Channel 4

Race, Representation and the Media 2007

Research Report

Introduction

A core part of Channel 4's remit is "to appeal to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society". To support this aspect of its remit Channel 4 conducts regular research into diversity issues, with a wide range of audiences drawn from a variety of different communities in the UK, as an integral part of its corporate research programme.

The timing for the 2007 research activity coincided with the aftermath of Celebrity Big Brother 2007 and a subsequent investigation into Channel 4's audience response systems.

Following this Channel 4 took the decision to conduct a large scale piece of research into the issues uncovered, and into wider issues in society relating to ethnic diversity in television, and the key subject of representation.

The Channel has worked closely with Trevor Phillips, of the Equate organisation, to formulate the most appropriated research methodology, framing the objectives within the most pertinent issues of today and to work with the findings to get to actionable results.

This document contains the report of the research findings, along with a management summary. There is also a short section at the front explaining the diversity commitments which were formulated in parallel as part of the Next on Four initiatives; instituted by Channel 4 in Summer/Autumn 2007

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Research Objectives

The overarching objective for the research was as follows:-

To seek public views from different groups and communities on how broadcasters in general and Channel 4 in particular should address issues around diversity on screen, on air and on-line and how Channel 4 should deliver its remit in a digital, multi-channel age.

The research was also underpinned by the changes within British society which has become more diverse in the twenty five years since Channel 4 was first given the remit to serve a multi-cultural audience. This led to specific objectives, to understand diversity in today's society and to use the enhanced understanding to consider implications for broadcasters. Among the questions were: Are we using the right language to describe the many cultures and races now present in Britain? Do we know enough about the needs of some of the newer communities from Eastern Europe? Do specialist channels change expectations of what the mainstream channels should offer audiences.

Key project objectives were therefore defined as follows:-

1. To present some context on identity in multicultural Britain. To look at perspectives from different communities on issues of race and identity, and to examine how those perspectives differed across communities.

2. To examine "representation" in terms of definitions and expectations both within communities and across them.

3. To look specifically at representation in the media, focussing in the main on broadcasting, to look at where expectations are being met and where they are not being met whilst highlighting the underlying reasons.

4. To examine Celebrity Big Brother 2007 as a case study in terms of what lessons could be learned

5. To draw conclusions to guide broadcasters in general in the future, and specifically to deliver lessons and learning to Channel 4.

The research findings were presented to the Broadcasters Cultural Diversity Network on 12th March 2008.

The research was conducted by a combination of Essential Research (broadcasting research specialists), and Connect Research (specialists in research among ethnic communities). The main research report was written by Karen Roberts of Connect Research.

Next on Four

This research did not exist in a vacuum. Before moving on to the main body of the report and its conclusions, it is worth considering the parallel context of relevant work and developments being carried out at Channel 4, both during Summer and Autumn 2007 and Spring 2008.

Firstly the channel was embarking on a project called "Next on Four" - essentially a wide ranging review of the Channel and its activities, culminating in a new vision of the Channel's role and purpose through to Digital Switchover and beyond. With input solicited from all stakeholders and members of the public, this is available as a separate report. Of particular relevance in this report were the commitments made in terms of diversity, which were informed by the research work already in progress.

The Channel concluded:

- We are absolutely committed to ensuring that Channel 4's operations and output truly reflect the diversity of contemporary Britain. We believe this is vital to our ability to fulfil our public role. We will implement a coordinated strategy for strengthening our commitment to diversity across all our activities, both on- and off-screen, with a number of measures to be introduced this year:

- Establishing a new Head of Diversity at senior executive level to lead Channel 4's diversity strategy across all the organisation's activities

- Creating a ring-fenced £2 million fund to commission multicultural programmes for 9pm and 10pm on the core channel

- Giving a commissioning editor specific responsibilities for commissioning multicultural factual programmes in the heart of peak-time

- Rolling out the existing commissioning diversity placement scheme to other departments across Channel 4 and doubling the number of diversity placements in the commissioning team from three to six

- Working with key suppliers to ensure that they have diverse teams on Channel 4 projects and meaningful diversity policies

- Building Channel 4's commitment to diversity and disability training through our new Diversity Production Trainee Scheme – which funds 18 placements at independent production companies for researchers from various minority groups

The Channel concluded that these plans marked a first step rather than the full scale of its ambition and recognised that more needed to be done. It called for a step change in commitment to diversity and hoped that the rest of the broadcasting sector would follow.

Research Follow Up

Following the research Channel 4 organised a series of workshops for internal staff to debate the findings in greater detail and to build on the Next on Four Commitments. These workshops were attended by representatives from a wide range of departments across Channel 4, including:- commissioning, scheduling, digital channels, new media, strategy, research and insight, marketing, press, legal, human resources.

The purpose of the workshops was to discuss the findings of the research in its implications in detail and to generate momentum going forward.

In outline, this encompassed the following elements:

- A discussion of identity and different communities, representation and representative programming, along with emerging themes

- A discussion about quality vs quantity of representation, the increasing sophistication of the audience and the power of television

- Ideas for progress and barriers to be overcome. Opportunities for the future and concrete and realistic next steps

Main Research Report

Research Methodology and Sample Structure

The project employed solely qualitative research methods given that the research objectives required an in-depth exploratory approach and covered a broad cross section of the key communities which make up Britain's diverse society, namely:

- White British
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Mixed race
- Eastern European (comprising Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian)

All respondents were free found by Connect and Essential Research.

In order to ensure a full and frank discussion of a potentially sensitive topic, across a very diverse set of communities,:

- Each session was conducted within a single ethnic group so that people would feel less inhibited about expressing their views and they would not worry as much about offending others in the group

- The ethnic minority sessions were run by Connect's specialist moderators who matched the ethnicity of the respondents

- Within the Asian communities, older groups were single sex, as it is not culturally acceptable for older Asian women to be interviewed with men

- Younger respondents (under 25) were interviewed as three friends to make it easier for them to speak freely

The sample included a mix of rural and urban locations. In addition, all ethnic minority respondents had lived in the UK for at least three years and had the intention of staying in the UK for the foreseeable future.

A total of nine focus groups and nine friendship triads were convened as follows:

Black African	1 x group, 25-34, BC1 1 x triad, 15-16, C2D	London London
Black Caribbean	1 x group, 35-54, C2D 1 x triad, 20-24, BC1	London Birmingham
Indian	1 x group, 35-54, BC1, female 1 x triad, 17-18, C2D	Slough Leicester
Pakistani	1 x group, 25-34, C2D, female 1 x triad, 18-19, BC1	Bradford Birmingham
Bangladeshi	1 x group, 25-34, BC1, male 1 x triad, 15-16, C2D	London London
Eastern European	1 x group, 25-34, C2D 1 x group, 25-34, C2D	Thatcham London
White British	1 x group, 25-44, BC1, Sun/Mail readers 1 x triad, 20-24, C1C2, Mirror/Guardian readers 1 x group, 25-44, C2D, Mirror/Guardian readers 1 x triad, 20-24, C2D, Sun/Mail readers	Wetherby Wetherby London London
Mixed Race (White/Caribbean)	1 x triad, 15-16, BC1 1 x triad, 17-18, C2D	London Birmingham

As well as the groups and triads, six individual interviews were carried out with community representatives to add a broader perspective to the research. Rather than community 'leaders', these were people who work within and amongst the community and who would be able to give a rounded picture of each community's attitudes towards diversity representation and the media.

The community representatives were:

- Bangladeshi Youth Development Officer and sports coach, London
- Indian businessman and karate coach, London
- Pakistani youth worker, Bradford
- Black Caribbean football coach, London
- Black Caribbean teacher and founder of an organisation looking at issues which affect boys and men, London
- White British primary school teacher, Croydon

All fieldwork was conducted between 29th October and 19th November 2007.

Management Summary

This project was commissioned to refresh C4's understanding of Britain's diverse society, exploring the views and expectations of different ethnic groups, with regards to the representation of their communities in the British media.

This was a large scale qualitative project, covering the following groups:

- White British
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Mixed race
- Eastern European (comprising Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian)

The research began with a discussion of ethnic identity and multiculturalism which highlighted the fact that it can be difficult for people to discuss these issues, even in 21st Century Britain. White British respondents found it hardest to articulate their identity and they worried about using terminology which could be interpreted as racist. Ethnic minorities were more comfortable defining their ethnicity. For minorities, identity was complex, multilayered and flexible according to the context (e.g. with friends vs with family). It was not as straightforward as their place of birth or the passport they held.

All agreed that British society is 'multicultural' and becoming more so. However, respondents did not feel that different ethnic groups are integrated. They described a situation where communities live side by side, but not together.

White British and ethnic minority viewers differed greatly in their assessment of how well broadcasters reflect multicultural Britain. Most White viewers feel that broadcasters are doing a satisfactory job, while all other ethnic groups (barring Eastern Europeans) feel that broadcasters' performance in this area is very poor.

Ethnic minorities accused mainstream broadcasters of:
- Tokenism and stereotyping
- Screening exaggerated and extreme representations of minority communities
- Failing to reflect modern ethnic minority culture
- A lack of black and Asian people in positions of power within the British media

A the heart of their concerns lay the worry that extreme and inaccurate portayals of their culture might give white viewers the wrong impression about black and Asian communities as a whole.

Views of 'representation' differed between groups and expectations varied. South Asians wanted to see a range of cultures, races and faiths within mainstream programming, along the lines of American ensemble shows such as 'Heroes' and 'Lost'. The black community, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on having programmes with an all-black cast in the schedules – such as 'Desmond's' and 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air'. Eastern Europeans, as relative newcomers to the UK, had no expectations of being represented.

All black and Asian respondents desired a significant increase in the quantity of ethnic minority individuals on TV and an improvement in the quality of the representation itself. Both are needed because a single ethnic minority character (say, in a soap) cannot begin to represent the richness of an entire community.

In addition, all ethnic minority audiences desired more programmes with an international outlook – not only featuring their 'home' countries, but other countries around the world. They criticised British TV for being too parochial.

When asked to give examples of representative programming, interestingly, many were either old or imports from the US.

Positive examples of diverse British programmes included:
- News and current affairs programmes such as 'Dispatches' and 'Panorama'
- Talent shows, such as 'X Factor' and 'Strictly Come Dancing'
- Some reality TV, such as 'The Apprentice' and 'Who Do You Think You Are?'
- Children's programming
- Some long running dramas, such as 'The Bill', 'Casualty' and 'Holby City'

To better serve their needs going forward, ethnic minority viewers desire:
- More ethnic minority characters/actors in the mainstream in leading roles
- Realistic storylines
- Mainstream programming with ensemble, multiethnic casts (not just one black or Asian character in isolation)
- Ethnic minority programmes shown in prime time
- More ethnic minorities recruited into the industry and promoted to positions of power within it, to facilitate better writing, producing and casting of multicultural programmes

Identity Issues

Overview

The focus groups began with a discussion of racial and ethnic identity to set the context for exploring issues of representation at a later stage. Respondents were asked to define their own identity. This discussion highlighted some clear differences between white and ethnic minority communities in terms of their level of comfort discussing these matters.

White British people found their 'identity' hardest to articulate compared to the other groups in the sample. They were unused to thinking in these terms and struggled to find an appropriate definition of their race.

For ethnic minority respondents, identity was complex, multilayered and changeable. It was not as straightforward as where they were born or the provenance of their passport. Instead, there was a tension between:

- Cultural identity vs. passport identity (i.e. having a British passport did not necessarily help people to feel British. Indeed, all those born abroad identified with their 'home' country even if they had been naturalised)

- Family heritage and upbringing e.g. if the parents insisted on raising their children in a traditional Asian or African manner rather than British

- Different identities in different contexts e.g. with the peer group vs. within the family, in the UK vs. abroad

It was also evident that identity issues have changed for all Asians since 9/11. Muslims reported that they now feel more Muslim, while some Indians were keen to stress that they now feel more British.

Age was also important for teenage respondents, who feel that adult society despises young people in their age group.

Responses by individual community are shown below.

White British community

Unlike the ethnic minorities in the sample, white British respondents found it difficult and *uncomfortable* to define their ethnic identity. This was clearly not something they were used to being asked and they were wary of using language which might be interpreted as racist. On a practical level, deciding whether they were English or British clouded the issue, as there was evidence of nationalistic undercurrents around the term 'British'.

"If you said to me like 'define yourself', I would never say 'white'. That just would never come into my head"
White British man, 20-24 years, London

"Scotland don't want anything to do with us. Wales don't like us. The Irish don't like us…."
White British man, 35-44, North Yorkshire

Those in the Northern rural groups had very limited experience of other cultures. Very few mixed with people from ethnic minority or non-British backgrounds; if they did so at all, this was only at work. London was seen as almost akin to another country in terms of the diversity of its ethnic make up.

However, younger people in general held a much more considered vision of multicultural Britain. This was their reality, particularly the students living in urban centres. Indeed, many were conscious of the more nationalistic/xenophobic outlook and language of their parents and grandparents and they wanted to distance themselves from this.

"I think my parents would be the same as me, but like my grandma wouldn't, like she's quite racist and she'd be walking down the street saying somet' and I'd say 'you can't say that'. And she'd be like 'Why?'"
White British woman, 20-24 years

Indian community

The Indian community reported feeling integrated, respected and accepted into the mainstream. They cited various examples of how Indian culture had become cool and trendy in recent years, such as the success of programmes such as 'Goodness Gracious Me' and 'The Kumars' and the popularity of Bollywood stars such as Aishwarya Rai within Western cinema.

"I am proud of being an Asian especially these days because everything Asian is in fashion"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

The older Indian women saw themselves as 'Asian' or 'Indian'. They said they felt no need to assert their British identities (all were British citizens) as they felt this should be taken as read. However, in the current climate, some were keen to distinguish themselves from Muslims.

"If the discussion is about general issues, then it is fine to say Asian. But if it is about terrorism and things like that, then the more accurate description would be Indian. I wouldn't like it if someone thought I was from Pakistan"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

The younger Indian respondents described themselves as 'British'. They pointed out that they are the third generation of their families in the UK and reported that they would only use the term 'British Asian' if pushed. They cited coverage of specific national events in the media as reinforcing their sense of Britishness, such as Princess Diana's death or Royal anniversaries.

"We're British. We're born here, so why should we have to classify our background?"
Indian young man, 17-18 years

"It's really only Indians who say 'British Asian' now. Muslims refer to themselves by their religion"
Indian young woman, 17-18 years

"When Diana died, all of Britain got together to mourn. Or when it's the Queen's anniversary or the Queen's speech, it's like Britain's come together. At the back of your mind, it's there, but it's [being British] not something you think about until the media reminds you"
Indian young woman, 17-18 years

Local and teenage identities were also very relevant to this age group.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim Communities

Religious identity was key for all Pakistanis and Bangladeshis who described themselves as 'Muslims' or 'British Muslims' in the first instance. After this, they used terms such as 'British Bangladeshi' or 'British Pakistani'. They seemed to identify less with the term 'Asian' than Indian respondents.

"I have always seen myself as British Bangladeshi Muslim. I am a Bangladeshi Muslim, but I think I need to state that I am British because I live in Britain and have grown up in this country. This is my home"
Bangladeshi man, 25-34 years

Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents reported that Islam is integral to who they are, their culture and the way they live their lives. Some of the women also stated that it is a very visible religion since they wear scarves and hijabs. All agreed that their Muslim identity has strengthened post 9/11. The community feels that Islam is 'under attack' and so it has pulled together to defend and explain the Muslim faith to non-Muslims. Negative media representation was said to have played a major part in inflaming the situation.

"We are born as Muslims and the religion dictates the way you live, eat, say your prayers – basically how you lead your life. It is not a private religion and you never stop being a Muslim"
Bangladeshi man, 25-34 years

"Nowadays you feel like you have to defend your religion and I suppose that's why you feel a bit more Muslim, but we're still British"
Pakistani young woman, 18-19 years

"I think it doesn't help with the way the media portrays Muslims. It makes you more determined to keep that part of your identity because you feel it is under attack"
Bangladeshi man, 25-34 years

However, despite a sense of rejection from the wider society, most also saw themselves as British. This explained why dual identities – such as 'British Bangladeshi' and 'British Muslim' – were very evident.

Respondents also exhibited strong ties to their local community as all were living in predominantly Muslim areas.

Black Communities

Among Black communities, there was a distinct difference between the Black Caribbeans and Black Africans interviewed.

The Black Caribbean sample was mostly born and bred in England and they usually described themselves as 'Black British'. In many cases, they also identified very strongly

with their local area – in terms of being a 'South Londoner', 'Brummie' etc. They were proud of their roots, but definitely felt they belonged in Britain.

"I would use the term 'Black British' to describe myself. I don't like 'Afro Caribbean'. I'm not ashamed of my descendents, but I don't see why that's relevant"
Black Caribbean woman, 20-24 years

By contrast the Black African respondents were mostly born abroad. Around half were British citizens. However, they were very proud of their African heritage and gave it priority over all other forms of identity. For example, a couple said they did not like to use the term 'black' to describe themselves because it was not specific enough.

"I believe I'm a Ghanaian no matter where I am. I believe that even if we move from one place to another, we never lose where we come from"
Black African man, 25-34 years

"For me, black is not a name, black is a colour and nobody should call themselves a colour. Besides, a black man could be from anywhere"
Black African man, 25-34 years

These respondents spoke in great detail about discrimination at work and seemed to feel distanced from the mainstream. Some used terms like 'bystander' and 'outsider' to describe how they felt as an African (black) person living in England.

In addition, across both communities, young black respondents stood out as a distinct subgroup. Most of them rejected their British identity despite being British-born and bred, particularly young black men. They felt quite strongly that society is hostile towards black teenagers. They reported many instances where they have felt stereotyped, marginalised and discriminated against – for example, when they have failed to get a job interview, or an elderly woman has held on to her handbag more tightly in their presence.

"I don't really want nothing to do with this country. I don't think blacks will ever achieve here"
Black African young man, 15-16 years

Mixed Race Young People

The mixed race young people in our sample were mixed Black Caribbean and white (which accounts for a third of the 'mixed race' category in the 2001 Census). Although they were happy to be referred to as 'mixed race', they had all assumed a 'black' identity by virtue of their skin colour and/or upbringing. As such, similar themes emerged as for other black youth in terms of:

- Negative stereotyping of young black people in the media/society
- Rejection of their British nationality
- And a strong interest in their local area and local news

One of the young mixed race women who took part is a born-again Christian. She considered her religion to be a key facet of her identity.

"I know I'm mixed race, but everybody that knows me considers me to be a black person. I know what I am and I'm not ashamed of it, but I've been raised in a Jamaican way, so there's no part of my life that is white-orientated"
Mixed race young man, 17-18 years

"If you're mixed race, you're always classed as black – not as white or black with having both sides"
Mixed race young woman, 15-16 years

"When you're around loads of black people, you feel that you must say you're proper black, but when you're around white people, you say you're mixed. It depends"
Mixed race young man, 17-18 years

Eastern European Sample

The Eastern European perspective was quite different to that of other groups, in that these respondents were more likely to see themselves as visitors to Britain. For most, England was their temporary place of residence rather than their home. Thus, a stronger sense of being a 'foreigner' in England came through from Eastern Europeans than from most of the other ethnic groups. The exceptions to this rule were a couple of the women who were married to British men and who had British-born children who felt more of a sense of belonging here.

When describing their identity, they identified with their nationality first (e.g. Polish, Czech etc.), but also saw themselves as 'Europeans'. Indeed, some criticised the media in Britain for being very parochial compared to the media in their countries which have more of a cross-European outlook.

In addition, Eastern European respondents were the only ones to use words like 'immigrant', 'worker', 'citizen' and 'minority ethnic' when describing their status in the UK.

Their religious identity (as Catholics) was also important to them and was something which they felt set them apart from the majority of British people.

Comments included the following:

"I am Polish and I am proud [of it]. I have been here for more than three years but this is not enough to feel English"
Polish man, 25-34 years

Even if I were here for the rest of my life, I would feel Czech. I had a beautiful childhood there and my family are there"
Czech woman, 25-34 years

"We are also European. In our country, most of the films and things are translated, but there are so many brilliant German, Italian and French comedies and the problem here is that there are no other programmes from places that don't speak English"
Czech woman, 25-34 years

"We are quite religious and I think British people of our generation find this quite weird. They were asking me why we were queuing at Christmas. They wanted to know if there was something being given away for free when in fact we were going to confession!"
Polish woman, 25-34 years

Views of Multicultural Britain

Definition of 'Multicultural'

Respondents were asked to define the meaning of the term 'multicultural'. Four main types of responses emerged, i.e.:

- Many respondents gave a simple dictionary-like definition and said it refers to a mix of cultures, races and faiths within society. London was seen as the ultimate example of a multicultural city and all agreed that Britain is welcoming to people from other parts of the world.

- A few broadened the definition beyond ethnicity and said that they think of 'multicultural' as including a range of sub cultures such as gay, disabled, student etc.

- Others saw it as more of a political term because they felt that it implies inclusivity, acceptance of others and equality between ethnic groups

- While some felt that it implies 'separateness' and 'difference' and that it can be used as a way of sidelining anything which is 'non-white'

Comments included:

"Britain is multicultural in the sense that there are different backgrounds that are here that you can see in the workplace, in restaurants and the food they sell in supermarkets"
Black African man, 25-34 years

"It's like a mosaic. You keep your own cultural identity, but at the same time live closely with other races and faiths"
Bangladeshi man, 25-34 years

"It means….non-British because when it is spoken about, it is always used in connection with Indians and other communities and never about the English"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

How Far Do We Live In A Multicultural Britain?

There was broad agreement across groups that we live in a multicultural society, but many believe that our society is not integrated. These sentiments were expressed both between and across white British and ethnic minority communities. Respondents gave numerous examples of cities and other environments where different communities reside side by side, but keep to themselves.

"Come into our college and you will be shocked. We have a big canteen and we have a little vending machine place. All the Hindus/Gujaratis sit in the canteen. All the white people sit in the vending machine area. All the Sikhs sit around the corner and all the Muslims stay in the study centre"
Indian young woman, 17-18 years

All felt that the term 'multicultural' was loaded. For some, it was seen as a euphemism for more racist and exclusionist views – a way of talking about race without talking about race. The word prompted discussion about political correctness and tokenism in society generally, particularly among whites.

In terms of their own social circles, the extent to which people mixed with other ethnic groups varied. It depended mainly on locality and the profile of the school/workplace in which people found themselves. Women were more likely than men to have friends from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Newer arrivals to the country (Black Africans and Eastern Europeans) said they found it easier to make friends with other 'foreigners' than with white British people.

Representation Issues

Key Themes

After discussing identity and multiculturalism, the researchers then went on to discuss representation issues, to explore perceptions of how well the main broadcasters reflect multicultural Britain. During this discussion, two major themes emerged.

First, it became clear that there is a massive gap between white and ethnic minority communities in terms of their expectations of broadcasters and how the British media represents the diversity of British society. White viewers cited a few programmes which feature black and Asian characters (e.g. 'Eastenders', 'Holby City') and they concluded that the main broadcasters are doing a satisfactory job representing multicultural Britain. However, ethnic minority viewers (excluding Eastern Europeans) strongly disagreed. They felt that the main broadcasters are falling way short in this area, both in terms of the quality and quantity of representation. Ethnic minority viewers commented that an ethnic individual alone (for example, a solitary black character in a soap) cannot represent the richness of an entire community.

[Eastern Europeans, as relative newcomers to the UK, had no expectation of seeing their community represented on British TV and had few views on diversity, perhaps because they were less familiar with the ethnic make up of British society].

Secondly, representation in itself is not a clear-cut concept as it can mean different things to different groups and expectations vary between communities. Therefore, for South Asians, 'representation' meant being inclusive of all cultures, races and faiths within mainstream programming. The examples they gave included American imports with a multi-ethnic ensemble cast such as 'Heroes' and 'Lost'. From the black community, however, there was much more emphasis on having programmes with an all-black cast in the schedules – such as 'Desmond's' and 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air'.

In addition, all ethnic minority audiences desired more programmes with an international outlook – not only featuring their 'home' countries, but other countries and continents around the world. For example, documentary series with a travel element such as 'Who do you think you are?' and current affairs programmes which cover global issues ('Dispatches', 'Panorama') were very popular.

Current vs. Ideal Representation

Currently, ethnic minority viewers complain that their lives are not reflected on British TV. They feel they do not see people like themselves in mainstream programming.

In several of the focus groups, respondents debated whether increased representation of minorities might mean sacrificing realism and accuracy. For example, would it be appropriate to cast an Asian actress as Jane Eyre? The rural soap 'Emmerdale' was also discussed in terms of its lack of diversity and whether it would seem odd to fill the cast with ethnic minorities given its setting in the Yorkshire Dales. However, on balance, ethnic minority respondents felt that media providers have a responsibility to reflect Britain's diversity across all genres, regardless of concerns about authenticity.

Their key criticisms of current programming were of:

- **Tokenism and stereotyping** e.g. Dev, the Asian corner shop owner in 'Coronation Street', Denise in 'Eastenders' who was a black single mother with two children by two different fathers when she first appeared on the progamme

- **Exaggerated and extreme representations** e.g. a recent 'Wife Swap' featuring a Muslim family where the mother was *"completely over the top"* according to the Muslim respondents in this research

- **Failure to reflect modern ethnic minority culture** e.g. some Asian viewers complained that Asian dramas always seem to focus on arranged marriage which they say is not the norm nowadays

- **A lack of black and Asian people in positions of power within the British media** - respondents contrasted Britain with the US where stars such as Oprah Winfrey and Tyra Banks control large media corporations

At the heart of their concerns lay the worry that extreme and inaccurate portrayals of their culture might give white viewers the wrong impression about black and Asian communities as a whole.

In an ideal world, representative TV would mean a significant increase in both the number of represented individuals/communities and in the quality of the representation itself. Ethnic minority viewers wanted:

- Minority actors to star in leading roles
- Or if not the star, their characters should be integral to the plot/cast of the programme they are in
- Realistic storylines….
- …featuring a range of minority characters (not one per programme)
- Ethnic minority programmes to be shown in prime time (this was a big criticism of current scheduling of shows like 'Dubplate Drama')

Comments on representation included the following:

"We would like to see a more realistic view of Asians. A lot of Asians are professionals and educated and we don't just work in corner shops"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

"The channels show Asians the way they want to and not according to the reality of the situation. They show Asians the way a white person wants to see them. They don't show normal Asians like they showed in 'Bend It Like Beckham'"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

"They don't portray black people doing different roles and in every aspect of every field, like doctors, lawyers, architects"
Black Caribbean man, 35-54 years

"You know, ten or twenty years down the line of steadily seeing good black people on TV in different jobs and it's going to change the kids' outlook. Right now, all they're seeing is hip hop and football"
Black Caribbean man, 35-54 years

"I might see Trevor [McDonald] at 10pm, but on a daily basis, you don't get to see your own people and if you do, they don't play good roles"
Black Caribbean woman, 20-24 years

"I would like to see Asians in higher level jobs like producing. They should be involved in the decision-making. It is good to have Asian presenters but they are being told what to do"
Bangladeshi young man, 15-16 years

"I don't see myself represented on [mainstream] TV. Only on BEN and OBE can I find stories that I actually identify with"
Black African woman, 25-34 years

"TV companies try but fail dismally [to be multicultural]. Channel 4 attempts it more but they fail just as much"
Pakistani young man, 18-19 years

Representative Programming

Overview

The research aimed to cover representative programming across a range of media channels, so the relative value of being represented in different media was discussed. However, beyond (for some) pirate radio and community/special interest websites, TV dominated the conversation.

Ethnic minority viewers offered a number of examples of programming which they felt either:

- Represented a diverse society, or
- Represented their own community well

Interestingly, many of the examples were either old or imported from the US. This may be pure nostalgia or may indicate that broadcasters produced more specialist ethnic programmes in the past than they do now.

Examples of Representative Programming

The following programmes were cited across ethnic groups as positive examples of diverse programming.

- **US imports**
  - current series such as 'Heroes', 'Lost', 'ER'
  - older shows such as 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air'
  These were seen as well written, with multiracial casts and minority characters in lead roles. The programme makers were congratulated for tackling controversial storylines e.g. those which touch on racial issues

- **News/current affairs programmes** e.g.
  - 'Dispatches'
  - 'Panorama'
  - 'Question Time'/'Wright Stuff'

- Newsreaders (but NOT news coverage)

'Dispatches' and 'Panorama' cover issues that affect all sections of society and they report in a fair and balanced manner. 'Question Time' was praised for always having a multiracial audience. 'Wright Stuff' usually has a black or Asian person on the panel and that person will be asked to comment on all the topics under discussion, not just those that relate to their ethnicity or religion. Viewers also liked to see prominent ethnic newsreaders such as Trevor McDonald and Krishnan Guru-Murthy

- **Talent shows** e.g.
  - 'X Factor'
  - 'Strictly Come Dancing'

Ethnic minority viewers appreciated the fact that there was usually a mix by ethnicity among the contestants on these shows

- **(some) Reality TV** e.g.
  - 'The Apprentice'
  - 'Who Do You Think You Are?'

Black viewers, in particular, liked 'The Apprentice' because it features black people in a business context which they felt would help to break down some stereotypes and because the winner of the first series was a black man. 'WDYTYA' was praised for featuring black and Asian celebrities exploring their roots and in the process visiting their countries of origin

- **Some soaps/'gritty dramas'** e.g.
  - 'The Bill'
  - 'Casualty' & 'Holby City'
  - 'Eastenders' (for some)

All of these were considered to have a multiethnic cast and within that, some prominent ethnic minority characters

- **Children's programming**
  - some white parents also highlighted this as a representative genre

- **Sports coverage**
  - players rather than presenters

- **Other miscellaneous examples**
  - 'Ross Kemp on Gangs' (has featured a range of overseas countries)
  - 'Deal or No Deal' (has featured many ethnic minority contestants)
  - '100% English' (interesting documentary that highlighted the fact that Brits have a mixed ancestry)
  - '3 Minute Wonder' (has featured short films of ethnic minority interest)
  - 'The Simpsons' (considered by all young people to be multicultural)

Examples of Least Representative Programming

The following programmes and genres were cited across ethnic groups as lacking in diversity.

- Programmes, including:

    o 'Coronation Street'/'Eastenders' – which many ethnic viewers felt could do better in terms of representation

    o 'Hollyoaks', 'Emmerdale' and Australian soaps such as 'Home And Away' which were criticised for having no virtually no ethnic minority characters

    o 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' – respondents felt this programme was very UK-centric in its general knowledge questions, which made it more difficult for minorities to get through

    o 'Friends' – although popular, respondents described the series as very 'white'

    o 'Vicar of Dibley' – set in an English village and all the main cast of characters were white British

    o 'Big Brother' – ethnic viewers acknowledged that BB is diverse in terms of the number of black, Asian and gay people who are selected to go into the house, but they were highly critical of the extreme personalities who feature in the series. As mentioned earlier, they worried that the mainstream public would assume that the people in the house are typical of their community.

- In terms of genres, the following comments were made:

    o Teenage programmes were seen as less diverse than children's programming. Therefore, parents felt their children were less exposed to black and Asian characters from the age of 12 upwards, except on satellite channels featuring US teenage shows (e.g. on the Disney Channel, Trouble TV etc.)

    o There was a common view that general knowledge quiz shows are biased towards white British contestants because the questions are often related to British idioms, history, culture etc.

    o Asian viewers pointed out that there is little Asian representation in sports presenting

    o All groups felt that ethnic minorities are largely absent from the health and lifestyle genre such as cookery, gardening and fashion shows

Representation by Genre

The chart below summarises the views of ethnic minority viewers by genre.
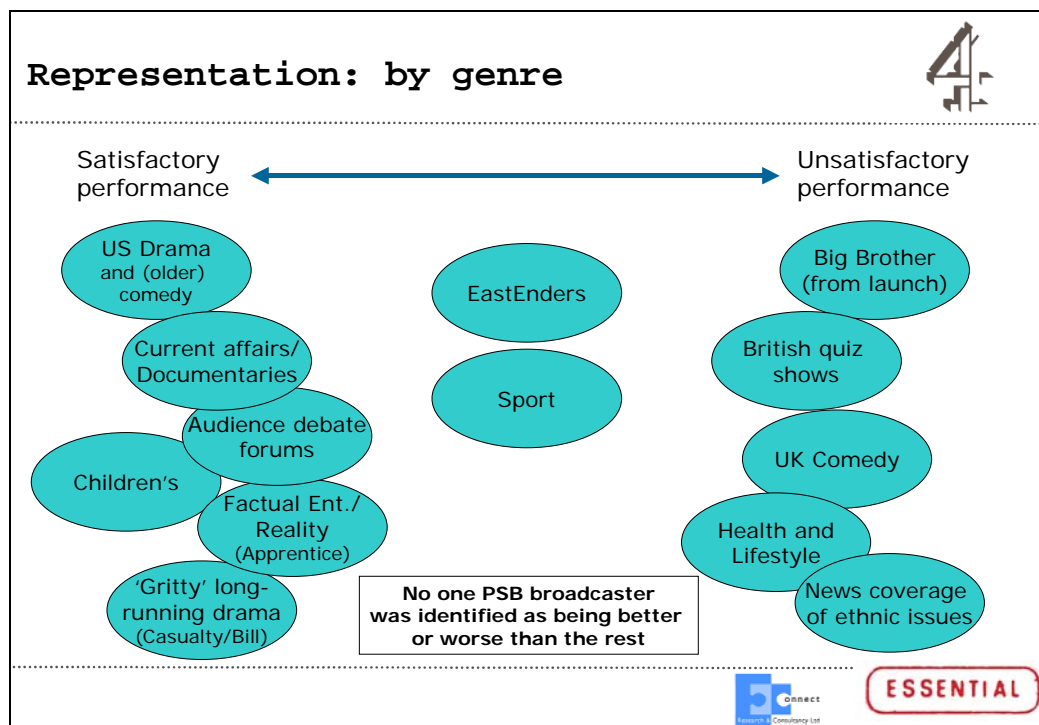
Programmes Felt to Positively Represent An Individual Community

Each ethnic group was also asked to pick out any programmes which they felt positively represented their community. Responses are listed below.

The Indian community cited the following:
- The recent BBC partition series of programmes about India and Pakistan
- The 'India' series presented by Sanjeev Bhaskar (great because it showed modern India)
- 'Indian Food Made Easy' presented by Anjum Anand (good to see a new Indian chef getting her own series)
- C4 news because it is fronted by Krishnan Guru-Murthy and Samira Ahmed (they have been newsreaders on a regular and consistent basis and this shows Asians *"in a responsible, front line position"*)
- 'The Kumars at No 42' and 'Goodness Gracious Me' because they were groundbreaking comedies in their time

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities struggled to pick out any positive representations of their communities from mainstream TV. We suspect they may be watching specialist Asian/Muslim channels more than mainstream output. They picked out:
- 'Dispatches' (fair and shows issues affecting all communities including Muslims)
- 'The Towers' (which featured the stories of residents of a run down office block. The programme featured a Muslim family who respondents really liked. They also filmed an Asian wedding as part of the documentary and respondents felt this was very realistic)

The <u>Black African and Black Caribbean</u> communities celebrated a number of all-black or black-led shows, which were mainly from the US. Fewer shows were cited from the British mainstream. Their list of programmes featured:

- A range of US 'black' comedies such as 'Fresh Prince', 'The Cosby Show', 'My Wife and Kids'
- Desmond's (even the youngest respondents mentioned this as they watched repeats on Trouble TV)
- 'America's Next Top Model (produced and presented by Tyra Banks and always features a multiethnic range of contestants)
- 'Hustle' (black viewers appreciated seeing Adrian Lester in a leading and non-stereotypical role)
- 'Little Miss Jocelyn' (funny, with good characters)
- 'Dubplate Drama' (innovative and realistic, but shown really late at night)
- 'Babyfather' (the BBC series based on a book by Patrick Augustus which featured an all-black British cast)
- 'Dr Who' because of the Martha Jones character (black viewers were pleasantly surprised when the Dr was given his first black companion)
- Any programmes shown on Trouble TV or dedicated African channels such as OBE or BEN

<u>Mixed race</u> young people tended to select the same programmes as did the black respondents (see the list above). It was interesting to note that they showed little recognition of current mixed race characters – no spontaneous mentions of Lloyd or Kelly in 'Coronation Street', for example. The only mixed race characters mentioned were from 'Brookside' and Billy Jackson from 'Eastenders', both very old examples.

Finally, the Eastern European respondents selected:

- Michael Palin's recent travel series covering Eastern Europe (described as *"a wonderful show"* because they felt it dispelled the preconceptions that British people have about Eastern Europe countries and showed they are not backward)
- The Polish machinist in the factory in 'Coronation Street (respondents liked the fact that she started out as a minor character and she is now the factory supervisor)
- A film shown on More4 called 'Czech Dream' which is about the rise of consumerism in the Czech Republic

Programmes Felt to Negatively Represent An Individual Community

Viewers also selected programmes which they felt negatively represented their community. Responses are listed below.

The <u>Indian</u> community cited the following:

- 'Britz', a recent drama shown on C4 (some felt this was scare mongering because it showed a very British Muslim girl becoming a terrorist)
- 'The Great British Asian Invasion' shown on C4 in 2004 (this looked at how Asian culture has influenced the English, but Indian viewers did not like its tongue-in-cheek tone. They felt it made light of a serious subject)
- Various inaccuracies and stereotypes in British soaps, such as Dev in 'Coronation Street' and the Ferreira family in 'Eastenders' who used to run the mini cab firm

The <u>Pakistani and Bangladeshi</u> respondents cited:

- 'Undercover Mosque' (they felt this *"went too far"* and they disliked the idea of having cameras in mosques)

- 'Britz' (some felt the content was balanced, but they dismissed the dialogue and behaviour of the characters as inaccurate and "*fake*". One man commented: "*I personally do not know any Muslims like that at all*")
- 'Wife Swap' featuring a Muslim family
- All news coverage of terrorism which they felt was biased

<u>Black and Mixed Race</u> respondents were most critical of programmes which they felt perpetuated notions of black people as gangsters and criminals. As a result, they picked out:
- 'The Bill' ("*Either the person who has committed the crime is black, or the person who is their drug dealer is black, or the person who's the mugger is black. That's the kind of programme I don't like*")
- 'Street Crime Live'
- 'Bad Girls'
- Negative news coverage of black on black violence
- Various inaccuracies and stereotypes in the soaps such as Gus being a roadsweeper in 'Eastenders'

<u>Eastern European</u> respondents selected the following negative representations:
- News coverage which confuses asylum seekers and illegal immigrants with migrant workers (they believe the British public is unsure of the distinction and that many assume Eastern Europeans are here illegally)
- Some Polish builders who featured recently in 'Eastenders' (too stereotypical)

Celebrity Big Brother

The researchers planned to introduce the topic of Celebrity Big Brother and Big Brother towards the end of the discussions to see how ethnic minority viewers had reacted to various incidents on these shows and to see how, if at all, this had impacted their views of C4. However, in nearly all groups, the series were mentioned spontaneously and respondents became very animated when expressing their views. The exceptions were Eastern Europeans who were less familiar with the controversy.

While all felt it was important to broadcast the behaviour – and indeed they felt that C4 may be the only public service broadcaster who would be brave enough to do so – all groups criticised the channel's handling of both events. In the case of Jade, respondents feel that C4 management was too slow to act and appeared to be complicit in encouraging unpleasant behaviour. In the case of Emily, the channel acted too quickly and many felt this was a transparently political move.

However, as before, there was a stark difference of opinion between white and ethnic minority respondents.

White British respondents discussed issues such as bullying, C4's role as editor/censor, the Reality format, Jade's intellectual/social status, the 'n' word and so on. Jade was seen as an example of a little-represented 'white underclass'. However, almost none spoke directly of racism or racist behaviour.

Conversely, for all ethnic groups, the CBB events were unquestionably examples of racist behaviour, despite the fact that Jade did not use any direct racial insults. For ethnic viewers, racist behaviour can relate to what a person *means* rather than what they actually *say*.

Therefore, many expressed much more sympathy for Emily who they felt did not have a racist intention when she used the 'n' word.

Asians were particularly offended by the CBB incident. However, all groups deplored the way in which Shilpa Shetty was treated.

There was also much discussion and disagreement around use of the 'n' word, driven largely by age. Older black respondents were adamant that black people do not and should not use it among themselves, while younger people were more accepting of the word because it is commonly used in hip hop. For white people, this was simply a confusing topic.

Comments on CBB and BB 2007 included the following:

"What Jade did was racism of the first degree. Channel 4 should have stopped the bullying earlier, but they didn't do anything until they saw all the emails"
Black African woman, 25-34 years

"Channel 4 should have taken action and sent the message that 'look, we will not tolerate this behaviour. This is racism'. They did nothing. In fact, they let it happen. They were only bothered about their ratings"
Bangladeshi woman, 25-34 years

"It was good that they showed what they did show. It showed the true colours of English and racist people and showed that Asians have strength and respect, but it didn't show any action against Jade and that was wrong. They ended up giving the wrong message"
Indian woman, 35-54 years

Summary of Emerging Themes and Implications

Throughout the research it was clear that there were many perspectives on Britain today. At the heart of these was the feeling that Britain was multi-cultural but not necessarily integrated.

It terms of recommendations going forward, this led the researchers to ask the question – "where are both white British people and people from other ethnic groups learning about each other?" The research results suggest that there is a continuing role, and also a responsibility, for broadcasters in this particular context.

In terms of the specific representation issue, it was clear that there was a noticeable gap in perception between the white British respondents in the research and every other ethnic group. This led the researchers to suggest broadcasters may need to examine the monitoring systems they currently use to stay in touch with the different perspectives, diverse opinions and to respond to it.

Looking at programming in particular, the report has detailed examples of genres and programmes which were performing well and not so well with regard to representation. This could be used by broadcasters to identify opportunities, to improve representation at a genre specific level.

Specifically on this issue UK Drama (indeed most fictional output) was highlighted for attention. It was felt that fiction was falling behind more "real life" genres – people did not think that fictional ethnic characters were sufficiently well conceived or well written. At the same time there was a call for more ethnic characters in leading roles – quality of representation as well as quantity. This call spread beyond fiction into all areas of TV. Overall this represents an opportunity for broadcasters to seize the initiative going forward.

In the research, truly representative TV was described as programming across a range of genres with both multi-ethnic casting (the American show "Heroes" being the prime current example) and dedicated black or Asian shows such as Desmonds or the Kumars. Within this, American programming was widely and consistently cited as producing rich and truly multicultural drama and comedy. It was felt that the broadcasters could learn from this and take up the challenge to emulate the best of the American examples and to match them with British-made programming.

Appendices:
Focus Groups Discussion Guide

Discussion guide, Version 3

October 2007

A. Introduction and Background	10 mins

- Introduce self and Connect/Essential
- Introduce purpose of the research: ***"We are conducting this project on behalf of a major organisation who is interested in finding out your views of TV and the media nowadays. We want to talk to you about the importance of TV in your lives, your favourite programmes and channels and the representation of different groups of people on TV"***
- Stress independence and explain confidentiality
- Discussion will last about 2 hours (1½ hours for triads)
- No right or wrong answers; a chance to air your views; all to have a say but please speak one at a time
- Explain tape/video recording/presence of observers (as appropriate)

Respondents to introduce themselves:

- First name
- Age
- Occupation and working status OR ask younger respondents what they are studying and where
- Marital status; number/ages of children (if applicable)
- Current favourite TV shows and why

B. Self definition	20 mins

- Ask respondents to take pen and paper. Then ask them to **write down the 5 words** which they think best describe who they are (can be done verbally if respondents are unable/do not wish to write).

- Reporting back from respondents – moderator to compile overall list

- Moderator to review with group
    - Which words are shared and by how many
    - Reasons for inclusion

- o Has your view of your identity changed in any way over time (e.g. do you feel more British now than you once did)? How and why?

- If any mentions of ethnicity/religion, ask:
  - o Why have they used the language they have used?
  - o Would they be happy to be referred to in this way by people from another ethnic group/religion? Why/why not?
    - IF NOT, what language would they prefer other people to use and why?
  - o How important is this aspect of their identity relative to other things on the list?

- If ethnicity/religion are not mentioned, ask:
  - o What do you see as your ethnic or racial identity? Why do you say that?
  - o Why did this aspect of your identity not come to mind earlier? Do you feel your ethnicity/religion is less important than the other things on your list – why?

- Check how many of the group are British citizens

- (Ask British citizens) Do you see yourself as British? Why/why not?
  - o IF NOT, What would need to change for you to see yourself as British? Why do you say that?

ASK ALL

- Where does your view of Britain and 'Britishness' come from?
  SPONTANEOUS FIRST, THEN PROBE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF:

  - o Family and friends
  - o Public figures/the government
  - o Experiences in Britain (which?)
  - o Experiences abroad (which?)
  - o TV
  - o Other media sources
  - o Internet
  - o Other

C. Multiracial Britain	20 mins

- Ask respondents to take pen and paper again.

- This time, I would like you to write down anything that comes to mind when I say a particular word. You might think of other words, images or sounds, but don't think about it too much. It is your first thoughts that I am interested in. The word is 'MULTICULTURAL'

    - o Once complete, ask respondents to share their thoughts
    - o Moderator reviews similarities/differences

- What does the term 'multicultural' mean to you?

- Do you feel we live in a multicultural society? Why do you say that?
    - o Probe for specific examples from their own lives

- How mixed would you say your own circle of friends is in terms of ethnic backgrounds and nationalities?
    - o Where/how did you meet the friends you are closest to now?
    - o Probe: who you work vs. social networks

- Do you talk about issues of race and ethnic identity with your friends?
    - o IF SO, What tends to kick off these discussions?
    - o How comfortable are you in discussing these issues? What sorts of things make you feel uncomfortable?
    - o Where do such discussions 'sit' in relation to the other things you talk about?

- Here are some statements that other people have made about multicultural Britain. I'd be interested in hearing what you have to say about them. (show 3-4 quotations on showcards, rotating the order between interviews)
    - o (Once all shown) Who do you think said each of these? Why do you think that?
    - o Are these the sorts of people who should be making statements about multicultural Britain (i.e. politicians, academics etc.)? Why/why not?

D. The Role and Responsibility of the Media	35 mins

Now I'd like to talk for a while about the media you consume – that is, anything you watch, read, listen to or download.

- First, where do you mainly get your news from…..?
    - o Explore usage and importance of mainstream press vs. specialist ethnic press vs. radio vs. websites/Internet etc.
    - o Pros and cons of each news source used

- And tell me about the radio stations that you listen to most often…..?
  - Probe: talk vs. music radio
  - Probe: mainstream vs. specialist
  - What do you like about the particular stations you listen to? What, if anything, makes them different from other stations?

- Explore usage and importance of:
  - Internet
  - Downloaded videos, movies, TV e.g. youtube, video on demand
  - MSN/Yahoo Messenger etc.
  - Social networking websites e.g. Facebook, Bebo
  - Podcasts
  - SMS messaging

- What are the pros and cons of these technologies vs. 'traditional' TV and radio?

- How best can traditional TV companies use these methods to communicate with people in your community?

- What do you particularly like to watch on TV?

- How far does the media portray a multicultural Britain?
  - Should it? Is this important? Why do you say that?

- Can you give me some examples of programmes which have been particularly good at crossing racial and cultural boundaries?
  - Ask what channels these programmes were shown on
  - Probe reasons for selecting these programmes

- How, if at all, do you think such programmes impact people's views of different ethnic/religious groups/nationalities?
    - Are they a force for good or do they make no difference? Why?

- How far should TV companies go in showing different people's views on multicultural Britain – for example, broadcasting potentially offensive points of view?
  - How important is it to maintain freedom of speech even if you don't like what the person on TV is saying?
  - Probe arguments for and against

- Which recent programmes do you think have gone too far in showing offensive views? Why do you say that?
  - In those instances, where should the TV company have drawn the line?
  - What should or should not be done in cases where TV programmes cause offence? Why do you say that?

- Do you think TV companies should censor 'old' movies or TV shows which could cause offence in the current times? (Give 'Dambusters' example if appropriate)

ASK WHITE BRITISH RESPONDENTS

- How concerned are you about the way (white) British culture is represented on TV? Do you see this as an important issue? Why/why not?

- How do you feel about the way ethnic minority cultures and communities are represented on TV?
  - PROBE: positive and negative examples
  - Do you see this as an important issue? Why/why not?

- (If not mentioned spontaneously) What do you think of the representation of black people/Asian people/Eastern Europeans on TV? Why do you say that?

ASK ETHNIC MINORITY RESPONDENTS

- How far do you see the reality of your life as a _____ person (adapt as necessary using the respondents' language from earlier) reflected on TV?

- Is this different in entertainment programmes vs. documentaries? Why do you say that?

ASK ALL

- Can you give me some examples of programmes which have been particularly good at portraying your identity/community?
    - Probe reasons for selecting these programmes

- And which programmes do you feel have misrepresented your identity/community?
    - How and where did they go wrong?

- How would you like to see _____ people like yourselves represented? Why?

E. View of Specific Genres/Programmes	20 mins

- Now let's talk about different types of programme. Tell me what you think of the representation of _____(ethnic group) on TV in:
    - Comedy/light entertainment
    - Dramas/soap operas
    - News/current affairs/documentaries
    - Reality TV
    - Presenters on children's programmes, sport, the news etc.
- For each of the above, probe positive and negative examples
- Probe on channels, if mentioned spontaneously

Moderator hands out cards containing stills from a selection of programmes, plus any programmes mentioned by respondents during the session (moderator writes these on blank postcards). Moderator divides the group into two:

- I'd like you now to group these various programmes in terms of how multicultural you think they are. You can put them into as many groups as makes sense to you, but you should have at least two.

    (Group reports back, with rationale)

- And now could you arrange them in terms of how realistic you think they are in their representation of different communities. Again, you can create as many groupings as you wish.

    (Group reports back, with rationale)

F. Views of Channel 4	15 mins

I can now reveal that our client is Channel 4.

- As far as you know, what are Channel 4's aims and objectives?

- How does Channel 4 compare to other channels in terms of its representation of multicultural Britain? Why do you say that?

- How does it compare to other channels in terms of its representation of your particular community/culture? Why do you say that?

- What (more) do you think Channel 4 should be doing?

G. Conclusion

- Finally, what advice would you give to programme makers who want to be more inclusive of _____ people in their future programming?

- Anything else you would like to add?

THANK AND CLOSE