). To date, however, very little is known about the ways in which these relationships differ or how the experiences of inter-ethnic or interracial relationships, families and mixed-race children living within the UK differ from those of mono ethnic origins.

One area that has been explored in depth is the experiences of mixed race children\(^2\). For example, mixed race children are more likely to be involved with social services, either as a child in need, on the child protection register or to be under the care of their local authority (Owen and Statham 2009; Phoenix and Tizard 2005). Disparities also exist within the education system, both in terms of GCSE results obtained and the likelihood of gaining graduate level employment of equal pay to their mono racial peers (Department of Education 2014; Zwysen and Longhi 2016). Furthermore, people of mixed race are one of several ethnic minority groups that are over represented within the prison system. The data available on the prison population highlights a common problem in research into people of mixed race, in that often the data will not be divided by the various sub categories that constitute mixed race. As
a result, it is difficult to see the differences across the sub categories and because as stated
above mixed race does not constitute a homogenous group, it becomes difficult to identify the
unique needs and challenges faced by the many sub categories subsumed within the broader
category of mixed race.

Census data also suggests that the makeup of interracial families and households are different
to mono racial families and households. For example, interracial couples are less likely to be
married and more likely to be cohabiting than mono racial couples. Furthermore, certain
groups of mixed race children were more likely to be living in lone parent households than
other groups of mixed race children or children whose parents identified them as belonging to
a mono ethnic group. For example, white and black Caribbean mixed race children were the
second most likely group to live in a lone parent household; this group was second to children
whose parents identified them as black Caribbean. The experience of relationship breakdown,
parental separation and living in a lone parent household, which is likely to be with the
mother as in 2015 women made up 90% of lone parent households, brings its own set of
unique challenges and needs (Office for National Statistics 2015).

People from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those identifying as mixed race, and lone
parents are also more likely to live in low income households or below the poverty line
(Department for Work and Pensions 2015). Furthermore, relationships exist between income
inequality, ethnicity and health and social outcomes thus demonstrating the complex
relationships between all of the factors mentioned (Rowlingson 2011; Becares 2013).

Previous research has tended to focus on the unique challenges mixed race children can face
with identity development, in particular, conflict regarding which ethnic or racial group to
identify with (Jones 2000). However, it is important to note that the majority of this research
has been conducted in America and therefore the generalisability of the findings for mixed race children in the UK needs to be considered.

Mixed race children are in the unique position of having a minimum of two racial groups with which they could identify but also run the risk of being rejected by both, potentially leading to the feelings of isolation and otherness (Cauce et al. 1992). As a result, interracial families and their mixed race children have to negotiate and form individual and collective familial racial identities (Byrd, Garwick and Williams 2006; Lawton, Foeman and Brown 2013). Kich (1992) proposes a model of healthy identity development for mixed race children which argues that the child needs to embrace both/all aspects of their racial and ethnic heritage to develop a healthy identity. It is argued that this is achieved when parents confront and openly discuss all aspects of their child’s racial and ethnic heritage and actively promote a multicultural lifestyle (Kich 1992; Gibbs and Hine 1992).

This can, however, be difficult to achieve, particularly if wider society holds binary views about race. Hickman (1997) discussed the ‘one drop’ rule and how historically in America anyone with ‘one drop’ of black blood was considered black. Furthermore, in the UK Phoenix and Tizard (2005) conducted research with adolescents of black and white parentage. They found that many people within society, including professionals such as social workers argued that mixed race children should identify as black because society will consider them to be black. However, when they asked their sample of young people how they identify themselves less than half of the young people identified themselves as black. Most of the other young people identified as ‘mixed’, using a variety of terms to refer to this, or ‘brown’. Phoenix and Tizard report that a very small number of young people identified as ‘more white than black’.
Phoenix and Tizard (2005) identified factors associated with how young people chose to describe their ethnicity or race. For example, they found that identifying as black was not related to social class, the racialised composition of their family or school but was related to holding politicised views about race and their level of affiliation to white people. The majority of the sample were deemed to have a positive racialised identity and to see their mixed heritage as an asset. Self-esteem, family dynamics, feelings of loyalty to one or both parents, and a sense of feeling torn were all associated with the development of a positive racialised identity. On the other hand, they found that living with a black parent was not associated with a positive racialised identity.

Skin tone was also found to affect how the young people chose to describe their ethnicity or race. The young people who were described as ‘looking white’ did not describe themselves as black. This is consistent with findings from previous research. In particular, Jones (2000) argued that mixed race adolescents, especially with darker skin tones, often feel forced to identify with the parent from a minority group as they did not feel able to ‘pass’ as a legitimate member of the majority group, leading to feelings of isolation and ‘otherness’.

Research has also shown that skin tone, colour and the degree of similarity within the family influence the parent and siblings with which mixed race children identify with. Furthermore, research suggests that skin tone and colour also affects the social groups that mixed race children chose to identify with but also that will offer friendship and membership to mixed race children (Sebring 1984; Jones 2000; Gibbs 1987; Root 1990; Morley & Street 2014; Phoenix and Tizard 2005).

In line with the changing ethnic landscape in the UK research has started to explore the experiences of those from interracial backgrounds. To date, however, most research has tended to focus on mixed race children and the unique challenge they face with regard to the
process of identity development. What factors influence this process of identity development, however, remains unclear. In particular, the potential role of parents, wider family or society on the process of identity development for mixed race children has attracted less attention. Research suggests that attachment is associated with the process of identity development, particularly regarding the child’s development of their sense of self, self-esteem and ability to form and maintain relationships with others (Ainsworth 1989; Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1979). However, a recent unpublished literature survey (Cousins and Ogden 2016) identified a lack of research exploring the process of relationship formation and attachment in interracial families, and whether this was a different process with unique factors to consider for interracial families compared to monoracial families.

Recently, however, there has been a shift towards exploring the views and experiences of other members of interracial families, most commonly white mothers of mixed race children. Most of this research has been conducted by sociologists and social psychologists, often adopting ethnographic approaches, to identify psychological, societal and social factors that affect members of interracial families’ experiences.

In 2013 the journal Ethnic and Racial Studies published a special issue called Mothering Across Racialised Boundaries. In the introduction piece Barn and Harman (2013) discussed the evolution of research into mixed race children and interracial families. Whilst Barn and Harman (2013) identify that there has been an increase in research looking at the experiences of women in interracial families, most commonly white mothers of mixed race children, there continues to be a lack of empirical research that captures the experiences of parents of mixed race children and the unique challenges they may face and needs they may have. Therefore, whilst the special issues introduces the reader to some of the most important and influential pieces of research in the area it did not include all of the research that has been conducted.
Furthermore, the selection of papers was not systematic and the quality of the research presented was not reviewed.

**Purpose and aims of literature review:**

The UK is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, with a growing number of interracial families and mixed-race children. Research suggests that members of interracial families face unique challenges and needs. Research has explored the challenges faced by mixed race children, particularly regarding the process of identity development. However, the influence of wider family members on their identity development has not been considered. In recent years, research has started to capture the voices of wider members of interracial families. Thus far research in the UK has tended to be conducted with mothers of mixed race children, with a view to identifying the social and psychological factors that affect their experiences of motherhood. However, this remains a relatively small body of research. To date there has not been a systematic review of the literature to assess the quality of the research, synthesise the findings and identify gaps in our knowledge and areas for future research.

Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to systematically collect and review the current literature on mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood with a view to assessing the quality of the research in this area, identifying the factors that affect their experiences of motherhood and gaps in our knowledge and areas for future research.

The decision to focus on mothers and their experiences is because this has been the growing focus of research in interracial couples and families. Furthermore, it may shed light upon the processes of identity development experienced by their children identified in the literature. This focus does not mean, however, there is not a real need to capture the voices of fathers and other members of the wider family and support networks. Nor does it mean that interracial families and their members are inherently pathological or problematic as has often
been the case (Twine 2010). The text so far could be seen as problem focused and as a result it is important to locate the text and state a position. The ‘problem focus’ is not intended to represent or contribute to a deficit focused narrative surrounding mixed race children and interracial families. It is intended to acknowledge that some mixed race children and interracial families will face unique challenges and therefore have unique needs. It is hoped that reviewing the current literature will help to create a more balanced narrative surrounding interracial families, by acknowledging factors that foster positive experiences for these mothers and their children alongside factors that provide challenges. In addition, increasing understanding and awareness of the challenges some mothers of mixed race children and consequently their children and family can face could help improve the support provided to these women, children and families when it is needed.

**Method**

A systematic search was conducted in July 2017 to review the current literature on mothers of mixed race children, with a view to identifying factors that influence mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood.

**Identification of Articles**

Psychology Cross Search was used, through EBSCO host, to search six electronic databases - Medline, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, PsychArticles, PsychBooks, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection and PsychInfo. Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) database was also searched. The following search terms were used "mixed race children" OR "bi racial children" OR "mixed parentage children" OR "mixed heritage children" AND "mothers" or "mothers’ experiences" or "motherhood". Boolean operators were used to ensure that search results contained information from each set of search terms and therefore were specifically about mothers of mixed race children. Limiters were used to
ensure only articles published in peer review journals were identified, no other limiters were used. The original search yielded 34 results, five duplicates were removed.

**Screening Process**

The screening process started by reading the title and abstract of the remaining 29 articles. Articles were screened, and only included if they met the following criteria:

- Empirical research published in a peer review journal article
- The focus of the research was to explore the experiences of mothers of mixed race children and/or the title, abstract and keywords indicated that the paper will contribute to answering the question ‘what factors affect mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood?’
- If the title, abstract and key words did not provide enough information to assess whether the research could contribute to answering the question ‘what factors affect mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood?’ it was included and this assessment was made by reading the full text.

17 articles were excluded at this stage as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The full text of the remaining 12 papers was read and assessed using the same criteria stated above. Four papers were excluded at this stage, leaving a total of eight papers, see Figure 1 for reasons for exclusion. At this stage, seven additional articles were identified from references mentioned in text or listed in the reference section of the original papers. The same screening process was undertaken for the additional articles and two excluded, leaving a total of 13 articles.
Figure 1. Process of identifying, screening and assessing quality of articles

- Potentially eligible records identified (n=34)
  - Psychology Cross Search: 11
  - ASSIA: 23

Number of duplicates removed, within and between both databases (n=5)

Potentially eligible records (n=29)

Excluded through screening (title, abstract and key words) (n=17) as did not meet inclusion criteria

Full text articles assessed for eligibility (n=12)

Exclusion of articles after full text screening (n=4)
  - Reasons for exclusion:
    2 were excluded as the focus of the research was not specifically on mothers of mixed race children.
    Mothers of mixed race children were not looked at separately and therefore you could not identify which of the findings were directly relevant to mixed race mothers specifically.
    1 was excluded as it was not an empirical research paper.
    1 was excluded as it was not about mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood, the paper looked at how social workers perceive mothers of mixed race children.

Additional sources found (n=7)

Exclusion of additional articles after screening (n=2)
  - Reasons for exclusion:
    - The focus of the paper was on single mothers, single mothers of mixed race children were not looked at specifically or separately.
    - Data for mothers of mixed race children not presented separately.

Appraisal of quality (n=13)

Exclusion of articles due to lack of information and transparency, meaning it was difficult to appraise the quality:
  1 - no information on p’s including n, method of recruitment, data analysis process. No quotes were provided to evidence findings.
  2 - no info on p’s including n, method of recruitment, how many p’s were mothers of mixed race children and data analysis process.

Articles included in the review (n=10)
Critical Appraisal of Quality

Appraisal strategy and process

The remaining 13 articles were examined in detail and assessed for quality. All of the articles were qualitative, five of these employed ethnographic methods. Two of the studies employed mixed methods. In one study the researchers asked children to complete a questionnaire that measured racial attitudes. However, as the information gathered from the questionnaire was not directly relevant to the aims of the review or the review question it was not included in the critical appraisal process. Another study conducted interviews with social work practitioners, carers, young people and families, a quantitative study of case files data and an analysis of departmental policies.

To assess quality the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) (Tong, Sainsbury and Craig 2007) was used. This is a comprehensive 32 item checklist for reviewing and reporting interviews and focus groups. For the five ethnographic papers where interviews constituted part of the research the COREQ was used to review the information presented about the interviews. However, the COREQ did not cater for all aspects of ethnographic research. Therefore, to ensure a comprehensive review of the ethnographic papers was conducted criteria created by Richardson (2000) was used to review the paper. Whilst this results in papers being evaluated by different criteria it ensures that papers are judged based on criteria designed specifically to evaluate the methodological approach employed by each study. This was deemed to be the fairest and most comprehensive way of assessing quality. Furthermore, when more than one appraisal tool was used the rating was based on an evaluation of the criteria for each appraisal tool. Moreover, the methodological limitations section below intends to summarise the common problems with the papers.
included that are relevant to all methodological approaches utilised by the studies included in the review.

The final stage of the critical appraisal process involved categorising studies as either high, medium or low quality. Decisions about how to rate the quality of the studies was based upon criteria developed and reported by MacEachen et al. (2010). The criteria were adapted to reflect the varied methodological approaches adopted by the studies and therefore to ensure that the criteria were relevant for rating quality of ethnographic research.

Studies that were rated as low quality were not automatically excluded from the review. This is based upon acknowledgment from qualitative researchers that methodologically flawed research can still provide interesting and valuable findings (Petticrew and Roberts 2008; Tong, Sainsbury and Craig 2007). However, three articles were excluded during the critical appraisal stage due to a lack of transparency, which made it difficult to critically appraise the quality of the study. For example, for one study no information was provided about the number of participants, how participants were identified and how data was analysed. In addition, a lack of quotes made it difficult to identify when the researcher was drawing on their own findings or findings from previous research. In addition, for the other two studies no information was provided about the process of the quantitative aspects of the study. Furthermore, very little information was provided about the qualitative aspects such as number of participants interviewed, how participants were recruited, how many of the participants were mothers of mixed race children, how the data was analysed and how the themes presented were generated. Therefore, a total of 10 papers were included in the review.

**Quality status of the papers included in the review**
See table one for a description of quality ratings of included studies, table two for further information on each study, including the quality rating and table three and four for a summary of each appraisal tool and how each study fared on this.

Table 1 – Description of quality ratings of included studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
<th>Description of studies included</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Four studies were rated as high quality, three studies provided the following information about their sample: number of participants, demographic data, how participants were recruited; information about the data collection (interviews (n=2) and therapy sessions (n=1)) and analysis process; and the findings were contextualised through reference to previous research and/or theory. In one of the studies the researcher also provided personal information about themselves, which contextualised his interest in the topic area. Furthermore, he discussed areas of similarity and difference between himself and participants and considers the potential impact this could have on their relationship and the information gathered. One of the studies was an autoethnographic account and therefore was evaluated using different criteria. The study was rated high as the researcher was deemed to provide: a substantive contribution to our understanding of the experience of family life for mothers in ‘mixed families’; an aesthetic, creative and artistic account of her experiences; a high level of reflexivity; an insightful and thought-provoking narrative; and credible interpretations.</td>
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</table>

### Quality Rating | Description of studies included
---|---
**Medium** | Four studies were rated as medium quality, two of which drew on ethnographic methods. Three of the studies provided information about how participants were selected and recruited. All four studies provided information about the sample size. However, the four studies provided varying amounts of demographic information about their participants. Two of the studies demonstrate a good level of reflexivity by identifying aspects of similarity and difference between themselves and the participants and the potential impact of this on all stages and aspects of the research. None of the studies provided sufficient information about how data was analysed. Furthermore, there was a consistent lack of information provided about the format of the interviews.

**Low** | Two studies were rated as low quality. Both studies provided very little information on how participants were recruited. One of the studies failed to provide sufficient demographic information about their sample. In addition, in both studies little information was provided about the process of data collection and no information was provided about the process of data analysis and therefore how the themes that are presented were generated.

### Results

*Summary of studies included in the review*
All ten papers included in the review utilised qualitative methods. Most of studies used purposive sampling (n=5). One study used snowballing and one used a combination of purposive and snowballing. Two studies did not state their recruitment method or sampling procedure. The final study was an autoethnographic study and therefore did not employ a recruitment or sampling procedure. Only three of the studies reported the method used to analyse their data (framework analysis (n=2), discourse analysis (n=1)).

Three of the studies examine the experiences of single mothers, one study does not state the relationship status of their participants and the other studies include mothers in a range of relationship statuses. The majority of studies included mothers of mixed race children of white and black heritage. Seven of the studies include mothers of mixed race children of white and black heritage. Furthermore, in two of the studies children of white and black heritage constitute the majority but parents of four mixed white and Asian heritage children are included in the sample. In her autoethnographic account Lester Murad discusses her experience as a mother of children of white and Asian heritage.

In two of Twine’s studies (1999; 2004) fathers of mixed race children and black family members were interviewed and included in the analysis and findings. These studies were included in the review as the interviews with family members were conducted in addition to interviews with mothers of mixed race children. Therefore, only findings that specifically relate to mothers and their experience of motherhood were included in the analysis and synthesis of results in this literature review.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Participant details</th>
<th>Recruitment Method</th>
<th>Research Question/Aims</th>
<th>Study Design, Data Collection and Analysis Methods</th>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
<th>Findings relevant to mothers of mixed race children's experiences of motherhood and factors that affect their experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of racism and the changing nature of white privilege among lone white mothers of mixed-parentage children in the UK by Harman (2010)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=30; Age 20-39, mean:36; white lone mothers</td>
<td>purposive - from a range of sources: black and interracial families, a regional multiple heritage service, social services, support groups for lone parents, a regional NSPCC family support service, a regional race relations unit, an agency assisting lone parents to find employment and snowballing</td>
<td>How mothers feel about and cope with the racism they and their children face</td>
<td>Interviews Thematic generation of codes combined with framework analysis</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Findings/themes were separated into three categories: family, school and local area. Family: Entering into IR relationship meant families racist views emerged. Mothers had to negotiate their support networks in order to reduce exposure to potentially harmful influences. Mothers stated that they felt as though their parenting is scrutinised more than in other families and assumptions are made about their abilities as mothers. Discussion of strategies employed to manage this: becoming more involved in the minority culture eg food, hair. School: mothers were concerned about how diverse the school was, how well they deal with racism and whether there are ‘good’ BME role models within the school. Strategies used by mothers to manage racism: remove from school, try to find ‘right’ school – involves consideration of class and race. Local area: White residential communities viewed as ‘unsafe’, mothers spoke about feeling different – juxtaposition to whiteness being seen as the same or norm. Mothers spoke about experiences of social disapproval towards them and assumptions that were made about them such as being seen as promiscuous.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Single White Mothers With Black Children in Therapy by Banks (1996)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=16; Age: 17-23; white single mothers</td>
<td>purposive - self referral, social services or voluntary agency referral</td>
<td>To explore the themes that arose during therapy with this group of women</td>
<td>Biographic note taking and audio recordings of sessions Discourse Analysis</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Themes emerged through discussions during therapy sessions. Isolation – feeling isolated from white and black communities – in most cases this affected mother and child. All women had symptoms of depression – related to poor relationship with the father and/or behavioural difficulties with children – which often affected mother/child relationship. Isolation and depression is common in single parents but for this group: Single parent + racism + isolation. Women had not considered the significance of having a mixed race child – what this represented to others. Experiences of racism from white and black people, obvious disapproval, stares etc. Experiences of loss of family due to rejection – when father is available for support thisameliorated the impact. Loss of the full status of motherhood – stigma and labels applied to the children. Feelings about fathers – anger towards father and does this lead to feelings of guilt in the children that might miss their father – does this lead to familial ‘in house’ racism? Women were better able to deal with racist comments when black partner is available and supportive. Alternative partners – process and difficulties associated with finding another partner. Mothers spoke about difficulties with attachment and the child’s relationship with their whiteness and blackness – rejection of this? Seen as rejection of mother?</td>
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<td>Narratives from a Nottingham council estate: a story of white working class mothers with mixed race children by McKenzie (2013)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=35; Age: 19-56; white mothers</td>
<td>purposive - all p's were residents on one estate but does not state how they were selected/approached</td>
<td>&quot;examining the impact of class inequality and a stigmatized living space in an ethnically diverse urban neighbourhood&quot;</td>
<td>Ethnographic - Interviews Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Women spoke about a sense of ‘being looked down on’ and feeling stigmatized. ‘Being St Ann’s’: the ‘Jamaicanization’ of a neighbourhood – identity and the role of the estate in their sense of identity – what this meant to them and what this looked like. What blackness meant and looks like on the estate ‘blackness’. Pride associated with their children - ‘more than just white’ and of their ‘beautiful mixed-race children’ along with their modern ‘multicultural families’. Knowledge about culture is valued – being able to cook food authentically is of value – something they are proud of. Resilience – how they manage difficulties and challenges through social support networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>The politics of Mothering in a &quot;Mixed Family&quot;: An Autoethnographic Exploration by Lester Murad (2005)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1 - autoethnographic, did not provide information about her age; ethnicity: American-Jewish</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>To explore the experiences of mothering in an American-Jewish and Palestinian-Muslim Family</td>
<td>autoethnographic - draws on diary entries Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Lester Murad conceptualises parenting as a political process, discussing the political decisions &quot;mixed&quot; families face. She explores the challenge faced by monoracial parents in &quot;mixed&quot; families in terms of how they define themselves and establish a racial identity. She also explores the power of location and language, experiences in which she has felt inadequate as a parent and the cultural context that surrounds this and social support.</td>
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<td>Social capital and the informal support networks of lone white mothers of mixed-parentage children by Harman (2013)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=30; Age 20-39, mean:36; white lone mothers</td>
<td>purposive - from a range of sources: black and interracial families, a regional multiple heritage service, social services, support groups for lone parents, a regional NSPCC family support service, a regional race relations unit, an agency assisting lone parents to find employment and snowballing</td>
<td>What are the informal support networks utilized by lone white mothers of mixed-parentage children?; and how do race and ethnicity influence the support networks available to mothers</td>
<td>Interviews - same data from Harman (2010) above Thematic generation of codes combined with framework analysis</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Whilst racism affected their support networks, this motivated them to seek support from alternative sources, for example through support groups, friendships with people from minority ethnic backgrounds and other interracial families. They developed strong relationships with other lone mothers of mixed race children who provided non judgemental support and empathy. Female friends were listed as most important source of support esp. black friends and other white mothers of MR children. Contact with father found to be one of the most stressful aspects of mothers support network</td>
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<td>A white side of black britain: the concept of racial literacy by Twine (2004)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=14; age not stated as this was a sample from larger subset of data for which age range of p's is not given. F:11; M:3, mothers and fathers of mixed race children</td>
<td>purposive - does not state how they were found</td>
<td>Original aims or research questions are not provided</td>
<td>Interviews - and ethnographic field research Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Introduces concept of racial literacy. Twine identifies practices parents attempting to cultivate 'black' identities in their mixed race children use 1) providing children with conceptual tools to allow them to critically evaluate media and textual representations of black people 2) Providing access to cultural knowledge and social relationships with black adults and children either through schools or clubs 3) enabling access to cultural objects - art, toys, books, music and décor that idealizes people of black heritage and portrays them as cultural equals. It is believed that this will support children to cope with and challenge messages or hierarchies that denigrate black people.</td>
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<td>Transracial Mothering and Antiracism: The Case of White Birth Mothers of “Black” Children in Britain by Twine (1999) 1999b</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=10; information about age not provided; white mothers who ‘socially classify’ their children as black</td>
<td>purposive and snowball - referrals from: youth workers, education officers, former students from sociology department at university and interviewees</td>
<td>Original aims or research questions are not provided</td>
<td>Interviews - and ethnographic field research Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3 themes arose when mothers discussed their views of maternal competence: 1. negotiating racist attitudes of white family members - considering possible impact this could have on their children 2. safe residential communities - exclusively white, residential areas were considered ‘dangerous’ for their ‘black children’ 3. co-mothering alliances with black women who provided their children with cultural resources which reinforced feelings of maternal competence Concluded that white women that are mothers of MR children ‘bear their whiteness’ in a different way to other white mothers - white privilege has the potential to cause distance between them and their child/children. Some white mothers evaluate their competence by comparison to black mothers rather than white mothers</td>
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<tr>
<td>The genealogical imagination: the inheritance of interracial identities by Tyler (2005)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N=4; information about age and ethnicity of mothers interviewed was not provided. Participants were classified as ‘mothers in african descent interracial families’</td>
<td>purposive - through a colleague, through youth project, through fiend, through colleague</td>
<td>Original aims or research questions are not provided</td>
<td>Interviews - and residential anthropological field research Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Tyler examines how mothers developed interracial identities for themselves and their children. Tyler explores intersection between ideas related to kinship, ancestry, descent, belonging, place, biology and culture in order to develop their own and their children’s interracial identities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Participant details</td>
<td>Recruitment Method</td>
<td>Research Question/Aims</td>
<td>Study Design, Data Collection and Analysis Methods</td>
<td>Quality Rating</td>
<td>Findings relevant to mothers of mixed race children's experiences of motherhood and factors that affect their experience</td>
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<td>Bearing Blackness in Britain: The Meaning of Racial Difference for White Birth Mothers of African-Descend Children by Twine (1999)</td>
<td>Uk</td>
<td>95 parents of African descent children including 65 white birth mothers and their black family members. 14 white, english fathers of African descent children in same communities. Information on age is not provided. Breakdown of gender is not provided - does not state gender of the black family members that are interviewed. White parents and black family members are interviewed</td>
<td>snowball</td>
<td>Original aims or research questions are not provided</td>
<td>Interviews - and ethnographic field research Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Maternal incompetence: black family members perceived white mothers as incompetent, particularly with regard to their ability to prepare them for experiences of racism, suspected them of not possessing 'racial empathy'. Contradictions in this as black family members stated that their own black mothers had not prepared them for experiences of racism either - 'whiteness' 'racial gap' - may become isolated, rejected from social network/family because of this. Both black and white mothers of MR children feared that their children would be seen as different to black children (with two black parents). Black mothers thought the fact that they shared the same 'racial identity prepared them to empathise with this experience. Mothers were seen as responsible for transferring black culture and heritage to their children, rather than fathers. Black family members stated that white women and their children are judged based on the adoption of certain cultural practices such as hair care and food. White mothers were aware of this and recognised the importance of gaining access to black communities and social networks. Concerns from white mothers, black mothers and black family members of white mothers about impact of racial difference on bonding, attachment and relationships in short and long term. Discussion of the role of physical appearance and similarity in skin tone in this process. Some white women adopted a range of strategies to counter experiences of racism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing Identity Formation and Self-Concept in preschool aged biracial children by Morrison (1995)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>N=11; information about age not provided. The women interviewed were mothers of mixed race children; ethnicity: 9: White 2: Black</td>
<td>not stated</td>
<td>To provide information on the factors within the parenting process that are intended to promote identity, racial attitude, and self concept development, how the mothers racially identify their children and the racial attitudes of the children</td>
<td>Interviews - Not stated - themes were presented but does not state how themes were generated</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>How to racially identify their children? Nine mothers wanted their children to establish an identity that acknowledged their dual heritage. Two mothers did not think it was necessary to use any term to identify their children. Mothers identified wanting their children to be independent and believe that they can do/be whatever they want. Mothers spoke about the importance of an understanding about culture and their cultural heritage in fostering their children's self concept and identity. Minor themes: Mothers spoke about the importance of social relationships with friends or family members that are also in interracial relationships. Mothers also spoke about their experiences of discrimination, including racism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appraisal Tool: Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ)</td>
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<td>Harman (2013)</td>
<td>Sufficient information is provided about the researcher, including: gender and occupation. Lack of information regarding relationships with participants, including whether relationships were established prior to the study and what participants knew about the researcher. There is a lack of reflexivity as the researcher did not discuss bias, assumptions or reasons for interest in the topic.</td>
<td>Sufficient information is provided about recruitment and participants, including recruitment method, number of participants and participants: age; level of education; employment status; level of income; housing status; no. of children and ethnicity of children. Sufficient information about interviews is provided, including: topics covered; average length and method of recording. There is a lack of information about whether repeat interviews were used, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants.</td>
<td>Method of data analysis is stated: framework analysis. Information was provided about how many people coded the data, how themes were generated, and the software used to aid this process. Quotes are provided to illustrate themes, there appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. Major themes and minor themes are clearly presented, including reference to diverse cases. Information was not provided about their coding tree or whether participants provided feedback on the findings.</td>
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<td>Harman (2010)</td>
<td>Sufficient information is provided about the researcher, including: gender and occupation. Lack of information regarding relationships with participants, including whether relationships were established prior to the study and what participants knew about the researcher. There is a lack of</td>
<td>Sufficient information is provided about recruitment and participants, including recruitment method, number of participants and participants: age; level of education; employment status; level of income; housing status; no. of children and ethnicity of children. Sufficient information about</td>
<td>Method of data analysis is stated: framework analysis. Information was provided about how many people coded the data, how themes were generated, and the software used to aid this process. Quotes are provided to illustrate themes, there appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. Major themes and minor themes are clearly presented, including reference to diverse cases. Information was not provided about their coding tree or whether participants provided feedback on the findings.</td>
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<td>Banks (1996)</td>
<td>Reflexivity as the researcher did not discuss bias, assumptions or reasons for interest in the topic</td>
<td>Interviews is provided, including: topics covered; average length and method of recording. There is a lack of information about whether repeat interviews were used, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants.</td>
<td>Reference to diverse cases. Information was not provided about their coding tree or whether participants provided feedback on the findings.</td>
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<td>Tyler (2005)</td>
<td>Information was provided about the author, she identifies as female. Tyler demonstrates reflexivity as she reflects on aspects of herself which may have affected her relationship with participants and the</td>
<td>Information was provided about how participants were recruited. Limited demographic information about participants was included. The location of interviews was provided. The aims of the interview were stated. Information was provided about the number of coders and method of data analysis (discourse analysis). Quotes were used to illustrate the themes, there appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. Major themes were clearly displayed, and diverse cases were also discussed. The following were not included: description of a coding tree, how themes were derived, if software was used and if participants provided feedback on the findings.</td>
<td>No information was provided about the number of data coders, the coding tree, how themes were derived, whether software was used and whether participants provided feedback on the findings. Quotes were used to illustrate the themes. There appeared to be consistency between the data presented</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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Table 3 - Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal Tool: Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ)</th>
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<th>Domain 3: Analysis and Findings</th>
<th>Study Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>information gathered. Information was not provided about her occupation, training/experience and whether relationships were established prior to the study starting and what participants knew about the researcher.</td>
<td>about the number of repeat interviews that were conducted was provided. Method of recording data was included. Information about whether notes were taken, the duration of the interviews, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants was not included.</td>
<td>and the findings. Major and subthemes were clearly presented.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>McKenzie (2013)</td>
<td>States that all participants are from the St Ann’s estate but does not state how they were approached. The number of participants is stated. Demographic information about participants is included: age range; ethnicity of children’s fathers; participants ethnicity; how they identify their children’s ethnicity; and age of children. Information is not provided about: where interviews were carried out; whether repeat interviews were conducted; how the data was recorded including whether notes were taken; the duration of interviews; data saturation; and whether transcripts were returned to participants for comment</td>
<td>Information was provided about the number of coders. Quotes were used to illustrate the themes. There appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. Major themes were presented clearly and variation within each theme was discussed.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<th>Appraisal Tool:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Twine (1999b)</td>
<td>Information is provided about the researcher including her gender, occupation and experience in the topic. Furthermore, a degree of reflexivity is demonstrated as she states her reasons for interest in the topic. Information is not provided regarding whether relationships with participants were established prior to the start of the study and how much the participants knew about the researcher.</td>
<td>Information about the sampling and recruitment methods, sample size, setting of data collection, demographics of sample and duration of interviews. Information was not provided about whether repeat interviews were undertaken, how data was recorded, whether notes were taken, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants for comment.</td>
<td>Information about the number of coders was provided. Quotes were used to illustrate themes, themes were presented clearly with consideration of diverse cases. There appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. No information is provided about the coding tree, how themes were derived and whether software was used.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twine (2004)</td>
<td>Limited information provided about the researcher: gender, previous research experience and occupation. No information is provided about whether relationships were established before the study and how much participants knew about the researcher.</td>
<td>Data presented is a subset of data collected previously and published in other papers. Twine explains why she has chosen this particular subset of the wider data set. Information is provided about the sampling and recruitment methods. Limited demographic information about participants is provided. No information about the setting of the data collection, topics covered in interviews, how data was recorded, whether notes were taken, duration of interviews, data saturation,</td>
<td>No information is provided about the number of data coders, the coding tree, how themes were derived and whether software was used. Quotes were used to illustrate themes, including major and sub themes. There appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Morrison (1995)</td>
<td>Limited information is provided about the researcher. Therefore, reflexivity is not demonstrated.</td>
<td>Information is provided about the number of participants, limited demographic information is provided and the topics covered in the interview are included. Information is not provided about sampling or recruitment methods, the setting of interviews, whether repeat interviews were conducted, how data was recorder, whether notes were taken, the duration of interviews, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants.</td>
<td>Information is not provided about how many people coded the data, coding tree, how themes were derived and whether software was used. Quotes were used to illustrate themes, including major and minor themes. There appeared to be consistency between data presented and the findings.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twine (1999a)</td>
<td>Very little information is provided about the researcher. No information is provided about whether relationships were established prior to the study and how much participants knew about the researcher.</td>
<td>Information was provided about the setting in which the ethnographic research was conducted. Information is provided about how participants were recruited and how many were included in the study. Some demographic information was provided. No information was</td>
<td>No information was provided about the number of data coders, coding tree, how themes were derived and whether software was used. Quotes were used to illustrate themes, there appeared to be consistency between the data presented and the findings. Themes were clearly presented, including consideration of contradictory perspectives.</td>
<td>Low</td>
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</table>
**Table 3 - Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal Tool: Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>provided about the nature of the interview, whether repeat interviews were conducted, whether the interviews were recorded, whether notes were taken, the duration of the interviews, data saturation and whether transcripts were returned to participants</td>
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**Table 4 – Ethnographic Appraisal Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal Tool: Evaluating Ethnographic Research</th>
<th>Substantive Contribution</th>
<th>Aesthetic Merit</th>
<th>Reflexivity</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Expresses a Reality</th>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lester Murad (2005)</td>
<td>Yes – contextualises her own experiences with reference to theory and literature</td>
<td>Yes – well written, flows well, constructs a vivid narrative</td>
<td>Yes – demonstrates reflexivity and self-awareness by locating self and stating her position</td>
<td>Yes – generates interest and questions, furthers my knowledge</td>
<td>Yes – account appears ‘credible’, interpretations appear fair and are contextualised through reference to literature</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal Tool: Evaluating Ethnographic Research</td>
<td>Substantive Contribution</td>
<td>Aesthetic Merit</td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>Impact</td>
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<td>McKenzie (2013)</td>
<td>Yes – provides a deeply grounded, embedded and informed perspective</td>
<td>To some degree – is not particularly aesthetic</td>
<td>Yes – demonstrates good level of reflexivity. Researcher locates and owns their perspective and position. Identifies self as a fellow resident of the estate and a white working class mother of mixed race children. Provides an insightful reflection on the possible impact of her position.</td>
<td>Yes – is interesting and thought provoking</td>
<td>To some degree – interpretations seem fair and are contextualised. However, would have been nice to have seen some considerations of the limitations of the study and generalisability of the findings</td>
<td>Medium – rating decided in combination with COREQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler (2005)</td>
<td>Yes – provides an insightful and considered perspective on interracial identities</td>
<td>Yes – written in a very narrative style which helps the reader develop a narrative understanding of</td>
<td>Yes – demonstrates good level of reflexivity and self-awareness. Reflects on aspects of herself</td>
<td>Yes – is very interesting and thought provoking</td>
<td>Yes – argument and perspective are constructed well and contextualised with reference to literature. There is</td>
<td>Medium – rating decided in combination with COREQ</td>
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<td>Table 4 – Ethnographic Appraisal Tool</td>
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<td><strong>Appraisal Tool: Evaluating Ethnographic Research</strong></td>
<td><strong>Substantive Contribution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aesthetic Merit</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expresses a Reality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quality Rating</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>the concepts discussed.</td>
<td>and how these may have influenced the research.</td>
<td>limited consideration of the limitations of her approach and the generalisability of the findings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twine (2004)</td>
<td>Yes – challenges view that white parents of mixed race children cannot understand or help their children manage racism. Introduces a new concept ‘racial literacy’. Challenges current views of white parents of mixed race children.</td>
<td>No - Lack of information about analytic approach, it is therefore difficult to judge whether analytic approach opens up the text and invites interpretative responses. Presentation is not particularly artistic or aesthetic.</td>
<td>No - Lack of reflexivity demonstrated. Subjectivity is not addressed – researchers position, opinions and assumptions are not stated. This gives the impression of a lack of self-awareness and exposure.</td>
<td>Yes – interesting, thought provoking and generated questions</td>
<td>Yes – interpretations seem fair. Would be interesting to hear participants views on her conceptualisation of the ‘strategies’ they were employing. ? will the concept of racial literacy change over time as racism changes and hopefully reduces?</td>
<td>Medium – rating decided in combination with COREQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twine (1999a)</td>
<td>Yes – gives insight into how black family reads and flows well but is not</td>
<td>No – lack of reflexivity, researcher does</td>
<td>Yes – generates interest and questions</td>
<td>To some degree – but would have been nice to have</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low – rating decided in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appraisal Tool: Evaluating Ethnographic Research</td>
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<td>members perceive white mothers of mixed race children</td>
<td>particularly aesthetic. There is a lack of information about the analytic approaches used. However, it does invite questions and interpretative responses</td>
<td>not locate self or contextualise her perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seen a consideration of the limitations of the piece in which the researcher locates and owns the findings and considers their generalisability</td>
<td>combination with COREQ</td>
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Key findings and themes

The process of identifying themes was informed by meta-ethnographic approaches (Noblit and Hare 1988). The themes presented are considered third order interpretations. Third order interpretations seek to identify patterns and themes across a body of research (Noblit and Hare 1988; Schutz 1962). These third order interpretations were developed from the first and second order interpretations by the authors of each paper. First order interpretations refer to the themes and concepts presented by the author(s). Second order interpretations refer to the narrative created by the author regarding how the themes and concepts relate to each other, wider theory and research (Noblit and Hare 1988; Schutz 1962).

As findings were presented in a range of ways across the papers, key concepts were extracted from the authors’ themes, quotes, results and discussion sections. Similar concepts were grouped together. A ‘line of argument’ or third order interpretation was then generated by grouping the similar concepts together and drawing on theory and explanations included in the original papers to create a narrative surrounding each concept in the form of the themes presented below (Noblit and Hare 1988; Thomas and Harden 2008).

The four themes can be broadly divided into the challenges the mothers face and the strategies they employ to manage these challenges. Quotes from the original papers are used to help illustrate and contextualise each theme. All names used to refer to participants are the pseudonyms used by the author in the original paper.

Challenges faced by mothers of mixed race children

Experiences of prejudice

All ten papers discussed experiences of prejudice and racism directed towards the mothers and their children both within their family and wider society.
Within the family

Mothers spoke about how entering an interracial relationship or having mixed race children resulted in racist views within their own family becoming more apparent (Harman 2010; Twine 1999b; Banks 1996; Tyler 2005). For example, Judy, a 25-year-old mother interview by Harman (2010) recalled how her sisters reacted when they found out she was pregnant:

“how can you carry a black man’s baby inside you? You know, you’re going to walk down the street and it’s not going to be your colour” (page, 181).

Some of the women stated that this had affected their relationship with their family because some family members disapproved of their relationship (Harman 2010; 2013; Lester Murad 2005; Twine 1999b; Banks 1996; Tyler 2005). Erica, a 29-year-old mother of three young children interviewed by Twine (1999a) described ‘falling out’ with her father because of the way he treated her children:

“I don’t think [my father] still can believe that he has family that are black, you know. It’s very offensive and hurtful to him, I think” (page 733)

In addition, mothers spoke about attitudes and assumptions held by wider family members and the judgements they felt were made about them as a mother of mixed race children. Twine (1999b; 2004) and Harman (2010) found that white mothers were often deemed incompetent by black family members and wider society. The white mothers interviewed by Twine (1999b) and Harman (2010) and the black family members interviewed by Twine (1999b) spoke about how white mothers were deemed incapable of being able to sympathise with or adequately prepare their children for experiences of racism (Twine 1999b; 2004; Harman 2010). For example, Camille, who was interviewed by (Twine 1999b), identified as black and whose brothers were in interracial relationships with white women stated:
“I don’t think white mothers have that understanding of what it means to be black… sometimes they haven’t dealt with their own racism. They meet a system that’s racist and they don’t know how to deal with it. I don’t think they’re always ready… in terms of being prepared for racism they haven’t dealt with their own racism. I think a lot of time [white mothers] aren’t prepared mentally, aren’t emotionally prepared just don’t know what they’re dealing with. They haven’t had the sociological discussions around racism. What it is, how it affects people, that kind of thing… somehow the forums aren’t there to discuss it” (Page 190)

Furthermore, whilst they were not necessarily deemed capable white mothers were often seen as responsible for transferring knowledge, to their children, about cultural heritage, preparing children for and managing experiences of racism, rather than their fathers (Twine 1999b; Lester Murad 2005). This is demonstrated by comments made by Jamilha, a 39-year-old mother, interviewed by Twine (1999b):

“You know what women’s roles and what men’s roles are. So I’m not quite sure whether there is a black influence even when black men are around. [Black fathers] will still very much feel that they need to be letting the mother bring up the children” (page 193)

Mothers spoke about how prejudicial attitudes expressed by family members and friends resulted in them having to negotiate the relationships and contact they had with certain people in order to protect their children from exposure to prejudicial and racist attitudes, and the impact this had on the relationships and support that was available to them (Harman 2010;2013, Twine 1999b; Tyler 2005).

Outside the family

Mothers spoke about experiences of prejudice and discrimination outside of their wider families. This included themselves and their children being called derogatory names, being
stared at or given ‘dirty looks’ (Morrison 1995; Harman 2010; McKenzie 2013). For example, one of the women interviewed by Morrison (1995) describes the racism she has experienced, including being stared at when going shopping:

“All kinds of things have happened to me. When I go shopping they stare at you and follow you around the store like you are going to steal something” (Page 149)

The mothers interviewed by McKenzie (2013) identified as working class. They described being aware of the negative views society holds about white working-class mothers of mixed race children. These include making assumptions that these women are ‘chavs’, wear a lot of gold jewellery, tracksuits and trainers. The women also expressed confusion at why gold jewellery, trainers and tracksuits had to carry negative connotations. They spoke about the role the media plays in perpetuating this perception through characters such as Vicky Pollard in Little Britain and Catherine Tate’s character Lauren. They argued that these characters encourage a stereotypical view of white working-class mothers of mixed race children and exacerbate negative connotations associated with clothing items such as gold jewellery.

The mothers reported feeling judged and ‘looked down on’ by people. Mothers spoke about how they were treated differently by people when they were in public with their children than when they were on their own. One mother interviewed by Harman (2010) recounts being spat at by ‘an old lady’ when she saw her in town with her children. One of the women interviewed by Tyler (2005) reported feeling judged by other Muslim women in her neighbourhood, stating that she is seen as a ‘race traitor’ and question the strength and integrity of her religious views as a result of her interracial relationship.

Furthermore, mothers spoke about how their children serve as evidence that they had sexual relationships with black men, which was considered deviant and therefore resulted in them being treated differently (Banks 1996; Harman 2010). Mothers spoke about being
‘sexualised’, deemed sexually promiscuous and available. They reported experiences in which sexual innuendos were made in public towards them, even if their children were present (Banks 1996; Harman 2010). For example, Lori, a 24-year-old mother interviewed by Harman (2010) recounted the comments she has received from men in her local area:

“I find it quite difficult because there’s a lot of men that maul you all the time. Like you’re walking down the street with your child and a man will come up to you and be like ‘Well, when do you want a boy?’ or ‘Give me a kiss’... and I find that really out of order in front of my daughter, ’cos she understands, and I don’t want her to think that that’s acceptable. Men like shouting ‘Sexy’ and all this stuff...” (Page 188)

Mothers spoke about how the prejudice they experience can lead to feeling socially isolated and experiencing a lack of social support (Harman 2010, 2013; Twine 1999b; Banks 1996; McKenzie 2013) Banks (1996) discussed how this exclusion and isolation can be experienced on many levels, including their extended family, white and black communities and the child’s father.

Racial Identity and ‘Whiteness’

Several of the studies explore the challenges associated with the process of developing a racial identity for the mothers they interviewed. Twine (1999a; 1999b) spoke about how for white mothers, they are used to belonging to the majority and suddenly become seen as and consider themselves as ‘different’ and consequently their position within and to a majority status racial category changes. Twine refers to the mothers undergoing a process and having to ‘bear their whiteness differently’ (Twine 1999a; 1999b). For example, Allesandra, a 35-year-old single mother interviewed by Twine (1999a) described how being the mother of a black daughter has changed how she and others see her ‘whiteness’:
“Being the mother [of a black daughter] has affected me a lot because I feel ostracized from the [white community] and I’ve ostracized myself from it. I’ve excluded myself [from the white community], and I have also been excluded by [whites] because I can’t sit in a pub or anything and listen to all the crap they come out with. I can’t. So there’s a lot of white people that I feel I nothing in common with, only color and color’s not enough to bind us” (page 737)

Twine argues that mothers redefine their relationship with their whiteness and find a way to drop their white privilege. As they cannot pass their white privilege onto their children, this is considered an aspect of their whiteness that stands to create distance between them and their children. Lester Murad (2005) and Twine (1999a; 1999b) talk about how difficult this process can be within the confines of the traditional conceptualisations and categories of race.

**Strategies – how the mothers manage the challenges they face**

** Appropriation of cultural knowledge and practices**

Some of the mothers interviewed adopted certain cultural practices to demonstrate their competence as a parent to a mixed race child. White parents and their black family members spoke about how white mothers of mixed race children were judged based on their adherence to certain cultural practices such as cooking food from the father or fathers’ families’ country of origin and certain hair care processes (Twine 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Harman 2010).

In her 2004 paper Twine draws on a subset of interviews with parents she considers to be ‘racism-cognizant’. These parents acknowledged that racism may be a problem for their children and argued that their children needed access to specific resources to allow them to cope with the forms of racism they may experience in the future. These include: providing their children with analytical skills to enable them to analyse the role of race and racial difference in social interactions and how black people are represented in the media; fostering
social relationships with black children and adults; and socialising their children to black culture through art, books, music etc. This is demonstrated through comments made by Claire, a 35-year-old mother, interviewed by Twine (2004) who described how she tried to seek out access to forms of media that represent black children and ‘people of colour’:

“I’ve always attempted to make sure that there are different images on the walls, that there are different books on the shelves. That, you know, there are these representations [of blackness][ . . . ] It was very, very difficult to do this at the time [1960s] it’s not so difficult now. I would sort of purposely hunt out books that had black children or Asian children or people of colour in them, lots of different situations, and read those things. They were very difficult to find [when he was a child]. There were lots of books about black Sambo, I think, but nothing positive. It got easier, but I did feel at one point that home was the only place that [anti-racist images] was happening” (page 896)

The women consistently spoke about the significance of where they chose to live and how difficult it can be to find somewhere that feels like ‘home’ for all members of an interracial family (Lester Murad 2005). As stated above for some parents it was important that their children had the opportunity to form relationships with black children and adults, which is harder to achieve in certain areas (Twine 1999a, 1999b; Harman 2010; Tyler 2005). Mothers interviewed by Harman (2010) and Twine (2004) spoke about feeling torn and weighing up the pros and cons of living in more working class, ethnically diverse areas where white people were the minority or more middle class, rural areas where white people were the majority. Furthermore, the mothers interviewed by Harman (2010) spoke about difficulties they faced in trying to find the ‘right’ school. Mothers interviewed shared concerns about how the school dealt with experiences of racism and the availability of multicultural resources. These mothers were in a financial position that allowed them the power and
opportunity to move and chose where they want to live and for their child to go to school. However, this is not representative of all mothers included in the study. For example, some of the mothers interviewed by Twine (1999a; 1999b; 2004), McKenzie (2013) and Tyler (2005) were living on council estates and consequently were much less likely to have the opportunity to move or choose where they live or where their children go to school.

**Social Support**

As previously stated the mothers interviewed consistently reported that the prejudice they experience can lead to social isolation and a lack of social support (Harman 2010, 2013; Twine 1999b; Banks 1996; McKenzie 2013). The racism demonstrated by some family members means that often the women have to redefine their relationship with family members, reducing the amount of contact they have, which in turn reduces the availability of support from their family. However, these experiences appeared to motivate the mothers to seek social support from other sources and spoke about the importance of local support groups and friendships with people from ethnic minority groups or in interracial families (Harman 2010; 2013; McKenzie 2013; Morrison 1995). Close friendships between lone white mothers of mixed race children were particularly valued because of the non-judgemental support and empathy they provided (Harman 2013). This is demonstrated by comments made by Bethany, a woman interviewed by Harman (2013) as she describes the importance of her friendships with other mothers of ‘mixed-parentage children’:

“Having someone in your situation...You know that you can talk with so that you know if you’re feeling down about something and you find out that same person’s feeling down about the same situation, it makes you feel a bit better” (page 1331)

The women interviewed by and McKenzie (2013) herself all live on the St Ann’s estate in Nottingham. The women reported feeling stigmatized, looked down on and rejected by
people outside the estate as a result to the notoriety of the estate. In response to this the women found support, a sense of value, identity and belonging through their residence within the estate. The women spoke about a ‘St Ann’s identity’, which includes wearing certain clothes, jewellery and speaking in a particular way. In addition, they reported the value associated with motherhood, resilience, multiculturalism, knowledge and adoption of certain cultural practices is of value on the estate. A St Ann’s identity is also considered to be a multicultural identity, the women spoke about being ‘more than just white’. This suggests that adopting a ‘St Ann’s identity’ results in a shift in their racial identity or what Twine refers to as them bearing their whiteness differently. It appears their St Ann’s identity provides a sense of value and belonging which is protective against their experiences of stigma and rejection.

**Discussion**

**Summary of key findings and themes**

Mothers in all ten studies reported experiencing prejudice, discrimination and racism directed towards them and their children from within their own family and wider society. These experiences resulted in mothers having to renegotiate relationships with family members and friends in order to protect their children from potentially harmful and racist attitudes. This in turn reduced the sources of support available. However, the mothers reported gaining support from alternative sources such as local support groups, and other women in interracial relationships, other mothers of mixed race children and ethnic minority women. The women interviewed spoke about the importance of location and the challenges faced when trying to decide the ‘right’ school or most appropriate area for themselves and their children to live. Mothers managed the judgements they faced regarding their competence and fears about their children’s self esteem, identity and experiences of racism by adopting certain cultural
practices. The women also acknowledged that having a mixed race child challenges and changes your own racial identity and moves you from a position of belonging to the majority racial group to an uncertain, undefined position. Lester Murad (2005) spoke about how she managed this by redefining her conceptualisation and the traditional, rigid categories to define race and saw herself and her family as mixed rather than just her children. The women interviewed by McKenzie (2013) developed a sense of belonging, value and identity through adopting a multicultural ‘St Ann’s’ identity which allowed them to be seen as ‘more than just white’ and was protective against the experiences of stigma and discrimination they had experienced.

**Methodological limitations of the papers included in the review**

During the critical appraisal of quality stage three articles were excluded due to a lack of transparency, which made it difficult to critically appraise the quality of the study. One of the most common methodological problems with the studies included in the review was a consistent lack of information about participants, particularly about how participants were recruited which means it is not possible to critically appraise the recruitment process and consider the potential role of bias in recruitment (Mays and Pope 1995). Furthermore, there was a lack of demographic information about participants, including age, gender, ethnicity, ethnicity of their children, relationship status all of which are factors that could also affect their experiences of motherhood. Without this it is not possible to assess how widely the findings might apply (Mays and Pope 1995; Barker, Pistrang and Elliott 2015).

Another consistent problem was the lack of information provided about the data collection and analysis process. The absence of such information makes it difficult to assess the level of rigour or bias involved in the process, and therefore assess the credibility, coherence and trustworthiness of the research (Golafshani 2003; Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 2015; Elliott et
al. 1999). Furthermore, it is difficult to replicate or build upon the research when there is a lack of transparency about the processes of data collection and analysis (Mays and Pope 1995).

Reflexivity is considered to be a core component of all qualitative research, particularly research that employs ethnographic methods (Denscombe 2010; Richardson 2000). Reflexivity refers to the researcher ‘owning their perspective’ by describing their theoretical orientation, relationship to the participants or participant group, reason for interest in the topic or reflect upon the potential impact of their personal characteristics, biases and assumptions (Richardson 2010; Barker, Pistrang and Elliott 2015; Elliott et al. 1999). Only six of the ten papers (which represented three of the five ethnographic papers) defined and ‘owned their perspective’. Ethnographic research is about making sense of what the researcher observed during their field work. This process in inevitably influenced by the researcher’s own culture and life experiences and existing knowledge, assumptions and biases about the population being studied and the research project. When the researcher does not define or own their own position and share an explicit consideration of these factors and their impact on the research process it is difficult to assess the level of bias and overall credibility of the research and its findings (Denscombe 2010; Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 2015; Elliott et al. 1999).

Therefore, the papers that received the highest quality ratings provided sufficient information about: their sample including number of participants, demographic data about participants, recruitment strategy, data collection and analysis processes. Furthermore, they all contextualised their findings through reference to relevant research findings and theory. Bank’s study (1996) is rated particularly favourably as in addition to the information outlined above he demonstrated reflexivity by stating his position and identifying characteristics of
himself that may have affected the relationship he formed with participants and how the data was analysed and interpreted.

**Gaps in the literature highlighted by the methodological limitations and findings of the review**

Several of the papers explored the process of racial identity development and dilemma’s the woman faced regarding how to define their ethnicity. Some of the issues the women faced mirrored challenges experienced by mixed race children in developing a racial identity. Research has identified factors associated with racial identity development for mixed race children. However, due to the relative lack of research into wider members of interracial families little is known about the factors associated with racial identity development for mothers of mixed race children. Therefore, whilst this review has highlighted that mothers of mixed race children face challenges associated with racial identity development, in addition, to their children, future research could explore this process further in an attempt to identify the factors associated with the process.

In two of the studies mothers spoke about concerns they had about their relationship with their child. White mothers interviewed by Twine (1999a) reported feeling concerned that the racial difference between them could undermine their ability to parent and their relationship with their child. Furthermore, the mothers spoke about fears that their child would reject them because of their racial difference and not having adequately addressed or supported them to manage issues related to racial difference (Twine 1999a; Banks 1996). To my knowledge, there have not been any studies that have explored the impact of the racial difference between mother and child in interracial families and the impact of this on relationship formation and maintenance.
The majority of research conducted with interracial families explores the experiences of mothers of mixed race children of black and white heritage. As ‘Other Asian’ and ‘White’ was the most common interracial pairing in the last UK census there is likely to be a growing number of mothers of mixed race children of white and Asian heritage. Whilst some of the findings from research with mothers of mixed race children from different heritages may be applicable it will be important to consider the unique challenges and needs these women, families and children may face.

Furthermore, some of the findings such as experiences of social isolation, stigma, anxiety and depression can apply to all mothers, particularly single mothers, regardless of the ethnicity of their children (Benzeval 1998). Therefore, a key part of developing an informed understanding and awareness of the challenges and needs of mothers of mixed race children is identifying which factors uniquely affect mothers of mixed race children. Developing such an understanding has potential clinical implications, as it may lead to an increased awareness of the potential challenges and unique needs faced by mixed race children and therefore the specific areas that professionals would need to be aware of and address.

Acknowledging that issues regarding identity development are likely to arise in all members of the family makes it a ‘family issue’ rather than an issue experienced solely by the mixed race children. This has direct implications for systemic work, in which ‘problems’ are located within the family rather than one individual (Walker 2012). A systemic approach could help family members work together to identify a collective, multifaceted family identity. Research with mixed race adolescents has identified the benefits of a multifaceted racial identity for mixed race children. Furthermore, women interviewed by McKenzie (2013) described how developing a multifaceted racial identity was protective against experiences of prejudice and
stigma. Therefore, it is likely that the development of a multifaceted family racial identity would be beneficial for all members of the family.

Two of the studies acknowledged other ways in which a family can be ‘mixed’, such as interfaith relationships and families. Future research should consider all aspects of the families that might be ‘mixed’ and the impact this has.

Further research, that builds upon current knowledge and understanding of the unique challenges and needs faced by interracial families, and strategies that are helpful in overcoming these challenges has potential clinical value. A more nuanced understanding of the unique challenges and needs faced by interracial families and strategies that help overcome these challenges could equip professionals across a wide range of services to better support the unique needs of interracial families that may work with.

Conclusions

Barn and Harman (2013) stated that there is a lack of empirical research that explores the experiences of parents of mixed race children and the unique challenges they may face and needs they may have. The purpose of this literature review was to systematically collect and review the current literature on mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood with a view to identifying the factors that affect their experiences of motherhood. The review has highlighted that there continues to be a lack of high quality empirical research exploring the experiences of mothers of mixed race children. Common problems include failure to provide sufficient information about: participants, including how they were recruited and their demographics; method of data collection; process of data analysis; and how themes were generated. Furthermore, there was a consistent lack of reflexivity as often the author would not ‘state their position’ by identifying areas of similarity and difference between
themselves and the participants or their reason for interest in the topic and how this might have influenced the research.

Whilst further research is needed, the papers included in the current review have allowed us to learn more about mothers of mixed race children’s experiences on motherhood. Furthermore, with reference to the review question it has allowed us to identify factors that affect mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood. The factors can broadly be divided into challenges the mothers face and the strategies employed to manage these challenges. The challenges include experiences of prejudice which often served to reduce their level of social support and dilemma’s regarding their racial identity. The strategies they employed to overcome these challenges included adopting certain cultural knowledge and practices, finding alternative sources of social support and ‘bearing their whiteness differently’ through creating a new multifaceted racial identity.

Endnotes

1 Various terms are used within the literature, for consistency the terms interracial and mixed race will be used from this point forward.

2 It is important to note that children that identify with the term mixed race do not constitute a homogenous group. Therefore, there will be differences in terms of needs, challenges and experiences for individuals and groups of individuals that identify as mixed race. Where research has stated the heritage of the children they are referring to when using the term mixed race this will be reported. However, this is not always stated and therefore caution and consideration has to taken with regard to the generalisability of findings across all mixed race children.
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Appendix A – Guideline for Authors

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Overview of Clinical Experience

Adult Mental Health – Rehabilitation and Recovery Inpatient Unit and Assertive Outreach Team (1 year)

For the first year of my training I undertook a split placement across a Rehabilitation and Recovery Inpatient Unit and an Assertive Outreach Team. On the inpatient unit I provided psychological assessment, formulation and therapy for people experiencing difficulties associated with psychosis. This included working with people with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and psychosis. The presenting difficulties we worked on in therapy included symptoms associated with: psychosis such as auditory hallucinations and unusual beliefs; traumatic experiences; anxiety and low mood. I also co-facilitated a group for people experiencing anxiety. The group was adapted to address the specific anxieties experienced by the client group that were associated with psychosis. Furthermore, consideration was taken to ensure the group was accessible to the clients, given the cognitive difficulties associated with psychosis based presentations.

With the Assertive Outreach Team I provided psychological assessment, formulation and therapy for people experiencing difficulties associated with psychosis, based in the community. Typically, the referrals accepted by the Assertive Outreach Team are for people who have struggled to maintain involvement with mental health services. As a result, they require a more flexible and intensive approach to foster and maintain positive relationships with mental health professionals and maintain engagement with the service. This provided me with the opportunity to develop my communication and engagement skills. Furthermore, I gained experience of adapting my practice and applying my psychological skills and knowledge flexibly to offer psychological assessment and therapy in a format that was appropriate for each client.

The presenting difficulties experienced by the clients were similar to those experienced by the clients in the inpatient unit. The main models of therapy I used were Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Narrative Therapy.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) (6 months)

In my second year I completed a six month placement in a CAMHS team. This placement offered a wide range of experience including psychological assessment, formulation and therapy, cognitive assessment, contributing to assessment for Autistic Spectrum Conditions and being a member of the reflective team within the family therapy clinic. The main therapeutic models I used were Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Systemic approaches. Clients presented with a wide range of presenting difficulties, including anxiety, low mood, self-harm, emotion regulation difficulties and gender identity concerns. I completed school observations and cognitive assessments to provide information about the child’s social and communication skills and cognitive ability to contribute to assessments of Autistic Spectrum Conditions. I also provided a presentation to families who were on the waiting list for psychological therapy. The presentation provided families with information about what psychological therapy was and self-help strategies they could utilise whilst they were on the waiting list. In addition, I provided supervision to an assistant psychologist.
Older Adult – Dementia Services and Older Adult Community Mental Health Team (6 months)

The next placement I completed during my second year was a split placement across Dementia Services and an Older Adult Community Mental Health Team. Within Dementia Services my role included providing information about dementia to people recently diagnosed with dementia and their carers/families. In addition, I provided psychological assessment, formulation and therapy to people with a diagnosis of dementia and/or their carers and family members. I also conducted cognitive assessments to assess for dementia in complex presentations. I co-facilitated a psychological therapy group for people recently diagnosed with dementia that are struggling to come to terms with the diagnosis and what it means for them and their families. Furthermore, I provided research supervision to an assistant psychologist.

With the Older Adult Community Mental Health Team I provided psychological assessment and therapy for older adults experiencing severe and enduring mental health problems. The main models of therapy utilised across both services were Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and post-modernist systemic approaches such as solution focused and narrative therapy.

Specialist – Mother and Baby Inpatient Unit and Community Perinatal Mental Health Team (6 months)

I chose to complete my specialist placement within a Mother and Baby Inpatient Unity and a Community Perinatal Mental Health Team. This is because I have a specialist interest in perinatal mental health problems. My role on the Mother and Baby Unit was very varied and included providing psychological assessment, formulation and intervention to women experiencing severe and enduring mental health problems during pregnancy or within the first year of having their baby. The women experienced a variety of mental health difficulties, including post-partum psychosis, anxiety, depression, OCD, emotional regulation difficulties and complex trauma. The role also involved joint work and consultation both within the staff team on the unit and with services and professionals outside the unit. In addition, I completed psychological assessment including cognitive assessment and formulation to contribute to parenting assessments. I was also involved with and contributed to work undertaken with mothers and their babies to aid the attachment process, this work was informed by Video Interaction Guidance (VIG).

My role within the community perinatal mental health team was to provide psychological assessment, formulation and treatment to women experiencing severe and enduring mental health problems during pregnancy or within the first year of having their baby that were in the community. I presented my doctoral thesis to the team and their local sister perinatal community mental health services. This was in response to recognition from the staff team that the research was of particular relevance to the women the team sees given that mental health problems can also affect the process of relationship formation between parent and child.

The psychological models utilised across the two services include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Systemic Approaches, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Compassion.
Focused Therapy. Furthermore, the work was underpinned and influenced by attachment theory.

**Learning Disability – Community Learning Disability Health Team (6 months)**

My final placement was within a Community Learning Disability Health Team. My role within this team included completing psychological assessment, formulation and therapy for people with a learning disability and their carer/family members experiencing a wide range of mental health problems. The main models used were Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Positive Behaviour Support and Narrative Therapy. The clients seen by the CLDT range from people with a mild learning disability to people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. As a result, it is essential to adapt your communication skills and clinical practice accordingly to meet the varied needs of each client.

During my placement I also completed assessments for Autistic Spectrum Conditions and dementia in people with Down’s Syndrome, Positive Behaviour Support work, consultation within the team and with residential homes for people with a learning disability.

I have also created a guide with questions to ask the individual being assessed in an assessment for Autistic Spectrum Conditions. This is because, to the best of our knowledge, such a guide has not yet been created. I presented the guide to the psychology team within the service who helped further develop the guide and will start piloting it soon.
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<tr>
<td>WAIS</td>
<td>WAIS Interpretation (online assessment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice Report of Clinical Activity</td>
<td>Practice Report of Clinical Activity with Ms Kelly Davis, a female client in her 50’s who has been diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder and is experiencing low mood, anxiety and low self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio Recording of Clinical Activity with Critical Appraisal</td>
<td>Audio Recording of Clinical Activity with Critical Appraisal of a psychological therapy session with Jo, a young person diagnosed with anxiety and depression</td>
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<td>Report of Clinical Activity N=1</td>
<td>Report of clinical activity of work conducted with Tod, a man in his early 40’s with a diagnosis of Paranoid Schizophrenia, presenting with anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Research Project Literature Survey</td>
<td>Literature survey examining the literature on the application of attachment, bonding or claiming theory to inter-racial families and mixed race children</td>
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<td>Major Research Project Proposal Title of proposed project: Does having a mixed race child affect the process of relationship formation between mother and child?</td>
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<td>Report of Clinical Activity discussing an assessment conducted with Kelly, a junior school child with complex needs, to ascertain whether Kelly has an intellectual disability and understand the role her cognitive ability has in her presenting problems.</td>
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<td>PPLD Process Account</td>
<td>A process account of my experience of being part of a Personal Professional Learning Development Group for the first two years of a Clinical Psychology Training Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working systemically with Ruth, a woman diagnosed with dementia, and her support network</td>
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<td>Major Research Project</td>
<td>Identifying the social and psychological factors associated with mothers of mixed race children’s experiences of motherhood: a review of the literature</td>
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<td>Empirical Paper</td>
<td>A qualitative exploration of the process of relationship formation between mother and child in interracial families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report of Clinical Activity</td>
<td>A Report of Clinical Activity with Leah, a new mother admitted to a Mother and Baby Unit experiencing difficulties associated with complex trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Reflective Account</td>
<td>On becoming a clinical psychologist: A retrospective, developmental, reflective account of the experience of training</td>
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*all names in the titles of assignments are pseudonyms*