

'Mixed' family moms ensure minority culture continues in the home

May 15 2012

The mothers of Britain's 'mixed families' are ensuring their children learn about their heritage and culture, according to a development project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). So, even if the child's father hails from a minority background, it will still be the mother who is responsible for teaching them about the father's culture.

"Whether it's ensuring their children know about the history and culture of their ethnic or [religious group](#), overseeing faith instruction, teaching them how to cook traditional foods, dressing in traditional clothes or introducing them to traditional music and dancing, it's mostly mothers who are taking charge of ensuring their children appreciate their [cultural heritage](#)," says researcher Professor Ros Edwards.

In a new collaborative initiative between the Universities of Southampton and London South Bank, and the [relationship](#) support organisation OnePlusOne, researchers have used their recent [research findings](#) on 'mixed' relationships to develop on-line resources that raise awareness about the sorts of issues 'mixed' couples may face, and to provide relationship support where needed.

'Mixed' relationships, where each partner is from a different racial or [ethnic background](#), are increasingly common in Britain. And, although all couples face many similar [relationship issues](#), research on 'mixed' couple relationships suggests that they may have their own distinctive experiences including:

- Possible disapproval and rejection from others based on assumptions and limited knowledge about 'mixed' families.
- Understanding and dealing with both cultural and individual differences within a couple relationships.
- Developing an identity and sense of belonging for themselves and their children.

"Once people come together in a 'mixed' relationship, we know that maintaining that relationship can be challenging for some couples, often because of other people's attitudes," Professor Edwards explains. "The issues that they may face can include having to deal with others disapproval, and in some cases, the exclusion from family and friends. Clearly, this can create stresses in their relationship and, based on our research, we provide examples of some of the successful strategies 'mixed' couples have employed to cope with these problems."

Researchers stress, however, that it would be wrong to over-emphasise the challenges that 'mixed' relationships bring to a relationship. Findings clearly show that for many couples and their children, their different cultures and heritage were not overly an issue for them, or for the communities in which they lived. For many it was more often an issue for other people than those who are themselves mixing or of Mixed race.

'Mixed' couples deal with the same responsibilities and issues as other couples, and they see their family lives as no different to others in many ways. "In fact, much of the feedback we have received regarding our on-line resources is how pleased [couples](#) are to see their relationships treated as 'ordinary' not as something strange or inherently problematic," Professor Edwards points out.

"This feedback is entirely in keeping with our finding that it is mothers

in 'mixed' families who ensure their children are brought up appreciating the minority culture in their home. In this regard, women in 'mixed' families broadly reflect what goes on in most relationships, she concludes".

More information: The on-line relationship support resources for 'mixed' couples can be viewed at: [thecoupleconnection.net/article... s-and-their-families](http://thecoupleconnection.net/article...s-and-their-families)

Provided by Economic & Social Research Council

Citation: 'Mixed' family moms ensure minority culture continues in the home (2012, May 15) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-family-moms-minority-culture-home.html>

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