

Include me in

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December 1999

In conjunction with the Independent Television Commission

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Foreword

This year has seen a heightened awareness of the continuing problems of racism in the UK, particularly serious pockets of institutionalised racism. We all have a part to play in demolishing these outdated obstacles to shared citizenship and none more so than the media. Broadcasting has a crucial role in ensuring minority ethnic groups are correctly and adequately reflected as a significant part of British society.

This report sets out to help the process by allowing us to understand how minority ethnic communities see themselves represented on television and whether they feel sufficient provision is made for them. It is important to understand that minority groups do not just want to see themselves; they want others to see them accurately represented.

The research also takes the opportunity to speak to broadcasters and programme makers about the issues surrounding the commissioning of programmes for and about ethnic minorities. Those *from* the minority ethnic groups are often expected to produce programmes *about* minorities. They prefer to make programmes on every subject, but recognise that if they do not take up the minority theme then few will do so. All creative talent should be encouraged to portray our multicultural society.

The Broadcasting Standards Commission is required by statute to raise issues about broadcasting for public debate. It has a comprehensive research programme to enable it to do this. *Include me in* represents another useful contribution to the debate. I am pleased to say that in considering views of producers themselves we worked in conjunction with the Independent Television Commission. I should like to record our thanks for their support and look forward to continuing co-operative approaches in the research field.

Lord Holme of Cheltenham
December 1999

Executive summary

Views of the Minority Ethnic Audience:

- Audiences are multiculturally aware, and everyday life in Britain is already far more cross-culturally connected than media depictions show, suggesting that television lags behind this area of social reality.
- People actively look for representations of themselves on television, and these representations are vividly remembered.
- Minority groups do not only want to see themselves; they want to be seen by others. They attach considerable importance to the diversity of minority ethnic representation for White majority understanding about the true nature of contemporary Britain.
- It is generally the case that the more you know about something, the more the television representation of that element will disappoint and frustrate: one's ethnic background will rarely appear to be adequately represented on television.
- Characterisation of minorities is seen as weak. Audiences have a strong sense that minority representation is there to make a point, to propose an issue, rather than as an integral part of the plot. Minority characters are presented as problems rather than as persons. There remains a 'burden of representation', whereby non-White actors have to 'act their skin colour'. Negative stereotypes are also felt to be alive and well. Thus, there is a strong desire for better minority ethnic representation across the entire range of programming, with 'colour blind casting' of more Black and Asian faces across all television genres.
- There is growing acknowledgement of multiple identities, but a belief that even the standard descriptions of minority ethnic identities do not do justice to the cultural mixes in which people live their lives. This has implications for representation beyond the standard range of visible minorities, and requires far more nuanced and subtle representations of ethnic/cultural characterisation and background.
- Minority tastes are both remarkably similar to, and divergent from, mainstream television preferences. The communities share popular taste in soap operas, news, and comedy, but often have more eclectic tastes. There are gender and generational differences in media consumption, as there are within mainstream audiences.

- There is an ongoing desire for minority ethnic programming that speaks to particular interests and concerns. Ethnic identities are increasingly differentiated and audiences are looking for diversified representations carried in specific programmes that address their needs and cultural tastes.
- When such programming exists, it tends to be broadcast very early in the morning or very late at night. There is considerable resentment at this unsocial scheduling of minority programmes.

Views of Minority Ethnic Independent Producers:

- Minority ethnic independent television producers feel a ‘burden of production’, an expectation that they always want to – and will – make programmes for their ethnic segment of the audience. Many simply want to be able to make the best programmes that they can, and to be creative producers; sometimes that may mean a focus on a theme of particular interest to an ethnic group, but not necessarily and not all the time.
- On the other hand, producers recognise that unless there are ‘slots’ for minority programmes, and unless they themselves produce such focused programmes, those programmes will not get made. The tension between these two positions - making general programmes for a broad audience, and making targeted programmes for ethnic niches – was acknowledged many times. Essentially, there needs to be the opportunity to make both kinds of programme.
- The independent television sector is expanding but under financial pressure, producing fewer but larger companies and umbrella structures, none of which is ethnic in orientation. While smaller companies are universally under pressure, minority ethnic companies are even more so.
- The industry is experienced as based on social networks and contacts, with considerable movement of people from the terrestrial channels into the independent sector. Minority ethnic companies lack ready access to the capital, social networks and contacts that mainstream companies can find.
- Access to finance remains an issue, particularly for small independents. The growth of larger independents and ‘umbrella’ organisations can be helpful, but can also quash diversity in the pressure for commercial success.

- The commissioning process is experienced as slow, cumbersome and not particularly supportive of minority companies or multicultural ideas. More commissioning editors are needed, as is a faster decision-making process that allows independents to develop highly topical programme ideas, and a better dialogue with independents.
- Improved equal opportunities within the terrestrial channels and the promotion of talented minority individuals to decision-making positions could help the commissioning of diverse programming from the independent sector. Linkages between the terrestrials and the independents matter, and need to be monitored. Targets and quotas in this area seem somewhat old-fashioned, but without them there is no guarantee that minority candidates will find access.
- Satellite and cable potentially offer new sites for programme development for minority ethnic independent producers, with access to global audiences and markets.
- The development of production in the regions and a movement away from London-centric decision-making can also be helpful to minority producers, and can promote programming which reflects the complex multicultural dynamics of Britain.

From both studies, respondents' comments suggest that they have a profound sense of Britain being a more diverse and multicultural society than television reflects. New ways to represent that diversity and new forms of inclusivity would be welcomed.

Introduction

There was a time in British life when the appearance of a dark face on a TV screen would provoke peculiarly unBritish reactions. There would be strong and passionate responses. White viewers would reach for the phone to object. They would bombard the TV stations' switchboards with complaints that "niggers" could not speak the Queen's English, or that they did not understand the British way. As late as 1987 I recall the word 'monkey' appearing on the LWT duty officer's log after my debut on *The London Programme*.

Black viewers would reach for their telephones too. But in their case it was to call relatives and friends to tell them to turn on their TV sets straight away or else they might miss the sight of a Black face on the nation's most popular medium. It was rather like birdwatchers being called to see a particularly rare species before it disappeared

Things are changing. We see many faces of colour and hear voices of different kinds.

It would be churlish to underplay the importance of the work done by some broadcasters - Channel 4, for example, and some parts of the BBC. But the picture is still patchy and the research on which this report is based shows a continuing dissatisfaction by both viewers and programme makers. One reason for that dissatisfaction is that some viewers only ever see their part of the British identity reflected in poorly-scheduled, under-budgeted productions. But there is something deeper going on, which matters for all of us, whether we are Black, brown or from the kaleidoscope of cultures which qualify as White.

I am frequently reminded that British people, in spite of official rhetoric to embrace multiculturalism, still find the idea of non-White Brits hard to come to terms with. For example, I know to my cost that until recently many Londoners still cannot distinguish between the two bespectacled, slightly greying, middle-aged Black men who appear on TV and are both called Trevor. People have even asked me, following the demise of *News At Ten*, if my "dad" is still reading the news.

Having said that, the climate in the society as a whole is changing. One person we interviewed for last year's *Windrush* series told us that, contrary to the years when he first came to a British city, young people especially are dissolving the boundaries of race and culture. He said that today he finds it hard to tell the race of a group of teenagers on the street from behind, given the extent to which the styles and speech of the Black and White and brown have merged. On top of that we know that intermarriage is complicating matters - though perhaps not quite as much as the growing realisation that Britain's imperial past has left Asian and African genes liberally distributed amongst those who think of themselves as "White".

However, the most significant change is the increasingly agonised debate about the nature of Britishness, provoked by devolution, and by the challenge of Europe. For all Britons, part of that debate is the realisation that the British Isles are an historically diverse place. As a result, the so-called majority community is itself differentiated between people with widely varying heritages - in addition to the African, Asian and Caribbean incursions of this century, there are older such communities, plus the Welsh, the Scottish, the Irish, Italians,

Jews, Chinese, Greeks, Turks, Cypriots, and many others who can genuinely claim to have roots both in Britain and elsewhere. In Professor Stuart Hall's memorable phrase, "being Black is just another way of being British".

All this change, and the energy that goes with it, should present both a challenge and an opportunity for British broadcasters and producers. That is why perhaps the most alarming finding of this report, is that television lags behind this new social reality. Black viewers are conscious of it from one point of view - that they tend, still, to appear principally as figures of two dimensions or not at all. Interestingly, when my office inquired of a major broadcaster as to why I had been invited to participate in a political debate about race in politics, when the same broadcaster rarely, if ever, invited me to discuss any other issues, we were told that it was because I never expressed opinions on anything else. Apparently some 600 current affairs programmes about social, economic, political and foreign affairs did not qualify. Needless to say, I turned down the invitation.

The worry here is that we, as an industry, are missing a great opportunity. We are ignoring talent. In the United States, the determined drive by the new TV networks, principally Fox TV, to woo the urban consumer, has given the world, amongst other successes, Will Smith, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. The systems are not directly comparable; but one of the report's further findings, that minority producers find it almost impossible to raise capital and to access the networks which provide regular business, explains why it is that we have no TV enterprises from Britain's distinct cultural communities which can pull the trick of providing programmes of universal appeal based on talent from within those communities.

This is not to say that no-one understands any of this. It may seem invidious to name people, but John Birt clearly was ahead of the pack when he set up LWT's London Minorities Unit in 1980, spotting the fact that the city was changing dramatically in its composition - and he did it even before anyone threw a petrol bomb in Bristol or Brixton. The last two bosses of BBC2, Michael Jackson and Mark Thompson, also seem to understand, as does Carlton's Chief Executive, Clive Jones. They have all spent money, and taken risks, to tap into this new stream of opportunity. But they are rare birds.

The British TV industry wants to be a global player. Much of that will involve great drama and innovative entertainment which has no demands on it other than that it should be compelling or entertaining. But we will never achieve that success in a sustained way if we ignore the originality and energy available in our own society, show contempt for parts of our audience, and fail to make programmes which look forward to the Britain of the next century, instead of the Britain of the 1950s. This is not just a moral good. It's about survival.

Trevor Phillips

Minority Ethnic Audience Research

Introduction

In the spring of 1998, the Broadcasting Standards Commission sought proposals for research into minority ethnic audiences, building on a small-scale project conducted in 1992.¹ Its aims were to map:

- how members of minority groups wanted to be described;
- the needs of minority ethnic viewers and listeners, and how well were these met;
- whether minority ethnic groups were watching specialist channels or mainstream television, and, if the latter, were they watching 'special provision' programming;
- if television was thought whether to condone or promote stereotyping, and what could be done about this;
- how racism should be portrayed;
- if television provided minority ethnic viewers with any positive role models.

Background

The project was awarded to The Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester. In our proposal, we stressed the need to take the available body of research findings into consideration, and to try to deepen our understanding of key issues, not merely replicate what was already well known and documented. New research needs to build on the findings of the old, but also pursue unanswered questions, develop new approaches and seek to be more subtle in social categorisation and thus in inclusion. We aimed to build on our own prior research for the BBC,² Channel 4,³ the ESRC,⁴ as well as the work of others, such as reports published by the ITC in 1996 and the BSC in 1992. We know that extensive research has been conducted by the broadcasters themselves in recent years, but because it has not been published, we are not able to refer to it.

The available literature suggests some well-corroborated findings. These include:

- Minority ethnic representation is considered predominantly negative and compounds attitudes and stereotypes regarding minorities in the wider society.⁵
- Individual groups are concerned about possible negative representations of their own collective identities, generally holding the belief that this is more negative than for other groups. It appears that the more one knows about a group and its internal differentiation, the more dissatisfied one will be with its media portrayal.⁶
- Cross-cultural differences exist in both the uses of and the understandings of texts through negotiation with programmes which meet differing needs.⁷
- There exists a strong desire to preserve one's culture and pass this down to future generations.⁸

1] A. Millwood Hargrave, K. Aisbett, M. Gillespie; 'The Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities on Television'; Broadcasting Standards Commission, London, 1992. 2] Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995. 3] Halloran, Bhatt and Gray, 1995; Cottle, 1997. 4] Sreberny, (forthcoming). 5] Tumber 1982; Jones & Dungey, 1983, van Dijk, 1991; Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995; Ross 1997, Gunter and Viney 1993, Campbell 1995; ITC, 1996). 6] Gunter & Viney, 1993, Campbell 1995. 7] Morley 1980, Lull 1988; Liebes & Katz 1990, Dent, 1992; Jhally & Lewis, 1992). 8] Gillespie, 1989, Gunter & Viney, 1993.

- There is a strong desire for the media to reflect the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of minority groups and there is often insufficient acknowledgement of difference within minority categories.⁹
- Minority groups should not have to bear the ‘burden of representation’ and always and only represent minority issues.¹⁰
- Local and other media are proving to be more popular and to provide a better service for minority groups than national channels.¹¹
- Imported programming, particularly from the United States, is popular and is seen to carry a greater range of, and more positive, ethnic role models.¹²
- There should be increased involvement and recruitment of minorities in media organisations.¹³
- Improvements need to be made in terms of representation and provision, but it is debatable as to which is the best way of dealing with this: more integration or separate provision.¹⁴

Methodology

The essence of our design was to try to avoid the usual pitfall of dealing with predominantly male community activists as ‘representative’ of minority ethnic opinion. There was a growing sense that generation and gender were now the two key variables for explaining differences in ethnic identifications, cultural tastes and audience habits. The project aimed to access the views of respondents across a range of ages, particularly younger viewers, and to hear from women as well as men. It was considered important that people who were not formal members of community organisations also be included in the study, since the meaning and importance that they attach to minority ethnic status might be quite different from those who are active participants in community associations.

We were trying to balance numbers across three localities, three broad ethnic categories (Asian,¹⁵ African-Caribbean and White/Other), as well as trying to capture generational differences and gender (Appendix 1). What has been gathered is not a representative structured sample, but participants assembled through a variety of procedures. The data should be considered indicative of minority opinions, not representative of any particular group. Numbers are skewed toward women (71% of the total) and toward youth (70% of total), and any aggregate figures have to be interpreted with this in mind.

9] Gillespie, 1989; Gunter & Viney, 1993; One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995; Halloran et al, 1995. 10] Ross, 1992; One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995. 11] Gillespie, 1989; Gunter & Viney 1993; Gilmore, 1996). 12] Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995. 13] Gunter & Viney, 1993; One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993. 14] Ross, 1997, One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993. 15] Primarily Asians from the Indian subcontinent.

Focus groups with young people aged 14–18 years, and some with adults, were conducted in Leicester, Bristol and London. Respondents were recruited by contacting local schools and, colleges, through some family members of younger respondents, through peer networks and, in the end, through some community associations.

We wanted to triangulate methods, to generate not only quantitative data, but also qualitative materials as to how participants talked about and expressed their feelings towards mediated content. A one-week media diary was given to participants, usually before their focus group, with the intention that it be completed and returned in the group. Seventy-six useable diaries were returned, each covering a single week between October 1998 and April 1999, recording data about radio and television use, film viewing and other cultural habits. A short questionnaire was administered at the start of each focus group. One hundred and sixty of these were collected and form the basis of the statistical data presented in this report. Group discussions were taped and transcribed, and the transcripts form the basis for the qualitative materials that follow. Additionally, a number of attitudinal questions and some questions about favourite ethnic celebrities were included in BARB questionnaires for the period February 8 to March 7 1999, under the auspices of the ITC; the data were processed by Ipsos-RSL.

Focus Groups

Focus groups began by watching an eight-minute compilation tape of extracts from current television content, including documentaries, magazine-type programmes, comedy and advertising, and including representations of both African-Caribbean and Asian programming.¹⁶ This provided a common point of reference and helped to trigger the initial discussion. Focus group facilitators followed a set of questions, although clearly animated discussion often lead beyond the immediate question asked. All quotations are from adolescents, unless specifically noted otherwise.

All groups were taped and full transcripts produced. Quotations are direct speech as recorded on the transcripts. The language of participants is presented uncensored and uncorrected. Quotations usually represent a single voice, although on occasion, where the topic was addressed by a number of participants, multiple voices are used and so noted. The acronyms used to identify focus groups are LO (London); B (Bristol); LE (Leicester), followed by a number; the full list of focus groups can be found in Appendix 2. In addition to focus group transcripts, 160 useable questionnaires and 76 useable viewing diaries were returned.

¹⁶] The contents of the compilation tape can be found in Appendix 3.

Demographics of Respondents

Table 1: Age by Location

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	<i>LEICESTER</i>	<i>BRISTOL</i>	<i>LONDON</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
<i>Age</i>				<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
14–18	36	38	38	112	70
19–25	7	4	6	17	11
26–35	5	3	–	8	5
36–49	11	1	–	12	7.5
50–64	9	2	–	11	7
TOTAL	68	48	44	160	
%	42.5	30	27.5		100

Seventy per cent of the sample is made up of 14–18 year-olds, so one of the great strengths of this study is the strong voice it provides for minority ethnic youth.

Table 2: Age by Gender

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
<i>Age</i>			<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
14–18	36	76	112	70
19–25	4	13	17	11
26–35	3	5	8	5
36–49	1	11	12	7.5
50–64	3	8	11	7
TOTAL	47	113	160	
%	29	71		100

From Table 3, it is evident that almost all our adult respondents over 36 years of age were Hindu, while the Muslim participants were young and three-quarters of these were female.

Table 3: Religion by Age

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	14–18	19–25	26–35	36–49	50–64	TOTAL	
Religion						N	%
Christian	30	4	1	–	–	35	22
Hindu	20	6	2	11	10	49	31
Sikh	10	–	2	1	–	13	8
Rastafarian	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
Muslim	27	5	2	–	–	34	21
Jewish	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
None	18	1	1	–	1	21	13
Other	4	1	–	–	–	5	3

Younger participants were most likely to say that they had no religion, while Table 4 connects ethnicity to location.

Table 4: Ethnic Background by Location

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	LEICESTER	BRISTOL	LONDON	TOTAL	
				N	%
White	–	9	6	15	9
Black Caribbean	11	6	7	24	15
Black African	1	–	3	–	25
Indian	55	7	4	66	45
Pakistani	1	13	3	17	11
Bangladeshi	–	7	4	11	7
Other Asian	–	3	2	5	3
Other	–	3	14	17	11

Table 5: Ethnic Background by Religion

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	Christian	Hindu	Sikh	Rasta	Muslim	Jewish	None	Other
White	6	–	–	–	–	1	7	1
Black Caribbean	17	–	–	1	–	–	6	–
Black African	3	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
Indian	–	48	13	–	2	–	3	–
Pakistani	1	–	–	–	17	–	–	–
Bangladeshi	–	–	–	–	11	–	–	–
Other Asian	1	1	–	–	2	–	–	1
Other	8	–	–	–	1	–	5	3

Table 6: Ethnic Background by Main Language

<i>(Number of respondents)</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Gujerati</i>	<i>Punjabi</i>	<i>Bengali</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Kutchi</i>	<i>Urdu</i>	<i>Turkish</i>
White	14	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Black Caribbean	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black African	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indian	17	42	5	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistani	3	-	6	-	-	-	8	-
Bangladeshi	1	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Other Asian	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Other	11	1	1	-	-	-	-	3

From Tables 5 and 6, we begin to see the emerging complexity of ethnic categorisations. Christianity and Islam of the religions, and English and Punjabi of the languages, cut across most or many of the ethnic categorisations. Among Indian respondents, use of English as the main language of the household is evident, while use of an Asian language remains significant among Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents. There is a profound sense in contemporary social theory that the category of ‘ethnicity’ has exploded, and our findings support that notion. Elaboration of the notions of cultural identity and self-categorisation from respondents that emerged in this project can be found later in this report.

In terms of access to media, the findings show a well-connected population, with all households owning at least one television set, almost universal saturation of video, one-third having satellite and/or cable, and almost one-fifth already connected to the Internet.

Table 7: In Your House Do You Have ...?

	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>%</i>
One television set	23	14
Two television sets	66	41
Three television sets	46	29
More than three televisions	25	16
Video player	154	97
Cable	55	35
Satellite dish	58	36.5
Internet	28	18

Viewing Diaries

A third research tool, designed to complement the data generated through focus group discussions and the questionnaire, was a viewing diary that covered a one-week diet of media and other cultural activities. These were distributed about one week before the focus groups met, and were supposed to be returned at the time of the group. Only about half actually came back, of which 76 were useable. They were completed between October 1998 and April 1999. Each diary was divided by the seven days of the week, and with enough space for each participant to note the programme, the time, the medium (radio/television), as well as provide comments about the programmes. The day was divided into four time periods: morning (06:00 hrs–12:00 hrs); afternoon (12:00–17:30 hrs); early evening (17:30 hrs–21:00 hrs), and evening (21:00 hrs on).

Table 8: Video Diary Response by Location and Gender:

<i>Leicester</i>		<i>Bristol</i>		<i>London</i>	
F	M	F	M	F	M
32	4	15	6	14	3

The data has limitations, and should only be used to gain a general sense of media habits and viewing preferences. Broadly speaking, it could be said from analysis of these viewing diaries that teenagers do not watch very much television. In terms of time period, the early evening is the preferred viewing time, reinforced by the list of popular programmes watched; there is more radio listening during the morning. In terms of viewing pattern throughout the week, viewing tends to drop over the weekend,¹⁷ perhaps suggesting that, when there are other choices and activities available, these are taken up in preference to television watching. In the answers to the question: *Were you involved in any other cultural activity today?*, the main activities were going out with friends, to the cinema, dancing, to concerts and other live performances, to play snooker or to community centres.

In terms of programme preferences, given the long time period over which these viewing diaries were completed, only serials and regular programmes will show up, while popular but single-show programmes could not score well in this system. Altogether, a list of more than 300 programme titles was generated, but 180 of them were noted by only one person. This could be used to suggest that a great deal of television fare is for ‘minority’ tastes, and only the really popular programmes gain a mass audience.

Once again, *Neighbours* is by far the most popular programme, partly because of its scheduling (twice a day, every weekday), while *EastEnders* which is on three times a week comes in second. Some of the programmes are clearly age-group favourites, such as *Tops of the Pops*. In terms of the use of television channels, BBC1, ITV and Channel 4 each score more than double the hits of the next two most popular channels Sky One and Channel 5. Following some distance behind come a children’s channel, Nickelodeon, and the music

¹⁷ See tables in Appendix 4.

video channel, MTV, followed by a list of cable and satellite channels, none of which garners a sizeable number of hits. This suggests once again that the audience is essentially utilising the main five terrestrial channels, with only occasional forays into the more targeted programming offered through satellite and cable networks.

The majority of respondents, mainly young people, manifested a daily pattern of viewership. In the morning, they might watch a breakfast show, a talk show or a repetition of a soap opera. *The Big Breakfast* was quite popular, with students watching it before college. Some noted that it has a Black newsreader, although others thought it was repetitive, boring and lacked references to minority ethnic groups. *This Morning* on ITV was also popular, as well as talk shows like *Trisha* (ITV) whom students remarked is '*a Black hostess with a very British attitude*'. *Guilty* on Sky One was noted for its racially mixed live audience, while *Sunset Beach* on Channel 5 was noted for the Black, Italian and Latin American characters who seem to have their own story lines and never mix with the majority of White characters in the series.

In the afternoon, reality shows were very popular, as well as teen-orientated sitcoms and repetitions of daily soaps. Early in the evening, teenagers seem to be ready for the daily diet of soaps, but also show interest in game shows, holiday programmes, some documentaries and news. Later in the evening, a greater variation in programme preferences can be seen, with favourite series complemented by film and news viewing.

Audience preferences

The basic profile of preferred types of television programmes in terms of overall ranking (from questionnaires, based on the total of three choices each participant could make) shows that soaps and comedy (the choices particularly of women and the youngest age group) lead the way:

Table 9: Television Preference by Gender

<i>Programme type</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
			N	%
News	6	17	23	17
Sports	17	6	23	17
Children's	0	2	2	1
Current affairs	3	0	3	2
Music	12	35	47	34
Education/OU	1	1	2	1
Documentary	8	10	18	13
Feature film	15	30	45	33
Cookery	2	10	12	9
Soaps	12	65	77	56
Talk shows	3	28	31	22.5
Gardening	0	1	1	1
Drama	6	22	28	20
Quizzes	0	6	6	4
DIY	1	3	4	3
Serials	3	8	11	8
Religious	2	4	6	4
Comedy	28	40	68	49
Other	1	4	5	4

Table 10: Television Preferences by Age

<i>Programme type</i>	14–18	19–25	26–35	36–49	50–64	<i>TOTAL</i>	
						N	%
News	8	3	4	5	3	23	17
Sport	17	1	2	3	0	23	17
Children’s	1	0	1	0	0	2	1
Current affairs	3	0	0	0	0	3	2
Music	39	5	2	1	0	47	34
Education/OU	0	0	0	0	2	2	1
Documentary	13	1	2	1	1	18	13
Feature film	36	4	0	5	0	45	33
Cookery	4	1	0	3	4	12	9
Soaps	60	8	2	4	3	77	56
Talk shows	28	2	1	0	0	31	22.5
Gardening	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Drama	23	4	0	1	0	28	20
Quizzes	4	1	0	1	0	6	4
DIY	2	1	1	0	0	4	3
Serials	9	0	0	1	1	11	8
Religious	3	2	0	0	1	6	4
Comedy	55	9	2	0	1	68	49
Other	4	0	0	1	0	5	4

The top television programmes in rank order, compiled from the three favourite programme preferences, were as follows.

Table 11: Favourite Television Programme by Gender

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
			N	%
Goodness Gracious Me	3	22	25	17
Coronation Street	1	11	12	8
Family Fortune	0	2	2	1
The Simpsons	11	11	22	15
Match of the Day	5	0	5	3
South Park	2	2	4	3
Friends	6	23	29	19
MTV	0	2	2	1
Top of the Pops	4	5	9	6
Sliders	1	0	1	1
Newsnight	2	0	2	1
Red Dwarf	5	0	5	3

Table 11: continued

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
			N	%
Richard Attenborough	1	0	1	1
Football Italia	2	0	2	1
EastEnders	12	47	59	39
Tomorrow's World	0	1	1	1
Fresh Prince of Bel Air	4	5	9	6
Network East	1	3	4	3
Asianet Top Ten	0	1	1	1
Hollyoaks	1	4	5	3
Emmerdale	1	1	2	1
Countdown	0	2	2	1
Heartbeat	1	0	1	1
Ricki Lake	1	6	7	5
The A-Force	0	5	5	4
Brookside	0	2	2	1
Neighbours	12	16	28	19
Sunset Beach	1	11	12	8
Panorama	1	1	2	1
Club Nation	1	1	2	1
X-Files	3	7	10	7
ER	0	4	4	3
Ally McBeal	0	5	5	3
Top Gear	3	0	3	2
Pretender	0	1	1	1
Ultra Violet	0	1	1	1
Jerry Springer	4	11	15	10
Moesha	1	0	1	1
Shortland Street	0	1	1	1
Home and Away	2	11	13	9
Heartbreak High	0	4	4	3
WWF Raw	1	1	2	1
Ready Steady Cook	0	1	1	1
Qasia	0	1	1	1

Some questions on minority ethnic portrayal were added to the regular BARB surveys between 8 February and 7 March 1999. People were asked to name three African-Caribbean television personalities:

Of 10316 responses, only a few names generated more than 100 mentions:

<i>Number of mentions</i>	<i>Personality</i>
2604	Lenny Henry
2592	Trevor McDonald
1234	Ainsley Harriot
643	Moira Stewart
307	Floella Benjamin
267	Oprah Winfrey
218	Rusty Lee
160	Mr Motivator
143	Bill Cosby
115	Ian Wright
105	Frank Bruno

The same question was asked in regard to three Asian television personalities. Of 4191 responses, only a few names generated more than 100 mentions:

<i>Number of mentions</i>	<i>Personality</i>
611	Madhur Jaffrey
358	Saeed Jaffrey
312	Sean (<i>Casualty</i>)
227	Shanka Gupa/Gura/Guha
187	Meera Syal
153	Sanjay (<i>EastEnders</i>)
142	Ken Hom
131	Gargi Patel
119	<i>Goodness Gracious Me</i> cast
117	Gita (<i>EastEnders</i>)

The inclusion of American figures and of soap opera characters among real television personalities is noteworthy. This suggests that minority ethnic actors and celebrities, particularly those of Asian background, still appear to suffer from weak name recognition. Madhur Jaffrey and Ken Hom are well-known cooks, making an interesting synergy between ethnic difference and cuisine. Only repeated and extended television coverage produces a name that is remembered.

Minority Representation on Television

The focus groups began by eliciting general comments about the video they had just watched¹⁸ and the ways in which people of African and Asian origins were represented on television.

This almost invariably prompted general comment about stereotypes:

'They're stereotypicalised [sic] sometimes.' (B1)¹⁹

There shouldn't be so many stereotypes and limited images.' (LE6/f)

'I felt quite depressed in a way, because I thought they were all tired images which really haven't changed that much regarding stereotyping. I felt it's all about food and styles of dress and exoticism.' (B/A5)

That kind of overly general comment often distilled into a number of repeated concerns. Our adolescents revealed a highly sophisticated understanding of the complexities of multicultural relations and criticised the limited and negative portrayal of minorities:

'You never see a Black person on television with a really good business, legally earning lots of money. They've always got loads of women, sleeping around and those kinds of things, and that's all – stereotypes of what people think of Black people.' (LE6/f)

'Asian people, they only make them look very religious or very purified, you know, girls that cover their hair. But there are Asian girls out there that go out and have fun and actually do a lot of things that young Western people do. And it's not just Asian people who have their hair covered; there's lots of Black people that cover their hair, and Muslims; there are a lot of White people that are Muslims, but I've never seen a White person on TV that is a Muslim, I've never seen one.' (LO2)

Another acknowledged the kernel of truth at the heart of a stereotype:

'The thing is though, where I live, all the corner shops are owned by Asians. It is quite representative, you know, quite a true representation, but it is very stereotypical.' (B/A4)

Another centred on the inaccuracy of the actual portrayal:

'And all the drug dealers are Jamaican and they've got dreadlocks. And they don't even talk Jamaican. It's just an accent that isn't even put on properly. If they gonna do it properly, then get somebody who can do the accent properly.' (LE4)

¹⁸] See Appendix 3. ¹⁹] See Appendix 2 for list of focus groups.

Sometimes, simply the broadcast representation of a person of a similar race or ethnicity to the respondent was noted as important:

'Lots of my Black friends have said that when they were growing up it used to be a big deal if there was a Black person on the telly; everyone used to run downstairs saying 'Black person on telly!'; I have heard that so often, so I think people are aware [of the issue].' (B7)

The desire to see oneself, or representations of the kind of person one thinks oneself to be, was often acknowledged, frequently because of its absence:

'I am dissatisfied, I really am, 'cause I can't relate to what I see, I can't relate to what I read. I just feel so upset about it sometimes.' (B7)

'I want to watch something I can relate to.' (LE4)

But the representation also carries a great deal of weight and prompts anxiety:

'I know that whenever I see a Black person on television I always pay attention and I always think I wonder how they are going to be portrayed, and I hope they don't die first, and I hope that they have got a decent part and I hope that they are central and I hope that they have a relationship with somebody and I hope that they have substance and don't make fools of themselves, because it is 1999, for Christ's sake, and we still get that.' (B7)

One repeated issue was that minorities, especially Blacks, were represented as lower class, working class, never as middleclass with professional jobs, salaries, comfortable lives.²⁰ Minority characters were considered often to manifest some social problem central to moving the plot along, rather than simply being characters in their own right.

'[Blacks and Asians], they can't just go and sit there, they have to do something. It's only White people who can sit down and talk, that's OK with everyone, but if you're from somewhere else, if you are different, you have to do something to show yourself. That's the way they do it.' (LO1)

The stereotype was always contrasted by respondents with a more complex reality and found to be badly inadequate.

²⁰] For further information on the actual representation of minority ethnic groups, refer to Appendix 5.

Attitudes towards Representations on Television

A number of participants, when asked whether their culture was being represented when they watched television, initially answered that they had not really thought about this issue:

'I just watch it for entertainment; I don't watch it for them kind of things.' (LE6/m)

Others found the dominance of White faces an obvious matter that did not deserve much attention:

'When you are in England, you are going to see more White people. If you go to Turkey, you are going to see more Turkish people. If you go to America, the majority of America is Black people, so you're obviously going to see more Black people there. It's just where you live basically. Here, it's all mainly White people.' (LO1)

News and Documentaries

Some comments focused more on factual news imagery, and were concerned about the limited nature of representations:

'I've kind of seen the stuff they show on TV about Islam and stuff, the culture, whatever; you know they are generalising, but they are taking on a little bit and showing the whole thing. And saying one little area, it's like trying to show that that's the whole of Pakistan ... and, that's not accurate, you know ... it's like all they show is those little villages and stuff, people living in backward ways, and you think, that's not it, that's not Pakistan!' (B5/various)

A comment echoed by an Asian woman in Leicester:

'When they make documentaries about India they never show the true India, the greener part of India – like the good temples. I've been to India twice and before that I used to think, yes, India is like this, all dirty and all filth and things like that. They never portray the true picture. This generation, we've all got teenagers, they think that's India, they've never been there ... but economically India has developed so much, but they tend to show us poverty and the dirty side of it, which is not true to India or our generation.' (LE/A1)

However, one Pakistani adult male spoke positively about news and documentary representations being realistic:

'Yes, absolutely, it's just like our lives ... they showed a programme on Pakistan recently, on Punjab, that was quite realistic. I've lived there, I've seen the sort of things that they showed in the programme ... people really are in the same position and in the same state as they were shown in the programme.' (B/A1)

Other comments noticed news language and its precise labelling of minorities:

'I don't like it, like y'know news headlines, like you'll see if it's a Black person that's done wrong, it'll say like 'Black male' or 'Black female' and then it'll say what they've done. But if it's like a White person, it'll just describe what they've done.' (LE6/f)

Sporting programmes were also not immune:

'I heard a classic mistake from a football commentator the other day. It was when Ruud Gullit's team won, Newcastle United, and the commentator was saying that Ruud Gullit was the first foreign manager of an English football team and completely forgetting that Arsene Wenger is not British, he is French, but because Ruud Gullit is Black, he's foreign ... It was unconscious, he didn't even think about what he was saying.' (B7)

Soap Operas and Series

A great deal of discussion in all groups focused on minority representations in particular programmes, and the same set of popular programmes was mentioned over and over again. This included *Cafe 21*; *Network East*; *Real McCoy*; *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*; *The Cosby Show*, and others.

'Most people watch soaps if they're going to watch anything on TV, so if you're not going to address the representation of ethnic minorities in soaps, then that's obviously a key issue.' (B/A3)

Viewers watch soaps and series regularly, vividly remember depictions of characters that share their ethnicity and have very forceful comments to make on the nature of these representations. These programmes were regularly raised in discussion with little prompting by moderators and were the focus of some of the most vehement and negative comments, mainly because they are recognised as staples of British television viewing and that, if the images in these popular texts are not accurate, then something is badly wrong with television representations of minorities. A range of comments were made about soaps and series, which were criticised for:

■ the lack of minority characters

'Foreign programmes, things like Neighbours and Home and Away, they just show absolutely no ethnic minorities in the cast at all. And Hollyoaks is no better, really. In fact, the only programme other than the main soaps that shows Black characters is Family Affairs. The Black characters have a proper life with love interests, etc. At least they're doing something!' (LO1)

Occasional comments by White adolescents showed a real attempt to empathise with the minority viewer, particularly in the simple desire to have one's physical presence reflected:

'I think TV in general for ethnic minorities, they must get really annoyed, because if you flick through the normal channels for 10 minutes, every channel is White, White, White. For me to watch that, I didn't think about it, but one day I was thinking, ugh, flicking through these channels and everyone's White, there's no Black or whatever ... How would I feel?'

Moderator: How do you think they would feel?

'I don't know because I am not them.' (LO3)

■ stereotyping minority characters

'Some of the Italians that you see on EastEnders are really stereotypicalised [sic] and they're not really real ... A stereotypical Italian is someone with greased-back hair, involved in the Mafia, that kind of thing.' (B1)

'Only now they're bringing Asian people in and they're stereotyping Asian people in to run a corner shop [agreement from others in group] ... it's like "Oh, let's go to the corner shop, Mr Patel's there." You know what I mean?' (LO1)

'What I found offensive was where they showed Black people dancing and it was like, kind of sexual dancing, and that's always been put over as Black people as being highly sexually active and that's stereotyping and I don't like it and my parents would be offended I think.' (LE5/f)

■ negative representations of minority characters

'I've noticed how in EastEnders if you're Black you've either got the part of a lesbian, or living in a squat, or the one to be starting a fight, but if you're a White man, that's when everything is alright.' (LO1)

'Alan Jackson²¹ was a bit of an idiot, he couldn't get a job or anything. He was made out to be really dumb ... his character was so shallow, I couldn't watch it because of that.' (B1)

'In Coronation Street there was a Black boy who came in, the first day he was in it he was robbing a yard, a house; you know what I mean, that's how they're portraying Blacks.' (LO1)

'You always get the bad Black man in The Bill. Or, if they try to change it, when they have a Black officer, but he still turns out to be the bad guy. He's like corrupt or whatever. So they try to do it but it's never a true representation. And there is, in Leicester, Black officers and they do a good job, but the way they're represented on TV, if you didn't know any better, you'd think all Black officers are stupid, or they're bad guys, or they're running their own drug places, or they've got a whole heap of women that they're looking after and all that kind of thing.' (LE6/f)

'The majority of the times the Black guy seems to be the bad guy. He never seems to be the good guy. The majority of the times, he's going out robbing something.' (LE6/m)

'When you do watch a lot of Black films, comedy or drama or whatever, Black people are portrayed – no matter what, even if they are the main character in the film – there's always that portrayal there, you know what I mean? Some people think less of them, even if they don't turn and go "We don't listen to you because you're Black". There's always something there to say there's the portrayal there.'

Moderator: That the portrayal is negative?

'Yes. Even if they're alright, they've always got a bad past ... or the Black men are players, like they are two-timing the girl, or they're into drugs or sex every night or something, like they are always made out to be the bad ones.' (LO1)

21] African-Caribbean character in *EastEnders*.

■ issues about adequacy/accuracy of representation

Often the group discussion really grappled with the issues involved in the analysis of such representations and what would count as adequate representation:

'Mick Johnson²², he's a good character. He's got his own business, looks after the kids, he's a good father...'

'He was the only one ever in Brookside to ever have taken drugs, though, wasn't he?...'

'Apart from Jimmy, yeah, but he was like a working-class stereotype, wasn't he....'

'Yeah, but that doesn't really count!...'

'But Mick does seem to have a lot of bad luck on the programme. Years ago he got arrested for murder, he beat a man up that was trying to burgle his house.'

'I was just thinking, Desmonds, I don't think it's on anymore, but erm, but you remember the son, the bank manager, that was positive ... but they had him coming across as stupid, stupid...'

'Yeah, they portrayed him like he was a Black person who was trying to be like a White person. He didn't want to know his heritage, his history. He didn't wanna know Black people and they always had him dating White women; it was like he was ashamed of where he came from.' (LE6/various)

■ thin cultural representation

Participants often remarked on the inadequacy or thinness of the cultural representation of the minority characters:

'Like in EastEnders, the Indian family is very Indian ... They're not though, they're not very Indian if you think about it. I mean occasionally their grandma comes over from India; but they don't show where they come from ... it's just their skin colour that makes them different.' (LE1)

'Gita and Sanjay²³ are Asians, but they don't show any religious ceremonies, or relatives, and stuff like that ... What's the point of having ethnic minorities and not portray them in an honest way? So if they're going to have ethnic minorities like Gita and Sanjay, then they must show them as typical Asians as well.' (LE3/ various/f)

22] African-Caribbean character in *Brookside*. 23] Asian couple in *EastEnders*.

'Alan Jackson, for instance, he wasn't really Black. He's what you'd call a "bounty bar".' [all laugh] (LE6/f)

Moderator: How do you define what to be Black is?

'Okay then, he had no cultural identity ...'

'He didn't go on like he came from some specific place in the Caribbean, or whatever ...'

'He acted British ...'

'He never identified with any culture, you know, you never heard him teaching his child, y'know, about Black history or those kinds of things.' (Le6/various)

■ racism

Soaps were criticised for not showing issues involving racism which are part of the everyday experience of minority citizens.

'Y'know in EastEnders when, was it Alan Jackson was living with like, that family, it was like you never saw any racism or anything like that, it was all nice and rosy.' (LE6/f)

'In a way, if you're not confronting an issue that Asian or Black people go through everyday, your everyday racism or whatever, then if you switch on TV, as far as you're concerned, there is no racism, there are no problems that are particularly pertinent to Asian or Black people as compared to White people that are kind of ... affecting them.' (LE4)

■ burden of representation

At the same time, there was a desire that minority characters fit in and concern about the 'burden of representation'. A Black or Asian character is rarely seen just as an individual character, but as somehow representing the entire ethnic community: a White criminal is simply perceived as a bad individual, whereas a Black criminal, for example, is perceived by Black audiences as bringing shame on the entire group.

'Gita and Sanjay ... they didn't seem to be particularly Indian. They just seemed to be the same as every other character. The only thing ... the colour of their skin was the only thing that was different about them, apart from that they could have been just anybody on the programme ...'

Moderator: Is that positive or negative?

'I reckon it's good, 'cause they fit in ... they fit into like the theme of the show, but at the end of the day they are Indian ... as long as they don't stand out much, and they're covered, well, it's alright.' (B1)

'When they do actually represent Black or Asian people in the soaps, it is either a real complete stereotype, or there is some token person in which they're going to bring up an issue a bit like Black discrimination or, I don't know, someone is being bullied in school. There always seems to be an issue attached to it ... I think that it makes them characterless as well. Instead of having them as a character, they are sort of standing there representing a problem or an issue, rather than having a background or a family, having no script for them, they're just stuck there.' (B6)

Soaps are the most popular programmes on British television, at the top of general viewing preferences and for our minority ethnic respondents. This was well understood by our respondents, who argued the importance of getting rich, rounded minority characterisations included in this genre. This was a basic manner in which ordinary minority characters could be introduced into British televisual representation and thus to mainstream British audiences. Respondents felt that soaps were almost more important than other genres, given their large audience and peak-time viewing period.

■ positive appreciation

On occasion, a certain character or programme was just simply appreciated.

'The thing I do like, you know in The Bill, they've got an Asian policewoman, that's really good.' (B2)

'A-Force, it's got variety, it's got what Black people do in a way. It's like your community and your home and stuff, and it portrays it in a funny way.' (LO4)

Comedy

Comedy programmes received much comment, with the concern repeatedly raised that being funny was one of the few ways for minorities to gain broadcast time. Although, as with most opinions, there was always a useful dissenting voice:

‘No, there are serious Black and Asian people on TV. Like Trevor McDonald, he’s proper serious and never smiles at anything on TV.’ (LO2)

Goodness Gracious Me

Goodness Gracious Me, which enjoyed a repeat showing during this research, was the focus of a great deal of comment:

‘Goodness Gracious Me is a programme where Asian people themselves are stereotyping the way they are. So I don’t know ... Goodness Gracious Me may be a bit hard for non-Asians to understand. Not all of it but some sketches, because some of them are very stereotyped so only Asian people would understand because it’s happened in their family and where the stereotype originates from.’ (LO3)

‘It’s a fantastic programme.’

‘It’s a good programme.’

‘It’s funny.’

‘They bring out things within the Asian culture and they make it funny. We understand all the stereotypes and they just mock them, which does help them to be less stereotypes.’ (LO4)

‘You know, in Goodness Gracious Me those two boys come and “Wicked, man! You know what I mean! Kiss my chaddy” and all that. They go on like that, and it’s not exactly how we go about, but the issues that they bring up when they are acting as those two characters are realistic to teenagers.’ (LO1)

‘You know Goodness Gracious Me, Asians can’t watch it because they talk about all this dirty language, people feel embarrassed. Like I can’t sit and watch it with my parents because of all the language.’ (LO1)

One adult Asian woman talked openly of her discomfort watching *Goodness Gracious Me*:

‘I mean, it was funny, but I mean the way they were, you know, treating him like a baby and there was that auntie, you know, feeding and feeding and feeding. Because in our world, you know, if you are an Indian, you know that when people come, you feed them, but we don’t suffocate them, you know ... There’s quite a few things that did make me feel, being an Asian, that it was more the bad side shown than what there is.’ (B/A2)

And an Asian male adult was critical of what he perceived as the easy targets of some of the jokes:

'I think that programme has a good humour and you can have a good laugh and all the rest of it ... The thing when they went into an English restaurant and acted as if they were hooligans, what happens to a lot of Bengali or Indian restaurants on a normal basis, to turn the tables around, I think that was a very good programme ... That was comedy, but gave out a very strong message ... But sometimes I watch that programme and I think they're idiots! They're young, Black, British-born Asians who are taking the Mickey, if you want to call it that, the humour, out of, umm, elder people who came here under totally different circumstances and to do a different job than they had. They've had it easy!' (B/A3)

Often, *Goodness Gracious Me* provoked very intense discussion about the limits of taste and whether different reactions within the Asian community were simply a matter of individual preference.

The programme also produced comments by White audience members, who seemed to accept *Goodness Gracious Me* as a marker of Asian self-assertion, as well as an important cultural boundary-marker.

'In Goodness Gracious Me and in A-Force, I like the way that they make jokes about their own race. It's like, to a certain extent, that's how far they think you can go; you shouldn't go beyond that, because after that, it's not a joke anymore.' (LO1)

'Goodness Gracious Me, you need to exaggerate 'cause otherwise it wouldn't be funny, and stuff likes that breaks the stereotype. Well, obviously they're kind of taking the piss out of the way that people stereotype them.' (B1)

Clearly, *Goodness Gracious Me* is an innovative and bold programme that marks a watershed in minority representations on British television, a point actually acknowledged in a special evening of television devoted to the programme in September 1999.

Programmes for Teenagers

Given the ages of many of the respondents, we pressed them for their attitudes towards programmes specially aimed at teenagers:

'I hate them. I think they are trying to portray us and it's just not it, and it just gets annoying, that's not the way it works or it's just the whole unreal feelings they're trying to show.'

'They're trying to show teenage life and the problems we're going through, but when you're watching TV, you don't want to have to watch what you are going through.'

‘They try and use trendy words and it’s like “What are you talking about? It’s 1999!” You can just tell the people who have written it or directed it have no idea and they’re just like “Oh yes, let’s try and do something trendy” or whatever.’ (LO4)

Such comments indicated a critical stance towards representation and provided as much a sense of television’s misrepresentation of ‘youth’ as of its misrepresentation of ‘minorities’. Indeed, the issue at large here seems to be a real dilemma for television: as it approaches the reality of (young) people’s lives, it appears not only to miss the precise nuance of individual experience, but also is dismissed as getting to be too much like real life. Yet, when it remains aloof from everyday life, staying non-engaged and light-hearted, it is criticised for precisely that.

Minority Programming

For the most part, respondents did like specifically minority-targeted programmes:

‘Channel 2 on Saturday morning, that whole programme on Asian people, I turn over and watch it, listening to them, I like it.’ (LE/A1)

‘I think they [Asians] would watch TV if they saw more of their own people on TV.’ (LE5)

But an adult Asian male provided a strongly dissenting voice, raising some fundamental questions about the intended audience for some programming:

‘I think there is no representation of ethnic minorities in this country at all on television. They show you some programmes, this is the “ethnic minority programme, how is the Indian wedding going on, let’s go and learn that” ... That’s not for the ethnic minority, that’s for the wider host community to understand that. But for the ethnic minority, we already know what the wedding is all about.’ (B/A3)

The issue of whether multicultural programming is essentially for the minority in question, or for the cultural mainstream to learn and understand about its minorities, recurs throughout debates on diversity and television. Doubtless there is a need for both kinds of programming; perhaps the problem occurs when the target audience or the intention of the programmers is unclear.

Cafe 21

Cafe 21, the informal discussion programme on BBC2, was liked by young people:

‘Cafe 21, that’s good!’

It was also welcomed by adults, the parental generation, because it seemed to focus on the real generational dilemmas of minority families:

'Before, they never used to have too many programmes which were showing so much about the youngsters coming up and, you know, their interests. It's more and more now, isn't it? It is good and I like that. I like the Cafe 21, there's a lot of discussion and parents know a lot about their youngsters, what they are up to, what are their ideas.' (B/A2)

'Cafe 21, yeah, I found that very good. I think by watching that programme, I got a 25-year-old daughter and I got a 17-year-old son, so obviously both of them are at that age. So, I mean, to look at programmes like that makes you feel what the children have got in their, you know, in their minds, what they are thinking, what the parents are thinking, what they think about the parents, you know. So you learn a lot from that. It is a very, very interesting programme and yeah, again, it was during the daytime.' (B/A2)

But not all such programmes received a high approval rating:

'Some of the programmes are wrenk. A few weeks ago, on the BaBaZee programme, a Black programme, they had this woman skinning out herself on TV and I thought, Nah, man, nah ... It was about this young Black girl who because she's done one porno, she couldn't get any other work on TV, children's programmes and that, and they were just trying to make out in that programme that she was going into the hard porn over there. End of. I just switched off my TV and went into my bed. They didn't have to show herself skinning out on TV.' (LE6/m)

Talk Shows

Talk shows were a popular genre among this minority audience, matching majority taste, and, for an audience often considered to be most concerned about the portrayal of explicit sexuality and violence, the popularity of *The Jerry Springer Show* (ranked sixth of preferred television programmes) and others is interesting.

One adult Asian women talked animatedly about watching talk shows:

'I love to watch them. I watch all of them. They're very interesting ... you know, the subjects they choose, you can talk about it, think about it in your mind, but you would never see a live discussion like that. Some of them are really good, you know.' (B/A2)

Often the idea of an Asian talk show was mooted. It was felt to be a good idea in principle, but one that would not work well in practice:

‘Asians worry about family, community, and would not go this far ... They don’t want to give a bad name to the family. They’re giving people a chance to talk. But we’re a bit more respectful [sic]!’ (LE4)

Advertising

Some of the excerpts in the video showed advertising (for *Lilt* soft drink, for *Sodastream* and for *Patak’s* sauces) which featured minority characters. These prompted quite a bit of debate:

‘Lilt is a tropical drink and it originates from the Caribbean. Both women are in a sense fulfilling a stereotype about Caribbean women being very loud and vivacious.’ (B7)

‘The two women selling Lilt, that is very stereotypical ... It was playing on the fact that you would immediately identify that Black people are like music people, jumping around with the raw basic rhythm like that is how Black people are, you know, so I suppose it works in that respect if that is what the company is trying to get at ... and also that kind of carefree attitude to life, no worries, and no problems, you know that kind of philosophy ... the large old woman as well ... Yeah, the fact that she was fat, that was a stereotype ... and quite kind of sexy dancing in a way ... compared to the uptight kind of boring dancing of stingy White people ...’ (B6)

Again, the stereotype was not felt to be challenged. The comments seem to accept a degree of veracity about the representation, but acknowledge that the value around the image had become positively identified through humour.

‘The only Asians in adverts are about exotic foods, Asian curries and things like that.’ (LE/A2)

‘The Patak’s ad, I always thought that was just sort of trying to capture what a lot of White people think that India is all about – those colours and spices and traditional costumes – and not really acknowledging the contemporary India and how vast it is.’ (B7)

And the ability to recognise difference, or to look for identification, seems to start young:

‘My son who is eight, he said, “Well, I can tell you”, he said, “look at hair adverts. There is probably one woman who is mixed race, and there is one Black woman, that is all.”’ (B/A5)

A number of comments were made about the few minority faces to be seen in advertising:

‘You know when it comes to an ad, like when you see a yoghurt ad or something, you see attractive little kids, you, know, going on their bikes and things like that. But when it comes to Asians, they do it funny.’ [Lots of ‘Yeahs’.] (LE1)

‘Pampers, no Asian babies there. And that baby lotion, whatever they call it, there’s a Black man with a little Black baby, White man with a little White baby, but there ain’t no Asian!’ (LE3)

Issues about Broadcasting

Minorities and ‘problems’

Even when minority ethnic programmes do try to focus on real social issues and take minority concerns seriously, they are often criticised for only representing the minority group as ‘having problems’:

‘There’s an Asian thing, but it’s on like a Sunday morning, really, really early morning. I think it’s called Cafe 21, but I can’t really relate to it. My parents aren’t totally like that. It’s like “What did you use to do?” “Oh, I used to like go into the shed and change into a skirt and go to college.” I can’t relate to that. My parents aren’t really like that.’ (LE4)

Need for greater differentiation

Conversations across all the focus groups centred on the nature of ethnic labels and their limitations. A number of comments point to the crudity of the designation ‘Asian’ and the need for far greater differentiation of programming within that category. Some comments referred to the predominance of Indian programming over other nationalities:

‘I think they should show more Pakistani stuff because on Saturday they show a lot of Indian stuff, they have like Bombay Mix and all that. And they should show some more Pakistani things ... On Sundays they always have an Indian film; they should have some Pakistani film sometimes also.’ (B/A1)

Greater religious variety

Some people wanted a greater recognition of the religious diversity that now exists in Britain, and is manifest in even the small set of respondents in this project. One request was that religious programming be shown during Ramadan, pointing to the availability of Pakistani programmes and *qawwals* (religious singing) that could be shown.

Language

A few comments pointed to the need for programmes in Asian languages, particularly for parents from abroad who did not pass through the school system and whose command of English is not strong.

'There are some people, there are some Asians that can't speak English, so there should be programmes on for them as well.' (LE5)

Offensive content

Across the focus groups, there were a few comments about too much drink, drugs, violence, divorce being shown on television. One woman talked about her:

'... constant worry about the children, because quite a few programmes that are showing more and more open sex, that's the only thing.' (B/A2)

The possibility of alternative readings

'It depends how you're looking at it [referring to a clip of Madonna wearing Hindu markings]. If you are looking at the racist side, then people could think, Yeah, she is taking the piss out of the Hindus or whatever; or you could be looking at it as, Yeah, but she's experimenting in a different culture.' (LO4)

Film

Table 12: Favourite Film

<i>Film</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Kuch Kuch Hota Hai	23	33
Titanic	19	27
Armageddon	6	9
Scream	5	7
Lethal Weapon 4	7	3
Casino	3	4

Film preferences for all ages were dominated by an Indian film, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. Only five other films garnered a number of mentions, almost solely by younger viewers; these were *Titanic*, *Armageddon*, *Scream*, *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Casino*, a mainstream list of fairly standard and current box-office attractions. Once again, a long list of films was generated, most seen by only one respondent.

There was a strong sense that the global film scene is dominated by Hollywood and that, while the United States had integrated a number of Black actors onto the big screen, there were almost no Asian actors. There was also consternation that so few foreign films were shown.

'You never hear about an Asian film or a Turkish film.' (LO1)

There was also a sense that films with strong minority casts get poor distribution in Britain:

'They don't always put Black films on TV, that's the thing. You have to get them on video, or at the cinema. It'll come out in the States and they say, "Oh, it's a really good film," so we await it over here, but it won't come out and it'll go straight to video and it's, well, what's the point? Obviously you've got a market over here because everybody's been waiting for it, but it's just straight on video.' (LO4)

Indian films

Quite a lot of sarcastic comment was meted out to Indian films:

'Every Asian film is similar to the other one, it's a happy ending after all ... They drag on for hours and hours ... There's no story to it. You're watching and you don't know what the hell's going on. There's one crying over there, one crying over here, and one happy ... You know the best thing about Indian films, yeah, when a hero's running, people shoot him about 600 hundred times, but the guy still lives at the end! And you know the villain gets shot one time and he dies.' (LE2)

In one focus group, there was a considerable exchange about Indian films, interesting as much for the ways in which young people challenge other viewpoints and push each other to take up an alternative position and tolerate differences in taste:

A: Indian films, they're always so happy!

B: Don't you like that?

A: Not really. I prefer more realistic films; if I'm honest, they're a bit too mushy for me.

B: Yeah for you, maybe, but I bet there are a lot of people out there who really like them. I mean, we all want to escape sometimes.

A: Yeah, I know, but those films are ridiculous! Noone goes around like that!

B: Maybe not in England, but don't forget that not everyone is the same as you!

A: That's not what I'm saying! I'm just saying that anyone would see those films as a bit mushy.

B: Well, what about old Hollywood weepies! They're so soppy I have to switch off! I don't see you complaining about those! White people are just the same!' (LE3)

Interesting exchanges often centred on why minority films were not shown:

'I don't think the demand is big enough...

'It is but they don't want to show it.' (LO4)

The 'burden of representation' problem, the assumption that every Asian face somehow 'represents' Asian culture rather than simply being a single character in a specific narrative, was repeatedly mentioned in relation to film. So, too, was the 'burden of production' that surrounded minority creativity:

'I think that it's difficult at the moment, because every film that is made has to be political, do you know what I mean? White people can make bad films and it is just a bad film, but if Black people make a bad film, it is a bad Black film.' (B7)

And geographic crossovers of taste were noted:

'It's ironic how Indian films do well over here, but they have done bad in India and Asia because they've got more demand for English films.' (LE2)

British films:

British films were criticised even more heavily than Indian ones:

'I mean, look, there's that Sliding Doors, that was English, wasn't it? And that film Emma; they're just boring!'

'Typical English, White people, that's what it is.' (LO1)

Media usage and channel preferences

Responses to questions about whether certain television and radio channels represented minorities better than others were mixed, with some disagreement about the general ethos of a specific channel.

Preferred Television Channels

'I'm not sure about BBC, but ITV and Channel 4 are good. BBC is always about White people and about Prince and Princesses ...' (LO1)

'BBC concentrates more on religion and culture.' (LO1)

'BBC and ITV are the most mainstream channels.' (LO3)

'I think Channel 3 overall is quite racist. I think Channel 2 is really, really good. Channel 4 is kind of neutral.' (LO1)

'Same with Channel 5, Channel 5 is kind of racist as well. I mean Sunset Beach where there's a couple of Black people ... Well, I suppose that is American, so ...' (LO1)

However, many participants paid recognition to the positive role of BBC2 and Channel 4 in representing difference:

'Well, there's Fresh Prince of Bel Air, there's A-Force, there's Goodness Gracious Me, they're all Asian and Black programming, so Channel 2, BBC 2, is good for that feeling, it's good for showing the different ethnic minorities.' (LO1)

'BBC2 and Channel 4 show a lot more consideration to ethnic minorities.' (B6)

'Channel 4 has a lot of things that BBC and ITV would never have; it's like an alternative channel.' (LE4)

'BBC2 and Channel 4 get a lot more ethnic minority programmes than anyone else, don't they?' (B4)

On the other hand, comments were made that minority ethnic groups were not getting value for money from the mainstream channels, and that they were having to pay for additional channels to receive the programming they liked.

'We pay for Zee TV and cable TV because we want more of our programmes ... for the money for the licence, they are not giving us enough.' (LE/A1)

It was also suggested that if mainstream channels carried more ethnic programming, fewer people would turn toward satellite and cable. There was a growing generational divergence, with the younger generation preferring terrestrial channels to the specifically ethnic satellite ones:

'If there are more programmes on national TV, our children will join us as well. But many people watch Zee TV, and children, they don't want to be part of it because there is identity. They want to identify more with the British and Whites. But if there was more programming on national TV, they'd watch it and they'd identify with it ... I watch two programmes on Zee TV and my children, they would straight away say, "Oh, we're not watching Zee TV". But if there was a national programme and it was showing Asian culture like Network East, my daughter always shares that with me and we watch it together.' (LE/A1)

Cable and Satellite

The opposite impression also holds: that minority programming is shrinking on the terrestrial channels as specialist satellite channels develop:

'There used to be a couple of Asian soaps on Channel 4, but they're not on anymore ... Maybe they took it away because there wasn't much demand for it. I think because there's ZeeTV and you can get it 24 hours a day anyway, so you have the Asian soaps; it's not on the basic five channels that you have but you don't have to pay that much more.' (LO5)

'Cable has more variety, like French and German channels and all these others. It's for people who can afford to buy it. People who can't afford to, they have to stick to TV.' (LO5)

'My aunt doesn't know English and she just watches Zee TV all the time.' (B5/f)

'On Asianet, on cable, they have more realistic images ... Yeah, that's full of Asians, that's an Asian station.' (B5/f/m)

'My uncle's Turkish and he likes cable, because he wants to know what's happening and there's programmes in Turkish from Turkey; it also gives them from a Turkish point of view.' (LO2)

The younger generation appears to recognise the cultural importance of such channels, and their use by older family members, but shows little interest as individuals or as a group.

Radio

From the questionnaire, the preferred programming on radio was music, by far the most popular category, followed by live 'phone-ins, news, talk shows, comedy and sport.

Table 13: Radio Preferences by Gender

Programme type	Male	Female	TOTAL	
			N	%
News	13	33	46	30
Live 'phone-ins	15	41	56	37
Religious	3	19	22	14
Current affairs	4	3	7	5
Sport	17	6	23	15
Comedy	10	25	35	23
Music	37	94	131	86
Drama	1	6	7	5
Quizzes	2	14	16	10.5
Talk shows	9	36	45	29
Serials	0	3	3	2

Radio was not mentioned spontaneously very much and, even when directed, it did not generate a great deal of comment from the focus groups, although from the viewing diaries it was evident that young people, in particular, were listening to radio in the early morning.

'I am aware that there are some good programmes on radio like Tariq Modeed does interviews on Radio 4 and there are programmes about the way things are changing, like what second-generation Asian kids are up to; you know, all this hybrid cultural activity that is going on.' (B7)

'Tim Westwood, Radio One, they've got interviews and that's interesting because it's not just bare music.' (LE4)

Ethnic radio

There was awareness of ethnic radio, and ready mention of ethnic stations, but not much evidence of its importance to these young respondents. There were quick categorisations of channels:

'Station FM concentrates on Black or Asian; Kiss FM is towards everybody; Capital Gold is for, like, oldies.' (LO1)

There were comments about the cultural and linguistic foreignness of channels, which seemed to alienate this youthful audience:

'The thing is in radio they change. Like in Sabras radio, there is Gujerati programme, Hindi Programme, then Punjabi, then you have like for Muslims. So we don't always want to listen to all that, do we?' (LE2)

There were also indications that political or other divisions came between linguistic or cultural identifications and, thus, media habits:

'There is a Turkish radio, but I don't listen to it. It has news and music, crap ones. It's for Turkish people; the thing is I used to listen to it, but they cuss Kurdish people, so that's why I don't listen to it.' (LO)

Sometimes, a comment seemed to suggest that a channel could be 'too ethnic', leaking different social and private mores into public attention, and sometimes simply being embarrassing:

'Once I listened to Sabras; you feel ashamed. It's good, I like the music. But when you get some people ringing to say Happy Birthday, they say the whole family's name, and they repeat it in Gujerati ... that's what Indians like, gossip!' (LE1)

To the contrary, for the older listeners, the resonances of their own languages and of cultural affinity were pronounced:

*'Leicester Sound, Sabras, BBC Radio, it's our language, our mother tongue, our music, our kind of talk ...
'It also talks about our religious functions and that's where you find it is educational as well ...
'Children learn a lot from that also; what's the meaning of Holi, Shivrati, everything they explain. It's better, we identify with that.'* (LE/A1)

Local or pirate?

Instead of ethnic or local radio, there was positive criticism by adolescents of pirate radio.

In Bristol, the male African-Caribbean students expressed an avid interest in the musical diet offered by Bristol's pirate radio stations, which they preferred over the more populist Black music of the licensed commercial stations; Leicester's pirates were also appreciated:

'I only listen to pirate.' (B7)

'I think pirates are better; yeah, they just sound so much better, period.' (LE4/various)

Although the dissenting voice commented:

'I don't really listen to the pirates because you can't rely on them, you never know when they're gonna be on.' (B7)

Local Press

Few comments were raised spontaneously in the focus groups about the press. From the questionnaires, almost 60 per cent did not read a newspaper (very much a function of the age group). The preferred national dailies were the *Sun*, *Mirror* and the *Guardian*.

Table 14: Ethnic Background by Newspaper Readership

	<i>Express</i>	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>
White	–	2	3	5	4	1	–
Black Caribbean	–	6	9	7	1	1	–
Black African	–	–	1	2	1	1	–
Indian	2	10	10	10	7	6	3
Pakistani	–	–	2	3	1	2	1
Bangladeshi	–	1	3	2	1	4	–
Other Asian	–	1	–	1	–	–	–
Other	–	–	4	6	6	3	–
Number	2	20	32	36	21	18	4
%	1	14	23	26	15	13	3

The role of the local press was perceived positively. The *Leicester Mercury*, although a local paper, was the single most popular paper, especially among Indians, because it prints a special Asian edition. The *Evening Post* (Bristol) was also frequently mentioned. *The Voice* had a small readership.

'The Asian edition of Leicester Mercury, I think it's good. I think it's relevant to us 'cause it's about Leicestershire, it's about what's happening around us.' (LE5)

'Hackney Gazette is really good because they had this racism fight in one of the housing estates and it happened on Wednesday and it was in the Thursday issue and I think that was really good because who doesn't live in that housing community gets to know about it and you'll be on the alert.' (LO2)

Media habits and attitudes

A feature of this project was to tease out differences in self-definitions, cultural practices and media habits between minority adolescents and the older generation. As already mentioned, the adults included in the study are not the actual family members of the adolescents, but represent adult members of the ethnic and geographic communities from which our adolescents are drawn.

Cultural Habits

Included in the questionnaire were some general questions about various kinds of activities, so that a more rounded sense of the cultural life of our respondents could be described beyond their media consumption.

Table 15: Activity by Gender

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	
<i>In the last month have you participated in...?</i>			<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Community event	11	26	37	24
Disco dancing	21	45	66	42
Family gathering	21	77	98	63
Lecture/discussion	15	21	36	23
Concert	6	12	18	11.5
Out to eat	27	81	108	69
Political event	1	0	1	1
Religious ceremony	10	42	52	33
Religious music	5	11	16	10
Sports event	13	9	22	14
Theatre	7	19	26	17
Cinema	24	75	99	63.5
Other event	1	8	9	6
<i>And in the last month have you been ...</i>				
out of your city	41	98	139	89
<i>And in the last year have you been ...</i>				
abroad	23	54	77	49

Respondents produced a profile of a family and food-orientated lifestyle where religion plays some significant role, but politics almost none. Music and cinema are also important, and respondents appear fairly mobile within Britain, but also in terms of international travel. These patterns are heavily skewed by gender, but nonetheless suggest eclectic and active choices.

Amount of Television Viewing

There were a number of comments suggesting that adolescents were simply not watching that much television.

'I hardly watch telly unless I know EastEnders is coming on or London Bridge, or something like that is coming on that I like. I would rather listen to music than watch telly if the programmes I like are not coming on. They need to have more programmes that are interesting for us.' (LO2)

'There's nothing happening on normal TV, same old boring stuff, same old rubbish.' (LO2)

That adolescents were not watching all that much television was reinforced by the analysis of data from the viewing diaries. Teenagers are watching significant amounts of television during weekday evenings and weekends, but not much during the rest of the day.

Youth Perceptions of Parents' Attitudes

We also asked adolescents directly about their family viewing habits and practices.

As noted, *Goodness Gracious Me* was often a point of negotiation between or confrontation with parents. Some young people expressed embarrassment at watching *Goodness Gracious Me* in the family; some talked about attempts by parents to prevent them from watching, others expressed a determination to continue to watch it, whether or not parents approved:

'You can't watch it when they are sitting there.' (LO1)

'I will stay in there, or if my mum wants to turn it over, I will just go and watch it in my room.' (LO1)

'I think our parents might be offended by it; it's a generation attitude.' (LE5/m)

'My dad wouldn't want to watch with me because he gets so offended. I go upstairs to watch. My mum wouldn't mind because she's been here longer ... He gets really offended because he doesn't want to admit that the things they do on TV is what he does.' (LE5/m)

But *Goodness Gracious Me* is not, however, the only point of controversy:

'MTV Rap: my mum turns it off, saying it's a bad influence. When she goes upstairs, I turn it back on.' (LO4)

At times there were basic, sometimes generational, differences of taste:

'All of them, it's like they like old kind of things, they just like watching the news and old films and stuff, and you want to watch music and sports and stuff. It is different and you fight over the channels as well.'

'For me, I prefer to watch the 6 o'clock News and have it over and done with in half an hour, whereas my mum will like to watch all the news programmes.' (LE4)

'My mum and dad like to watch documentaries, and stuff like that, and I like to watch comedy, but you share it out, don't you.' (LE4)

Occasionally an adolescent was pleased to have persuaded a parent to watch something which they subsequently quite liked, moving them into contemporary popular culture with a little sense of triumph:

'I think we do influence our parents a lot. Like my mum the other day, Brookside, she hated it, she refused to watch it, and all my friends were going on about it and I begged her to watch it, but she refused, and then slowly ... Now she watches it whenever it's on.' (LO3)

Sometimes, mediated content seems to serve as a way of articulating issues that parents and children find hard to talk through directly; television puts the problem on the public agenda and then perhaps makes it possible to negotiate in private:

'Bhaji on the Beach, that was just so cool. I was sitting there with my mum and I was just laughing because my mum, like, she doesn't really mind in that way, but I was really thinking of other people in my family, and I was thinking, exactly. that's how they are. And I just stick it in [the video] when they're there, and it's like "Watch this," and I make them watch this, and then just walk out and leave them with it.' (LE4)

Sometimes the tastes of parents and children coincided:

'My mum and dad watch the same kinds of things I do. My dad loves Jerry Springer and Fresh Prince and House, he likes those things and my mum will as well. Obviously there's differences, but a lot of the time I can personally say that my parents would watch the TV that I watch.' (LO4)

'A-Force, it was like one of the very few programmes that, say, you can watch with your grandad or something, and even he'll enjoy it and even he'll talk about it.' (LO4)

Viewing something together, as a family, was sometimes seen as an Asian practice in itself, and was contrasted with the imagined individualistic viewing practices of Whites:

Moderator: If you record a film, how do you watch it, by yourself or with the whole family?

Shouts of: "Whole family."

'Not like those gore,²⁴ they like, you know, sit in their rooms watching it.' (LE3)

Viewing at home was often preferable to going out to the cinema. As one Asian female adult put it:

'In the comfort of your own home, you know, it's better to watch it at home than watch it with a lot of people around you. 'Cause you know there can be embarrassing parts ... At home, you could forward it, couldn't you? You wouldn't be able to do that in the cinema.' (LE/A1)

Programme choice depended on whom you were with, and television watching was understood as a social activity which altered according to prevailing group norms:

'We do watch Turkish, Kurdish and English. It depends on your friends as well. If they're watching Turkish TV and talk about it, you just go and watch it and you say "Oh, I watched this and I watched that" and you talk about it. But if you've got different ... if you've got friends who speak English and always watch those programmes, then you watch that and go and talk about that. It depends on your friends as well, but your family makes a difference as well. If they're all sitting down and watching Turkish TV and you've kind of ... I've got a TV in my room, but I still just sit down and watch with them.' (LO1)

24] Hindi word for 'White people'.

These young people recognised that parental concern did not focus solely on television consumption, but involved much broader cultural habits:

'They still have their traditional norms.'

'It is also very hard to go out on your own. There are a lot of questions about who you go with, when you're back, what they're like, they want to know. [General assent and laughter]. Twenty questions or what?!'

'Especially if you're a girl, you're not allowed to do certain things while boys are allowed to get away with it.' (LE5/various)

Parental Attitudes towards Teens and Television

Parents, including minority parents, were felt to hold more stereotypical attitudes than their children:

'I think the older generation think that. They'll think "a typical Black person" but young people because they know, you go to college and you see everyone and you can have a mixed cultural thing, so you know what they are like, so you don't say "She's Black so she's definitely going to be like this ..."'(B4)

Asian adults talked about the need for more minority recruits into broadcasting, but recognised that Asians would have to be prepared to work in the media instead of the typically preferred 'safe' jobs such as doctor or accountant. Asian adolescents understand this cultural predilection well and voiced their parental and social scepticism about work in the media:

'There are quite a few Asian news reporters, but I think, at the end of the day, if something went wrong for those people I know my parents would just say if I wanted to do whatever and there was a role model for that, if something wrong happened to that person, they'll just say to me, "Look, I told you so"; they'd just chuck it in my face.' (LO5)

But there was also evidence of the way in which contemporary television can help parents understand and empathise with the younger generation, as in the following comments by an Asian mother about an Asian magazine programme:

'There should be more programmes like this (Cafe 21) ... it was showing like the parents they come to this country, and the children are brought up here. Of course the children mix with different children of this society, you know, both sides, and there was some feelings at home. Because, as you know, some of our things, everybody does hard work but, I mean, Asians coming from another country, start from scratch to be somewhere, to bring up the children, to see the better side, isn't it? And suddenly if they take drugs or drink, it's disappointing ... There was a youngster who was ... Strong-minded and he just wanted to be in the band and, you know, the music and all that, and he didn't care about anything else. But then again they carry on in life to be somebody else ... So it takes time, the parents were very disappointed when he didn't come home sometimes, and they were trying to explain to him ... They showed the parents talked to him. The other side, how young people grow up. So obviously it's both sides.' (B/A2)

There was a strong sense of the older participants using television as a tool of cultural acclimatisation and of social learning, intrigued by the issues that television presented them:

'The Oprah programme, and some others, we learn a lot from them. So many nice things she brings. How to improve yourself. If you're depressed, how you come out of that, and everything.' (LE/A1)

Scheduling Issues

The issue of scheduling was repeatedly and spontaneously mentioned. Programmes aimed at minorities, or that minorities might like, were considered to be scheduled at very user-unfriendly times. Both African-Caribbean and Asian participants complained of this:

'I think there's a couple of Asian programmes they schedule at times when no one would really like to watch, at really weird times.' (LO3)

'It's like all Black programmes are on late at night but it's like why can't it be on prime time, 8.00 p.m. or 5 .00 p.m.? And the thing is that they usually put it on BBC2 or Channel 4, they never ever put something like A-Force say at 9.30 p.m. just after the news on BBC1. It gets pushed aside to BBC2 and I mean nobody hardly watches BBC2, apart from when those types of programmes come on; people are more likely to switch between BBC1 and Channel 3, and they won't put those programmes on those channels. It's just like "What's the point?" (LO4)

'They also put Black things on really late, and that's another thing that I think is so stink! Anything else, put it on before 9.00 p.m. or something like that. When it comes to a Black show, like Brothers and Sisters, now who on earth is gonna stop up till 11.15 p.m. at night and it's on a weekday, and the next day people have got school, y'know, or college or uni or whatever? So at the end of the day you gonna have to wait up and watch and then go to bed, and to me that's just stink cause that shows what we are: we're not important, why should we have something on early to watch? Yeah, and we end up mash in the morning.' (LE 6/f/m)

Two simple comments captured the essence of this issue:

'Normally the ethnic minority programmes are on at the wrong time.' (LO4)

'If they're trying to cater to minority audiences, they are going about it in a very sort of marginal way.' (B7)

However, notice is taken when programmes are shown in a primetime slot.

'I think it is a ratings war and that obviously the common denominator is the one that wins out. There is a small effort in that Channel 4 does Black Box and BBC2 does Black Britain. These are put out at peak hours like 7.30 p.m., 8.00 pm, but they are minority channels anyway and they are only half-hour programmes catering for specific issues that are relevant to the community.' (B7)

Sense of Elsewhere

Quite often comments compared the media representations of minorities in the UK with the United States, sometimes with other countries, and that often led to wider comparisons of the dynamics of racism and multiculturalism.

Comparisons with the United States

American programmes with all-Black casts, such as *Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and the *Cosby Show*, elicited comment, and comparisons with the UK:

'In America, maybe it's different from what it is over here, because over there, they have Puerto Ricans, everyone, they all understand each other. But over here, there's just the White people and the rest of the people have to work hard to become something and equal to the White.' (LO1)

Sometimes a group would compare their perceptions of the tolerance or racism of various countries, with television implicitly used as a measure:

A: I think England's improving compared to other countries; it's much more multi-cultural than other countries.

B: I consider America more racist than Britain...

C: No, I think England's much more racist, like Germany ... (LO2/various)

Comparisons of the kinds of ethnic groups prevalent in the UK and the United States were voiced in a number of groups, and produced radically divergent conclusions:

'CNN has Chinese, but like, that's because it's American and America has widened it out more and, unlike here, there's more ethnic minorities.' (B3/f)

'If you go to America the majority of America is Black people, so you're obviously going to see more Black people there. It's just where you live, basically. Here it's all mainly White people.' (LO1)

'I think here there are many different sets of people. In America, there are not that many sets. Either you're Black or White, finished.' (LO2)

Comparisons were also made between Britain and elsewhere

Young respondents seemed to fully inhabit and enjoy a multicultural Britain and found other places lacked diversity:

'The thing is that most people in London are in touch with other cultures: White people, Black people, Asian people, Turkish people. It's not that bad compared to places like, say, Italy or places like that where there are hardly any Black people or hardly any Asian people.' (LO2)

'Compared to a lot of other places in England, it's [London] better.' (LO5)

Comments by White Adolescents

White adolescents also appreciated the taken-for-granted diversity of London:

'It's weird, like, 'cause when I go out of London, somewhere nearish like Tunbridge Wells, you notice it's really weird that there's no ethnic minority, everyone is White, like the world's turned White. And then you go straight back into London and it's back to normal and you're like "Phew!".' [Others laugh] (LO3)

Racism

Reverse racism?

At times, crude generalisations about Whites were made, although sometimes a countervailing voice would warn of the dangers of falling into such reverse stereotyping:

A: White people don't study nothing. At the end of the day, it's Indian people, Asian people and African people learning to make the country work. The majority of the people that work are the Africans and Asians and Turkish people, and they're working to make the economic growth go high. The White people they don't work all day, all they do is sit in front of the telly.

B: But you see that's the thing, we shouldn't be thinking this, that White people stay in pubs or Black people all go to work. We should think that everybody is doing something. We should think that way, but we can't think. (LO2)

'Holby City last week, it's got lots of different races, it's got Black people, Asian, I didn't see any Turkish, though I'm sure there were. It was quite good, they're really working together. That's how telly programmes should be. It shouldn't be like all White people or all Black people because if Black people are doing something they want White people in it but if White people are doing something they don't want no Blacks in it.' (LO2)

A theme of minority endeavour and serious application in order to achieve was occasionally voiced, with an implicit – or sharply explicit – criticism of White laziness:

'I think definitely Blacks and Asians are more down-to-earth people than White people, you understand. We take life in a serious way, we think about what will motivate and encourage us to do things and be out there in the world and get big and have lots of money, be a part and have a role in society, but White people, they take it as a joke, they take everything for granted, they know they have it, they don't have to strive for it ... I'm not saying that we shouldn't have fun on TV, yeah, we do but there's a limit to everything. You can't keep laughing, I mean being silly, all the time. Them who are in the limelight should at least be more encouraging and motivate to us out here who have some sort of talent and would like to be like them.' (LO2)

Discussion about Media Effects

General effects

There were quite a few general comments about the power of the media, especially television:

'TV is very influential, very.' (LE6)

'It carries on and reinforces the stereotype.' (LO4)

Typically, the effect is displaced on to some others, and rarely does anyone claim themselves to have been moved by the media:

'Media does affect your behaviour and has an influence ... nothing relevant to race or anything, but you get magazines. Like teenagers and they see a skinny model and think "I wanna be like that" and get anorexic, so the media does affect your behaviour.' (LO1)

'Obviously the way they communicate is through the TV and radio and what we see is what we believe. It forms our opinions and everything, and that's what happens. We need to think that what we watch, because of that, that's how we think now.' (LO2)

Television's effects on a White population

Many comments by minority participants focused on their projection of the way in which minority representations on television would affect White audiences, making Whites anxious, fearful and generally reinforcing what is perceived to be an already negative set of assumptions about minorities:

(On showing a Black burglar in *Coronation Street*)

'Next time they see a Black person, they think he must be a burglar.' (LO1)

'I think because they see certain minorities portrayed badly, they become wary.' (LO3)

Television was understood clearly to be a most powerful teacher where people had no other sources of information or direct experience from which to make judgements or gain understanding:

'Depends on if you've experienced it or not. So if you've not been with Asian people, you're gonna think whatever's on TV is right.' (LE4/f)

'I think it depends on if they know any Asian people or not. Because if you don't know any and if that's the only thing that you see, then obviously that's your opinion on it, but if you know them, then you have your own opinion because you know what they are like, what they do, etc.' (LO5)

'They were just putting us down, like saying that Black means they're going to rape us women. And, you know what I mean, that "If you go past a Black man he's gonna rape you," and I thought that was stink. That's probably why White people sometimes, y'know, when you walk past them in the street or something and they look at you and it's like they grab their bag really tight because that's what they see on TV.' (LE4)

'Some people don't know about Blacks or Indians. What they see on TV's what they believe that's what we're like.' (LE5/f)

Thus, for minorities, negative fictional representations might be understood by Whites as realistic and accurate representations and lead to fearful and prejudicial behaviours.

Television's effects on minorities?

The effects on minorities themselves were seen to reinforce a negative sense of self, as well as setting up limited social expectations for minorities.

'It just makes us inferior all the time.' (LE6/f)

'It's always negative, it's always bringing us down.' (LE6/f)

Many challenged such notions as quite uncharacteristic of the actual expectations about education and success to be found within minority communities:

'When you see a Black person, they expect you to either have a baby when you are 16 or you are not expected to go to university. And I'm saying that where I come from, that's not expected at all. You are expected to go to university, expected to make money, get married when you're 25, not 16, and have two kids.' (LO2)

What lurks within this problem is the manner in which representations and categories of ethnicity all too simply collapse into class; that is, to be ethnic is to be perceived as a poor underclass. A vocal ethnic middle class is looking for characters, settings and narratives that reflect the reality of their lives, too.

Sometimes the issue became an examination of upward class mobility, which was seen to involve moving into ‘Whiteness’ and leaving one’s ethnic origins behind:

‘What they feel is to get there you’ve got to be like them, you’ve got to be like White people, act like them, wear the same clothes as them, so for them to actually get there they totally leave their beginnings behind, they leave their origins behind and their culture behind. They want to get there and they feel that if I behave like a white person he will accept me, he’ll give me that job, that promotion rather than give it to some younger White person, so they start to behave like that and they lose their touch. Like Black people, most African people, have like a second language; they stop speaking that language, they stop talking to their family, they want to be with white people all the time. I’m not saying not to be with White people. Everybody has got White friends. I have got White friends, Turkish friends and other groups. But still you’ve got to remember where you are from. [Loud agreement]. Remember who you are and who your people are and everything. People don’t think of it that way because of the fact that if you wanna get anywhere you’ve got to be White ... and that’s the way they make us think.’ (LO1)

Attempts at Explanation

Frequently discussion moved into attempts to understand why media content was structured in the way that it was. Participants looked for causal explanations and sometimes turned to discuss the processes and personnel involved in production:

‘In EastEnders you get a lot of people, I suppose they seem kind of posh to us or they have a very different background or something; even though they are Black, they just seem as if they’re not very realistic. I think scriptwriters don’t really get the hang of that kind of thing, whereas A-Force, or something like that, they understand it because they experience it, they are around it and they’ve got a lot of people that understand it. In A-Force you’ve got people just being themselves; in EastEnders there’s a script and you are an actor, performing to a role.’ (LO4)

Sometimes the explanation offered was a very simple one. That is ‘they’, a term/group that appeared frequently in conversation, and referred to those who work in the media, are White:

‘White people, they’re the kind of people that write, direct and produce scripts, and they’re just conforming to their stereotypes and thinking, okay, that’s how Black people are, and she’ll do this, that or the other.’ (LE6/f)

‘I can imagine that the people who control TV, they are usually White, male and middle class.’ (B7)

The challenge to write across ethnic lines was acknowledged, but not accepted. Lack of experience and of knowledge was felt to reproduce the stereotypes found in television texts.

'I think it's hard for a White middle class person to try and write a role for a Black person in EastEnders. Although they say they've seen it, they don't actually come from that sort of background so they don't have the full experience ... They live on stereotype basically, that's all they can do.' (B7)

One adult Asian male said:

'I feel patronised ... It's lack of knowledge, lack of understanding. And I think sometimes it's because the decisions on these issues and the programmes are made by the middle-class White people, probably male, who have got no concept of who understands. They think they understand the multi racial Britain, and the ethnic minority which is the British population, the majority of them are British-born, brought up here, with the same ideas and then these are not taken on board.' (B/A3)

Issues of cultural identity

Definitions of identity and perceptions of self as belonging to a minority generated a complex response.

On Being in the/a Minority

For many, the notion of minority was clearly understood as having to do with numbers, particularly the size of local communities, and to do with the visibility of non-Whites in different locations:

'I went down to Cornwall and I hated it down there because I felt so out of place because where I live, it's predominantly Black, and I go down there and I couldn't relate to anything and I felt as if people were staring at me, "Ooh, she's a different colour to us". [General laughter in the group]. When I am up here [London] well, it's as no one even takes a second glance.' (LO4)

'It depends on where you live. If you are in Leicester, you don't consider yourself as part of a minority. Whereas if you live out of Leicester, Coventry, you feel as part of a minority. It just depends on who you are surrounded by ... It depends on where you grew up. If you grew up in White areas, that'd be normal to you. If you grew up in more Asian areas, that would be normal to you.' (LE3/various f)

'I think it also varies because of what type of area you were brought up in. In the area I was brought up in, it's like the majority of it is White, and then in the summer holidays and stuff, I used to come and spend time with my aunt and she lived in a community where the majority of people were Black or Asian. I think that varies as well, on how you consider yourself, what kind of community you were brought up in.' (LE4/f)

But the sense of being a minority clearly also has to do with the particular balance of population in a given area, a sense of 'visible saturation'.

'I don't feel a minority 'cause the Indian population has increased. I think, given time, it won't be an issue. Of course, there would be more White people in this country. But given some generations, you'd see more of us and won't see us as a minority.' (LE5/m)

The size of a visible community can also produce a positive sense of fit and belonging:

'Because it is Leicester and there are a lot of Asians and Black people around so you don't feel part of a minority, you feel part of "the people".' (LE5/m)

There were frequent comments about the importance of London as a racially and culturally mixed environment.

'I moved to London for a little while, right, and then when I went there first, it's like every Black person I seen was in his nice, nice car, right, and over here [Leicester] when you watch TV, the only way they can get them kind of things in the way they portray us is through badness. But the majority of them people, when I got to talk to them, when I got to know them, they all had good jobs, but they don't show anything like that on TV at all. They don't make you feel positive. You think I might as well bum around like the rest of them, no one's going to help me out. But when you go to places like that, like London, it just makes me feel more positive when I see things like that.' (LE6/m)

'I don't feel part of a minority in London because it's mixed but, say, if you went to other parts of England ... Well, in the cities it would be mixed race and mixed cultures, but I don't think if you went to the suburbs it would.' (LO5)

Problems of Definition and Labelling

In many groups, there was considerable debate about the complexity of defining identity and the problem of the adequacy of labels. Black, the designation of choice by most African-Caribbeans and Asians during the 1970s, is now taken very literally, and disliked.

'Black to me is a colour, while Afro-Caribbean is the actual origin of the person. I mean nobody in this room is Black. We're Afro-Caribbean, West Indian, African or whatever, but we're not actually Black, and there's no one here that's White.' (LE6/f)

Some categories, such as 'Asian', were criticised for covering over a great deal of internal difference:

'But all Asians are different, aren't they? Some are heavily religious and some aren't, you see what I mean? It depends, like some are really cultural, take pride in all the activities, and some don't. So it varies on your background, how you are brought up, that sort of thing.' (LO5)

There was strong understanding that the social discourses of race and ethnicity change, and groups recognised new verbal coinages developed to name new phenomena.

'It's like every year, y'know, like it's a new reg of car or something. Y'know, like this year, it's like "Let's have dual heritage!" Next year, let's think of something else. Let's put our heads together, let's see what we get!' [All laugh]. (LE6/m)

'Mixed' Heritage

Although these participants laughed at the new label of 'dual heritage', they continued by discussing the absence of visual representations of people with mixed heritage, accepting its social reality:

'I don't feel represented. I don't feel it's right, y'know, 'cause there's loads of mixed-race people out there. It's not just half-Black and half-White. There's like half-Asian/half-White, or whatever, there's just so many 'mixed-races' out there now. If they're gonna represent people on television, they should represent everybody, not like just Black and White, like there's no in-between.' (LE6/f)

'You don't see any mixed-heritage people on TV; that's why I identify with like Afro-Caribbean people. 'Cause when you look at me, the first thing you see is that I'm Black anyway, you don't see like I'm half-White. Then you'll look deeper and you'll know that I'm half-White or whatever.' (LE6/f)

The absence of multiracial couples and friendships in programming was noted, with television representation judged as lagging behind the intercultural mixing of the contemporary urban landscape:

'The statistics in Britain are quite amazing really. Half of Afro-Caribbean males are involved with partners from a different ethnic group, 40% have White partners. But to me that doesn't really say anything necessarily about representation on TV. I mean it just doesn't happen as often as it does in real life.' (B7)

Such comments seemed to celebrate the emerging cultural hybridity and the spread of multiple, hyphenated identities. Yet the dilemma of being pulled between two cultures was also evident, as in the poignant comment of an Asian girl:

'We're British Asians, so we are torn between two cultures. We know two cultures and we live in two cultures; whereas our parents only had one.' (LO5)

Attempts by the older generation to maintain cultural identity through television consumption was also recognised:

'I think ZeeTV is a load of crap, I really do ... but it's cultural contact with India, keeping that cultural thing ...'
'Our parents like it because it's the closest thing they've got really. Like my family, we are not a religious family at all, very cultural but not religious, so when they watch things like that, they say "Oh, you know, we should do that".' (LO5)

Identification with Britain?

What kind of sense of belonging and Britishness do these young people carry? For some, it was integrated into a complex set of multiple identifications:

'I'd class myself as an African-Caribbean British person because obviously African, that's where, y'know, ancestors are; and Caribbean because my mum and dad were born there. And British, 'cause of where I was born. But 'cause I'm always around my African-Caribbean parents so I can relate to that, so I would say that I am half and half. But if someone was to say to me "What is your race, what is your ethnic background?" I would say African Caribbean British.' (LE4)

Others seem to find little point of connection and indeed expressed alienation and a sense of non-fit:

'I don't feel British because it goes back into the history, slave trade and all that. It goes back into all of that. And that's why I don't feel British because at the end of the day, none of us, if you go back, you're not from Britain, so you're not British ... I don't feel British at all.' (LE4)

Moderator: You don't identify with being British?

'No, I think it's the way the society is. I don't think we'll ever be accepted as part of this society, and until we do I think everyone will feel like that, I think.' (LE4/f)

Group facilitators noted that participants often had difficulty answering the questions about ethnicity and whether they were part of a minority. One facilitator reported the following:

*'Many respondents did not understand what "ethnic background" meant. My usual response was to say that if someone asked me that question, I would probably answer "Asian" or "Indian". They would then ask if "Pakistani" or "Asian" or "Bangladeshi" would be an appropriate answer. But some of them asked if they could write "Muslim". My response was that they should write whatever was an important part of how they defined themselves. One respondent thought about it and said she was Pakistani but she was also British, and I said it would be appropriate for her to write both down in that case. As a result of the difficulty they had in identifying themselves in an exclusive fashion, many of them have quoted the sources of multiple identities. One says "British Pakistani Asian", another says "Indian and Asian and also Punjabi", another says "Kenyan Asian". Interestingly, the white students raised no questions about this. Their answer was simply "British", suggesting a direct conflation of national and ethnic identities.'*²⁵

This complexity and confusion is also reflected in the long list of self-nominations produced in responses to the question: *'How would you describe your ethnic background?'*

25] S. Das, Bristol Asian notes, November 1998.

Table 16: How Would You Describe Your Ethnic Background?

	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Indian	25	16
Jamaican	2	1
Follower of Rastafar	1	1
Asian Indian	6	4
Black Caribbean	4	2.5
Black African	2	1
White British	6	4
Very mixed	1	1
Complicated	1	1
Caribbean	1	1
Black Caribbean/Black British	2	1
Asian	10	6
British Indian	1	1
British	6	4
Hindu	1	1
Indian/Sikh	1	1
Bangladeshi/Muslim	4	2.5
Pakistani	8	5
Muslim/British	1	1
Kenyan Asian	3	2
Asian/Punjabi	2	1
British Asian	1	1
No answer	46	29

What was important in this list was not the numbers, but the kinds of self-descriptions of ethnic background provided. About half the labels included two elements, often a national designation with a religious or regional qualifier, i.e. Bangladeshi/Muslim. ‘Asian’ had the most qualifiers, reinforcing comments that it is too big and crude a designation to have very much meaning. Two labels simply reflected the sense that identity is almost overwhelmingly ‘complicated’ and ‘very mixed’.

The cross cutting of old and new national identities, religion and language make the map of British cultural groupings increasingly complex. Further research in this area must take seriously this intensifying differentiation; the potentially competing allegiances to nation, religion and regional group not only have implications for cultural politics and media preferences, but also for more formal kinds of politics, both domestic and transnational.

It was clear that any broad collective naming in political solidarity in the way that ‘Black’ functioned in the 1970s has disappeared, and there appears to be a search for complex definitions that adequately capture the sense of multiple cultural allegiances that many people feel they carry.

The future: how can things be improved?

The preferred solutions for broadcasting were also explored, e.g. more narrow-cast channels for minority tastes, more mixed programming, and so on.

The dangers inherent in developing a multiplicity of minority channels were acknowledged, not least of which was the possibility of walls of ignorance being built up between groups:

'I think in America, how it works, there's more channels, more channels on more networks, but what that's also done is isolate the groups; there you have, for every ethnic minority, you have a channel for them and that would change it, but that would just put up barriers against other people. I think it's wrong [dedicated channels for different minorities], but then I can think this is the only way they are gonna get it, you know, if they can have their equal media.' (LO3)

'The point of a devoted channel is then you only have people watching one channel basically and you don't know what's happening in other colours and other races. You won't know about the others and then you won't be able to respect them, will you?' (LO4)

Often the suggestion seemed to be simply to keep the minority group in focus across the entire range of programming, not simply with special moments of recognition:

'You know what really pisses me off though is like when Channel 2 or Channel 4 will do "a week in the eyes of a Black person" and they will be showing all Black films and Black interviews. What's that about? It should be like that 24-7. And the same for Turkish people, not like just once in a while, oh the Turkish film festival, you know what I mean?' (LO1)

'Yeah, 'cause it's like the Black people, the Asian people, the Turkish people, the White people. ... well, it's always White week, isn't it. But you know what I mean, it should be spread out all the time.' (LO1)

The overwhelming preference, repeated across many of the groups, was for 'mixed-up' programming:

'They need to have different groups communicating together ... because everyone watches the TV and if they see it on TV then they might start doing it normally.' (LO1)

'It should be a mixed community because that's what reality is, that's what life is about, everyone of different nationality [sic].' (LO3)

'I think every programme on television should have mixed race, every race in it. It shouldn't be more White people, less Black people; more Black people, less White people. It should be mixed because the more we work together, the more we learn to respect ourselves, we begin to know what each and everyone is capable of.' (LO2)

There was a deep sense in which many respondents simply considered Britain to already be multicultural, and wanted the kind of representation that reflects that reality. The potentially positive experience that this offered was evocatively explored by a Bristol Asian adult:

'I don't think that anybody should water down the culture, um, because I think it's a very strong cultural heritage that you've got, hold on to it. And mixing that with your living in this country and your English colleagues and all that, because they've got a strong culture. Western culture is a strong culture, Eastern culture is. Blend it in! There's nothing wrong with that, you can live side by side, parallel, in harmony, respecting each other's culture, and moving it forward. That's what makes the life much more interesting and positive ... the multicultural, that people can truly live together, that's no problem. If I'm praying to Krishna, and you want to pray to Allah and he wants to pray to Jesus, three of us should be able to do that quite nicely, joining hands, and doing it, why not, what's stopping it? And to respect. I think that "respect" word is so important, that each other must respect the other's culture. You integrate, but you don't disintegrate. You don't totally, I should not totally become a White man. I should not pretend to become a totally English man and say, hold on, yes, I'm ashamed to say I love my curry.. People should be able to mix together. So an Indian child and an English child can sit together one day and eat fish and chips quite happily, and chicken tikka the next ... That's the sort of culture, that's the sort of programme I want to see ... I want to see programmes here which contribute and says what my daughter's generation feels like, having, being part of Europe now, how are we going to move into that, and how are we going to work? And then a true representation and true views are represented ... Because we are British Asians. Why should I be either/or? I've been in this country the longest in my life, from the age of 16, and I'm 54 now. I've spent the most time in this country. I gone out to the discos. I like my beer. But I still like to sit with a friend and sometimes listen to the Bhangra group playing. What's wrong with it? I enjoy it.' (B/A3)

At times a note of caution and conservatism could also be detected, as participants expressed a sense of their insecurity and of still being in Britain on sufferance:

'Asians are a minority in Britain. White people would not want to see Indians on television, we might as well face it.' (LE1/m)

'We can't come in here and say we want our television, radios, we have to adapt.' (LE1/f)

'Minorities – Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims – they've got to realise that they can't have everything they want. Watching the news, there was this woman who had some pigs on the windowsills and the Muslims got quite offended by that and told her to get rid of them, but it was her own home! The whole nation cannot adapt just to suit your needs ... It's a two-way thing, you've got to compromise.' (LE5/m)

A potentially endless fragmentation was sometimes imagined:

'I think before people start walking around making demands, I think it still needs to think that we are the odd minority. We can't say, right we want Indian films on at eight o'clock, you know, so that everyone can watch. I mean then there'll be like fifty French people and they'll say we want to watch French films. Can you imagine? You have to think, we sit here, we've got to think, you're White, how would you feel, like other people are taking over their country?' (LE1)

At other times, there was a sense of a pure culture being contaminated:

'Well, you know, this is English TV, so it's up to them, innit? If we had our own TV, probably we wouldn't want them, like English people on it, you know. That's like spoiling, like, if I was watching an English film and an Asian advertisement came on to it, I wouldn't like that, you know, spoiling ...' (B/A1)

Such comments reflected a sense from some minority voices of a lack of entitlement to demand anything different, of a non-belonging that carried no rights. 'They' and 'them' were White and English, while the implication was that 'we' as ethnics, were not and could never become English.

If You Had the Chance, How Would You Change TV?

Focus groups generally ended with an invitation to propose change of any kind.

Change the content

- more ethnic representation:

‘Television, I think you see more and more of our people in the programmes ... It is happening, but I think more should happen.’ (B/A2)

- mixed-up programming:

‘All races on television together, in films, and show what kinds of things go on ... about interacting, and about how all people from different cultures interact.’ (LO1)

*‘I think that the BBC spends so much money on period dramas, they spend a fortune on things like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* and then export them abroad as comments on English life. If they spent more money on programmes that reflect inner-city multicultural life, I think more people would be happy. Not just Black people, the White working class as well, the Irish, other groups that feel they are invisible on television, like the Welsh.’ (B7)*

‘I still feel that instead of separate channels, some of the programmes should be included in the national channel broadcasting. That’s the problem of identity; we want to be included with everybody, not isolated.’ (LE/A1)

‘What I would like to see is a Black, a proper Black, family on TV.’ (LE6/m)

- mixed-up relationships:

‘A wider range of interracial relationships, White people, Black people, Asian people, Turkish people, all that related together, working together. Not just about Turkish people or Black people on their own.’ (LO1)

- more for teenage minority viewers:

*‘They’ve got to make programmes that appeal to younger people. I don’t even watch TV now because there’s nothing that appeals to you apart from *EastEnders* and the soaps ...’ (LE4)*

- more positive representations:

‘I think that ethnic minorities should be portrayed in a more positive light than what they are at the moment ... I think that having an ethnic minority character as a protagonist would improve representation, and perhaps more professional classes, whether they are police inspectors, or doctors, or barristers, or whatever it is.’ (B/A4)

■ more balanced representation:

'What I am interested in is seeing non-White faces doing normal things, not the extraordinary.' (B/A5)

■ more authentic, nuanced representation:

'If they're going to put a Black person in a soap, make it realistic. Make it a real person.' (LE4)

'Talk about different religions or cultures within India or Africa, or Jamaica and those sort of places.' (LE5/f)

Many comments seemed to suggest a need/desire to see successful, middle-class and professional minority characters. As an Asian adult said:

'My God, you know we've got an ethnic minority population here who are rocket scientists, who are doctors, who work in a nice place, who are married, perhaps intermarriages, they've got children, they are intelligent.' (B/A3)

Portrayals, however, need to be realistic and also show conflict:

'Especially if you're going to put a Black or Asian person in a soap that is basically White-related, you have to think about their background. You have to think how you're going to portray them in that. You can't put them in with ... they're getting along with White people "safe", you can't have that all the time, 'cause that's not how it always is, y'know what I mean. You have to sort of mix and change it.' (LE4)

Crossover tastes are quite normal, so some elements of minority culture can have broad appeal.

'The majority of White people also listen to Black things, say Black music. It's not so segregated and it's not so different.' (LO4)

'To me, it's not enough to say we are multicultural, or we are equal ops, I don't think. To become truly multicultural, you really have to go a lot deeper into, and make resources available, change some of your set patterns that has been set into stone, to say, 'Well, no, hold on, they have to think like that, they have to change', because we are truly looking at multicultural ... I want to see Black people, White people, Chinese people into normal dramas, into normal movies. If you're a good actor, go forward.' (B/A3)

Change the producers

Many comments focused on the imagined White ethnic background of media professionals, the editors, producers and writers:

'I say that it would be better for us to have more Black actors, directors and scriptwriters. I am sure it's going to increase, but it's just like the TV companies giving them a chance.' (LO4)

The link was frequently made between poor representation in media content and weak representation in media employment:

'They need to promote more Black people. Black as in dark skin, light skin, Asian people, the whole shebang. And we should get not just in front of the camera, but behind. If we've got good writers, then we can kind of get over the fact that there's not many Black people there.' (LE6/f)

Questions were raised about institutionalised racism and the glass ceiling that minorities often encounter in media organisations:

'Corporations, broadcasting corporations and all that, they need to take on board, take on the right people, on their boards, on their selection. Not somebody who makes the tea, so they say we have got three Black people working for us, one cleans the front door, one is the receptionist and one helps us out delivering in the programme. At the right level, where they can influence making the programmes, and give them a true sense of direction, as to how they should go.' (B/A3)

Do it yourself: some thought the best solution was to get into television production themselves:

'Anything is possible, that's the premise. So I would say that what we need to do is actually to get a lot of money ... What I want to do is create the production company which is Black in a sense of, not because it is a Black crew, but the people involved are non-White, as it were ... and they would have the money to generate programming which is sold to the networks, in some sense sold to the White community, so it gives them the space to create programmes. I think if that did happen, we would get programmes which would cross over in the sense that they would be more popular ... I think it would be possible to create programmes which in some sense reflect not necessarily the Black community, but the kind of talent and interests that those groups have.' (B/A5)

These ideas about not only the need for increased and better employment opportunities within the terrestrial channels, but also the challenge of developing minority ethnic independent production companies echo issues raised in the next section of the report, which focuses on production issues.

Research

Many comments were made about need for research about minority tastes that could be used in developing programme ideas and in checking the authenticity of minority representations.

'Go out in areas with ethnic minorities, ask them questions ... and when they do portray them, don't use stereotypes; see how they change according to time. They still got ideas what ethnic minorities were twenty, thirty years ago. It's changed, it's the 1990s!' (LE4/f)

Respondents did see this study as a chance to make their voices heard, but want to be listened to seriously. Comments were made that there was little point conducting research if the findings were not taken seriously:

'This work should matter, yes. I think the recommendations should be acted upon, instead of just collecting dust. You know, somebody who listens to this tape, you or I don't know who, will say, you know, he's an idiot talking. Because I'm saying what I really feel. I feel angry. I feel angry and I feel I'm being patronised a lot of times.' (BA3)

Innovation and risk

'They can try a few things, one or two pilot things. I just don't feel that they try hard enough, they think it's safer if they go with some of these other boring programmes for, like, the mainstream audience.' (LO4)

Education

'I think it's educating the people a lot more, like the Stephen Lawrence case, a lot of media coverage has educated the people about what this country's really like' (LO5)

'And more of an attitude, "Well, maybe this is interesting to everybody", rather than just minorities, because as long as they have that attitude, it is all going to be in separate bits and unless they try and represent us as a society or as a community that's made up of lots and lots of different parts, and we might all be interested in each other, then it's not going to happen. It's like a policy in public libraries not to have Asian novels or not to have Black literature because there aren't any Asian or Black people living there apparently. And as long as people think that in my area there aren't people of colour so they won't be interested, they are going to carry on with this separateness which is just wrong. Until like everybody is just out there and it's almost all influenced and it's on people's sets, OK this is our society, it is not all White in Coronation Street anymore, then we're not going to get anywhere, and Whites are missing out as well'. (B6)

As described in the section on media effects, respondents do see television as a powerful influencer of attitudes and opinion, and recognise the educative potential of positive representations even in entertainment programming. Hence the strong interest both in programmes that focus on minority issues and also in programmes that fully and adequately represent minority characters and issues to the wider population.

The need for minorities to speak out:

'If we don't open our mouths and say something, nobody is. It's not like White people are gonna say Black people are portrayed in that way or Asian people are; we've got to open our mouths and say we don't like what you've put on television and a lot of Asian people are offended by it and if that sort of thing continues then we're not going to watch that programme any more, or something so that they feel compelled to change that programme, so we actually have to open our mouths and say something before anything can happen.' (LO2)

Occasionally, a dissenting voice pointed to the over sensitivity of minority groups:

'Indians are allowed to say whatever they want about Indians, but as soon as the White person says it, then it's racist. Hypocrisy!.. Why do they take the piss out of White people and when somebody does it to them, they can't stand it?' (LE1/various f)

That kind of comment, and the ready acceptance of the self-satire of *Goodness Gracious Me*, suggests a new generation that is integrated, with a different mindset to that of their parents and grandparents. As one participant put it:

'I think the older generation aren't integrated as much as this generation.' (LO5)

Similarities and Differences in African-Caribbean and Asian Responses?

There was quite a strong Asian perception that there is more programming for African-Caribbeans. There is also quite a pronounced sense of their own internal differentiation (by country of origin, language, religion, etc.) and of that being inadequately addressed. Increasingly, 'Asian' is a category that simply masks this internal complexity.

Rather more of the discussion amongst Asian groups focused on cultural issues and maintenance of a divergent cultural identity from the mainstream. A stronger theme amongst African-Caribbeans is the ongoing reality of racism and a sense of blocked opportunities.

Asians tended to turn more to the transnational market and to satellite and cable channels in Asian languages. African-Caribbeans appreciate the Black representations in American programming. And while many comments acknowledged the contemporary reality of urban diversity, few explicitly entertained the idea that minorities shared things in common, not least a sense of exclusion from mainstream society.

Conclusion

As will have become evident from the voices of participants, one of the biggest problems at the moment is a sense of the crudity of our ethnic categorisations, the assumption of internal homogeneity within a category, and the assumption of singular belonging to a particular cultural group, rather than the acknowledgement of the complex web of cultural affinities within which many people now live. Our own tripartite division of participants is itself up for criticism, a function more of administrative expedience and general use than social or cultural validity. As one group facilitator noted:

‘One fact emerges ... people have definite but shifting ideas about their multiple identities. This was particularly true of the younger generation. The term “south Asian” group or individual is merely the first and a crude filter. Behind this blanket term lie layers of identities which are revealed as the focus group or the deeper probing of ethnography progresses. In the end, one is left to wonder if one has really interviewed “south Asians”.’²⁶

At times there was a profound sense of a basic lack of knowledge among respondents of the extent and nature of the ethnic make-up of Britain. A series of programmes about the cultural diversity within Britain might be quite useful in quashing some of the crudest misunderstandings which work in both directions: the misperception that Britain is more multicultural than it really is (enhanced by living in certain inner-city locations), or the misperception that ethnic groups are very small and very recent.

It is clear that people watch television looking for images of themselves, and are always disappointed. The more one knows about a community, group or culture, the more one will find televisual representation wanting. But that does not mean that the goal to develop more adequate, more nuanced and more up-to-date representations should not continue. Certainly, the ongoing sense of the negativisation of minority status, of images of minority characters as socially, culturally and criminally different, is unforgivable and a testimony to the need for ongoing monitoring of output, for employment opportunities to allow minorities into broadcasting to represent themselves, and for awareness training in this area.

While minority ethnic groups certainly welcome and want more programmes that speak to their particular needs and interests, much of the discussion was about the need to inform the wider society and to project a range of images about cultural diversity into the mainstream. These mainly young respondents live an urban multicultural life; their mainstream counterparts might not to the same extent.

A young Asian male in Bristol probably made the simplest argument for ‘mixed-up programming’:

‘If we’re ever going to get any equality in modern life, we have to learn each other’s beliefs and practices, and stuff like that.’ (B5/m)

26] A. Bhatt, *Asking the People: Some Reflections on the Process of Forming Focus Groups*, unpublished paper, Leicester, June 1999.

**Minority Ethnic
Independent Television Production**

Introduction

It was a logical development of our work on minority ethnic audiences that we shift focus to examine the minority ethnic independent television sector to explore some of the issues surrounding the production of minority ethnic programming and alternate forms of representation. The project was tendered and funded jointly by the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the ITC.

The subject is nothing if not highly topical. Race and racism are back at the top of the nation's political and cultural agenda because of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, the subsequent Macpherson Report, the report into racism within the Fire Service, problems at the Ford Dagenham plant, and many other issues. Television is back as an arena of public controversy in debates on 'dumbing down', the squeeze on arts programmes, digitisation and the rapid march of new technologies.

The two arenas of debate come together in the issues surrounding the future of multicultural programming, definitions of diversity and the changing nature of the independent television production sector. Michael Jackson's controversial speech in June 1999, as the new Head of Channel 4, suggested that the minority sector was outdated and a multicultural Britain needed no special slots for minority audiences. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has initiated a review of opportunities in film and television for minority ethnic groups, including the issue of training, with a scoping study undertaken by the British Screen Advisory Council. The Commission for a Multicultural Britain, supported by the Runnymede Trust, has also included media and issues of representation within its remit. The Edinburgh International Television Festival in August focused on the independent production sector although it paid scant attention to issues involving multicultural programming. PACT, an organisation for independent television producers, ran a series of seminars on multicultural issues in September. APEX (African Asian Partnership for Excellence) held a Media Conference at the end of October 1999. The issues are current, are being examined across a wide variety of organisations and locations, and are complex.

This project aimed to have a mixed focus, looking at three different kinds of actors:

- 'insider'²⁷ accounts by the main terrestrial channels and organisations about the state of multicultural broadcasting;
- 'outsider' accounts by independent production companies of the opportunities and problems for minority programming; and
- the perimeter stories of minority ethnic channels.

With insider accounts, the focus would include issues surrounding the determination of programming priorities and the commissioning process, and the changing nature and definition of multiculturalism. One concern would be the evident increase in minority identifications (the social fragmentation suggested by the BBC's '100 Tribes' research) and how mainstream broadcasting could address this. Another concern would be the 'burden of representation', whereby minority ethnic actors are always required to represent their

27] The spatial metaphors are derived from Cottle, 1997.

background, rather than ‘simply’ play a fictional character. This was quickly to develop into the ‘burden of production’, whereby a Black producer is expected to make a ‘Black’ programme, and so on.

For the second group, with the growth in the number of independent production companies and the slow increase in the amount of terrestrial television programming commissioned and bought in from these, it seemed important to locate examples of good practice as well as examples of ideas not developed and frustrated talent. An example of success is to be found in the trajectory of *Goodness Gracious Me*, the successful formula of which has led from a minority slot on radio to prime-time and prize television scheduling in the Comedy Zone and on to the live comedy circuit. Evidence of its public acceptance was the entire evening devoted to the programme in September 1999.

In regard to the third focus, new forms of distribution, such as satellite and cable, offer possibilities not only for locally inflected minority ethnic media production, but also for the construction of global diasporic communities bound together by a shared flow of media products, especially film, entertainment programming and news. Such channels often include a mix of imported programming, news of global ‘homes’ and some locally produced materials. In addition, new restricted service licences aim to support local minority media provision for specific ethnic communities.

Interviews were conducted with key industry individuals, with some secondary analysis of statistics, internal documents, and policy guidelines where these were available.²⁸ Many people gave of their time, information and analysis in a very generous manner, and we would like to thank all the individuals and organisations listed in Appendix 6. The representatives of large organisations, mainly the terrestrial channels, are either quoted by name or by their channel allegiance, since for the most part they represent official policy. We have made the voices of the independent sector anonymous so that their comments and criticisms can have no impact on the already complicated commissioning process.

New issues emerged in the course of conducting this project. Essentially, the precise focus on minority ethnic independent television production can only be understood within three broader contexts:

- what has happened to independent television production in Britain;
- the shifting discourses on diversity and multiculturalism, not only within the major terrestrial broadcasting organisations, but also in the wider public domain and indeed from the public themselves;
- the changing technological and economic environment of television.

28] We were working within a very tight deadline at a particularly hectic time for media professionals. In an industry where networking and the address book are key, a lot of contacts unfolded in an informal snowball effect. We also placed an advertisement in *The Voice* asking for independent producers who wished to talk with us, and made a few contacts that way. The research was conducted by Prof. Simon Cottle of Bath Spa University, who also provided invaluable consultancy advice; Dr Shoba Das, Bristol; Liz Poole, Staffordshire University; Magdalena Bober, Malvina Carpi and Sameera Mian, Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester; and Adom Sabonchian, London.

The growth of the independent television production sector

The independent television production sector really developed with the establishment of Channel 4 in 1982. It was boosted by the 1990 Broadcasting Act which required Channel 3 companies and the BBC to meet one-quarter of their schedules through commissions from outside. A market analysis of the sector, conducted in 1996, indicated a business of £720 million a year from a combined output of 10000 hours of programming.²⁹ The PACT Directory of Independent Producers 1999 carries information of about 400 companies and claims that the 'UK's independent production sector is now the most vibrant and successful in the world'.³⁰

Licence conditions set down by the ITC stipulate that at least 25% of qualifying programmes broadcast are made by independent producers. The figures achieved in 1998 by regional Channel 3 licensees, GMTV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 were 33, 53, 88 and 69%, respectively.³¹

Yet the latest available monthly assessment of the independent sector concluded that: 'August has not been a particularly good month for independents.' ('August Top 20 programmes', *PACT Magazine*, October 1999:32). Of the top twenty programmes on BBC1, three were independent productions. The highest audience rating was received by Celador Productions' *National Lottery-Winning Lines* (light entertainment); *Badger* (drama/Feelgood Fiction) and *Birds of a Feather* (sitcom/ Alamo Productions). BBC2 and ITV had five independent productions in the top twenty programmes; Channel 4 had eight, while Channel 5 had only three.

For the entire year, September 1998-September 1999 (13 months), in terms of programming for and about ethnic minorities, 22 companies were listed as independent suppliers, of which only three made more than one programme. How to interpret such findings is a real issue. Does the figure of 22 companies reveal a reasonable spread of production sources? Does the fact that few make more than one programme mean they are all doomed to a limited, small-scale production? These are issues which are live within the independent sector as a whole.

29] *Media Guide 1998*, 1998, p. 202. 30] PACT, 1999, p. 3. 31] ITC, 1998, p.34

An Inner Circle of Bigger Independents?

Industry analysts have long predicted that there will be a mass consolidation, with smaller companies collapsing, although so far the sector appears still to be growing. The *Media Guide*, 1998 (202), at the top of its long list of independent television companies, comments that within the sector ‘much of the work concentrates on an inner circle of 25 or so companies’. Perhaps the issue is not so much an ‘inner circle’ or preferred company names, but the fact that size does matter. One media analyst’s description of the independent sector talked about ‘5–10 large companies; a group of 10–25 substantial ones, and the rest, down to the company that perhaps makes one production a year in a craft industry manner’. To some extent, this structure derived from the moment of deregulation of broadcasting when, as one interviewee described the process, ‘many men walked out with golden commissions’ and the social networks to more or less guarantee a steady flow of commissions.

In fact, there is already considerable consolidation into what PACT describes as umbrella companies, and given that such processes are well known in other sectors of the media, it would be naive to be surprised by oligopolistic tendencies within the British independent sector. The *Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival Yearbook 1999* listed three ‘super independents and production groups’. The first is GMG Endemol Entertainment, jointly owned by the Guardian Media Group and the Dutch production group Endemol Entertainment. This owns the programming divisions Bazal and Initial, and Gem which handles exploitation of rights and brands. The second is the Mentorn Group, the largest privately owned independent producer in the UK, which owns Mentorn Barraclough Carey Productions, MBC Midlands, MBC North, Mentorn International, Folio Productions, TV21, Worldwide Entertainment News and Cheerleader Productions. The group also owns Golden Break Music, a music publisher. The third group is Virgin Media, which owns 50% of Rapido and 20% of Ginger Television. There then follows a list of twenty-six independent production companies owned in whole or part by some very well-known names in broadcasting, including Robert Kilroy-Silk, Jeremy Isaacs, Griff Rhys Jones, Kirsty Wark etc.

This list of well-known names suggests a movement of individuals from the big terrestrials into private companies, indeed a blurring of the boundaries between the two. One recent example is that Bazal, a well-known large independent company, has poached Pat Holland from the BBC’s own Commissioning Group to executive-produce new productions (*PACT Magazine*, October 1999, p. 31). Such a dynamic was frequently mentioned by interviewees:

‘A well-known independent usually has a number of elements: important backers, some of whom are ex-BBC workers who’ve set themselves up as independents but are known either directly to Michael Jackson, or he can pick up the phone and talk to someone at the Beeb who’s worked with these guys. You need to get that initial trust in you and the network of contacts helps.’ (Independent producer)

It is not hard to anticipate such a trend developing even more, with the bigger independents building up a considerable pool of experienced talent and the ‘umbrella’ structure seeming

to provide the security that the broadcasters want, so that if they commission a company they know it will be able to deliver the programme on time and on budget. However, for small companies – whether White or Black – there are problems. There are ‘forced marriages’ between smaller and larger companies which are not happy ones.

‘And financially it’s almost inevitable that a small company will lose a considerable percentage of their production fee, their profit in that umbrella arrangement. Because the large company says “Why should we look after you for nothing? We’re not going to do that. Therefore, we want to take 50% or so of the production fee to help cover our overheads, our management time and the fact that to a large extent we are having to take a risk because you might screw up and then we are the ones that are going to have to sort it out”. So that’s the tricky thing. Now that does apply as much to White companies as to Black companies, except that the White companies probably have more contacts than the Black companies may have built up. The White companies may have been able to build up existing kinds of relationships where they can go to a company, a bigger company that they already feel comfortable with and say “Okay, we’ve got this potential commission, can we work with you?” And it might be easier for them to do that than a small Black company.’ (PACT)

The terrestrial channels are keen to refute the notion that they work more closely with a known inner circle of independents. Michael Jackson, speaking at the Edinburgh International Television Festival, mentioned that there are now 1400 independent production companies in Britain, and that, in 1998, Channel 4 had spent £290 million on original production and had worked with 465 companies, *‘in comparison to the 30–40 at the BBC’*.

Peter Grimsdale,³² new Head of Factual at the BBC’s Independent Commissioning Group, absolutely refutes the notion and the practice of working with an ‘inner circle’:

‘What we won’t be doing is holding closed sessions for a chosen few. In fact there are no such things as key suppliers. Our sessions will be open, frequent and informal, with plenty of time for questions.’

He is putting in place a new system for dealing with the huge influx of ideas, with the:

‘Potential to be the most responsive factual indie unit of all the main channels, and the precise goal of being able to read all proposals and getting a response out from the BBC within 10 days.’

Yet, despite these claims, as one independent put it:

‘The received wisdom is that the smaller companies are doomed in the sector, one has to become part of a bigger unit.’ (Independent Producer)

32] Grimsdale, 1999.

And many respondents repeated the sense that there was indeed an internal ring of independents, an ‘A-list of favourites’:

‘There are loads and loads of independent producers, but the same old companies usually get the commissions.’ (Independent Producer)

There are no Black production groups of large size, and they tend to have fewer contacts than White companies.

‘The independent TV production sector is so structured, it’s very difficult for a small Black sole trader to break through and become a big company.’ (CA)

‘The main issue is that Black independent television companies don’t get any respect from the commissioning side. The independent sector built up really in the last eight years, because of the change in the Broadcasting Act and stuff like that. But there isn’t one Black independent company that’s established themselves in the market place in that time. You couldn’t name one Black production company. And that’s a disgrace.’ (Independent Producer)

Within the large grouping, none is recognisably multicultural in orientation, although within each may well be producers/writers and other talent of the normal spread of ethnic background. Indeed, the suggestion that a company that employs a number of Black people be seen as a Black company is distasteful; and many creative people talked about the ‘burden of production’ as a parallel to the ‘burden of representation’. The additional level of conflict and confusion for members of minority ethnic groups around this matter – the need and desire to be assertive for the group, as well as the need and desire to be free as creative individuals to make the best programmes – is real, and needs to be acknowledged and understood.

Another problem that small minority independent production companies face is becoming victims of their own success, when talented individuals are able to develop careers in the television world and take much needed skills and expertise with them; thus a small organisation can be a successful training ground and steppingstone for aspiring producers.

The terrestrial channels have established new structures and new posts to ameliorate relations with the independent sector, and to improve the commissioning and production processes. The BBC has established an Independent Commissioning Group. The ITV Network Centre has organised a series of meetings with independent producers and more commissions are flowing. Channel 4’s revised licence contains new requirements for original production, multicultural programming and new targets for commissioning programmes from outside London.³³ And Dawn Airey, Director of Programmes for Channel 5, said recently that some of the small independent companies had the most interesting programme ideas, and she was aiming to commission more documentaries and programmes for the early evening slot (18:00–20:00 hrs). (*Broadcast*, 27 August 1999:5).

33] Benson, 1998.

The Terrestrial Channels and Multiculturalism

As is only to be expected, the strategies of the BBC and Channel 4, the two dominant players in multicultural television programming in Britain, are both continually evolving and very different from each other.

The BBC, public service broadcasting and diversity through audience 'reach'

The production of minority-orientated programming has had a complex development in British broadcasting. The Immigrants Unit in the BBC in the 1960s aimed to teach immigrants coming to Britain for the first time, but included items such as instructions on how to switch on a light bulb and how to catch a bus. It then became the Asian Unit with Asian presenters and was allocated one or two programming slots in the morning schedule. In the 1980s, an Asian Programmes Unit was established and *Network East* developed as the flagship programme. Then, as the Multicultural Programmes Department, programmes for all minorities were produced including African-Caribbean output. But, in 1996, the unit was split, both remaining with the directorate of BBC Production and thus still part of the same overall structure but becoming specialist units with specific remits. The African-Caribbean Unit moved to locate with Features in Manchester, while the Asian Programmes Unit stayed as one of five units within Network Production in Birmingham.

Paresh Solanki, the Editor of the Asian Programmes Unit, feels that this current structure allows for the exchange of staff across units:

'What happens is that we're slowly breaking barriers, where, you know, Asian people just don't have to come to this unit and work and they can't do anything else. I have staff who work for other units, completely mainstream, nothing to do with Asia at all, and vice versa, where non-Asians come and work here, because now it's just seen as a specialist unit, with high-profile, good-quality programming that's won loads of awards.'

The unit has developed a high profile through *Network East*, but also with programmes such as the *Mega Mela*, the Indian Independence concerts, the series on the Sikhs, a documentary on Jinnah etc. Solanki's assessment was that such programming:

'Has suddenly put us kind of high profile and people no longer think we are a ghetto. They don't think we are an ethnic output but they see us as a specialist unit, specialising in Asian issues, from an Asian perspective.'

The language of the ghetto has resonated in other, public, interviews, with Michael Grade talking about the end of 'the strand mentality', ghettoisation and the move to an integrated sensibility reflecting contemporary Britain.

In another recent public talk, at the Royal Television Society convention in Cambridge in September, Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, affirmed his belief that the notion of ‘public service’ as the ethos of broadcasting still had value. This meant, in his words, that:

‘Despite the increase of choice which digital television brings, I believe that we will continue to need public service broadcasters, including Channel 3 and 4, as well as the BBC, to sustain a diversity of viewpoints and to act as a quality benchmark.’
(Smith, 1999)

But the BBC was singled out as having ‘a particular duty ... to provide something for everybody, making the good popular and the popular good’ and that ‘audience reach’ is a far more important way of measuring public confidence in the BBC than ‘audience share’.

One of the best analyses of the complex remit of the BBC was actually offered by someone from Channel 4:

‘In the BBC they’re driven not just by a liberal notion of what we ought to do, but also by a licence fee argument ... one of the big arguments for a licence fee is that ethnic minorities are like Radio 3 listeners, they’re a small group but they’re a part of the whole. And if you lose any one group, if you lose Radio 3 listeners, classical music lovers, then the BBC loses some of the legitimacy for the license fee ... ’cause one of the big arguments is that’s the only way in which you can cater for is to have a big public funded organisation with a brief to cater for everybody.’ (C4)

So what is the future for ‘multicultural programming’ in the BBC? One of the key issues to emerge when asking this question is the more variegated sense of ethnic identity that now pertains within broadcasting circles. Solanki expressed this clearly:

‘Let me stick to the Asian output. Firstly, there isn’t enough hours [sic] in the day on channels to satisfy all the different variations of Asian communities. That’s a major issue. We have got different communities, different religions. On the other scale, we have generation gaps which are huge now. We’ve got first-generation who still want that language-based programming and, on the other scale, we’ve got fourth-generation British Asians who don’t understand the sub-continent. Though they know their ancestry is there, they feel they’re separate; they feel “Yeah, I like Bollywood movies, but the rest, I want to do here.” And so what you get now are third- and fourth-generation Asians who speak English, still follow Asian culture but in an English sense or a British sense, British Asian ... They have links to the subcontinent, but they do not necessarily gel into it.’

The shifting ethnic identifications are compared with dynamics in the United States:

'Yeah, it's becoming like America where the Italians and the Irish people in America are still very proud of their ancestry, but they're Americans. What they're saying is, yes, we know of the subcontinent; we're British Asians, we love Bollywood movies (and Bollywood movies are in the top ten of the British charts, which is amazing for a population which is only 3%, it's disproportionately colossal really), so what you're basically getting is a British-Asian identity.'

The problem, in Solanki's assessment, is that it is hard for the BBC to fulfil that remit in programming terms, because 'it's too long, or too big, too wide' and this really calls for an BBC Asian channel. The BBC as the public service broadcaster cannot easily compete with such niche channels. It has to find material that will satisfy most, if not all, of these tastes and people, so Solanki says it has no choice but to develop ground-breaking television content, world-leading Asian documentaries, for example, and programmes that appeal across a range of tastes:

'Multicultural programming is watched by the wider community; also East, a strong current affairs series, is watched more by non-Asians than Asians, simply because of the actual numbers of people.'

The obvious tension is between programming aimed specifically for a community and programming about a community interest that might serve to introduce cultural difference to the wider society:

'Multicultural programming has to have a two-tier strategy. One tier is targeting your own community; on the other, it's trying to push ideas out into the mainstream, opening it up ... we did Madhur Jaffrey's Flavours of India cookery. We knew that other people will be interested simply because of putting them at prime time, a subject matter like cookery is going to be appealing.'

Solanki was positive about the high regard that has grown for multicultural programming and how the BBC structure allowed for flexibility and offered diverse training opportunities for his staff:

'We want to develop talent, on-screen and off-screen talent ... You train your Asian staff how to develop those kinds of programmes ... I don't expect my staff to be here all the time. I expect them to go and work on Panorama or Newsnight or whatever other programme in Birmingham; they already do that.'

Increasingly, staff from other units, such as Factual in London, want to come to do a big Asian story that might interest *East*. Yet the Asian Unit still has to compete and fight for its commissions, and the main criteria used are ratings, quality, success:

'Success is defined not just by the number of people because you can't, all programmes can't rely on ratings, 'cause then you're dumbing down television. So you look at the quality of, the importance of, the story. Like if it's the 300th anniversary of Sikhism: you know it's an important story, it's important in Britain because Britain has a strong community, it's important worldwide. So you know that even if it doesn't get the highest of ratings (but decent ones anyway because of the time of the slot), it's an important story, so you balance it that way.'

Thus multicultural programming covers a number of strategies: programmes for the Asian community; programmes about the Asian community for the wider audience; and, thirdly, getting Asians involved in production.

'If we're really honest, the Asian unit doesn't need to exist if the world was ideal. Because what would happen, 5–6% of the population is minorities, so everywhere you go, in any department of the BBC, ITV, there'd be 5–6% minorities, automatically, by random. So if you go to Music and Arts, you'll have music and arts people and some of them happen to be Asian. If that's the case, then you don't need a unit like this which specialises in ethnic output because what will happen, if you want to do a Music and Arts programme, Music and Arts will be doing it. And if you want a documentary, then Documentary will do it. So ethnic programmes will be spread out and ethnic talent will be spread out and moving on ...'

But in contrast to Solanki's very positive position in relation to the power and autonomy of the programming units, Patrick Younge, an ex-employee, argued a different position:

'I went to Network Current Affairs (in the BBC) to produce Black Britain, which is made under Network Current Affairs, not from the African-Caribbean Unit. Which was quite important to me because it meant that we got a proper budget and we got proper slots, and we were part of the real political infrastructure of the BBC, whereas the African-Caribbean unit and the Asian units aren't really, they don't have clout as departments.' (Patrick Younge, C4)

The other problem, often hidden because of the poor data about employment patterns from the BBC, is that different areas of television might offer different kinds of opportunities:

'If we push, there's a long way to go, but it will get better. If we look at the Asian faces on TV now, George Alagaiah presents The 9 o'clock News. In news and current affairs, factual, we're doing very well now. In drama we've a long way to go. In news and factual, you can start as a trainee, you can work at work experience for nothing, you can go and work in your local newspaper, local radio and get your experience. But how do you get into drama? Forget Asians; anyone who wants to make it into drama, it's difficult, expensive.' (BBC/PS)

But there was a feeling that this division of separate units within the BBC has a quite old-fashioned air to it now, although it is also acknowledged that they at least gave people their first opportunities in making programmes:

'The bigger disappointment comes that not enough of these people came out and really integrated and moved up the ladder through the BBC kind of promotions ladder.' (PACT)

For many independents, negotiating the organisational hierarchy and social assumptions of the BBC is very hard indeed:

'The BBC is a difficult animal to work with. It's full of prejudices, it's not more liberal than anyone else. It's a very stratified organisation.' (Independent Producer)

Thus, key to BBC strategies remains the need for better internal employment opportunities for minority individuals and ensuring there are no internal 'glass ceilings', as well as maintaining a diversified portfolio of programmes about and by minorities.

Channel 4's New Britain: the demise of 'minorities'

Channel 4's remit at its launch in 1982 was 'to appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV', 'encourage innovation and experiment' and 'be distinctive'. In 1987, taking over from Jeremy Isaacs, Michael Grade joked that his job was to lower the audience share, and later described the channel as:

'a minority public service broadcaster by statute'
(Grade, quoted in Gibson, 1999).

The radically changed attitude of Channel 4 towards this part of its remit was clearly articulated by Michael Jackson in a speech to the Broadcasting Press Guild in early June, in which he said:

'We are not a minority channel for minority audiences. If we continued doing that we'd end up filling the small gaps left by other channels.'

The changed vision of British society was further developed in an article by Jackson (*The Guardian*, 5 July 1999), in which he described Channel 4's changing audience:

'This is a time of extraordinary social and cultural transformation ... old shibboleths are dying and attitudes we used to take for granted are up for debate ... we live in a less homogenous, more pick-and-mix culture, and we're better off for it.'

After describing ITV's response as the 'safety first' schedule, giving the audience larger helpings of the popular and familiar, and the BBC as needing to reach every citizen with something of value, he described Channel 4 as pursuing '*what you might call a third way*', intriguingly echoing 'Blairspeak':

'Once Channel 4's audience were viewers of disparate minorities. Channel 4's special constituencies are now an integral part of a new emergent culture in Britain. The old values of rigidity, certainty, routine, safety, tradition, familiarity and duty are being replaced by a new set of values. We have always aimed to be the channel for people who value freedom, permissiveness, hedonism, discernment, experimentation, ambition and individuality ... values that cut across age, class and gender.' (Jackson, 1999)

The governing assumption is that the mainstream has altered and the clear divide between minority and mainstream tastes and interests no longer holds:

'Traditional minorities have achieved greater assimilation. They don't want only specialist programmes that reinforce their separateness within society, but also programmes that bring their attitudes and interests into the centre ground of the schedule.'

But the argument also has the potential effect of rendering ethnic affiliation as the same kind of 'difference', and having the same kind of meaning, as being a keen gardener, cook, sports enthusiast or film buff. Social stratification and division based on racialised ethnicities are reduced to another minor variation in cultural taste.

Tim Gardam, Director of Programmes for Channel 4, said publicly in Edinburgh that multicultural programming had changed over the past ten years, and that current policy was not in making programmes ‘for them’, but innovative programmes for the mainstream reflecting society as it is, modern and cosmopolitan. Michael Grade had also talked about approaching a method of ‘colour-blind casting’, positive examples of this being the recent *Love in Leeds* and *Psychos*. Current policy wants to extend multiculturalism into all areas so that every programme should have a statement of how it contributes to the multicultural world.

The different pressures on Channel 4 rather than those on the BBC was articulated by interviewees:

‘Here [at C4] it’s different. We’re a commercial channel, still with a public service remit. And here, and in ITV, what’s driving people is the recognition that, first of all, you know, the general mission that we should cover properly. But also, we’re a largely urban, pretty young channel. And large parts of the urban audiences in all the big cities are African-Caribbean or Asian. And so, if we’re not reflecting and tapping into their agenda, we are going to see our audience sort of fall off the end. So it’s marketing reasons. So the BBC has a social function plus a licence-fee function; we’ve got a social function plus we’ve got an audience-driven function and I think we’re probably a bit more sensitised to the audience than the BBC was because if people stop watching, we can’t get advertising. We can’t get advertising, we can’t make programmes. Whereas in the BBC they could carry on. Even if Black people aren’t watching, or Asian people aren’t watching, the BBC, the licence fee still comes in until such point as you get critical failure and everything collapses.’ (C4)

Yasmin Anwar, Commissioning Editor, Multicultural Programming Department of Channel 4, in the post since October 1997, has spearheaded the changed definition of multiculturalism, something she appears keen to claim:

‘One of the interesting things about this channel is that in many ways you don’t step into a dead man’s shoes. When you take up your job here, you’re very much expected to bring something to it.’

Her position very much echoes Jackson’s ‘we’re all hybrid now’ notion:

‘There’s sort of an old view of Britain and there’s a new view of Britain, and I think the new view sees very much Britain as a hybrid society, in which minority ethnic cultures have contributed, have made an impact on the mainstream far and above their numerical existence. And I think there’s an acknowledgement inside the channel, something that certainly I’m always trying to get people to see, is that television has failed to capitalise on that ... so television is sort of lagging behind when it comes to its understanding of what it means to be in multicultural Britain and how that should be depicted.’ (C4/YA)

'I've always wanted to make sure that this department is never used as a figleaf to somehow justify other departments in the channel not being multicultural. There's a very big push on at the moment, and it's a push that's coming from commissioning editors themselves, to increase and improve their multiculturalism, their diversity, both behind the camera and in front of it in terms of their programming output.' (C4/YA)

This process aimed to diffuse a more sensitised awareness throughout the organisation:

'It becomes a kind of consciousness-raising exercise, and then more and more people around the channel, and the programme makers that feed the channel will be asking themselves: "Am I doing this sufficiently?"' (C4/KB)

So the entire remit of Channel 4 needs to change, perhaps in an equally vague manner, the aim becoming:

'Making programmes that reflect the changing face of multicultural Britain and the peoples who are part of that as well as their diaspora.'

This is a response to a radically altered social environment, and one of quite recent making:

'There's something very different from even ten years ago, a measure of the extent to which our audiences have changed.'

Reactions to the new strategy are mixed. On the one hand, minority ethnic independent producers recognise that, historically, the original focus of Channel 4 had helped to develop Black production teams through the workshops systems, supported by a C4 department called Independent Film and Video (which helped the development of organisations such as Sankofah, Black Audio and others in the 1980s). While the new integrated model is welcomed, there is a fear that the commissioning process will not support minority groups. Commissioning will look for the 'best idea' and there seems to be no reason why White teams cannot make multicultural programmes, and the general preference is for integrated production teams across the board.

'Black producers feel that's fine so long as they've been given the opportunity to get integrated into the other strands (beyond Multicultural-AS), but they don't feel they have. So in a sense they had the one little area of their former greatest potential taken away from them rather than a great increase of work across the schedule.' (PACT)

Problems of Definition

What is 'Multiculturalism'?

The issues around the intended and perceived meanings of much of the terminology are absolutely central to this debate.

The operating definitions behind this project were around definition of 'minority ethnic' as primarily 'visible minority groupings of Asians and African-Caribbeans', while acknowledging that the debate, British social reality and the self-definition of groups are pushing to a far more variegated recognition of a huge range of identity/community groupings. This is not the place to review the historical trends in race discourse and labelling of minority ethnic groups in Britain. What is relevant, however, is the emerging sensibility of the people involved in the television sector under analysis. What do our respondents think?

What's 'minority ethnic programming'?

'I don't know [laughs.]. How to define an ethnic minority? I don't even know what it is. It's such a large thing. If you said to me what Black production is, my interest is in absolutely everyone, and it does include everyone. I don't often see any Chinese stuff on TV, or Greek, there's not many of them in production, I don't know any Greek production company ... I don't see a programme about them. So what is it, a minority? Ethnic minority programming is really about Black and Asian people, and that's it.' (Independent Producer)

It cannot be simply defined by the ethnic background of the producers; that is too essentialist. It cannot only be a matter of programming strategy, themes of interest to the minority community; that is too limited.

There are independent companies such as Black Pyramid which developed out of the emerging need for Black communities to find ways to gain access to and participate effectively in the film and video industry. It aims 'to initiate, develop, promote and produce innovative Black media'. Their perception is of 'under-representation' within the industry, both in front of and behind the cameras. Only with increased access and participation can African-Caribbean people redress the impoverishment of mainstream television portrayal and add their own voice and unique contribution:

'I think it's an experience ... another experience of being in Britain and what that means. Some of these [experiences] are similar to other producers and some are very different: issues to do with being an outsider; with racism and discrimination; with the history that we carry, even as a second generation ... it's just incredibly important that Black people in this country can watch TV and have that sort of understanding in common with the makers of television programmes. I think it's really important.' (Independent Producer)

'What is Black programming is a debate that we have ... and is not something that is totally fixed. There isn't one thing that you can say is a Black film or a Black programme. It's not as easily defined as that. I think that the funders and the large TV companies would like it to be really easily definable, but it's not, it's something that is incredibly diverse and it's something that changes, as well ... I mean, for us it's about Black people being empowered to make film. I don't think that there is any particular subject matter, but it's something that can express Black, African-Caribbean people, and people of African-Caribbean descent ... I think it always needs talking about.' (Independent Producer)

Often the debate moves forward as people articulate the lacks in programming that is on offer. For example, interviewees pointed out there is no drama with a mixed-race couple, although in reality there are many such relationships. Other people mentioned that there has been no drama or series in which the main love interest was Black on Black. Channel 4 was felt to want everything to be multicultural, including the presented faces on the screen, but the reality is quite far from that hope.

Yet the desire for greater minority visibility on television encounters another concern, that minority performers are always required to 'act their skin'. This is something that both minority and mainstream interviewees were at pains to caution about:

'I don't think there is a good definition. I think Father Ted is multicultural in a way. Or rather it is not the mainstream British culture and it is a genuinely strong culture. And so when it came into the schedule, one can claim it, by any definition of multiculturalism, as, you know, that was a culture that came into the centre of the schedule and enriched the mix as a consequence. But we don't count it as multicultural. So we know what they, the regulators, mean, and in the end they don't mean Father Ted.' (C4/KB)

Thus the regulators do often simply mean a headcount of visible minorities:

'Multiculturalism means a number of manifestations of culture, which could be mono, multi, or cross-cultural. So, colour of skin is certainly a measure. If there's an American acquisition, and colour of skin is largely non-White, or very particularly mixed, then we might consider counting that as part of our multicultural output ... I think multicultural is a polite euphemism for showing different races here on screen. And I think that's a shame because I think it's something more. One genuinely multicultural programme that no one could ever argue with was a film that Sonali Fernando made, about Pakistanis who had gone to live on one of the islands right on the North of Scotland and it was about how the two communities came to become neighbours ... So bad multiculturalism is where it is skin deep I think, where it is just about the skin and nothing more.' (C4/KB)

The ‘burden of representation’ in acting is also experienced in writing. Black writers talked about the difficulty of writing White characters when the reaction is ‘you’ve got to write from your own experience’. Given that it has long been accepted that male writers can write women’s roles and vice versa, and indeed that the logic of ‘across-the-board multiculturalism’ is that White teams can make multicultural programming:

‘we should be able to accept that a Black writer can write White roles, yet it’s still a thing that’s thrown up.’ (PACT)

Who’s a ‘minority ethnic producer’?

For many of our interviewees, there is no such thing as a minority ethnic producer. Most people consider themselves to be independent television producers whose first concern is to make good programmes.

‘Obviously I’m Black and everything I do is going to be tinged with Black culture. But I grew up in a White culture so I’m in a really privileged position where I can mix, I understand both 100%. Black culture is kind of the most vibrant within European culture and Black in American culture because it’s an organic thing that’s constantly growing and constantly reproduced because it’s been suppressed for so long, through slavery and apartheid. And Black people’s opportunities, now they find they are becoming a little more equal, Black culture is finally being freed and released, and it is really vibrant and a lot of things happen ... I see myself as a Black film-maker in that sense. As an independent I do different things. I don’t necessarily do something that’s Black, might be the idea that I come up with is Black-scented, but as a film-maker I would do anything.’ (Independent Producer)

Minority producers are of course highly sensitised to the changing politics of ‘Black’ representation and prefer not to prescribe in relation to a singular or ‘correct’ position of cultural representation. Rather, ‘Black’ is a contested and dynamic category that cannot be fixed by static politics:

‘Black is a ridiculous concept in many ways. It represents such a diverse range of people ... it becomes a kind of overflow tank or something like that for Black “others” as it were.’ (Independent Producer)

While there are some producers and companies who still want to make targeted programmes, there was a sense from a number of interviews that these people are seen as the ‘older generation’ with a political agenda, a history of struggling to get minority positions heard and still, legitimately, quite angry. The newer model is of companies that are more mixed-up, with an African-Caribbean or Asian and a White company director, more integrated and more business-orientated.

But being both Black and independent can be a double-edged sword. Broadcasters tend to pigeonhole companies into producing certain genres, comedy or drama or Black programming.

Channel 4's current rhetoric proposes a tripartite division:

'Historically what multicultural programmes have meant is, it's not been multicultural at all, it's been Black or Asian programmes targeted at Black and Asian viewers by and large made by Black and Asian production companies. We've tried to break out of that by making our programmes, certainly the multicultural programmes, genuinely multicultural. Mixed cast, mixed production teams. What we've actually done as a channel is split up the notion of multicultural into three sub-genres. Mono-cultural, cross-cultural and multicultural.' (C4/PY)

Partly the strategy does seem to be governed by the need to maximise audience size:

'We've got no mono-cultural programmes in our schedules this year because we're trying to move away from that. I mean, the nearest thing we've got to mono-cultural is Flava, and Asian-Flava. But I would argue they're not mono-cultural in that sense because, if you look at where we're doing most of our programmes, cross-cultural programmes, we're taking programmes which come from an ethnic perspective, but which draw larger audiences.' (C4/PY)

But they are also pressing that all programme proposals explain how they make a contribution to multiculturalism:

'Now there are two ways in which you can make multicultural programmes. One way is you throw in a Black character here there and everywhere, you sort of brown it up a bit. But what people always say about those characters is they're not authentic. The other way, which we're trying to do, is to have Black people writing these characters, and who are on the film crew so you get more authentic characters. We've moved a long way from the days when we used to shout, hey, there's a Black or Asian person on the telly and we all used to gather round. But a lot of the characters are still one-dimensional. And what we're trying to do here is, in future, all production companies will be asked to state on their proposals how in an appropriate way, or if appropriate, their programme intends to reflect multicultural Britain. So we put the onus on them to start doing the thinking.' (C4/PY)

The Jacksonian definition of Channel 4 being at its best when it is *'open-minded, uninhibited, forward-looking and cosmopolitan'* speaks to a post-modern 'youf' channel rather more than one which continues to acknowledge the ethnic and cultural differentiation

of Britain and seeks to address diverse needs. One danger is that the policy of mainstreaming on Channel 4 might actually lead to safe programming, or populism based on fictional fun, sexy youth TV and political correctness. To the contrary, more programming should allow a diversity of genres to develop including both niche and mainstream programming which should free Black programmers from the 'burden of responsibility'. The exemplar here would be *Queer as Folk* which started as a gay drama but became simply a contemporary drama; to some extent, the trajectory of *Goodness Gracious Me* was also out of the ghetto and into the mainstream where its Asian provenance was tempered by widespread popularity.

Certainly the impact of the Jackson vision could be felt in our project; on being asked whether things were harder for minority ethnic independent producers, one independent programme-maker simply replied:

'Oh, that kind of category is totally out of fashion now.' (Independent Producer).

Amongst independents, the new rhetoric is receiving a mixed reception. One person described the new attitude toward multiculturalism as:

'Aggressively populist and anti-anti racist. It's like whingeing is old hat, we've all got to be positive, it's part of the Blairite conjuring trick.' (Independent Producer)

Others felt that the shift in the position of the terrestrial channels was not matched by adequate development in the private sector:

'It's like they think that we've gone beyond the point of a need for a ghettoised sector, that we now have a pluralistic society and that protectionism is reactionary, it actually puts Blacks down. But I'm not so sure, is there a sufficient mass for a Black middle-class production sector?' (Independent Producer)

Perhaps one of the most telling considerations came from a number of minority producers, who repeated the creative urge to make whatever programmes they wanted to, irrespective of whether the theme had anything to do with the producer's background/ethnicity or not:

'I don't want to be consigned to a minority slot. If I want to make a programme on the Greek myths or Persian history, it would have to be well researched, authoritative; I have to be as able to present such ideas as anyone else. Persons of colour are programme-makers and we should be able to make any kinds of programmes that we think we can.' (Independent Producer)

PACT also concurs that:

'People from ethnic minorities have a reluctance to be ghettoised or to self-identify as being Black or Asian because they don't want that to be the primary way in which they identify. They wish, as far as our members are concerned anyway, to be primarily identified as producers who happen to be Black or Asian, but who more particularly wish for the most part to be able to have the opportunity to make programming right across the board.' (PACT)

PACT organised a number of meetings in September 1999 around the theme of multicultural programming, but they were not very well attended, attracting no more than six to ten Black and Asian producers. PACT felt that the reason for this was that it is now impossible to sustain a business by only producing for multicultural slots. The majority of Black and Asian producers do not want to be seen as companies who only make minority programmes, partly because there are very few opportunities for that, but partly because many are second-generation and third-generation British who feel more integrated and see themselves first of all as producers who 'happen' to be Black or Asian.

The Economic Context:

The Hunt for Ratings and Slippage towards Commercialism

For some independents, the current moment represented a redefinition of television as a whole, and by definition the independent sector. One independent described it as a significant post-Annan moment where the philosophy that produced notions of responsiveness to minority interests and the need for a multiplicity of voices is being superseded, or more pessimistically, has been defeated. He saw Jackson's conception of the audience as essentially atomised consumers whose main concern was that the supermarket shelves be packed with goods, and felt that this meant undue attention to glossy packaging, branding, slotting things in at the right time, and far less attention to actual content.

'Commissioning editors are very timid at the moment. They're always looking over their shoulders, they're looking for quick turnover, for something that rates well, gets noticed, makes a quick impression, but that doesn't require taking risks.'
(Independent Producer)

Commerce pushes to larger audiences, away from the interests of specific audience fractions:

'In this new commercialised environment, everyone wants majorities. Going for the minority is suicide.' (Independent Producer)

'The majority of people whom we've identified through contacts and so on as being from Black or Asian backgrounds have actually said that they don't necessarily wish to categorise themselves in that way because they don't wish to be seen as people who only make targeted programmes because there are very few opportunities to make targeted programmes on British television anyway. And you cannot run a business just making what's possibly 2% of targeted programmes. You cannot manage and run a business on that kind of turn-out, that kind of finances.' (PACT)

The Process: Commissioning versus Getting an Idea in

Being a commissioning editor is to have to plough through reams of suggestions

'We get hundreds of ideas, I reject a lot of ideas: people don't think of what's already been done, they don't understand media culture. Somebody says, oh, why don't you do a concert with Ravi Shankar. And the chances are that I get twenty to thirty offers of Ravi Shankar concert. And I reject them all simply because we know a Ravi Shankar, we've done a concert with him, it's already been on air. Although we would like to do another documentary series on him, and all the channel has to say is yes, we would like to do Ravi Shankar, we could easily do that. So those kind of ideas get immediately rejected, they're not stories, they're just access.' (BBC)

It was this part of the process that received the most negative criticism. Commissioning editors were seen as conservative, as insufficiently sensitive to this range of issues, as insufficiently of minority background themselves.

'The first thing would be to kick out the commissioning editors who commission the programmes, they've got no backbone ... it's such a shame. They commission the major White companies to do this [programmes with minority themes].'
(Independent Producer)

'So few Black people are commissioning programmes because they aren't coming from any sound, solid foundation, we're coming from multiculturalism and that kind of thing, and often people in charge of TV, none of them are Black, none have ever been Black ... then the decisions to be made about programming are still made by a White person who hardly understands the culture.' (Independent Producer)

'You got to make the people who commission more sensitive, and you got to make the people who make them more mixed. There's only three Black commissioning people in this channel so our ability to influence things is pretty limited.' (C4/PY)

The sense from independents was that it is getting to be harder to put an idea before a commissioning editor.

'In the first ten years, you could write in to a commissioning editor and actually get through.' (Independent Producer)

Now the sense from independent producers is that the vast bulk of programming is actively sought out by commissioning editors.

'They are becoming much more pro-active. In a sense, the process is reversed. They have a clearer idea of what they want and who they want to work with.'

(Independent Producer)

There is a public tendering process for companies for many slots. PACT, the organisation of independent producers, does a mail-out of such documents. Some independents felt that the competition to tender was pretty much a level playing field:

'For example, Channel 4 holds commissioning rounds perhaps every three to four months. This will be preceded by all the Heads of Departments getting together to bash out ideas, talk about trends in the marketplace, things they want to see developed. Then they invite independent producers to an Open Forum, and PACT will let its members know about these also, where there will be a lot of discussion. Channel 4 might say that there are too many docu-soaps and that they want other kinds of programming. From the range of ideas discussed, you as an independent might decide to compete in a particular strand. Sometimes you're expected to produce a rather general outline for a programme, sometimes, very precise information is required about costs, about how you're going to do the research. It depends. Perhaps thirteen, fourteen, fifteen companies all submit bids, and perhaps a shortlist of six are invited to present their ideas to the board.' (Independent Producer)

The post-Macpherson project, commissioned from Diverse Productions and, at the time of writing, about to go into production through the Open University, had received fourteen bids initially.

Others felt that the commissioning process absolutely failed to recognise the strengths of Black production companies:

'It's a real disgrace. The main reason that I see is we hadn't the support of the commissioning editors. A lot of times they've gone commissioning White companies to make programmes about Black people. Where's the involvement of the Black production companies? I could name Black Audio, Smoking Dogs, Sankofah, all these who came out of the workshops sector in the 80s. You got to see what they are doing. And it's such a shame that they commission the major White companies to do this. What does that say? Does that say that the Blacks can't make a programme, we don't have the ideas? It's not that. We've got the ideas, the ideas are good and the ideas are then sold off to somebody else.' (Independent Producer)

Ironically, concern was also voiced at the problem of Black companies being forced always to produce minority-orientated material, which produces an odd double-bind: on the one hand, a specialist credibility or value within mainstream organisations; on the other, being positioned within a very narrow perception of programme-making ambitions:

‘Certain researchers will always ring you up if they had a Black story and they wanted to know something. “Do you know anyone who does this?” and “Do you know anyone who does that?”. You might not have the faintest idea where to go for those leads ... so they expect you, just because you’re Black, to know these people or to know the issue they are dealing with ... but at the same time, you feel duty-bound to help them out because you’re please, that Black stories are actually starting to get on the television. So it’s a bit of a double-edged sword in that respect.’ (Independent Producer)

Channel 4 certainly think it is vital:

‘to foster good relationships with the best programme makers in the independent production sector, because without them you have absolutely nothing. It’s important to keep the dialogue open between yourself and the independent sector as a whole, because most of the people who pitch ideas don’t get commissions, they probably form about 0.5 of a per cent of the total number of people who want to make programmes and who have ideas. There’s always a lot more people talking to you and pitching to you and wanting to know what you’re looking for than will ever get programmes.’ (C4/YA)

Both Channel 4 and the BBC are devising strategies to try to ensure that the production teams making programmes are themselves composed of people of diverse backgrounds. At the BBC, contractually, whenever a programme-maker is commissioned, they sign up to the BBC’s diversity policy. Their Broadcast Equality Unit has set up a Diversity Database³⁴ of potential contributors and experts which aims to get new faces and new voices onto the BBC.

‘It’s available for BBC programme-makers, network programme-makers, not just regional. As a programme-maker, you would say, “Right, I’m doing a feature on X ...” and if you go through the database you would have a whole list of places you could contact, and you would hopefully use them in the programme.’ (BBC/MN)

Similarly:

‘We’re looking to see the production teams, so at Channel 4, when a production has been commissioned, they have to tell us who the producer is, who the director is who the exec is. And we had a working group of commissioning editors and one of the things we’re going to recommend to the channel next month is that we put much greater time looking at the racial composition of teams for all programmes.’ (C4)

³⁴] BBC Diversity Database: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/working/diversity.shtml>

But there is frustration amongst minority ethnic producers because it is felt that broadcasters take fewer and fewer risks with new talent. Despite the rhetoric of innovation, the industry is experienced:

‘as basically conservative. If you’re pitching for a one-hour documentary slot on the BBC, and you’re not known and don’t have a track record, it’s impossible to compete with companies who are known, who do come in within the budget, which can be £60000–70000, and who have delivered the goods within the time frame.’ (Independent Producer)

Independent producers are sometimes invited to participate in a project.

‘We were invited to participate in this new scheme, because we had a track record of working with them [Channel 4].’ (Independent Producer)

But the commissioning process is not simple or transparent. In an industry where contacts, networks and the phonebook are key elements of the process, finance plays a role in attuning companies to the latest drum beats. Larger companies are seen as not only having sufficient surplus to reinvest in development, but also being able to afford the staff and the lunch bills to schmooze with commissioning editors.

‘In this game, informal knowledge is invaluable.’ (Independent Producer)

These kind of friendship and even familial networks, well recognised as part of the incestuous dynamics of the media, mean simply that broadcasters basically employ people they know. There are clear implications here about other social contexts, such as schooling, housing, higher education, where closed networks could be challenged by new forms of contact and affiliation.

The terrestrials’ position was to defend standards:

‘My own view is that they [Yasmin Anwar and Pat Younge] tend to go to quality producers. And some of, quite often they won’t be multicultural suppliers. And what we need to encourage is two things. One is more of a mix in the high-quality production companies in the same way as we need more of a mix in Channel 4. And the second is to build and nurture new companies, which is more emphatically multicultural.’ (C4/KB)

Indeed, Michael Jackson was keen to reiterate at Edinburgh that:

'I can absolutely assure you that the best idea from any source is not just important to us in terms of the remit, but good for business as well. We need good ideas and good ideas as we know are hard to find. There is no sense that we want to, as such, "reduce" the number of independents we work with. We do want to sustain and grow good people.' ("Future of Four", 1999)

Channel 4 now operates a mixed strategy of holding an annual meeting for all independents, including new and inexperienced producers, to explain the channel's strategy for the year; holding more briefings around the country as well as holding some invitation-only meetings where a better dialogue between Channel 4 and certain independents might develop.

The BBC is involved in greater outreach and dialogue with minority independent producers, as with events like 'BBC Programming for 2000 and Beyond' held in June 1999, developed jointly by Black Coral, PACT and the BBC Broadcast Equality Unit. It, too, is looking for 'the cracking good idea' and recognises that greater diversity is vital to hold audience share. Jane Root, Controller of BBC2, speaking at the conference, acknowledged that:

'This is a scary time for a channel like this: in the multi-channel digital world, we could simply drop off the small list of channels people watch regularly. It is vital that we reach ethnic minority audiences and young people in general. Reflecting Black and Asian culture represents a way to improve our relationship with young audiences.' (EQ, 1999:8)

In addition, part of the task of the Independent Commissioning Group is to build connections with minority ethnic independents and improve the commissioning process.

Minority independent producers often sound trapped in an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, 'there's only so much room' for minority programming, although, on the whole, Channel 4 was felt to provide some decent options for minority programming. But, at the same time, as one participant argued:

'They can't have a programme on Black women on every night, there are only a few slots.' (Independent Producer)

Things are more complicated now than five years ago, since there are more independents competing for a tender. While tenders from companies with a minority orientation might be expected to come at an issue with novel perspectives and provide insights/alternative voices not readily available to mainstream companies, this alone is insufficient. An example was the idea of a programme post-Macpherson on the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry:

'Many independents competed for the tender and there was some notion around that a Black company with a person of colour at the helm might have better contacts at the grassroots, might bring different perspectives to bear on the issue. But, in the end, a Black company is not better than any other independent company, because it also matters what you can do, what your track record is.' (Independent Producer)

'I think Black programming should be led by independent Black film-makers. We know what people would like to see and we can get it there in as undiluted fashion as possible ... it's about allowing us to dictate what we should see ... they would then see that programmes that we want to make are truly multicultural. They contain two sides of us that we've not been allowed to show. We always have to show one side which is our "native side", like drugs, dance, the music.' (Independent Producer)

The ongoing marginalisation of minority discourses was also remarked upon by one minority producer:

'We don't have any high court judges, we don't have any bank managers. We're always seen as Black and not as British. If someone sees you and you're Black, they think you can't be British ... these are the issues we threw up and we looked at why, at the society, at the system, what does it maintain ... I'd like to try to make something which an educated Black person would see as positive.' (Independent Producer)

On 'Multicultural' Audiences

One way of discerning a minority independent production company is the kind of audience they are trying to reach:

'I think the reason that I start from, it's got to be for a Black audience, this is something that I want, Black people to appear, but I also want White people to be here as well. If I'm making a programme, it's coming from a Black centre. I don't want to make a programme that goes on air and the Black audience saying "What rubbish! Why are you exposing, why are you doing that?" I wouldn't want to make a programme that I couldn't then walk down the street and a Black man seeing me and saying, "Hey man, you know ..." It's got to be dead solid from the political aspect and I expect that people would want to see these things on TV.' (Independent Producer)

But is it always clear what the audience wants?

'That's the hardest, trying to satisfy community need. A few weeks ago, we did a wedlock story looking at forced marriages which predominantly occur in Bangladeshi or Pakistani communities, predominantly in villages. And of course we get accused of putting more dirt on Muslims. So you have to be brave, and I said, no, we're not doing that, I'm doing this story because it is important to the community. So you get two versions of the Muslim community: one saying, great, that has to be done because it opens up the debate, and the other, kind of more right-wing, saying how dare you do such things, you are a racist, etc.' (C4/PS)

'The problem with some of our Asian community is they don't understand how the media works, they don't get the larger picture. They pick on a lot of things. And these are people who do not want to move the issues forward.' (C4/PS)

The frustration of competing for commissions and not getting the opportunities to make the kinds of programmes envisaged has led some to drop out of the field altogether:

'I feel that TV is really letting down the Black audience, that's why I don't want to get involved with it. If people see my name up there ... so that's why I left TV and I'm trying to do something else.' (Independent Producer)

'The real commitment has to be about equal opportunity. So first, they have to make me feel, "Come in and I'd like to hear your ideas." I went to a conference the other day and the BBC came and we were talking about this Black film and they showed fifteen to twenty programmes which didn't have one Black face in them.'
(Independent Producer)

Minority ethnic independent producers mentioned the same kinds of limited representations and skewed stereotypes that audiences had described in focus groups:

'If you look at television drama they seem to be the most conservative in this area. I have yet to identify television drama where there is a mixed-race couple, for example. I haven't come across one yet, and if you know that, I mean in London a third of all children born are born to mixed parents, it seems ridiculous that we haven't yet had a drama which features as main stars a mixed marriage couple.'
(PACT)

Successful programmes: *Goodness Gracious Me*

One example of good programming with a minority orientation that was described to us was a programme made by John Akomfrah, Black Audio, on Louis Armstrong for *Omnibus*, which the interviewee described as:

'A bio-pic but with lots of political analysis of America's racism ... and you could tell that there was a different sensibility at work.' (Independent Producer)

Other positive examples that respondents gave of the kind of programming they wanted to see more of included the programme in the *Reputations* series on Martin Luther King; *Love In Leeds*, in which where four of seven central characters were from minority ethnic groups; *White Tribe*, due out this autumn, which ‘turns the tables on English nationalism’; *Untold* which was made for Black History month. Yet others mentioned the series of programmes produced by the Big Issue for London Weekend Television that had an authentic street feel, and included minority perspectives, showing a kind of cultural Asian fusion.

The comedy *Goodness Gracious Me* was frequently referred to as an example of a successful ‘crossover’ programme.

‘Goodness Gracious Me to me is an example of a cross-cultural programme. It’s not multicultural. I mean the cast isn’t mixed, they don’t make White jokes, they don’t do White stand-up. They do comedy which is Asian, comedy which is very true to their Anglo-Asian heritage, which Anglos and Asians can tap into. We’ve got a series called the Hip-Hop Years, looking at the history of hip-hop over the last 20 years. Now, hip-hop is a very Black thing, but most of the people who buy hip-hop records are White, and that allows us to take a Black story, but bring it to a much bigger audience.’ (C4/PY)

‘In a way Goodness Gracious Me which is held up rightly as a huge success, is also ... not about integration. Umm, it’s about a little ring fence. And we need both ... you need that kind of humour, that kind of culturally specific humour, and then you need the integration.’ (C4/KB)

‘Goodness Gracious Me is important. I hope we get to a time when it is simply seen as just very clever, witty, funny, and not Asian. The minority tag, the label, this baggage we carry, sometimes it would be good to put it down, because we’re conscious of it being there on our backs all the time.’ (Independent Producer)

On the one hand, the burden of representation is still acknowledged:

‘I think that it’s very important that if you have a person of colour spearheading a programme, that they have a particular contribution to make. There’s still too much that smacks of tokenism. For example, I just watched a programme on record-breakers with Keith Chegwin desperately trying to drum up enthusiasm, and there’s Frank Bruno who seems to be there just to laugh, and I realised that I found it really offensive. Is it just an audience ploy, “Look, we’ve got Frank Bruno!”, or is it a feeble attempt to “represent minorities” or is he the only one who said yes to the invitation? I don’t know the answer, but it did feel offensive having him sitting there making no real contribution to the programme.’ (Independent Producer)

On the other hand, people want to get rid of the burden:

'One of the problems is that we still cringe for the whole group. Media representations carry a deeper kind of resonance for minorities, so in that sense, we have not fully come of age. If White viewers see a bad character, they don't feel that reflects badly on them. However minority viewers do feel that.'

(Independent Producer)

The notion of genre boundaries and creative difference was also raised:

'Why does a Black programme have to ape a White programme, what's the point?'

(Independent Producer)

The movement from television production to film production was also raised, with all the vagaries around the new Film Council and the role of the BFI. Funding was clearly an issue, but an interesting aspect was the measurement of audience. Recent analysis by Menelik Shabazz at *British Filmmaker* magazine has shown that the few Black feature films that have been released had a very high audience-to-print ratio. Also, the sense of being able to appeal to a global audience through film meant that many Black producers, having made shorts for television, now want to move into feature film production rather than television.

The Challenge of Satellite and Cable

The potential of other, new technologies such as satellite and cable as outlets for talent/product but also as distribution networks to wider audiences, is clearly recognised by minority producers. PACT reported people saying that they were giving up on the mainstream because it was too hard for them to get in. They are doing very well, however, providing programmes for Zee TV and Asian television and finding export markets to Japan.

But some find the fragmentation worrying:

'Well, it's scary because it means fragmentation of the sources of income ... it has much lower budgets, much quicker delivery time. Discovery want you to make a one-hour documentary for £15000 in three weeks, that's the kind of logic they have.'

(Independent Producer)

Among the people that we spoke to were some whose output is solely available through localised cable distribution or satellite feeds. More and more, it was felt that this kind of production will tie local communities to broader, even global diasporas, and these new technologies of distribution will become an electronic Tower of Babel with small communities narrowcasting in a range of global languages.

One assessment is that more channels seems to promise more possibilities, as each has to be fed with programming:

'The whole digital revolution will have a positive effect. There'll be more entrepreneurial minority production, more commissions because there are more slots to be filled, so producers might be ready to take more risks, be more innovative.'
(Independent Producer)

There is also an anticipation that, in taking a risk in making innovative programmes for narrow-casting, if these prove to be popular, they may then be bought up by the big terrestrials:

'It's also likely that the good stuff on satellite and cable will be recognised by the big terrestrials and bought up.' (Independent Producer)

It is evident that new digital technologies are fostering specialist minority or diasporic channels. The range of channels and niche markets for Asian viewers is growing, choices now including Zee TV, The Sony Channel, and B4U, which specialises in Bollywood movies. Sony Entertainment Television and B4U are the first Asian channels to go digital in the UK. A new Channel East will open soon and aims to focus totally on the emerging British Asian perspective. There is a prevalent sense that the Asian community is far better served than the African-Caribbean community in this way:

'Asian channels grow much faster than Black ones. The Asian audience is more united than the Black.' (non-Asian/BBC)

The listing of ITC licence holders suggests more than forty organisations defining themselves as producing programmes for a particular linguistic (Japanese, Persian, Chinese, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Greek, Arabic, Punjabi, etc.) or ethnic (African-Caribbean, Asian, European, Chinese, etc.) community. However, looking at the twelve months ended September 1999, estimated audience share figures for selected television channels received in the British Isles, the only 'ethnic' channel included is ZeeTV Europe with only 0.3% of the audience share; although, for comparison, Eurosport only garners 0.3% and CNN only 0.1% (ITC, 29 October 1999).

Often the finances, audience size and content of these minority channels is precarious. Rangarang Persian Television currently broadcasts three days a week from 6–8 a.m., hardly prime time, on Cable and Wireless in Central and West London. Its programming includes a mixture of locally made magazine-type programming interspersed with music video material from California and Islamic soap opera from Iran. In such ways, a truly global diaspora of transnational 'ethnics' may be constructed, and one country's 'ethnics' may, of course, be a transplanted 'national' community.

But such channels do not necessarily fulfil the needs of local communities, nor the multicultural remit to articulate the different parts of society to each other. The programming on most of these channels comes from abroad, often from the heartland of the diasporic

community, and thus they do not necessarily offer new programming slots for British-based independent producers, despite the perceptions to the contrary. However, their expansion and content has relevance for the debate about multiculturalism, catering as they do for very specific niche markets.

The World Wide Web also offers huge opportunities, mentioned by a few people, with a suggestion that it could support the explosion of new businesses in a way that happened in the music industry, with alternative record labels, Black and Asian record labels.

‘There is potential, there is business and ... courage and knowledge.’(PACT)

This could allow the Web to become a new way of targeted audience interaction.

The Issues

Money

A number of independents talked of the problems in raising finances to finish a project. One director claimed that his documentaries had had good critical feedback from viewings, but the director had not managed to raise the capital to complete the editing.

Two interviewees talked of the cost of joining PACT, one leaving because they were unable to pay the dues. PACT does operate a sliding scale of membership fees, depending on the turnover of the company, with the lowest producer subscription, for companies with a turnover of less than £0.5m, of £560 incl. VAT, although there is also affiliate member status for new and developing companies with a turnover of less than £100000, of £210 incl. VAT.

There are some funds available through competitive tender, such as the London Production Fund for film, video and television projects by independent film-makers living or working in the London region, which is supported by Channel 4 and Carlton. London Film and Video News, supported by the BFI, provides quarterly information about new schemes, competitions and training courses.

There was an oft-repeated need for more Black entrepreneurs to be ready to invest in the sector. Many questioned whether the Black middle class was big enough yet to support such a sector, but people also raised questions about the priorities of Black entrepreneurs and whether they would see media as a worthwhile project. This theme was articulated at the APEX conference, where Chibs Ifeanyi, the Co-Chair of the BBC Black Workers Group, suggested that:

‘Black people are less willing to help other Blacks, but in America it’s different, it’s more open to entrepreneurs and business ... we have to establish a help funding body. The Jewish or Asian communities, they fund themselves, they don’t need to go to banks.’

Training

Training was mentioned by a number of interviewees, usually along the lines of there not being sufficient for minority talent wanting to get into the media.

'No, there's not enough training.' (Independent Producer)

The Department for Education and Employment has appointed Skillset, the National Training Organisation for Broadcast, Film, Video and Multimedia, to increase the take-up of NVQs in the media industry, a process that has been publicly supported by Tim Gardam, Director of Programmes of Channel 4, and with pilots involving ten independent companies already in process. (Townsend, 1999).

Skillset and other organisations such as BECTU, FT2, and Black Orchid all have websites on which quite a lot of information about training and courses is provided.³⁵ TS2K, launched in 1996, is a charity specifically geared to tackling youth unemployment and social exclusion by getting young people into work in the creative industries. Eclectic Media is a media consultancy designed to help young African-Caribbeans and Asians get a foot into the communications industry. Ethnic organisations are holding big events where young would-be trainees can connect with companies offering placements. The Apex Media Conference '99 on 24 October brought about one hundred African and Asians together to discuss media access and diversity; Youth Anti-Racist Alliance (YARA) organised both a Media Conference and one on new media technologies in 1998. Four Corners specialises in training for women from Asian, Black and refugee backgrounds, and Connections also works with refugee communities. Black Coral has developed Script City and, latterly, Cine City as development schemes targeted at Black writers, production managers and producers. New Voices New Visions has supported 68 trainees as part of a wider transnational project, *More Colour in the Media*, coordinated by STOA in the Netherlands.³⁶ Many independent production companies concerned about minority access and representation in the media, such as Black Pyramid, themselves offer training and exhibition facilities.

It is hard to quantify the amount, and adequacy, of available training. It appears that there is quite a lot of information available and training and support events designed to get minority individuals into broadcasting. It is clear that the training schemes that matter the most are the ones for entrance into the terrestrial channels, where places are exceedingly limited and competition high. There is circumstantial evidence that without quotas, minority candidates do not make it onto training programmes; with the demise of the quota on a BBC News Trainee Scheme, few minority individuals have been selected over the past few years.

35] SKILLSET: <http://www.skilset.org> BECTU: <http://www.bectu.org> FT2: <http://www.ft2.org>

Black Coral: [http://freespace.virgin.net/Black coral](http://freespace.virgin.net/Black%20coral)

36] More Colour in the Media has established the Multicultural Skyscraper at <http://www.multicultural.net>

When accepted or even employed, the pressure does not end. Someone who had been selected from thousands of applicants for the BBC Radio Journalism Trust training programme said:

'I felt we continually had to prove ourselves even then, then prove ourselves doubly capable, to be taken seriously.' (Independent Producer)

This can continue even when employed:

'There is a lot of proving that needs to be done. They seem to want us to prove a lot more than they would ask another person to.' (BBC)

But a repeated theme was not to provide more training programmes, but to change the structure of opportunity. Many minority individuals talked of being overtrained and more qualified than their White counterparts, but still not getting the chances. Conventional routes do seem to debar people of colour, so there is a need to incorporate new schemes. Many respondents felt that positive discrimination does work, and is needed because:

'Journalism is so nepotistic, you're judged subconsciously by other criteria, so we need other kinds of schemes to get minorities in.' (Independent Producer)

In this manner, the impact of training on the minority ethnic sector might be limited. Although Black film-makers sometimes have more training than White producers they often get less opportunities, partly because of the mode of recruitment which often happens through freelance production managers who work under time constraints and choose people they know.

'I'm often asked, "Who do you know in the business?" We don't have clear networks yet.' (Independent Producer)

Or, as another interviewee put it, it is not so much who you know but rather:

'Who knows you?' (Independent Producer)

The role of networks, connections, indeed of familial support, was mentioned by a number of people:

'It's a very incestuous industry. You watch the ... show and see how many times the bloody family names of the producer is mentioned. That's what happens. And we're not in a position to make that happen for our kids because we have nothing to offer them. My daughter would like to come and work, but I can't help. We're not getting help really from anyone.' (Independent Producer)

Initiatives that connect the terrestrials with the independent sector to build capacity and give real chances for creative production are being mooted:

'We're looking for an opportunity at the moment to see if there is a place where we could kind of match a nascent production company with some air time on a regular basis, so that they can train a bunch of people up from scratch in a way and know that there is a regular thing that they can promise them, and to know that they are available as a supplier, to offer in other things as well. So I think we have to look at lots of different methods of trying to correct the production community.' (C4/KB)

Legislation/regulation

The government has as yet shown little inclination to enforce an EU requirement that channels should broadcast 50% of locally produced (i.e. EU-produced) material. When this happens, there should be big opportunities for the independent sector with the ideas and material to support this huge increase in original programming.

PACT is pressing for 'real 25%' quota of independent production; the way it has been operationalised to only include certain types of programmes has kept the actual quota at around 17%, or approximately one-sixth of all new programmes, not one-quarter. There are also issues around broadcasters' control of the intellectual property rights generated by new producers which make the chances of building a significant independent company very small (PACT, 1999).

More 'minority' staff in the big terrestrials

There is something of a chicken-and-egg dynamic between equal opportunities on the terrestrial channels and support for minority independent production. It appears unlikely that more minority-orientated programming will be commissioned from minority producers if more minorities who can see and appreciate the potential of the work are not employed as commissioning editors in broadcasting.

'It hasn't happened yet; it's happening very slowly. The BBC now has nearly 8% minority staff, but not at every level. In some departments they're doing really well, like Finance, Asians are doing brilliantly. So we nurture talent, if any new Asian talent comes along, we discover it.' (BBC)

Importance of regionalism

Amongst independent producers, there is an enduring sense of television's 'London bias' by which networks, commissioners and corporate offices are based in the capital and which results, albeit unintentionally, in marginalising production houses outside the capital.

'Bristol has got the most independents outside of London, and I think it's only equalled by Glasgow. So there is definitely a media or television culture in Bristol. But at the same time, getting access to the big ITV companies and Channel 4, a lot of these companies have their offices in London ... This is where HTV comes in useful because a lot of people started off at HTV ... it's a good starting ground. But even within HTV there's a real struggle in getting ITV network commissions, even HTV can suffer from not being in London and this 'London bias'. So it's not even just on the independents' level, it's actually on a corporate level as well.'
(Independent Producer)

Regional companies can play key roles in supporting local independent production and developing its minority ethnic sectors. Clearly, different areas have different minority composition, and different requirements for representation. Some, like Carlton, have made high-profile appointments to develop multicultural strategies. Channel 4 has a regional development fund, the BBC aims to locate a third of all new network production out of London, and Scottish Television is active. These might give a long overdue boost to the regions with the possibility of overseas partnerships developing with localised production hubs. Restricted service licences for producers that target specific minority audiences, such as Midlands Asian Television in Leicester, are also the kind of development that is likely to spread.

Conclusion

It is, of course, impossible to isolate what is happening in this sector from the general story of what is happening in television more generally:

‘Television is relentlessly looking for the younger generation.’ (Independent Producer)

In a highly competitive industry, things are hard all round. In one non-minority independent production company, everyone still maintains a day job:

‘... because we couldn’t afford to pay ourselves salaries; we can only survive in this eccentric manner.’ (Independent Producer)

Multicultural programming needs to look, to offer invitations to audiences, in at least two different directions at once. First, to the minority groupings of audiences themselves. These are increasingly fragmented as broader, even global, processes of identity formation and reformation affect the lives of British-based diasporas. These are also increasingly catered for by the diffusion of new technologies and the availability of non-English-language programming that more and more aims to address globally dispersed diasporas or cultural-linguistic groupings spread across Europe (Turkish, Persian, Greek, etc.). The problem, even danger here, is in the logic of fragmentation. Minority audiences, however defined, will be offered more and more programming for ‘people like us’ and spend less and less time viewing programming for ‘people like us and not like us’. But if social progress is perhaps in identifying with larger, more abstract groups and finding ways for everyone to participate in a multi-ethnic public sphere, such affiliation to very narrow communities is not helpful if it produces isolation.

Secondly, and at the same time, multicultural programming looks out to the wider audience and plays a role of attuning that audience with the shifting socio-cultural landscape of Britain, or more specifically its multicultural cities. The entire society is more multicultural than ever before and the broad desire coming from audiences is that this diversity be reflected across the gamut of programming output.

In giving up the first kinds of programming, Channel 4 may be consigning audiences to the shifting vagaries of commercialism and political trends, and away from the construction of multicultural Britain. But in the reverse trend, the BBC, by continuing to focus mainly on ‘minority-orientated’ programming and still (as audience responses indicate) insufficiently integrating casting across the wider output, runs the risk of maintaining ghetto-like notions of how so-called ‘minorities’ live in Britain.

‘There are half a million African-Caribbeans, 2 million Asians in Britain. Any commissioning editor worth his or her salt will acknowledge this and make programmes accordingly.’ (Independent Producer)

'Increasingly there are people of colour, second-generation born and brought up in the UK, not only born but educated here, our partners are here, we're firmly rooted here. So even if you feel that the political process doesn't fully represent you or that there are problems with policing, you're here and working to improve things, and no longer want things that continually underline your minority status. I think we have increasing self-confidence, self-assertion. There's sense of a coming of age and that our real contributions are still to come.' (Independent Producer)

'The pace of progress is slow, but I think we have to make changes within structure. We have to learn the jargon, get the info, learn how things happen. It's still hard to get the big jobs.' (Independent Producer)

But the inexorable pressures of commercialism will push production in certain directions, unless counterbalancing measures are devised. There is pressure for television companies to become bigger. One independent producer described her bleak vision of the future:

'It will be harder for small production companies and harder for Black producers. My own company will be threatened. The risks are getting higher and there's a trend towards more bankable producers. But it's really important that we don't get homogenous programmes, and the only guarantee of that is to ensure we get different producers.' (Independent Producer)

The inevitable synergy between the broadcasters and the independent sector means that quite a few initiatives still focus on changing the composition of personnel in the big organisations. The Alliance of Black Media Workers has pressed the BBC about the 'ghettoisation of Black programming' by recruiting executive producers in genres such as drama, education, news and current affairs with responsibility for commissioning multicultural programming. Trevor Phillips has also called for one in ten broadcasting board members to come from minority ethnic groups by 2002 (Shelton, 1999:18).

All in all, there is a sense of the lack of continuity of serious research work in this area. There is the ongoing difficulty of prising information out of the big organisations: there is a lot of rhetoric but not much substance, certainly not in terms of employment data. Equality monitoring data as presented in the ITC Annual Reports are such aggregate data that it is impossible to know if there are actually more minority ethnic individuals scaling the hierarchies of power and decision-making, or if there are simply more Black faces in the typing pool, or in cleaning and security. As PACT has said, it is absolutely important that the ITC and BBC start to break down figures according to jobs and grades within the industry.

There is no central, independent collection of relevant materials, and no ongoing monitoring of data. The kind of monitoring currently undertaken is inadequate. The important task is not simply to ensure that an aggregate percentage of minorities are employed within broadcasting organisations, but also to monitor opportunity structures within media organisations and map career trajectories to the pattern of movement of minority individuals into the decision-making and commissioning positions within broadcasting. The establishment of targets at various levels of the broadcasting hierarchy is possible and necessary.

There is no strong academic database on this topic. The very useful ERAM (Ethnicity, Racism and the Media) list-serve and website once based at the University of Bradford has been relocated because of lack of funds to Fordham University in the Bronx. There is a strong sense of overlap and small-scale research that gets little attention and has little impact. Coordinated longitudinal research work in the area, supported by the broadcasters, the larger independents, the regulators and the Broadcasting Standards Commission, does not seem too far-fetched an idea.

There is a need to monitor minority output, as well as the independents who are making it. There is no network analysis of independent production companies: how do they tie in with bigger units, and are they becoming simply a clever marketing ploy for the bigger corporations? Is the British media landscape moving in the direction of the American, with ever larger conglomerates producing formulaic product? How do the BBC and other trainee networks actually function, and where do people end up working? Is Channel 4 still a hothouse for talent? Again, there is need for serious thinking and discussion. There is a sense of too many little projects (like this one), too little coordination, too little impact.

There is a rather depressing synergy between the positive sense of becoming more hybrid that comes from the audience, followed by demands for more African-Caribbean and Asian faces across the range of media output, and rhetoric that seems to consign social responsibility simply to the marketplace. Yet the mechanisms being developed within the BBC, such as the Independent Commissioning Group; the commitments made by Jackson in Edinburgh that a major strand of programming will be given to an African-Caribbean or Asian independent company to produce; and that 'colour-blind casting' will be taken seriously are all positive indications of the serious intent to continue to progress multicultural programming in new and appropriate ways involving the independent sector.

It is evident from interviews that there is considerable anger and resentment among minority producers. Given the absence of evidence to allay that sense of being excluded, it is likely to grow. Thus there is need for greater transparency among the main terrestrial organisations in this area and better monitoring of training, employment and retention rates within them.

Perceptions matter. There is still a powerful sense of exclusion, which was described in relation to both programme dynamics and in relationship to training and support.

'For example, when Channel 4 decided to commission the programme called Love in Leeds which was about young women dating and things like that, they actually advertised in local papers and got a good response, but all the respondents were White women. So they actually had to then go out and find Black and Asian women, and they did this, they took quite a while to do this, and when they approached these other women, they asked: "Why didn't you respond to the ad?" And they said "Well, we didn't think it was for us." They don't automatically identify things as being for them.' (PACT)

'I do accept that we could probably go out more and encourage more ... because one of the things that we've found out ... is that people from the Black and Asian communities do not come forward very easily because they often don't identify something as being for them.' (PACT)

Yet while there is considerable anger, there is also quite a lot of optimism:

'I think the future of Black independent film-making is quite rosy. I think it has a bright future because if a new generation will come, it's not so much a question of if, a new generation of film-makers will come, who have a more commercial attitude. Realistically, we're only kind of ten years old. It will be good because there's a lot of talent out there. I've run some training courses and seen the films they make after just some short weeks. So there's a lot of talent out there. It just needs to find a way to express itself. It needs a creative Black community to do things.'
(Independent Producer)

PACT puts the case like this:

'Television in the UK has never been merely an economic activity. It is a cultural activity, too. It touches fundamental aspects of public life. It is a way of preserving and celebrating our national culture and heritage. It has always reached out to those with little or no economic power – the old, the poor, and minorities of one kind or another. It brings the nation together at moments of great importance. These benefits are rightly thought so important that broadcasting remains a protected domain ... there is nothing ... that is intended to question the principle of public service television – those obligations broadcasters undertake as conditions of their licences. Nonetheless, as we enter a new information era, television-like other creative media – is an increasingly important part of our economy. We need to ensure that investment is going where it is needed most – into the development of new ideas, new talent and new forms of content.'

The increasing visibility of minorities in some key areas of television output, especially the news, was mentioned as giving quite a false impression to the audience:

‘One actually does see quite a lot of Black and Asian faces on screen as presenters and that gives quite a false impression really because there are probably more Black and Asian presenters on screen than there are, or the percentage is far greater than there are people working behind the camera. You look at telly and you see Trevor McDonald and other people on the Channel 4 news and get the idea that it’s all mixed-up, and it really isn’t. It’s not like that behind the camera at all.’ (PACT).

Indeed, notions of ‘visible/visibility’ and ‘invisible/invisibility’ themselves shift over time. Presumably, the more variation that appears in a location, the greater will become the sensitivity to difference: the criteria for distinction may change, and multiple gradations develop. At the same time, the meaning given to criteria of difference may diminish, becoming less important or significant. It is this argument that is so compelling for the debate on multiculturalism and representation. More and more people feel they hold or inhabit multiple-layered identities. There are more people who consider themselves to be second-, third- and fourth-generation Black Britons, who have been born and educated here and have different agendas than their immigrant predecessors. The old census categories are simply inadequate for the range of lived experiences in Britain. The simple notions of minority communities have to change. At the same time, the real cultural practices of African-Caribbeans and Asians and others need to be fully appreciated and accepted, not erased in the simple addition of minority faces into formulaic genres. A better dialogue between mainstream channels and minority producers is clearly needed, but so, too, is some articulation between minority audiences and minority producers. Perhaps, in the end, it is the audiences that determine the multicultural nature of programming.

There are dangers: of commercialism that drives production into ever more ‘popular’ formats; of excessive ethnic fragmentation; of ongoing institutional and social racism which prevents access to decision-making, finance and opportunity. But there are also lots of possibilities, and lots of creative energy. Television must aim to be adequate to the task of representing a changed and changing Britain in all its diversity.

The overall picture of the independent sector is of a great variety of companies all competing for programming commissions. Among them are some with a strong on-going ‘Black’ sensibility and concern to address minority audiences and reflect minority issues. A newer kind of orientation is a company that recognises its minority sensibility but that does not want to be strait-jacketed into only and always making minority programmes, wanting the chance to be creative, effective and perhaps to introduce new ideas and images into the mainstream. Neither of these two kinds of companies rank among the big groupings that are emerging.

A similar shift of sensibility seems to be emerging within the minority ethnic youth audience, from the evidence of the assembled voices of our participants. Many live multicultural lives, inhabiting mixed families and multicultural friendship groups, and choosing eclectic patterns of cultural and media consumption, that both replicates but also extends mainstream preferences.

All of this suggests that the representation of specifically minority ethnic themes, ideas and orientations is less and less likely to be encouraged, while a more diverse and diffuse multicultural orientation might be supported by the new organisational processes and commercial pressures faced by the terrestrial channels. This could be seen optimistically as an opening of a window of opportunity, with a new wind of diversity beginning to blow through it. But this needs monitoring to ensure that the same dynamics of exclusion and misrepresentation do not simply continue under new guises.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research process

In our design, we intended to start by identifying minority ethnic youth between the ages of 16 and 18, and to work through them to reach households that would include parents, grandparents, siblings and others. We wanted to take the family unit seriously and look at generational and gender choices within the context of familial structure.

It was not easy to gain access to youth groups. Many schools, especially in London, claimed to be over-researched and refused access; schools and colleges are bureaucratic organisations in which even the process of gaining permission to conduct such a study becomes a lengthy exercise; our target age group were exam-year classes who had little time for extra-curricular activities. Thus, simply gaining access to sixth formers in schools and sixth-form colleges was difficult.

We gave each young participant in a focus group a letter to take home to parents inviting the family to take part in an interview with us; we received a very poor response. We can only speculate on why the adolescent-family connection worked poorly: activities which make sense in the school environment may make less sense when viewed from home. Adolescents and their parents do not have much contact or enjoy very particular forms of relating which did not easily accommodate our request. Our written explanation of the relevance of the research was not sufficient to invite people to participate. People are simply terribly busy, juggling the demands of work, family and home, and could not spare the time. So we then turned to pre-existing organisations for our adult focus groups. Thus, while this report does include the voices of both young people and adults, they do not represent families in the way we had intended, there being no organic link between the two sets of voices. There is also a sense of ethnic communities being over-researched and not taking the process very seriously or expecting anything to change as a consequence. Numerous adult focus groups were organised, but collapsed when people did not show up.

We also wanted to include three geographic areas: Leicester, Bristol and London. The reasoning here was to include different kinds of minority groups. We also wanted to explore the relationship between the size and saturation of minority ethnic communities and the intensity of community development with the sense of ethnic identification. The Asian communities of Leicester are extensive and fairly long-standing, well developed in terms of organised community structures, while the African-Caribbean community is far smaller and less vocal. In Bristol, the opposite is true, with a large and organised African-Caribbean community and a smaller Asian population. The thinking here was that analysis of these historical, organisational and contextual variables could help understand the self-consciousness of the communities. Work in London picked up some new ethnic communities that are adding to the cultural complexity of the capital, including Turks, Kurds, Nigerians. Such geographic categorisations are also crosscut with other identifications, especially religious affiliation.

The project generated different kinds of data: quantitative survey data, viewing diaries and qualitative data from focus groups. The populations covered by these three methods are not identical, and the samples are not representative, so the data should be read only as indicative of the attitudes and concerns of minorities, but not as directly generalisable to larger populations.

Appendix 2: Focus groups

LONDON: Conducted by Sameera Mian

- LO1, LO2: Skinners School, London N16 (Thanks to Jan Balogh, Deputy Head)
- LO3, LO4, LO5: Hampstead School, London, NW3 (Thanks to Michelle Watson, Sixth Form Tutor)

BRISTOL: Conducted by Patrick Ismond and Shoba Das

- B1, B5: Cotham Grammar School, Bristol. (Thanks to Yahi Tahibe, the Director of Post-16s)
- B2, B3 and B4: St George's Grammar School, Bristol
(Thanks to Sue Hawling, Director of Post-16s)
- B6, B7: Easton youth groups, Bristol
- B/A(Adult)1 and B/A2: Family interviews, Easton, Bristol
- B/A3: Support Against Racist Incidents, Bristol
- B/A4 and 5: Adult African-Caribbean friendship groups, Bristol

LEICESTER: Conducted by Arvind Bhatt, Shirley Burgess and Priti Raithatha

- LE1: Loughborough College
- LE2: Shiv Ranjani Group, Leicester
- LE3, LE5: Wyggeston and QE College, Leicester (Thanks to Sylvia Langham, Head of Sociology)
- LE4: African-Caribbean Centre, Leicester
- LE6: Highfields Youth and Community Centre, Leicester (Thanks to Nick Leeover, Youth Tutor)
- LE/A1: Roshni South Asian Women's Group, Leicester
- LE/A2: Mixed group, Wesley Hall Community Centre, Leicester

Appendix 3: Compilation of video clips

Television clips used, in the order they appeared:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1) EASTERN MIX (Arts & entertainment/magazine) | Carlton TV/Nov 1997 |
| 2) A-FORCE (Entertainment/magazine) | BBC2 |
| 3) LILT (Advertisement)** | Independent channels/Sept 1998 |
| 4) EASTENDERS (Soap) | BBC1/Sept 1998 |
| 5) PATAK (Advertisement)*** | Independent channels/Sept 1998 |
| 6) A LITTLE PIECE OF HOME (Documentary) | BBC2/July 1998 |
| 7) SPOTLIGHT ASIA | Carlton TV/July 1998 |
| 8) SODA STREAM (Advertisement) (Lenny Henry) | Independent channels/Sept 1998 |
| 9) WINDRUSH (Documentary) | BBC2/June 1998 |
| 10) GOODNESS GRACIOUS ME | BBC2/Sept 1998 |
| 11) BIG BREAKFAST NEWS (Phil Gayle) | C4/Sept 1998 |
| 12) PARTY OF A LIFETIME (Ainslie Harriot) | BBC1/Sept 1998 |

* The video clips were compiled by Shirley Burgess.

** Thanks to Mother, London, for providing a copy of the advertisement.

*** Thanks to Mitchell Paterson Grime Mitchell, London, for providing a copy of the advertisement.

Appendix 4: Viewing diaries

Most Popular Day

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Leicester	133	135	113	106	108	115	77
Bristol	52	51	60	60	66	45	45
London	61	59	64	34	44	29	22
Total	246	245	237	200	218	189	144
Rating	1	2	3	5	4	6	7

Most Popular Time Zone

	Leicester	Bristol	London	Total	Rating
Morning	118	51	41	210	4
Afternoon	9	59	72	228	3
Early evening	387	155	116	658	1
Evening	175	114	94	383	2

Appendix 5: Representation of minority ethnic groups 1993 - 1998

For the past seven years, the Broadcasting Standards Commission has commissioned the Communications Research Group to conduct an analysis of people from minority ethnic groups represented in a sample of programmes. For terrestrial television, the sample of programmes is drawn from the five channels across a total of 14 days. All programmes transmitted between 17:00 hours and midnight are monitored.

For satellite television, a total of four channels have been monitored, including two film channels. The sample covers the same time period, over 7 days each year.

Terrestrial Television

The number of people from minority ethnic groups has ranged from a low of 650 in 1993 to a high of 754 people in 1998; however, the proportions of programmes have remained remarkably stable.

Table A1: Proportion of Programmes and Numbers of Minority Ethnic Participants

Year	N	% of all programmes	No. of People
1993	259	43	650
1994	283	44	725
1995	269	41	740
1996	276	42	657
1997	280	43	731
1998	302	43	754

Similarly, year-on-year comparisons have shown stability in the ethnicity of the sample, certainly until 1997. In 1998, however, the proportions of Black and Asian participants have altered. In previous samples, Black people comprised two-thirds of minority ethnic participants (65–67%); in 1998, this figure dropped to slightly more than half (55%). Conversely, Asian representation increased to 30% in 1998. This change was due, in part, to the transmission of a programme which looked at the difficulties between two Asian groups in London. Future samples will show if this change is sustained.

Table A2: Ethnicity of Minority Ethnic Participants

Year	Black		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1993	437	67	145	22	68	10
1994	468	65	152	21	105	14
1995	488	66	179	24	73	10
1996	433	66	140	21	84	13
1997	472	65	164	22	95	13
1998	417	55	228	30	109	14

The following table shows the distribution of groups by programme type. The most notable feature is the gradual but persistent decline in the proportions of minority ethnic people in news programmes. In 1993, more than one-quarter (27%) of all minority ethnic people appeared in news, decreasing to 18% in 1997. In 1998, however, there was a slight increase to 22%, a proportion more comparable to the 1994 figures.

In the first five years sampled, between 30% and 37% of all minority participants appeared in fiction programmes, although this had decreased in 1998 to 23%. Between one in ten and one in six (10% to 16%) appeared in light entertainment programmes (with the exception of 1996, when it was one-fifth) and, in film, the range was between 7% and 13%.

Table A3: People from Minority Ethnic Groups by Programme Type (Percentage)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
<i>Programme Type</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
National & regional news	27	21	19	19	18	22
Factual	16	22	22	18	23	29
Light entertainment	12	10	11	18	11	16
Sport	2	2	2	5	1	1
Religion	1	*	–	–	*	*
Children's programmes	2	1	*	1	*	1
Fiction	32	30	34	33	37	23
Film	8	13	12	7	11	8
TOTAL	100	99	100	101	101	100

Table A4 shows that, overall, the proportions of Black people in a major role are declining, and a similar change is noted in the representations of Asian participants.

Since the base of people from 'other' minority groups is generally low (between 68 and 109 participants) fluctuations were more evident. Thus, while 45% of all 'other' minority ethnic groups occupied a major role in 1997, this proportion is unrivalled in the remaining samples, where between 15% and 27% of participants made a major contribution to the programme in which they appeared.

Table A4: Level of Appearance by Ethnicity (Percentage)

	Black	Asian	Other
	%	%	%
1993			
Major	27	20	19
Minor	18	13	21
Interviewees/incidental	54	67	60
TOTAL	99	100	100
Number of people	437	145	68
1994			
Major	25	26	17
Minor	15	9	18
Interviewees/incidental	59	66	65
TOTAL	99	101	100
Number of people	468	152	105
1995			
Major	22	15	23
Minor	16	11	12
Interviewees/incidental	62	74	64
TOTAL	100	100	99
Number of people	488	179	73
1996			
Major	20	18	15
Minor	18	14	20
Interviewees/incidental	63	69	64
TOTAL	101	101	99
Number of people	433	140	84
1997			
Major	25	13	45
Minor	19	21	15
Interviewees/incidental	56	66	40
TOTAL	100	100	100
Number of people	472	164	95
1998			
Major	21	14	27
Minor	13	13	13
Interviewee/incidental	67	72	61
TOTAL	101	99	101
Number of people	417	228	109

Data on the professions and other characteristics of participants are also collected. In the latest sample considered here (1998), where occupation could be coded, the arts and entertainment industries were found to be the largest grouping for both Asians (31%) and Blacks (22%). These relatively high proportions were due to the considerable number of on-screen presenters within these groups.

Table A5: Occupational Status of People from Minority Ethnic Groups – Terrestrial Television

Occupation	Black		Asian		Other		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Arts, media and entertainment	116	22	76	31	11	8	203	22
White-collar office	13	2	15	6	3	2	31	3
Educationalist, academic	3	1	3	1	5	4	12	1
Travel and leisure	10	2	3	1	9	6	22	2
Health and caring	35	7	19	8	15	11	69	8
Legal	3	1	3	1	–	–	6	1
Police (incl. private detectives)	37	7	1	*	7	5	45	5
Other uniformed services	14	3	–	–	6	4	20	2
Domestic staff	4	1	–	–	–	–	4	*
Blue-collar worker	7	1	1	*	1	1	9	1
Sportsperson	32	6	2	1	2	1	36	4
Clergy, religious leader	4	1	2	1	2	1	8	1
Politician/spokesperson	10	2	2	1	4	3	16	2
Shop and stall owner/assistant	6	1	8	3	3	2	17	2
Pensioner/retired	3	1	–	–	–	–	3	*
Student	9	2	14	6	2	1	25	3
Under 16 years	29	6	12	5	7	5	48	5
Housewife	2	*	2	1	–	–	4	*
Unemployed	6	1	–	–	1	1	7	1
Criminal	11	2	–	–	4	3	15	2
Others	14	3	7	3	7	5	28	3
Cannot code	154	29	74	30	48	34	276	30
Not applicable	3	1	–	–	3	2	6	1
TOTAL	526	102	244	99	140	99	910	99

Other occupations seemed to be associated with particular groups. So, proportionately more sports people were Black (17% of all Black participants compared with 1% from the other ethnic groupings). Asian people were three times more likely to be in white-collar office jobs, while people from 'other' groups were more frequently associated with the health and caring professions.

Satellite Television

In contrast, the proportion of programmes featuring minority ethnic participants increased year-on-year from 54% of all programmes in 1993, to 76% in 1997, although it fell back in 1998 to 65%. This is due to the very high incidence of people from minority ethnic groups in films – two of the channels sampled are film channels.

Table A6: Proportion of Programmes and Numbers of Minority Ethnic Participants

Year	N	% of all programmes	No. of People
1993	87	54	253
1994	86	61	405
1995	88	63	252
1996	94	64	324
1997	114	76	340
1998	106	65	421

Table A7 shows that participants appeared most frequently in films throughout the six samples. Representation in light entertainment programmes was also quite heavy, where typically between one-fifth and one-quarter of all minority participants have appeared.

Table A7: Frequency of People from Minority Ethnic Groups by Programme Type

Programme type	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
National & regional news	11	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Factual	23	9	8	2	11	4	58	18	21	6	33	8
Light entertainment	44	17	110	27	53	21	80	25	88	26	64	15
Sport	–	–	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Religion	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Children's	–	–	–	–	6	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Fiction	63	25	42	10	57	23	52	16	73	21	97	23
Film	112	44	243	60	125	50	134	41	158	46	227	54
TOTAL	253	99	405	100	252	100	324	100	340	99	421	100

Generally, Black people have accounted for about 80% of the minority ethnic sample, although this fell to 71% in 1998. Asian people were infrequently represented, accounting for fewer than 10% of the samples. The percentage of participants from 'other' groups showed greater variability.

It was noted that the prominence of minority ethnic participants fluctuated across the samples: In 1998, 16% of people were noted to occupy a major role. By far the largest proportion of roles were incidental or interviewee roles, increasing from 61% in 1993 to 67% in 1998.

There was a decreasing likelihood over time for these participants to be portrayed in roles that illustrated issues of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. In 1993, 10% of roles were thought to be designed for that purpose, but this has varied considerably over the years.

Appendix 6: List of interviews

People we talked with directly include:

Yasmin Anwar, Commissioning Editor, Multicultural Programmes, Channel 4

Dr Iftikhar Ayaz, Ahmadiyyah Muslim Television

Karen Brown, Deputy-Director of Programmes, Channel 4

Tony Downmunt, APT Productions

Diane Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive, PACT

Lloyd Gardner, Artikalfilm

Gill Henderson, 'New Voices, New Visions', London Film and Video Development Agency

Lorna Henry, Black Pyramid, Bristol

Paulette Jones, Creative Alliance

Kwame Mahlangu, Nakhebet Productions

Rob Mitchell, Black Pyramid, Bristol

Maitreyi Nandakamur, 'Sangam', BBC Bristol (Radio)

Omar Al-Qattan, Sindibad

David Price, David Graham and Associates

Jamshid Sarabi, Rangarang Persian Television

Celina Smith, Reel Life Television, London

Paresh Solanki, Editor, Asian Unit, BBC Pebble Mill, Birmingham

Sean Sopper, Black Pyramid, Bristol

Roy Thaine, Moray Group

Patrick Younge, Deputy Commissioning Editor, Multicultural Programmes, Channel 4

Appendix 7: Researchers' credits

Annabelle Sreberny is Professor at the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester; she was Director of the Centre from 1992–1999. She has written widely in the general area of international communication, most recently on 'Globalization and the Nation' in *World Social Science Report 1999*. Her previous work on the media and ethnicity includes projects funded by the BBC and the ESRC. Previous research for the Broadcasting Standards Commission examined women, media and politics.

Her current interests include globalisation and gender; media and democratisation in the Middle East; and transnational diasporic communities.

Her previous work on the media and ethnicity includes projects funded by the BBC and the ESRC. Previous research for the Broadcasting Standards Commission examined women, media and politics.

Appendix 8:

Broadcasting Standards Commission

The Broadcasting Standards Commission is the statutory body for both standards and fairness in broadcasting. It is the only organisation within the regulatory framework of UK broadcasting to cover all television and radio. This includes the BBC and commercial broadcasters, as well as text, cable, satellite and digital services.

As an independent organisation the Broadcasting Standards Commission considers the portrayal of violence, sexual conduct and matters of taste and decency. It also provides redress for people who believe they have been unfairly treated or subjected to unwarranted infringement of privacy. The Commission has three main tasks set out in the 1996 Broadcasting Act:

- produce codes of practice relating to standards and fairness;
- consider and adjudicate on complaints;
- monitor, research and report on standards and fairness in broadcasting.

This research working paper is published as part of a programme into attitudes towards standards and fairness in broadcasting. The research, which was carried out by independent experts, is not a statement of Commission policy. Its role is to offer guidance and practical information to Commissioners and broadcasters in their work.

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