

## **The role of attitudes in the innovation and spread of Multicultural London English**

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London is Europe's largest city and has one of the highest proportions of foreign-born residents across cities globally. Processes of urbanization and globalization have fostered rich ethnic and cultural diversity in London and the result has been the emergence of a new variety – Multicultural London English (MLE) – spoken among young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds (including white British), with the children of immigrants seemingly driving it forward (Cheshire et al. 2011). MLE is considered to be a vernacular in that it is the speaker's everyday unmarked variety. Although spoken by many, MLE receives a lot of attention from the media and the general public, usually in terms of negative comments. Labels such as Jafaican often reflect its perceived origins in minority ethnic groups, and some schools in London have even gone so far as to try and ban its use. In the light of these public perceptions of MLE, we conducted our study of language attitudes towards MLE among London residents since, as noted in one of the earliest sociolinguistic studies, "one cannot understand the development of language change apart from the social life of the community in which it occurs" (Labov, 1963: 275). We report here on the results of our face-to face and online questionnaire surveys in which participants were asked to state their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale to a number of statements concerning the status and solidarity dimensions of MLE and were given the opportunity to express their opinions in a series of open-ended questions. Initial results confirm that MLE scores low on the status dimension amongst participants of all ages and across genders. However, interesting patterns are revealed with regard to the solidarity dimension, with young males valuing MLE in terms of its role as providing a sense of being a young Londoner.