

## Chapter 4 IDENTITY & ETHNICITY

### **Themes in this chapter**

- An overview of the profile of the Black and Minority Ethnic participant sample in this research, including:
  - Age and Sex
  - Ethnic group
  - Religion
  - Family status
  - Country of birth
  - Languages spoken
- Describing ethnicity and identity – a look at some of the pros and cons of self-definition and prescribed categories
  - Free-form definition or prescribed categories?
  - Identity and vulnerability to racism
  - Identity and Children
  - Ethnicity record keeping and monitoring
  - Participants' definitions of ethnic identity.

### **An overview of the profile of the Black and Minority Ethnic participant sample in this research**

The research sample encompassed the full range of age, ethnicity, religion and language skills among the Black and Minority Ethnic population and was split almost equally between women and men. It reflected the population breakdown indicated by the 2001 Census in terms of gender, population growth and rural dispersion. The research has included Europeans within its brief, but the proportion of visibly Black and Minority Ethnic people in the sample is higher than the European proportion. The 2001 Census data shows by contrast, that the Irish and European part of the population in Devon is greater than the visibly Black and Minority Ethnic population. The 2001 Census data also shows that 53% of the European and visibly Black and Minority Ethnic population is Christian, but the research sample focuses more on other faiths, with only 36% coming from a Christian background. A few people with Traveller backgrounds are also included in this research, but due to the weight of research and development work already done on Traveller issues in the UK and Devon, Travellers form a minority of the research sample. In-depth information about the situation of Travellers can be found by reference to the Travellers

Education Service and the County Gypsy Liaison Officer. Contact details are in the resources list at the end of this book.

### Age profiles

Table 4.1 shows that the research sample included people of all ages, with a concentration of working age adults.

**Table 4.1**

Age	Women	Men	Sex not stated	Totals
10 – 12	4			4
13 –19	2	2		4
Young adult	3			3
20s	14	12		26
30s	25	17		42
40s	15	19		34
50	9	9		18
Middle aged	9	5		14
60s	3	6		9
70s	1	2	1	4
80s	1			1
Elderly	1		1	2
Not stated	2	5	2	9
	89	77	4	170

### Distribution of sample across ethnic groups.

The distribution of the sample across the range of ethnic groups differs from the distribution indicated by the Census for the whole of Devon’s Black and Minority Ethnic population, in that the research sample centres more on the visible Black and Minority Ethnic population, and less on the White Minority Ethnic population.

<b>Table 4.2</b>	White Irish	White Other	Mixed	Asian/ Asian British	Black/ Black British	Chinese	Other
sample	0 %	19%	8%	24%	19%	18%	5%
Devon BME pop’n	18%	48%	15%	5%	5%	6%	3%

Table Notes:

- sample = % of research sample
- Devon BME pop'n = % of Black and Minority Ethnic population (inc. Irish & European) in Devon's 7 rural districts in census 2001
- In addition, 7% of our sample comprised White parents of Mixed Heritage children.

**Religion**

Analysis of the religious background of the participants shows that the research study has collated the views of people from a range of faith backgrounds and none. The largest faith group in the sample was Christian. However, comparison of the religious backgrounds of the sample with the 2001 Census data on religion and ethnicity, shows that the sample's proportion of faiths other than Christian, is higher than it would have been if the sample had matched the breakdown of religion indicated by the Census.

The data from the sample shows that some people have a sense of spirituality bridging more than one religious tradition, that others have a faith identity more cultural than religious, that some have lapsed or chosen not to practice the faith of their family tradition. We also see that a significant number of people do not ascribe to any faith denomination. More information on the participants' views about faith and religion can also be found in chapter 9.

**Table 4.3**

<b>Religion – comparison of sample with Census 2001</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>C.f % for whole of Devon in 2001</b>
<b>Buddhist</b>	<b>4</b>	2.4	2.5
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>5</b>	2.9	
<b>Christian</b>	<b>36</b> 14	21	53.2
Anglican	1		
Protestant	3		
Church of England	3		
Roman Catholic	13		
Roman Catholic by Baptism but non-believer	1		
Armenian Church	1		

<b>Hindu</b>	<b>3</b>	2.4	1.6
Hindu but happy to go to Church or Mosque	<b>1</b>		
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>6</b>	4	3.5
Atheist but culturally Jewish		1	
Jewish –secular		1	
<b>Jehovah’s Witness</b>	<b>3</b>		1.8
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>17</b>	16	10
Muslim – not practicing		1	
<b>Rastafarian</b>	<b>1</b>		0.6
<b>Sikh</b>	<b>4</b>		2.4
Sikh and Buddhist	<b>1</b>		0.6
Not stated	<b>59</b>		34.7
None	<b>30</b>		17.6
Other faiths			23.2
		5.9	1.1

## Family status

The participant sample covered a range of family and household profiles, including people living alone, young, middle aged and retired couples, single parent families, and of ‘nuclear’ or extended families. The research usually recorded the participation of one family representative, although where children were interviewed, an adult was also present and participated in the research.

The research sample included a number of people of Mixed Heritage identity (namely a person whose mother’s ethnic identity is different to the father’s) and parents of Mixed Heritage children. In fact the largest group of participants belonged to Mixed Heritage families (38%). (See table 4.4) This group was followed by 24% of participants who belonged to co-ethnic families. The number of children in a family was typically two.

Given that the proportion Mixed Heritage families is greater than the number of Mixed Heritage participants in the sample (i.e. 38% of people belonging to Mixed Heritage families vs. 8% Mixed Heritage participants), we can deduce that the percentage of the Mixed Heritage population is likely to increase with the next generation. This is also indicated by the Census 2001 figures in chapter 3, which also shows that the Mixed Heritage population in rural Devon is already the largest Black and Minority Ethnic group, second to White Non-British. This indicates that the increasing trend within Black and Minority Ethnic families in Devon is towards a majority of Mixed Heritage. This in itself is likely to have an

effect on the way that people approach issues of integration and identity formation, and indicates that the demand for Mixed Heritage family support network groups, such as the ‘Planet Rainbow’ project in Exeter, will increase across Devon and especially in rural areas.

**Table 4.4**

<p><b>Family status profiles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 24% live with family members of the same ethnicity (i.e. 40 people, of which 3 were heads of single-parent families)</li> <li>◆ 38% are members of Mixed Heritage families (i.e. 65 people, of which 6 were heads of single-parent families)</li> <li>◆ 13% live alone</li> <li>◆ 19% live in a hostel/ student digs/ with a host family</li> <li>◆ 6% not known</li> </ul> <p><b>Size of family households</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 18% lived with a partner only</li> <li>◆ 8% lived with a partner and one child</li> <li>◆ 25% lived with a partner and two or more children</li> <li>◆ 5% were single parent families with between 1 and 6 children.</li> <li>◆ 3% were extended families including grandparents.</li> </ul>
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**Country of Birth**

Our sample also serves to illustrate the extent of immigration and the consequent great diversity of ethnic backgrounds in Devon, with the majority of the sample coming from nearly 50 different countries around the world. The proportion of participants born overseas (75% of the sample) is higher than the proportion of Black of Minority Ethnic people in Devon who were born overseas, according to Census 2001 data. The Black and Minority Ethnic population in Devon is split 50/ 50 between people born in the UK and overseas.

**Table 4.5: Place of birth**

Country	No. of Women	No. of Men	No. Sex not stated	Total Nos.
UK	6	5		11
UK Ashton Upon Lyme	1			1
UK Bucks	1			1
UK Devon	5	1		6
UK Doncaster	1			1
UK Coventry	1			1

UK Leicester	1			1
UK Liverpool	1			1
UK London	9	4		13
UK Manchester		2		2
<b>Total born in UK</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>38</b>
Armenia		1		1
Bangladesh	2	2	1	5
Bosnia		1		1
Brazil	2			2
Canada	1			1
Caribbean	1	1		2
China	10	10		20
Congo		1		1
Congo-Brazaville		2		2
Cyprus		1		1
Egypt	1			1
France	1			1
Germany	3			3
Ghana	2			2
Greece	1	1		2
Holland	1			1
Hong Kong	3	4	1	8
Hungary	1			1
India	3	5		8
Iran	1	1		2
Iraq		1		1
Italy	2	1		3
Jamaica		1		1
Kenya	2			2
Lithuania	1			1
Malawi		1		1
Malaysia	1	1		2
Middle East		1		1
Mozambique		2		2
Nigeria	1	1		2
North Africa		1		1
Pakistan	1	3		4
Palestine	1			1
Philippines	1			1
Poland	1		1	2

Portugal		1		1
Romania	1			1
Sierra Leone		3		3
Singapore	3			3
Sri Lanka		1		1
St Helena		1		1
Sweden	1			1
Tanzania	1	1		2
Thailand	1			1
Turkey		2		2
Uganda		1		1
USA		1		1
Zimbabwe	2			2
<b>Born outside UK (49 countries/regions)</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>110</b>
Not stated/ known	10	12		22
Totals	89	76	5	170

## Languages spoken

The diversity of place of birth also brings a plethora of language skills to rural Devon.

Amongst the research sample, 39% spoke English plus another language. A further 23% had skills in 3 or more languages. Chapter 5 looks in greater detail at English language skills among the sample, and finds that 19% spoke English that was described as ‘poor’. The largest language classification for spoken English amongst the participants was ‘fluent’.

54 languages other than English were spoken by the participants. 39 of these were spoken as first languages, and 33 as second languages. Chinese was the most widely spoken language group among the sample. The diversity of the languages spoken among the participant sample, and the Census 2001 ethnicity data, indicate that other than Chinese there is no one dominant foreign language spoken among the Black and Minority Ethnic population. This presents a problem for agencies wanting to communicate through translated written media and to make expedient decisions about use of resources. For this reason, chapters 2, 5 and 12 make the argument that communication outreach would be much better achieved through oral communication, both in English and other languages, by establishing Black and Minority Ethnic rural networks. By using facilitated networks as

settings for oral communication the chances are that the dialogue, even in English, will have far greater success in communicating information and establishing dialogue.

The participants' comments in Tables 4.9 and 4.10 below also indicate that that their speaking, reading and writing skills in each language are not necessarily similar. In chapters 2 and 5 the impact that the variations in these skills has on the value of translated written materials is further discussed. The comments below serve to highlight that oral language skills are likely to be much better than writing and reading skills. Some participants also described how the limited opportunities for many people to practice the speech of their mother tongue can lead to some deterioration in first language skills, and that limitations on opportunities for practice also has particular impact on the bi-lingual opportunities for children of Mixed Heritage families. This in turn is likely to have an impact on the bias to which one parent's culture has an influence on the child's developing sense of ethnic identity. The research suggested that this can also produce tensions in some families, especially those where one parent speaks one language only.

**Table 4.6**

Study sample in Rural Devon	No. languages spoken including English							
	6	5	4	3	2	English only	English 1 <sup>st</sup> language, any others not stated.	Not known
No. of people	3	6	12	17	66	8	35	23
% of sample	2	4	7	10	39	5	20	13

**Table 4.7**

English language skills among the research sample					
'n' = 170	1st	fluent	good	Poor	Unknown
No.	6	79	42	32	9
%	4	46	25	19	5

**Table 4.8**

<b>Language spoken</b>	<b>No. of people for whom this is a</b>	
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> language</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> language</b>
<i>Arabic</i>	2	5
<i>Armenian</i>	1	
<i>Bengali</i>	4	
<i>Bosnian</i>	1	
<i>Chagga</i>		1
<i>Chichewa</i>	1	
<i>Chinese (unspecified)</i>	27	2
<i>Chinese Cantonese</i>	1	1
<i>Chinese Mandarin</i>	2	
<i>Creole</i>	1	
<i>Danish</i>		2
<i>Dutch</i>	1	
<i>Ebu</i>	1	1
<i>Fante</i>	1	
<i>Farsi</i>	2	1
<i>Filipino</i>	1	
<i>French</i>	5	11
<i>German</i>	3	7
<i>Greek</i>	1	1
<i>Gujerati</i>	2	3
<i>Hausa</i>		1
<i>Hebrew</i>		1
<i>Hindi</i>	1	9
<i>Hungarian</i>	1	
<i>Italian</i>	4	3
<i>Jamaican</i>		1
<i>Japanese</i>		2
<i>Kituba</i>	1	
<i>Korean</i>		1
<i>Kusuba</i>		1
<i>Lingala</i>	2	
<i>Lithuanian</i>	1	
<i>Malay</i>	1	1
<i>Malayalam</i>	1	
<i>Marati</i>		1
<i>Mbushi</i>	1	
<i>Mulukutubaya</i>	1	

Norwegian		1
Oseri		1
Polish	2	
Portuguese	4	2
Provic		1
Punjabi	4	4
Romanian	1	
Russian		3
Shona	2	
Spanish	1	3
Swahili	2	1
Swedish	1	
Tamil		2
Thai	1	
Turkish	2	1
Urdu	2	6
Vietnamese		1
Totals	39	33
54 languages spoken in total		

**Table 4.9**

Participants comments about their 1 <sup>st</sup> language: <i>“I speak……”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ <i>Punjabi. But don't write it.</i></li> <li>☛ <i>Italian -speak well and write quite well</i></li> <li>☛ <i>Shona. But my husband who is White doesn't think my sister and I should speak it at home.</i></li> <li>☛ <i>Chinese. We don't speak Chinese at home because my husband's Chinese is too much like orders - he not good at learning language. Our son doesn't speak much Chinese. There was a Chinese language class for kids but my son didn't go. My husband didn't like me teaching our son Chinese because he felt threatened and it caused conflict. So I stopped teaching my son Chinese.</i></li> </ul>

**Table 4.10**

Participants comments about their 2 <sup>nd</sup> language: <i>“I speak……”</i>
<p>2<sup>nd</sup> language comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ <i>English, Hindi, Urdu and a very little Provic.</i></li> <li>☛ <i>Malay - there's no-one here to talk with but I still get by in Malay. I also speak Tamil. I'm on the hospital language list.</i></li> <li>☛ <i>Danish, English, Norwegian, French, Arabic. I'm on the hospital language register and they've used me.</i></li> </ul>

- ☞ *Dad: I'm so busy working I rarely see the kids and also I read that if kids are brought up bi-lingual they won't do well at school. But now I'm not sure about that. Children: We would like to learn Arabic but it's too hard. So our Mum is learning with Linguaphone and then will help us. I wish we'd been brought up bi-lingually like our cousin who lives in Dubai ( he was born in Scotland). I like French. I would like to be bilingual so that we can join in with Dad when we go on holiday to Dubai and to Leicester for his medical reunion. Mum: It would also help put the kids in touch with their background and get closer to their family and grandparents.*
- ☞ *Greek - getting a bit rusty.*
- ☞ *English - don't speak good enough, write excellently. Speak and write Japanese and Korean a little bit*
- ☞ *Chinese – so-so in speaking and writing*
- ☞ *Hausa - very well speaking and writing, French fair at speaking and writing.*
- ☞ *Punjabi and Hindi - not so fluent now because can't practice often. Can write a little. French GCSE*
- ☞ *Some Russian and Farsi. My mother spoke 7 languages but my father wouldn't allow her to teach me because 'British is best and English is all you need'.*
- ☞ *Also fluent in spoken Gujerati which is spoken at home, but I get self-conscious and prefer to speak English.*
- ☞ *Urdu, Punjabi, Gujerati. Arabic - just to read and pray - not for conversation.*
- ☞ *English - quite well, Russian - speak not very well, good writing, German - not very good.*
- ☞ *Punjabi - speak very well but can't write or read.*
- ☞ *Urdu - moderate speaking but basic writing skills. Rudimentary Arabic - reading and writing.*
- ☞ *Punjabi - can speak very well and read, but can't write. Also speak Hindi well but can't write.*

**Describing ethnicity and cultural identity - self-definition vs. prescribed categories and a need to rethink?**

This research indicated that participants had a variety of outlooks on the way that they defined their sense of ethnic identity. The participants were able to express their sense of ethnic identity freely, whether in the research interviews, during the workshops, or through the questionnaires.

Participants were not asked to confine themselves to prescribed categories or headings. The outcomes of this part of the research can be summarised as the following:

- When given the option, many people don't choose census categories to define their sense of ethnic identity, or use these categories in unconventional ways.
- Most people are specific and refer to their country of origin (N.B. the majority of the rural Black and Minority Ethnic population is indicated by the research and the Census to have been born overseas).
- Religious identity forms an integral part of ethnic and cultural identity for many people.
- Ethnic identities are often complex, and people feel the need to express the fullness of the way they perceive them.
- The category 'Other' – obscures a plenitude of diversity.
- The 'Chinese' and 'Other ethnic group' categories are combined under one heading in the Census format and this seems irrational.
- Political terminology influenced the way some people described their identity, but the result can be the obscuration of ethnicity.
- Some people do not recognise their identities as lying neatly under the Continental headings that define the Census categories (for example people with ethnic origins that combine Asian and Chinese roots in the Far East).
- Many people would prefer not to use categories at all.
- Ethnicity may figure less in identity, for those who have not encountered racism.
- Children's perceptions of ethnicity are influenced less by formal terminology and political concepts and more by relationships.
- Attitudes to Ethnicity Keeping and Monitoring (ERKM) are influenced by the question 'what is it for?' – a good question! In other words, people are nervous about giving out information about ethnic identity.

A list of the way in which participants described themselves is provided in Table 4.11 at the end of the chapter.

### **Free-form definition or prescribed categories?**

We decided to conduct an exercise in assessing how easy it would be to enable people to describe their identity as they wished, without

prescription, and to judge the benefits of this against the difficulty of collapsing the individual definitions into broad categories. We found that one the one hand, the free-form approach enabled people to provide on the whole much more information about themselves, which was both informative for the observer and satisfying for the participants. But by contrast, we also found that a few individuals did not provide enough information in their descriptions to enable collation under a census category. In several of these instances we were able to do the categorisation nevertheless, using information the participants shared with us about their place of birth and parental origins. The overall outcome was that freeform definition alone would be unwieldy to process on a large scale. However, it was also clear that many people did not like the idea the usual system of prescribed categories.

☛ *Italian. I prefer to describe myself as Inter-national person.*

☛ *We think of ourselves as world citizens.*

☛ *I'm like anybody – we're all the same.*

Asylum seekers especially wanted to make this point, as a consequence of the experience of persecution both in their home country and here in the UK.

We also heard from participants whose religion played a great part in their sense of ethnic identity, but who felt that they could not express this within the Census categories.

☛ *I'm English but I want to put Jewish somewhere on the forms.*

However, some participants found that politics and religious issues create a sense of discomfort for them when describing ethnicity:

☛ *Turkey is very nationalistic and I don't like it. Your background is important. For example I am not a Muslim. I would say my nationality is Turkish but that this is not my main point of reference.*

By contrast, some used political terminology to define their identity. Whilst this revealed their political experience of being a Minority, it did not describe much about the individual themselves. It could possibly also lead to mis-classification of a person's identity under prescribed categories.

☛ *Indian [Australian Citizenship]. I self define as Black. I can't pretend to be White so by exclusion I am Black. I am what I am – no different to White people.*

Several people found that their complex ethnic heritages made it difficult for them to identify neatly within a single category. Some participants' national identity fell on the cusp between different continental categories, e.g. Asian and Chinese. For example Malaysian participants described

themselves under both these headings. Other participants found they often had to use the ‘Other’ category on forms, which they felt was meaningless:

*“I put ‘other’ on the forms. Really I am native Indian and Black slave and 100% Brazilian.*

We noted too that the ‘White Other’ category rather un-informatively encompasses the largest of rural Devon’s minority Ethnic groups – Eastern and Western Europeans.

We also noted that the Chinese population is the largest of the visible Black and Minority Ethnic groups in rural Devon, and that to combine in as one category with ‘Other Ethnic Groups’ seems odd.

We know that people frequently opt out of responding to ethnicity monitoring forms, and the research indicates that diffidence about squeezing a person’s sense of self into an impersonal prescribed box is a part of the problem. In the course of the research, we came across a suggestion of compromise which would enable individuals to describe their identity as they felt it, and which would allow easy analysis and aggregation. One participant was keen on the idea:

*“I don't mind ethnicity monitoring but I would rather say I'm Malaysian rather than Indian or Asian. It would be best to have a tick box plus your own definition.*

The concept of setting out Census category headings each with a tick box and a space, would allow the respondent to identify a category and then provide a description of identity underneath or alongside, that is both relevant and informative for the respondent and to the data processor. A model format for improved success in ethnicity monitoring processes is laid out in table 4.12 at the end of this chapter.

The participant’s feelings about ethnicity monitoring can be illuminated with a closer look at some of the features of the way they described themselves (the original self-descriptions are included in Table 4.11 below):

### **White**

Among those participants whose descriptions fell under the Census category ‘**White British**’, there were:

- some people who automatically used the category verbatim to describe themselves

- others who felt satisfied with using the category to describe their identity, but who also wanted to talk about their ethnic identity in terms of heritage, sometimes complex
- some who used other terms such as ‘Scottish’ and would recognize their identity as falling within the category
- and those who also pointed out the relevance of their Black and Minority Ethnic children/ partners to their sense of identity.

Amongst those whose descriptions fell under the term ‘**White Other**’ were a great variety of people, mostly from West and Eastern Europe many of whom had distinct religious, cultural and linguistic components to their identity. A number of refugees also formed part of this section of the research sample. The Census 2001 data tells us that the Other White group is by far and away the largest of the Minority Ethnic categories in rural Devon. As such it is a category that obscures much and reveals little.

### **Mixed**

None of the people whose descriptions were collated under the ‘**White and Black Caribbean, White & Black African and White & Asian**’ categories used those terms to describe themselves. Two of these participants’ self-descriptions as ‘British’ and ‘Black British Mixed Heritage’ would not have enabled allocation of their descriptions to a category without the benefit of additional information.

### **Asian / Asian British**

- Under the **Indian** category, most people specifically referred to themselves as Indian, but for many this reflected family ethnicity rather than the country where they were born or had been brought up, such as the person who described a combined sense of African and Asian identity.
- Some people with **Pakistani** origins wanted to focus on their British identity.
- Most people of **Bangladeshi** origins described their identity as such.
- Under the **Other** category, we collated descriptions from several people who described themselves as Asian, but about whom no other ethnic background was known. This also included people of Southeast Asian origins, who also had national peers who had defined themselves as Chinese. The ‘Asian Other’ category also included an Iraqi participant and a participant whose family heritage was Asian but who had roots in Africa.

### **Black/ Black British**

- Some people of **Caribbean** origin focussed on their Black British identity and others on their Afro-Caribbean roots.

- Most people of **African** origin referred to either their continental or national identity. We also collated under this heading some people who preferred not to give their identity an ethnic label, but whom we knew to be born in Africa of African parents.
- Under the ‘**Other**’ category, we collated people who had not made any specific references to national or continental origins either out of choice, or because they did not know of these origins themselves, and about whom we knew no further details.

### **Chinese or other ethnic group**

- Under the **Chinese** heading we collated several people who described themselves as Chinese, and some who described themselves as Asian, although other personal data they provided identified them as Chinese.
- Under the ‘**Other**’ category, we collated the people who made no reference in their descriptions to continental or sub-continental origins, which included people from South America and Southwest and Southeast Asia.

### **Identity and vulnerability to racism**

For some, ethnic identity as a point of distinctiveness and differentiation hardly impacted at all upon the way they thought about themselves. This correlated with absence of experience of racism and the factors which appeared to provide a buffer against it (see chapter 6); of the 18 participants who stated they did not have any experience of racism in Devon

- All but one spoke English as their first language or very well.
- 13 lived with white family members.
- All were professionals or students in the Education and Health sectors or their partners were, or were retired or business owners.
- None of these respondents practised a faith at a place of worship other than a Church.

*Never considered myself as a minority – I know what I am because of my face but have never considered that to be a problem or myself to be different to you or any one else. When I came to Bristol there were no other Indians about so I had a kind of cultural detachment.*

### **Identity and Children**

The way in which children talked about ethnicity in the research raised some interesting points.

The issue of identity was a concern for trans-racially adopted children in the research, whose parents had not enabled their adoptive children to come to terms with their ethnic identity or to the reactions they experienced to their minority status at school and in public. (Also see chapter 10 which looks at some child welfare issues).

*“I used to help out with babysitting my white friend's kids. One kid asked me 'do you think you're Black?' I said 'whether I think I am or not, I am'. He hadn't seen me as Black before. I haven't got a sense of identity. [Black British. Adopted]*

We also found that children do not always express their identity in ways that politically sensitized adults would consider ‘correct’. We also noted that children’s self perceptions can also depend on the way that they wish to construct their identity in terms of their identification with parents, whose ethnic identity may not be the same as theirs. The following quotes illustrate these points, and the convolution of questions and phrases that children digest when thinking about their parents’ and their own identities:

*“At one point my son didn't know what colour he was because his father is White and his mother is Black. So for a while he thought he was White with short hair, but has now decided that his identity is brown with curly hair.*

*“My daughter said 'Mum you're brown and Daddy's pink and the teacher says I'm orange.' I said 'No you're olive skinned' and my daughter decided she was light brown. Otherwise my daughter has never bothered about colour. Both the kids have blue eyes and people are struck by that. My son is browner than my daughter. He's not bothered by colour and thinks he's just normal.*

*“Indian (born in UK). At the end of the day I will never be English because I was only born here and my family's culture that surrounds me is Indian. The culture is completely different. My Mum also says to me that I am Indian. As I grow up I understand the differences of the English and Indian culture. I see other foreign friends and feel justified in being proud of India. I have no plans to live in India. I've visited 4 or 5 times and couldn't live there.*

*“I thought of myself as spotty and don't say I'm Black. I'm the same as everyone else but I recognise I have something in common with my [Black] friend. I'd say my ethnic identity is half-caste. Half-caste means a mix of Black and White - it shows my Mum is white - I'm not all Black. It tells the truth. [Mixed race White & Black British – Afro Caribbean]*

Similarly, some adults may also adopt such non-conformist ways of talking about identity and their own identity issues can affect the way they approach ethnicity with their children.

*“I describe myself as half-caste. I’m half Scottish and half African. Like me our daughter is out and out British. I would rather my daughter didn’t know about ethnicity. Trying to categorise people into ethnic boxes causes bad feelings – look at South Africa. I see people as human beings. There’s an old lady here of 81. She calls me ‘my chocolate man’. I like it.*

Participant’s comments have also suggested that if they have not had support in the process of identity development in relation to ethnicity then some children could experience a sense of uncertainty about identity or even a feeling of threat when the issue is raised. The support factors upon which this can depend appear to be:

- the opportunity to discuss with their parents how their identity may be perceived externally
- the support to understand why how and when their ethnicity might be raised as an issue, for example in ethnicity monitoring
- the support to reconcile the tensions between independent identity formation and loyalty to the different elements of family identities and heritage

### **Ethnicity record keeping and monitoring**

This chapter has illustrated how defining ethnicity is a personal and often complex matter. When it comes to putting a person’s sense of identity into words, it is usually because someone else has a purpose in asking about it and in their prescribed terms without reference to the subject’s own way of expressing his or her identity.

A definition of ethnicity illustrates why ethnicity is a complex issue which, when artificially simplified, loses the substance of what it is meant to describe:

**Ethnicity:** ethnic character, background or affiliation

**Ethnic:** Of or relating to sizeable groups of people, sharing common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic and cultural heritage.

Given that the trend in Devon appears to be towards a predominantly Mixed Heritage Black and Minority Ethnic population in rural Devon (see chapter 3 ), this means that ethnicity will increasingly be increasingly

complex for many people. However, the norm in Ethnicity Keeping and Monitoring is to use systems based on the broad categories of the Census.

According to the service providers who spoke to us about ethnicity record keeping and monitoring (ERKM), difficulties were experienced on a number of counts with the existing systems. In summary these are:

- Staff feel uncomfortable about asking people which ethnic category they match
- Staff feel uncomfortable about the classification systems including those that put White British as ‘A1’ with other categories descending afterwards, and the cultural dominance they felt it implied.
- Staff often found that the census classifications were too broad to be helpful in their planning of service delivery.
- Classification systems had been developed and adapted by different agencies in order to acquire the varying levels of information that they needed. These different systems however were reported often not to be mergeable or comparable when agencies wanted to compare or combine their data.
- Agencies and organisations are worried about self-definition of ethnicity because of the difficulties in analyzing it.
- Staff often felt that White British people also objected to ERKM for a variety of reasons, including the wish to describe their sense of ethnicity in more detailed terms (for example ‘Welsh’ and ‘Scottish’).
- Agencies often struggled to get a good response rate to ethnicity keeping and monitoring.

The compromise solution proposed earlier in this chapter (and set out in table 4.12) would help to overcome most of these problems. It provides the option of accessing detailed levels of information which will help far more constructively with planning, it can be used commonly between agencies who need different levels of information, and it enables respondents to feel that they are thought of as people and not as boxes. It does however rely on data administrators or computer scanners recording phrases as opposed to check boxes – which can be more laborious if the information is collected on paper.

One other key recommendation was highlighted in the research, as crucial to success in ERKM: giving a good explanation of the purpose of ERKM. Many of the participants were unhappy about ethnicity monitoring, suspicious about the way information would be used, and unconvinced that

it would be to their benefit. The case of a participant who felt that ERKM had led to discrimination in her search for jobs, is an example:

**Case study:** *C is worried about Ethnicity Monitoring forms and that by filling them in she will prejudice people against her when making job applications: she wants to be judged on her own merits, not for or against her colour. She's worried about negative discrimination and also about positive discrimination causing people to be chosen in order to fill quotas. She's not confident that just because organisations are doing ERKM that they are using the data constructively. She also feels that tick boxes are very impersonal and stereotypical. C notes that on the occasions she has completed a monitoring form, she has not been called to interview.*

Some other participants however had been happier about ERKM, having been given reassurance of its purpose:

*I was only asked [officially] about ethnicity when I did the college course. I felt OK about that so that they could understand the background and help me make most of the education and do things right.*

The work we did with service providers suggests that there are a several reasons for this lack of explanation by agencies doing ERKM:

- The staff collecting the data are themselves unsure about the purpose of ERKM
- They often have not thought through how the data will be used, and are collecting it because it is the 'done thing'.
- Often, the 'Monitoring' section is left out of ERKM and hence nothing is done with the data collected.
- Consequently people responding to ERKM don't see the fruits of the process.
- Staff do not have an insight into the fears that Black and Minority Ethnic people have about discrimination, and potential abuse of data.
- Agencies don't act to provide assurances to allay those fears.
- Agencies haven't thought of ways to demonstrate safe handling of the data in the process (e.g. providing separate envelopes for the return of ERKM and application forms; detailing who will confidentially handle ERKM forms separately from the selection process).

The Black and Minority Ethnic participants in the research also highlighted service provider's poor ERKM handling, and recommended that that agencies should provide a clear explanation with ERKM forms about :

- Why the information is needed
  - How it will be processed
  - How it will bring benefits
  - How it will ensure equality and inhibit discrimination
  - How personal data will be protected
- Chapter 12 provides more details about this recommendation.

**Table 4.11: Participants’ definitions of ethnic identity.**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	
<p>The responses below were given in answer to the question ‘<i>how do you describe your sense of ethnic identity?</i>’.</p> <p>Information in brackets [ ] provides additional identity background derived from other data fields (e.g. parentage).</p> <p>Number of people whose descriptions would fall under the 2001 Census definitions indicated in the header box are in the right hand corner of each box.</p>	
White – British	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“WASP” local to Devon. Mother of dual heritage Black African and White children.</i></li> <li>● <i>British.</i></li> <li>● <i>British [has African in-laws and dual heritage grandchildren.]</i></li> <li>● <i>British. I feel British - just a useful way of self- description. When you have lived around the world with roots in so many countries, nationality is not important. It's very nice to be international. [Born in Iran. Mother half Assyrian half German but identified as Russian, father Scottish]</i></li> <li>● <i>Scottish with Jamaican partner ( with dual heritage children)</i></li> <li>● <i>Scottish with Peruvian wife ( with dual heritage child)</i></li> <li>● <i>White [with Black husband and dual heritage White and Black Caribbean daughter]</i></li> <li>● <i>White British</i></li> <li>● <i>White British (Black spouse)</i></li> <li>● <i>White British [My mother had Russian Jewish ancestry and my father originated in Cornwall with some French and pirate ancestry]. Mother of Black Mixed Heritage children.</i></li> </ul>	

- *White British single Mum of Mixed race kids. The kids don't really think about themselves as being coloured.*
- *White. Mother of Mixed Heritage children*

White Other

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- *5th generation American. 1/4 Sioux, 3/4 American. When I get naturalised I will be an American British citizen – I feel proud of both the USA and the UK.*
- *Anglo-German. Jewish. I'm English and German and a little bit Jewish. ... Only now after 60 years of living everywhere have I psychologically realised the enormity of the event of being thrown out of Germany, because I was totally identified with being a German girl. The in the UK I was totally identified with being a WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). But as time went on I became less and less identified with any of the places that I lived in..... I need friendship with individuals with whom I have something in common to feel a sense of identity in a place.*
- *Armenian. I respect every nationality. In my room I shut the door and I am completely Armenian. Outside I meet people half way. You must respect your own history and heritage to respect others. Only my body is in England. My head is in Armenia.*
- *Canadian/Jewish*
- *Greek*
- *Greek Cypriot. But I have British Citizenship and a British passport.*
- *Greek Mediterranean origin*
- *I think of myself as Jewish and English. I don't feel most of the time as part of a minority because I don't look Jewish and I don't know much about my culture. I feel my Jewishness through my family. Everyone feels they want to belong to something. I have lots of choices about the way I see myself because my father was a Christian. I like feeling part of my family, so I chose to feel Jewish. My identity is more important to me now as an adult. A friend of mine said I'm a typical kitchen Jew - based on food.*
- *I'm English but I want to put Jewish somewhere on the forms. I'm more Jewish culturally than religiously. I'm Jewish because of the distress and behaviour patterns passed on from my Mother's experiences as a German Jewess.*
- *Italian. 2 people.*

- *Italian. I prefer to describe myself as International person.*
- *Jewish. I married out very successfully.*
- *Turkish. We think of ourselves as world citizens. Turkey is very nationalistic and I don't like it. Your background is important. For example I am not a Muslim. I would say my nationality is Turkish but that this is not my main point of reference.*
- *Portuguese*
- *Representative - Ilford Park Polish Home*
- *Romanian.*
- *Scandanavian [Swedish]*
- *Show-woman (Fairground Traveller) – married in.*
- *Turkish*
- *White British Ex-Traveller. My situation has pushed me into seeking recourse to help from a Race Relations angle, and I wouldn't have normally viewed myself as an Ethnic Minority.*
- *White European*
- *White European [Hungarian]*
- *White European [Italian]*
- *White European [Lithuanian]*
- *White European [Polish]*
- *White- non British.*
- *German / British-ish*
- *French*
- *German White*
- *Mediterranean*
- *White [Dutch]*

**Mixed – White and Black Caribbean**

6

- *Afro Caribbean/ White.*
- *Jamaican and British*
- *Mixed parentage - White Afro-Caribbean.*
- *I describe myself as 5'3", half caste with brown blonde curly hair, chubby with brown eyes. Half caste means half brown and half white. [Mixed race White & Black British – Afro Caribbean].*

- *I thought of myself as spotty and don't say I'm Black. I'm the same as everyone else but I recognise I have something in common with my [Black] friend. I'd say my ethnic identity is half caste. Half caste means a mix of Black and White - it shows my Mum is white - I'm not all Black. It tells the truth. [Mixed race White & Black British – Afro Caribbean]*
- *Jamaican/Irish*

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Mixed – White & Black African | 2 |
|-------------------------------|---|
- *I describe myself as half-caste. I'm half Scottish and half African. Like me our daughter is out and out British. I would rather my daughter didn't know about ethnicity. Trying to categorise people into ethnic boxes causes bad feelings – look at South Africa. I see people as human beings. There's an old lady here of 81. She calls me 'my chocolate man'. I like it.*
  - *Black British. Mixed Heritage*

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mixed – White & Asian | 3 |
|-----------------------|---|
- *Anglo-Indian*
  - *I've never been asked about my ethnicity. I would say I was British if I was asked.*
  - *White/Indian. All the family are Christian, and this is a strong feature of the family's identity and sense of upper class/caste status in Bangladesh.*

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Mixed – Other | 2 |
|---------------|---|
- *British with a sense of Middle Eastern background – I don't really know. I like the middle East. I'd like to go to Iraq and see where my Dad lived. I'm interested in the news but don't really understand it.*
  - *British but Middle Eastern as well but not as much. We went to Dubai and Jordan. It's relevant when we go on holidays. I'd like to go to Iraq and see where my Dad lived.*

- |                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Asian/ Asian British – Indian | 13 |
|-------------------------------|----|
- *Indian. 5 people.*
  - *British Asian*
  - *African-Indian.*

- *Indian [Australian Citizenship]. I self define as Black. I can't pretend to be White so by exclusion I am Black. I am what I am – no different to White people.*
- *Indian (Born in Mozambique). I was only asked [officially] about ethnicity when I did the college course. I felt OK about that so that they could understand the background and help me make most of the education and do things right.*
- *Indian (born in UK). At the end of the day I will never be English because I was only born here and my family's culture that surrounds me is Indian. The culture is completely different. My Mum also says to me that I am Indian. As I grow up I understand the differences of the English and Indian culture. I see other foreign friends and feel justified in being proud of India. I have no plans to live in India. I've visited 4 or 5 times and couldn't live there.*
- *Indian (Hindu). But believe in the validity of all faiths and take part in Christmas dos and happy to go to Church*
- *Never considered myself as a minority – I know what I am because of my face but have never considered that to be a problem or myself to be different to you or any one else. When I came to Bristol there were no other Indians about so I had a kind of cultural detachment.*
- *You know, the younger generation are unsure why they are asked to identify their ethnicity.*

Asian/ Asian British – Pakistani

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- *British (Pakistani) Pakistan and my parents at that time were very British. My Father gave me a pluralistic education in world faiths to demonstrate need for good relations among all people.*
- *British [Pakistani]. My sense of ethnicity is coming out now. I am English, not Asian. But I am becoming more Asian as I am getting older – more religious, I don't want my kids to be clubbing and pubbing. ....The house now looks more Asian or Islamic because of the pictures of Mecca and the entrance hall.*
- *Pakistani. 3 people.*

Asian/ Asian British – Bangladeshi

6

- *Bangladeshi. 5 people*
- *Bangladeshi. I feel half Bangladeshi and half English.*

- *Burga = ethnic mix in Ceylon. I'm Ceylonese. I now say I'm Sri Lankan.*
- Not stated
- *Asian. 8 people.*
- *Asian [Thai]*
- *Asian British*
- *British Asian - Iraqi.*
- *British East African Asian.*
- *I describe myself as Asian. I don't have great feelings towards Asia or Kenya or India etc. I probably wouldn't self- identify at all - I see myself as just me. I remember very little of Kenya. [British citizen, Asian parents, and born in Kenya.]*
- *Malaysian. My nationality is British. I had problems because I wanted to keep my Malaysian passport in case anything happened to my husband. But it turned out the Malaysian government requires people to say if they get married. So I changed to a British passport. I couldn't have dual nationality. But I still consider myself Malaysian. I don't mind ethnicity monitoring but I would rather say I'm Malaysian rather than Indian or Asian. It would be best to have a tick box plus your own definition.*

- *Black or Black British I'm not offended by description as coloured or brown, but prefer Black, although I don't often think in these terms. (Jamaican ancestry).*
- *Black English Woman (of Afro Caribbean parentage). At one point my son didn't know what colour he was because his father is White and his mother is Black. So for a while he thought he was White with short hair, but has now decided that his identity is brown with curly hair.*
- *Afro Caribbean. 2 people.*

- *First of all I am a human being. Life is possible in any place you meet people.*
- *A person [Tanzanian]*

- *African [Ghanaian]*
- *African [Malawian]*
- *African [Sierra Leonian]*
- *African Arab.*
- *African. I like everybody. I like everybody who likes me.*
- *Black African [Nigerian]*
- *Black African British*
- *British/Ghanaian. Half-Ghanaian*
- *British/Mauritian*
- *I'm like anybody – we're all the same.*
- *Kenyan*
- *Moroccan*
- *Mozambican*
- *Nigerian. 2 people.*
- *Sierra Leonian*
- *Zimbabwean*

<b>Black/ Black British – Other</b>	<b>11</b>
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- *Black*
- *Black British. 7 people.*
- *Black other. 2 people*
- *I used to help out with babysitting my white friend's kids. One kid asked me 'do you think you're Black?' I said 'whether I think I am or not, I am'. He hadn't seen me as Black before. I haven't got a sense of identity. [Black British. Adopted]*

<b>Chinese or other ethnic group – Chinese</b>	<b>32</b>
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- *Chinese. 21 people*
- *Han. 5 people*
- *Chinese (Hong Kong). 2 people*
- *Asian [Chinese]*
- *Asian [Hong Kong]*
- *Chinese [Singaporean]*

Chinese or other ethnic group – Other	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>First of all I am a human being. Second I am Iranian – it is necessary to introduce your nationality to people because of your cultural background and history.</i></li> <li>● <i>Brazilian</i></li> <li>● <i>I put ‘other’ on the forms. Really I am native Indian and Black slave and 100% Brazilian.</i></li> <li>● <i>Iraqi</i></li> <li>● <i>Middle Eastern</i></li> <li>● <i>Palestinian</i></li> <li>● <i>Filipino</i></li> <li>● <i>Malaysian</i></li> </ul>	

**Table 4.12 Ethnicity monitoring: combining categories and free-form**

Please select and tick heading below and describe your ethnic identity as you wish, alongside it:		
	✓	Your own description:
<b>White</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	British
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other white
<b>Mixed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean
	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black African
	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Asian
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other mixed
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indian
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Asian
<b>Black or Black British</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean
	<input type="checkbox"/>	African
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Black
<b>Chinese</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
<b>Other</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other ethnic group

This handbook and supporting tools ✖ can be accessed at [www.DevonREC.org](http://www.DevonREC.org)