

# Bringing Up Mixed-/Multi- Race Children: Comparing Fathers' Racial Projects in Britain and New Zealand

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## Britain:

- c. 10% of couples in inter-ethnic partnerships
- c. 7% of dependent children lived in multiple ethnic households

## New Zealand:

- c. 25% of couples in inter-ethnic partnerships
- c. 20% of >14 year olds have more than one ethnicity

## Both:

- significant middle class element to inter-ethnic partnering and mixed families

Britain:

- **Ambivalently multicultural society**

New Zealand:

- **Institutionalised biculturalism > < empirical multiculturalism**

Both:

- **Inter-racial partnering as indicator of integration**

## Fathers:

heterosexual relationship with a partner from a different pan-ethnic population group and with dependent children

| <b>BRITAIN</b>             |  | <b>NEW ZEALAND</b>  |   |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Race/no. of fathers</i> | <i>Race of partners</i>  | <i>Race/no. of fathers</i>                                  | <i>Race of partners</i>   |
| White = 8                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East Asian x 3</li> <li>▪ South Asian x 2</li> <li>▪ Black x 1</li> <li>▪ Mixed White-Black x 1</li> <li>▪ Mediterranean x 1</li> </ul> | 'Pākehā':<br>New Zealand European = 4<br>North American = 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East Asian x 3</li> <li>▪ Māori x 1</li> <li>▪ Pacific Island x 1</li> </ul> |
| Black = 6                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mixed White-Black x 1</li> <li>▪ White British x 5</li> </ul>   | Māori = 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Zealand European x 3</li> </ul>  |
| Mixed White-Black = 1      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ White British x 1</li> </ul>  | Pacific Island = 1  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Zealand European x 1</li> </ul>  |
| Asian = 3                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ White British x 3</li> </ul>  | Multi: Māori-Pacific Island x 1                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Zealand European x 1</li> </ul>  |
| Mixed White-Asian = 1      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ White North American x 1</li> </ul>   | East Asian x 1  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Zealand European x 1</li> </ul>  |
| Middle Eastern = 1         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ White British x 1</li> </ul>  |   |   |

# Mix collective approach

They've got friends at school who come from mixed race backgrounds and one of them – he is English and I think his wife is Indian, and he described her as a 'harmony child'. And then [our children] said to us, 'oh we are harmony children aren't we?' And I said, 'well yes, that is right'.

*(Graham, Britain)*

I feel a lot of times I've got to protect her [Caribbean]ness or her blackness. I have to make sure that for me that she remembers that she's half and half and not get carried away and think that she's just white.

*(Leo, Britain)*

I don't want [my children] to think they're just purely [Pacific Island], I want them to learn they're [European] as well... [My son], he said, 'oh dad, am I a [Pacific Islander]?' He even asked, he asked that question. Yeah, I thought that was quite cool. And I said, 'yeah you are. And remember you are [European] too, like your mum'.

*(John, New Zealand)*



# Single collective

We have various family events, and then we have some sort of tribal events too that I take kids to be part of... I try to speak as much Māori with them as possible... I tell them directly that, you know, they should lean towards the Māori side... I'll make jokes about White people and Pākehā culture, and force them to decide which way they're leaning on issues... and I'll be talking about, well, you know, 'there are issues in our community because of the way the system's set up'... I'm pro Māori and so I want them to be supportive of our wider family and make a contribution there.

*(Chris, New Zealand)*

The journey towards true biculturalism, it's not there yet by any stretch of the imagination. We're still a Pākehā dominated culture... I've sort of embraced that Māori world view and have learnt a lot of the language and culture... So I thoroughly encourage all of that Māoriness in them... Whenever anything comes up along those lines, let's just go and do it, let's support that in some way... I'm proud they identify as Māori.

*(Andy, New Zealand)*

# Transcendent open individualised approach

Because I think the fundamental thing for them is that they are, as I say, happy with who they feel they are and able to articulate that and be a bit cosmopolitan and move things around instrumentally as well when they need to or want to... I think one of the reasons [the term] multiple heritage is helpful is because it makes no demands on fractions like when people say, 'I'm half this and I'm half that' you've got to mention a nationality or an ethnic category or something... Whereas I feel that this thing of simultaneity and being able to have a number of heritages [is valuable].

*(Daniel, Britain)*

Here they're [East Asian]. In [East Asia] they're definitely not... What I identify with, and what my tension in life is, is that 1980s, 1990s education, socialisation, that celebrates diversity... you know, everyone is different, appreciate difference... And I think what I would pass on [to my children] is a questioning... And this is probably itself very Western... They'll be told [by their mother], 'this is [East Asian country culture]' and I'll say, 'yeah but what is [East Asian], what does that mean?'

*(Luke, New Zealand)*

# Transcendent national collective approach

They look like Kiwis, they feel like Kiwis I think. And they talk the language... I can see it's mostly Kiwi values [being passed on to them]. I think by default it's largely environmental. That's where we are, that's what they do, it's how we do things... I'm inclined to hope that my kids will fit in kind of thing... Cos for me, the kids, when they're brown, [my son] looks healthy and looks like a real Kiwi kid, being outdoors and just having experiences... Because I had [European] parents and we were brought up over the hill there, our values were a little bit different from the other kids and we stood out a wee bit. And that didn't work very well for me... I'm kind of inclined to hope that my kids will fit in kind of thing.

*(Dylan, New Zealand)*



# Racism: reframing

[My child] doesn't look particularly Asian or anything... I guess we will eventually [discuss prejudice with him] but probably more as a general life lesson that some people will be mean to you sometimes. But I don't think it will be specifically targeted towards racism, no.

*(Connor, New Zealand)*

# Racism: resisting

I don't want them to have a negative view of their ethnic, or part of their ethnic origin... I'm keen for them to understand that Africa is a continent and it's got lots of countries in and the experience will vary not just across the continent but in those countries... Yeah, they like to know about [African country]... at the moment they're comfortable with being who they are.

*(Paul, Britain)*

I have a strong sense of belonging, I know who I am. So if I can expose that back out [to my children], cultural identity, who they are... I feel strongly that they need to be confident in terms of who they are... Being a Eurasian is a point of interest... They do look different and I think that's good, it's a point of interest.

*(Kevin, New Zealand)*

Once a child came up to [my daughter] in the playground and they were talking about their nationalities I suppose and she said to [my daughter], 'Where are you from?', and she said 'I'm English'... The other child who was White said, 'You can't be English'... I mean I was really angry... so I wrote a very careful letter to the Head about identities... and then I went to see her.

*(Daniel, Britain)*

# Racism: avoiding

[I try to avoid settings where] there is a danger of either explicit racism or kind of exoticising or making people – categorising people by their ethnicity without listening to their own self-identification and so on.

*(Daniel, Britain)*

I try not to put them in Pākehā situations where they can be subjected to that kind of stuff [racism] because as their protector I would have to get militant about it. I don't really choose to put them in those situations.

*(Teoti, New Zealand)*

We had an experience where [East Asian] university exchange students came round for lunch at our place, about a dozen of them. And they just crowded around and absolutely doted on [my children]. And it was surreal, it wasn't a healthy experience really. As if they were little gods... I feel the obligation to take the kids to [East Asian country] to give them the experience, but I can't bring myself to do it yet... I just don't think the experience will be worthwhile.

*(Dylan, New Zealand)*

# Racism: Black and Māori fathers

What I say to [my son] is that prejudice, racism is not all our problems and they never will be. These are other people's issues. Oh, and my son is also into the impression that actually racism is a mental health problem [laughs]... It's about, 'son, this is what some of the jugular issues are. When they arrest you, when they deny you access to work, when they discriminate against you, it's not going to be because your mum was White. It's going to be because your dad was Black'.

*(Tyler, Britain)*

The youngest one's brown, he's sort of my colour. And I was talking to my oldest son about racism and stuff, and I said to my son, 'with the way you look, you might hear a lot of stuff and people won't think that you're Māori, so you know how would you feel about that?' And he goes, 'I just won't worry about it'. I said, 'do you think that you'll say something about it?', and he said, 'no, I'll just think they're stupid'. I said, 'oh, I think it's important to say – it's about how you feel but if you feel strong enough to say I'm Māori you should say that'.

*(Rewiti, New Zealand)*

# Discrimination: Black and Māori fathers

While we were on the subway going to our digs [rented accommodation], pretty well, a large majority of those were on the subway looking at us and were in fact very rude [were Black]

*(Bradley, Britain)*

Some dark skinned Māori kids can be awful to lighter skinned Māori kids, and I put that down to part of the whole colonial process. Whatever the reasons may be it can be nasty sometimes. But it always gets sorted out when these other kids see my kids with their whanau [family]. They realise, oh shit, look at them all... I've said, 'your whakapapa is your whakapapa [genealogy]. I don't care if any black Māori's give you shit, at the end of the day you are what you are, and you have the whakapapa to prove it'. I think he's realised that and behaves accordingly.

*(Rewiti, New Zealand)*

In conclusion ...

- **Fathers' hopes for their children's identity/affiliation key into historical social, economic and political forces, with multi/bi cultural settlements**