

Ethnic Options of 'Mixed Race' People in Britain:
A Report for UK Census Agencies on Preferences for
Terminology and Classifications

by

Peter J Aspinall,
Reader in Population Health,
Centre for Health Services Studies (CHSS)

University of Kent

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The pilot study used convenience sampling methods and was open to all 'mixed race' people. The respondents to the main survey were 'mixed race' young adults aged 18-25 years who were full-time students in further and higher education colleges in England.

Background note on origins of the surveys

The general population survey¹ was designed as a pilot study for work set out in an ESRC application under the Research Grants Scheme. The research pursued under the award - ‘The Ethnic Options of Mixed Race People in Britain’ – encompassed a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire survey (both hard copy and online versions) entered the field in May/June 2006 and included most of the questions used in the pilot survey. The total accrued responses were 326.

¹ *Mixed Race in Britain: A Survey of Peoples’ Preferences for Terminology & Official Classifications.* University of Kent.

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Executive Summary
&
Findings relevant to the 2011 Census Development Programme

1. In unprompted open response the substantial majority of respondents gave a description of their racial/ethnic identity rather than a generic term only (like 'mixed race' or just 'mixed'). Many of these were fairly short, combining two terms, although others revealed more complex heritage. Over 60% of respondents named two groups and 20% three or more groups.
2. Most respondents (70%) identified themselves in the stated way because their 'parents are from different racial/ethnic groups, Somewhat fewer (43%) stated that they felt it was their 'own sense of personal identity'.
3. Slightly larger numbers felt it was very/fairly important *overall* to identify with their known ancestry than to identify with *all* such specific racial/ethnic groups.
4. The salient general term of choice amongst respondents was 'mixed race' (selected by over half the respondents). The only other terms that attracted some support were 'mixed heritage', 'mixed origins', and 'mixed parentage'. Few chose 'dual heritage'.
5. Respondents identified around a dozen different terms as offensive, most frequently 'half-caste', 'biracial', 'coloured', 'half breed', and 'dual heritage'.
6. The reasons for the dislike of terms like 'biracial' and 'dual heritage' were that they focussed mainly on its limitation to two groups.
7. 'Half-caste' was regarded as pejorative by respondents, on the ground of partial recognition & historical connotations.
8. 65% of respondents thought the term 'mixed race' should apply to 'people who are mixes of white and any minority racial/ethnic group' but significant

proportions (40% each) selected 'People who are mixes of minority racial/ethnic groups' and 'People of disparate ethnic origins', suggesting a somewhat different (and wider) conceptualisation to that in the USA.

9. Three different classifications for 'mixed' were tested. Of the three variants of the ethnic group question ('2001 Census', 'open response', and 'tick all that apply') the overwhelming majority of respondents found the 2001 Census question easiest to complete and the 'tick all that apply' option most difficult to complete.
10. Respondents found the '2001 Census' question and the 'open response' option best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity. Few of those giving a response felt that the 'tick all that apply' option best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity.
11. On respondents' understandings of the questions, the 2001 Census question scored best and the open response question also scored highly, with few cases of misinterpretation/no response. The tick all option incurred significant quality problems.
12. Overall, the open response option gave the best content, followed by the 2001 Census option and tick all.
13. The things respondents particularly liked about the 2001 question were its simplicity, ease of completion, the fact that it catered for specific mixes, and also had an open response option.
14. The things respondents disliked about the 2001 question included the fact that the three pre-designated categories were all mixes that included White, the pre-designated categories all privileged White as the first-named group, and the choices were too limited.
15. A fourth classification that asked for family ethnic origins of mother's family and father's family yielded a high information content but was problematic

with respect to the number of multi-ticks, annotations, & additional free-text, and would incur high costs in the production of output.

16. Around half of the respondents stated that they had reported their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they usually do now, the most frequently cited reason being that they had been constrained by the previous categorisation that had been used on Census and other forms.
17. Around only a quarter of respondents stated that they could foresee a future time when they might report their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they do now and a significant number indicated that they did not know.
18. Around two in every five respondents said that they would describe their racial/ethnic identity differently in conversation with friends to the way they reported it on official forms, the responses highlighting the differences between private and public identities for some respondents.
19. The response profile of the pilot survey showed a broad representation of age groups and housing tenures but with an over-representation of females and people from professional occupations. Substantially more respondents identified as 'British' than 'English' or some other national identity in this pilot.

Findings relevant to the 2011 Census Development Programme

1. With respect to options for 'Mixed', respondents found the 2001 Census question easiest to complete of the three variants & their understandings of this question were also the highest. On grounds of quality and content, this version should be asked in the 2011 Census.
2. However, respondents had concerns about the lack of a 'mixed minority' option and the privileging of 'White' in the ordering of groups in the

predesignated options. These issues could be addressed through minor amendments.

3. The 'White and Asian' category is more heterogeneous than intended. This could be addressed by adding a 'White and Chinese' option.
4. Should ONS harmonise the ethnic group question conceptually with that tested by GRO(S), then it would be important to change the conceptual base of the predesignated options to, for example, 'European and Asian' (as indeed one of the respondents suggested).

1. Introduction

Categorisation for the 'Mixed' group was introduced into the decennial census for the first time in 2001, before which there had been no reliable estimate of the size of the mixed race population (Aspinall 2000). In the 1991 Census the ethnic group question contained 9 categories: 7 pre-designated ('White', 'Black-Caribbean', 'Black-African', 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', and 'Chinese') and two free-text ('Black-Other' and 'Any other ethnic group'). The question contained the instruction (OPCS & GRO(S) 1992: 30):

'If the person is descended from more than one ethnic or racial group, please tick the group to which the person considers he/she belongs, or tick the 'Any other ethnic group' box and describe the person's ancestry in the space provided'.

In the 1991 Census 230,000 people wrote in mixed descriptions, evidence in itself of a need for a 'mixed' category. Further, the initial consultation document on the content of the ethnicity question for the 2001 Census reported unanimous support amongst users of census data for a 'Mixed' category (Aspinall 1996). In 1996 focus group discussions conducted by ONS' Social Survey Division, on changes to the ethnic group question, included the need for a 'mixed' category (Mortimer & White 1996). This was followed by a cognitive test carried out in April 1997 (Rainford 1997). Both these exercises established that a mixed ethnic group category would be an acceptable category for the ethnic group question. The 1997 Census Test tested a version of the 1991 ethnic group question which included a free text 'Mixed ethnic group' as the penultimate category. However, the agreed 2001 Census ethnic group question that contained the predesignated categorisation for 'Mixed' ('White and Black Caribbean', 'White and Black African', 'White and Asian', and 'Any other Mixed background, *please write in*') was not tested until the 1999 Census Rehearsal.

This research project into the preferences for terminology and classifications was initiated in 2004 through a pilot study placed into the field in summer 2005. Its main purposes were: (i) to help inform terminology and classifications for ethnic group for the upcoming 2011 Census and (ii) to serve as a pilot for an ESRC application: 'The ethnic options of mixed race people in Britain' (which also had a focus on official terminology and classifications). This application was funded by ESRC and the project began on 1st March 2006. A substantial dataset on official terminology and classifications accrued in this main study.

The wider agenda on census categorisation was informed by a number of additional considerations. Firstly, members of the mixed race community had only a limited input into the 2001 Census Development Programme: the ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ survey was an attempt to provide more structured mixed race community input into the development programme for the 2011 Census. Secondly, the decennial census offers an opportunity to revise classifications, although there is an impetus for continuity with respect to preserving the opportunity for comparing findings across censuses and developing time-series. In Scotland, for example, the General Register Office for Scotland has substantially revised the 2001 Census question and tested the new version in its 2006 Census Test². The new question shifts the emphasis from a conceptual base which acknowledged race in its labels to one based largely on ‘ethnic background or culture’ (that omits reference to the terms ‘Black’ and ‘White’). This question replaces ‘Mixed’ with the label ‘Multiple ethnic groups’, offering an ‘Any multiple background’ free text option. That classification has now been abandoned for one similar in structure to that used in Scotland in the 2001 Census (which has now been adopted as Scotland’s New Official Ethnicity Classification and recommended for Scotland’s 2011 Census): that is, five pan-ethnic groups - White, ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, African, Caribbean or Black, and Other ethnic group – broken down into cultural background options; the ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups’ comprises a duplex free text box (General Register Office for Scotland & the Scottish Government, 2008). In England and Wales the same categorisation for ‘Mixed’ has been recommended as was used in the 2001 Census. Thirdly, analysis of 2001 Census findings provides an evidence base on how well that question worked and, in turn, helps inform revisions to questions in the succeeding census.

Since the 2001 Census, the ethnic group classification has been widely adopted across Government (Department of Health 2001). However, some branches of government (including agencies and licensees) and the local state (mainly local authorities) have made some limited changes that involve the ‘Mixed’ group. For example, the five pan-ethnic groups have been listed alphabetically rather than in the order they appeared on the 2001 Census form³, even though ONS located ‘Mixed’ as second of the five pan-ethnic groups, after ‘White’, for strategic reasons (to maximise response to the ‘Mixed’ group). Other changes have included the listing of the ‘Mixed’ cultural background options with the minority ethnic identity listed first (e.g. ‘Black Caribbean and White’)⁴, a more defensible change as ONS

² <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files/2006-census-test-form.pdf>

³ <http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/doc/MonitoringForm.doc>

⁴ See, for example, Civil Service employment forms:
http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/management/statistics/publications/pdf/re-survey/04b_final_questionnaire.pdf

privileged 'White' in all three pre-designated categories. In other cases the pan-ethnic group 'Mixed' has been changed to 'Dual heritage'⁵ or a 'Chinese and White' category added⁶.

An evaluation of the question in 2003 (Aspinall 2003) identified the following difficulties:

- 'the combination of two broad racial categories (in the pre-designated dual options) invokes the notion of biological mixing in 'parentage' rather than that of cultural diversity or multiple heritage'
- 'the listing of 'White' as the leading group maintain(s) the historically embedded asymmetries of race relations'
- 'the categorisation is problematic in the case of the 'White and Asian' option, 'Asian' being defined in the 'Asian or Asian British' cultural background options as relating to the Indian Subcontinent, although substantially higher rates of inter-ethnic unions are found in the Chinese/SE Asian groups, whose offspring may be unsure which box to tick'
- 'the use of White as the dominant group in all the cultural background options (rather than combinations of two 'visible minority' groups) may result in the capture primarily of colloquially defined mixed race rather than other racial mixes exclusive of White, like 'Chinese and Indian'
- 'mixed ethnic origin identities, such as 'Irish and Albanian', 'Somali and Nigerian', or 'Caribbean Asian and Sinhalese'...will be concealed within the 'other' options of the broad, socially constructed race groups of White, Black, and Asian, respectively'.

However, the question also had advantages. The three pre-designated categories - 'White and Black Caribbean', 'White and Black African', and 'White and Asian' - probably gave more robust counts of these different mixes than would the write-ins for an open response option (although country of birth data show that the 'White and Asian' category was more heterogeneous than ONS intended, including those who interpreted 'Asian' to include East and SE Asia and West Asia). Further, there continues to be a debate about which groups are referenced by the term 'mixed race' (Song 2003; Parker and Song 2001). While some US researchers regard as 'frivolous' an attempt to widen the collectivity to encompass mixed ethnicities (multiethnic groups), there are more sympathetic views to this construction on this side of the Atlantic. There remains an arguable case that the term 'mixed race' should refer

⁵ <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/RecruitmentApplicationFormStandard.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/news/phpye6y9R.pdf>,

http://extra.shu.ac.uk/nrc/section_2/uploaded_docs/Pump%20Priming%20Grants%20Application%20Form%20Jun%202006.pdf

only to combinations of the broad pan-ethnic groupings, although this does not, of course, constrain officialdom from capturing population data on multiple ethnic origins.

This report offers findings on the 47 responses that accrued in the pilot (an additional 4 were out of scope) and 326 responses in the main study (76 in the hard copy survey and the remainder in the online survey). This has added to the evidence base that has been used to inform the development of the ethnic group questions for the 2011 Census in England & Wales and Scotland⁷.

2. Self-ascribed racial/ethnic identity

The first question on the ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ questionnaire and main survey asked respondents to describe their racial/ethnic identity *in their own words* in a text box supplied. The question was intentionally placed there so that it would be a response that would be unprompted in any way by the content of the schedule.

In the pilot survey all but one respondent gave a response. Table 1 identifies various characteristics of those responses.

Table 1: Characteristics of free-text, unprompted descriptions of racial/ethnic identity

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Count</i>
‘Mixed race’ only	10
‘Mixed race’ only plus ‘mixed race’ in description	19
‘Mixed heritage only plus ‘mixed heritage’ in description	3
‘Dual heritage’	0
‘Multiracial’	1
‘Mulatto’	1
Mention of ‘British’	8
Mention of ‘English’	7
Mention of ‘European’	3
One specific group mentioned ¹	1
Two specific groups mentioned	27
Three or more specific groups mentioned	2
Use of ‘half’ ²	2
Indication that respondent does not identify racially	3

Source: ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ Survey, 2005/6. **Notes:** ¹ It is possible that this person did not have a mixed race/heritage background & was therefore out of scope (not enough information about the

⁷ See, for example: General Register Office for Scotland & The Scottish Government. *Scotland’s new official ethnicity classification for Scottish Official Statistics and Recommended for Scotland’s 2011 Census*. Edinburgh: GRO(S) & Scottish Government, 2008 (July), paras. 32 & 33 (p. 63): Mixed Race in Britain: A Survey of the Preferences of Mixed Race People for Terminology and Classifications.

respondent was available to rule them ineligible).² ‘Half Romanian half Nigerian’; ‘half Asian & half European’.

Around three-quarters of respondents gave a description rather than a generic term only (like ‘mixed race’ or ‘mixed heritage’). Many of these were fairly short, combining two terms, e.g., ‘British Black Caribbean & White’; ‘British of Irish & African-Caribbean descent’; ‘European & Asian’; ‘I am mixed race – Black Caribbean/White British’; ‘Irish/Kenyan’; ‘Mixed race, father Indian, mother English’; and ‘Mixed heritage – Black African & White English’.

A number of respondents gave more lengthy descriptions that indicate more complex heritage:

‘I see myself as a person of mixed race, both genetically connected to this country (England) & also to the Caribbean (Jamaica). Due to the slave trade & the indignities wreaked on my African ancestors, I have no idea whereabouts in Africa my ancestors may have come from – in fact they are likely to hail from any number of different areas. Given that plus the time lapse, I don’t see any reason to overly connect myself to an arbitrary West African country in preference to Jamaica. I object to people who on seeing the colour of my skin assume that they know all about me’

‘Mixed Black African & White British (though father is mix too – but identifies himself as “black African”’; his mix includes Arab’

‘Mother from France, father from Bangladesh. I don’t feel I have a racial identity. I feel ‘European’, but not specifically attached to a ‘group’

‘My identity is based on my cultural heritages of an English, white mother whose ancestors are of Irish heritage, my Nigerian, Muslim father and my step-father who is from Trinidad’

‘Welsh/West Indian – but mainly I don’t identify myself racially. Occasionally I identify myself as White. I would prefer to be treated as a human being & not a label’

‘“Brown”/Mixed Race, formally “Anglo Caribbean”’

‘White & Asian (Zoroastrian)’

‘White British/Jewish & Nigerian/Black African’

‘Mix of Black Caribbean, White English, French and American’.

Several respondents made reference to skin colour in their descriptions:

‘“Brown”/Mixed Race, formally “Anglo Caribbean”’; ‘Father Indian, brown skinned, mother Welsh, white skinned’; and ‘I am mixed race – white/Asian – although I am predominantly white’.

Respondents were asked why they identified themselves in this way and were given the option of multi-ticking across seven options (including a free-text field). Most respondents (n=35) identified themselves in the stated way because they felt it was their ‘own sense of personal identity’ (table 2). A majority (n=29) also indicated that it was because their ‘parents are from different racial/ethnic groups’. A much smaller number (n=11) indicated that it was associated with membership in a mixed group (‘the group I feel I belong to’). Seven or fewer respondents gave as reasons ‘it is the way society sees me’, ‘my ancestors (forebears) before my parents were from different racial/ethnic groups’, and ‘my friends/peers identify me in this way’.

Table 2: Reasons respondents gave for identifying themselves in this way

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Count</i>
It is my own sense of personal identity	35
It is the way society sees me	7
It is the group I feel I belong to	11
My parents are from different racial/ethnic groups	29
My ancestors (forebears) before my parents were from different racial/ethnic groups	7
My friends/peers identify me in this way	2
Some other reason ¹	4

Source: ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ Survey, 2005/6. *Notes:* ¹ The following responses were given: ‘I was told by my parents growing up’; ‘very annoying when people ask! It is as if it’s a big deal to them’; ‘respect to grandmother’; ‘it is a fact’.

Respondents were asked about identification with their known ancestry, both in terms of (i) overall importance and (ii) identification with *all* the specific racial/ethnic groups that comprise their known ancestry. Slightly larger numbers felt it was very/fairly important *overall* to identify with their known ancestry than to identify with *all* such specific racial/ethnic groups (table 3).

Table 3: Identification with known ancestry

	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Fairly important</i>	<i>Not important</i>
Overall	25	18	4
All the specific racial/ethnic groups	20	17	9

Source: ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ Survey, 2005/6. *Note:* With respect to (ii), one respondent wrote in: ‘Interesting rather than important’.

A very similar question set was asked in the main survey. Again, respondents were invited to give a ‘top of head’ (unprompted) description of their ethnic/racial identity at the start of the

schedule. The substantial majority of respondents gave a description rather than a generic term only, like 'mixed race' (n=17) or just 'mixed' (n=5). Overall, 60% of respondents named two groups and 20% three or more groups. 24% of respondents used the term 'half' (as in 'half Japanese half English' or 'half White British, half Jamaican') in their descriptions. A small number of respondents fractionated their identities in more complex ways, as in the constructions of: 'three-quarters British, quarter Chinese'. 'English' (n=75) was as accessible as 'British' (n=65) in the descriptions. What is distinctive about the open responses is their heterogeneity and frequent complexity, some combining racial/pan-ethnic terms like 'black', 'white', and 'Asian' with ethnic terms such as 'Somali', 'Polish', etc., and national identity/group terms (such as 'English' or 'British') in the same description. While some respondents used Census terms (like 'White British') that included colour terms, only 4% (n=14) of respondents referred explicitly to skin colour in their descriptions.

When asked why they identified in this way, most respondents (70%) chose the option 'my parents are from different racial/ethnic groups' and somewhat fewer (43%) 'it is my own sense of personal identity', more distant ancestry being much less important (17%). More explicitly 'social factors' – 'the way society sees me', 'the group I feel I belong to', & 'friends/peers identify me in this way' - attracted few responses (15-16% each). The importance of the race/ethnicity of one's ancestors as a factor shaping respondents' own racial/ethnic identity appears to diminish the further back one goes: whilst almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents thought the race/ethnicity of their parents was a very important influence, this fell to 39% in the case of grandparents, and just 17% in the case of more distant ancestors.

3. Terminology

3.1 Preferred generic terms

There has been virtually no systematic exploration in surveys or other data collection of the preferences of mixed race people for generic terminology (such as ‘mixed race’, ‘dual heritage’, etc.). Respondents were asked which of a list of *general* terms for mixed race they preferred and were invited to tick across a list of 11 options (including a free text ‘some other term’ option).

Table 4: Respondents’ preferences for general terms for mixed race

<i>General terms</i>	<i>Pilot study (n)</i>	<i>Main study (n)</i>
I do not identify as mixed race	1	15
Mixed parentage	10	42
Mixed race	32	176
Dual heritage	5	38
Mixed heritage	11	58
Multiracial	2	32
Biracial ³	-	13
Multiethnic ³	-	23
Mixed origins	4	51
Some other term	4 ¹	16 ²
No preference	4	60
I never think about it	3	62

Source: ‘Mixed race in Britain’ pilot survey, 2005/6; Main ‘questionnaire’. n.a. not included in pilot survey.

Notes: ¹ ‘mulatto’, ‘multiethnic’, ‘brown’, ‘background’. ² ‘the terms are not what is important to me’; ‘As a human being’; ‘dual nationality’; ‘anything that doesn't have the word 'race' in it- I'm all about being the human race’; ‘mixed’; ‘half caste’ (n=3); ‘yellow’; ‘I prefer to be identified by my name’; ‘black mixed race’; ‘quarter caste’; ‘me or I would just let everyone state their origins’; ‘I only think about it when I am asked to define myself in those terms’; ‘I never think of myself unless someone brings it up, but then it does not really bother me what other people call it’; ‘brown’. ³ Not included in pilot study.

Table 4 clearly shows that the salient general term of choice amongst respondents in the pilot and main studies was ‘mixed race’: just over half the respondents in the main study selected this term. The only other terms that attracted significant support were ‘mixed heritage’, ‘mixed origins’, and ‘mixed parentage’. The term favoured in some government departments (such as Department for Children, Schools and Families), ‘multiple heritage’, was chosen by under a fifth of respondents. ‘Dual heritage’ was preferred by even few (around 12%). ‘Mixed

origins' was a term Michael Banton had sought to promote in the 1990s⁸, arguing that 'mixed race' was unsatisfactory as it referenced 'race'. However, it is not the term of choice amongst these samples. Terms indicating only two groups (mixed parentage, dual heritage, and biracial) were mentioned by only 4 to 13% of respondents. Finally, around a fifth of respondents mentioned that they had no preference and never thought about it.

3.2 Terms regarded as offensive

Respondents were then asked if there were *any* terms (including *any* of the listed general terms) that they found offensive or would not like to see on an official form for any reason. In the main survey 200 respondents said there were no such terms and 113 that there were, 12 failing to answer and similar proportions in the pilot study. They identified a total of eleven different terms (table 5).

Table 5: Terms respondents found offensive or would not like to see on official forms

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Pilot survey count</i>	<i>Main survey count</i>
'Half-caste'	7	60
'Biracial'	0	19
'Coloured'	0	11
'Half breed'/'half bred'	2	10
'Dual heritage'	8	9
'Multiracial'	3	7
'Multiethnic'	0	7
'Mixed parentage'	2	7
'Mixed race'	0	6
'Mixed heritage'	3	4
'Mongrel'	0	5
'Mixed origins'	5	3

Source: 'Mixed Race in Britain' pilot survey, 2005/6; main 'Questionnaire'.

Terms with a count of ≤ 2 in the pilot (P) or main (M) surveys: 'Mulatto' (P 2, M 2); 'Other' (P 1, M 2); 'Race' (P1, M 1); 'nigger' (M 2); 'mix up' (M 2); 'mixed other' (M 2), 'mixed breed' (M 2); M (one each): 'African black and white'; 'all except dual heritage'; 'answering the question at all'; 'ape'; 'blackie'; 'black/white'; 'china man'; 'chink'; 'chinky'; 'cooley'; 'don't belong to people'; 'dual'; 'faggot'; 'half and half'; 'hapa'; 'hybrid'; 'I was once called a cross breed by a patient. Many other black languages also have derogatory terms along the same lines. I don't like 'coloured' either'; 'I suppose anything that makes people being different from each other is not necessary'; 'Iranians categorised in the same options as Arabs'; 'it does sound like you are trying to describe a person'; 'light-skinned'; 'monkey'; 'monkey hanger'; 'mutt'; 'ok, I'm just putting my opinion across, this whole application is just wrong, it really doesn't matter what race is, we all belong on this one world, that we're all apart of. I know sad people find it intriguing to see mixed race people. When why don't they just plan to have children from a different ethnicity partner, mix more, integrate further. I mean

⁸ A resolution was carried by the Royal Anthropological Institute as a result of a motion by Professor M Banton: 'The Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute expresses concern at the increased use in Britain of the expression "mixed race" since this implies that there are pure races. The Council believes that the expression "mixed origin", though not ideal, would be preferable'. *Anthropology Today* 1994 (Apr); 10(2): 26. In 1999 Banton called for 'the cleaning up of the language...despatching such objectionable expressions as 'mixed race'' (see Banton M. Reporting on race. *Anthropology Today* 1999 (June); 15(3): 1-3.

my parents have and, look, one day, just one day everyone will be beige then everyone will be mixed race or another, and there will be no problem, it's sad we have to wait for that day, really it is'; 'racism'; 'red skin'; 'slant eyes'; 'when people are being racist about black people'; P (one each): 'any including the word half/semi, like half-caste'; 'Octoroon'.

In the main survey around 30% of respondents indicated that there were such terms. The most frequently mentioned offensive term in both surveys was 'half-caste', others including 'dual heritage', 'mixed origins', and 'biracial'.

The mixed race respondents gave a range of reasons why they found these terms offensive or inappropriate.

In the pilot survey, the reasons for the dislike of 'dual heritage' appears to have focussed mainly on its limitation to two groups, as in the following comment: 'Many of us are more than dual!'. Dual heritage (along with terms like 'mixed origins') were also disliked as they were regarded as attempts to disregard race. 'Mixed origins' and 'mixed heritage', too, were disliked as they '...do not accurately represent "Mixed Race" as they are too general' and 'sound negative'. 'Half-caste' was regarded as pejorative by several respondents, on the ground of partial recognition & historical connotations:

"half-caste" is terrible! Makes you sound as though you're "half a person"; They [including words like half and semi] suggest I am less than whole and have historical meanings & usage which demean us'; 'I am not 'dual'/two of/half of even though PC social workers 'adopt' this term'; 'It was formally used in a prejudiced/ignorant way'; 'Because it [and also mulatto and dual heritage] would indicate two races of genetic origin'; 'sounds derogatory', and 'Because it portrays the notion that I am only half a person'.

'Half breed', too, was regarded as 'very negative' or with 'negative connotations - linked to racist ideology & slavery' [also half-caste]. 'Mulatto' and 'octoroon' were judged to be linked to 'slavery connotations and inaccuracies'.

Although multiracial was disliked by three respondents (thought to be 'very open to interpretation, anyone could tick it'; "'I'm multiracial" sounds like a place, not a person!'; and 'It sounds very inconclusive, multi rather than mixed'), another mixed race person expressed a preference for this term ('I like 'multiracial', as used in USA debate, much better than "mixed race"').

One respondent felt that none of 'half caste', 'mixed heritage', 'dual heritage', and 'mixed parentage' meant 'mixed race'. Any terms encompassing race were felt to be inappropriate by

another respondent: 'I think of having "origins", but I have always felt that the only "race" is the human race and as a result do not believe there are "different" types of human beings'.

In the main survey, similar objections were voiced. With respect to 'half-caste' respondents stated:

'Degrading and unnecessary'; 'Half-caste has negative historical origins'; 'Makes you sound incomplete'; 'Because it dates back to the slave trade & what cast you belong to'; 'I don't see different races as castes (as in levers of class). We are all equal'; 'It is indicating or suggesting that you are only half one race or that you're not a full person as you're not fully one race'; 'It has connotations that a person is not 'whole'...they are half made'; 'I presume it stems from the Hindu caste system and I don't like the implication of social inferiority or the principle of dividing any population into groups/castes - stratified into special roles'.

'Biracial' was disliked for a range of reasons: 'Has an element of sexual orientation'; 'biracial is too categorical (i.e. just not 2 races)'; 'Makes me think of the term bisexual which I think is wrong'; 'The context itself shows lack of respect for mixed heritage'; 'These (dual heritage, biracial) do not apply to those with more than two racial backgrounds, so may be inaccurate for some people'. Terms such as 'multiracial', 'biracial', 'dual heritage', and 'multiethnic' were thought of as pretentious by some.

3.3 The meaning of terms like 'mixed race' and 'mixed parentage'

A third question on terminology asked respondents what they thought terms like 'mixed race' and 'mixed parentage' should refer to, offering multi-ticking across four options.

Table 6: The group terms should refer to

<i>Group terms should refer to</i>	<i>Pilot study</i>	<i>Main study</i>
<u>People who are mixes of white and black groups only</u>		
Yes	12	80
‘Absolutely not exclusively’	1	
<u>People who are mixes of white and any minority racial/ethnic group</u>		
Yes	24	211
<u>People who are mixes of minority racial/ethnic groups (that is, excluding white)</u>		
Yes	16	128
‘Racial – what do you mean’	1	
<u>People of disparate ethnic origins (e.g. ‘Welsh & Polish’)</u>		
Yes	14	127
‘People of any racial mix’	1	
<u>Other responses (in substitution of above)</u>		
‘Any body who feels it reflects who they are’	1	0
‘Mixes of ethnic groups whose physical make-up varies significantly’	1	
‘None of above – people who are mixes of any group’	1	
‘People of any mix’		

Source: ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ pilot survey, 2005/6; main ‘Questionnaire’.

The largest number of counts in both surveys was recorded for ‘people who are mixes of white and *any* minority racial/ethnic group’ (table 6). However, significant numbers also felt that the terms should refer to ‘people who are mixes of minority racial/ethnic groups’ and ‘people of disparate ethnic origins’ (one respondent adding: ‘I think that the categories should not be entirely based on racialisation but should reflect white ethnicities & cultures’). There was least support for limiting the term to ‘people who are mixes of white and black groups only’, although this description is frequently how the wider society conceptualises ‘mixed race’. These findings highlight a tension between how ‘mixed race’ is conceptualised in Britain and the USA. While ‘mixed race’ is almost invariably used to indicate colour-based racial identities (most frequently where one parent is ‘White’ and one ‘Black’) in the USA, in Britain a more nuanced usage has emerged in which some see the term as also encompassing mixed minority and even intercultural (or multiethnic) identities⁹. Some see dangers in the erosion of a culturally comprehensible term, Azoulay¹⁰ arguing that:

‘It is a strategic but frivolous petition as the explicit legacy of Anglo-European slavery and colonialism, which gave birth to the ominous idea of race in the first place, facilitated the abhorrent notions of ‘miscegenation’, ‘hybridity’, and ‘mixed race’. Efforts to expand the discourse of “mixed race” to include any combination that abridges diverse ethnic/national origin – e.g. Chinese-Chicano, Southeast Indian and Iranian – seem rather disingenuous given the mating history of humankind. Scholarship on the impact of contemporary demographic changes and their impact on mixed identities per se must not confuse the historical

⁹ See the contributions to Parker D & Song M (eds). *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’*. London: Pluto, 2001.

¹⁰ Azoulay KG. Rethinking ‘Mixed race’. *Research in African Literatures* 2003; 34(2): 233-35.

particularity of ‘mixed race’. Again – more, not less, clarity and precision is needed and the appealing notion of ‘third-ness’, a separate space defined for mixedness, still confuses the challenges of racial ambiguity with panethnic mixing between minority communities’.

3.4 Wider findings

The terminology used by officialdom in Britain varies widely. The 2001 Census for England & Wales avoided specific reference to generic terminology by referring to the relevant options in the ethnic group question as simply ‘Mixed’¹¹. The free-text option in the ethnic group question used in Scotland similarly used ‘Mixed’ (‘Any Mixed background, *please write in*’)¹². In the Northern Ireland 2001 Census the option was ‘Mixed ethnic group, *write in*’¹³. However, there is more variation across central Government departments and in the equality monitoring apparatus of the local state (local authorities, the family of health organisations like primary care trusts, hospital trusts, and strategic health authorities, social services departments, etc.).

The Department of Health has referred to the ‘mixed parentage’ category¹⁴. However, ‘mixed heritage’ is salient in the Department for Education and Skills. Many local authorities have termed the ‘mixed’ options in the 2001 Census ‘dual heritage’ (possibly in response to the dual options offered in the Census question, such as ‘White and Black Caribbean’, and the use of a duplex ‘write in’ box). Examples include Derby City Council¹⁵, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council¹⁶, Sheffield City Council¹⁷ (Mixed/Dual heritage), and Bath & NE Somerset Council¹⁸. Brighton & Hove City Council uses ‘Mixed Parentage or Heritage’¹⁹ and the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham ‘Mixed Parentage’²⁰.

Other labels that have been used to describe the Census options on ethnic monitoring forms include ‘joint ethnicity’ (used by Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire County

¹¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pdfs/engi1.pdf>.

¹² <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files/indform.pdf>.

¹³ <http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/pdf/Individualform.pdf>

¹⁴ Department of Health. The implication of the 2001 Census ethnic categories on DH central collections of data: a position statement. London: DH, 20 Jan 2000.

¹⁵ http://www.derby.gov.uk/LeisureCulture/Libraries/Online_Joining_Form.htm

¹⁶ http://www.oldham.gov.uk/fcho_10.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/about-this-site/website-feedback>

¹⁸ <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/councilinformation/equality/Equalities+Monitoring+Guidance.htm>

¹⁹ https://jobs.brighton-hove.gov.uk/remote/appforms/main_app_form.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/9-council/complaints/complaints-form.cfm>

Council.)²¹ and ‘dual ethnicity’ (East Sussex County)²². ONS has also used ‘double ethnic group’ in documents. However, perhaps the most controversial terms are ‘half caste’ and ‘dual heritage’.

‘Half caste’:

‘Half caste’ is controversial as it is a term that is still used as a self-descriptor by some mixed race people yet is regarded by others who are mixed race and parents of mixed race children as a pejorative term. For example, in a study of teenage parenting experiences (Higginbottom *et al.*, 2005) dual ethnic origin young parents used the terms ‘mixed race’ (the most common term), mixed white/Caribbean, bi-racial, mixed white, half-caste, and mixed white/Caribbean in self-assignment of their ethnicity. Templeton & Hood (2002: 53) cite examples of school pupils who described themselves in interviews as ‘half caste’. Other examples of young people using the term ‘half caste’ as a self-descriptor occur in the criminal justice literature (Lyon *et al.*, 2000: 46). An investigation of the understanding of the educational needs of mixed heritage pupils is especially instructive on the somewhat ambiguous status of this term (Tikly, Caballero, *et al.*, 2004). The investigators report that it was apparent in interviews that the majority of pupil and parent respondents used ‘mixed race’, whilst some were content to use ‘half caste’ (Tikly *et al.* 2004: 17, 59). Such use of this term as a self ascription has also been reported in survey data (Aspinall 2003: 283, 284). However, other respondents in Tikly *et al.*’s survey found the term inappropriate and derogatory:

‘My sister, she hates it when people say half-caste, she hates it so much [...] She says...you’re half African Caribbean and you’re half English and caste means to be chucked out, so you’re being chucked out of Black and White. And that’s what she doesn’t like, so say mixed race...’

[Tikly *et al.*, 2004: 59, citing female pupil]

‘I don’t like half-caste ‘cos it’s classing it yeah? It’s like, oh, we’re second class, not best and all that’

[Tikly *et al.*, 2004: 59, male female pupil].

These investigators also cite the case of a primary school where the Head Teacher recalled an incident in which a White/Black Caribbean child had described herself in a piece of work as ‘half caste’. The child’s parents had expressed concern that the school ‘...had apparently sanctioned the use of this negative type of language by the child and had not sought to engage with the issue or to challenge the use of this and similarly derogatory terms within the wider

²¹ html version of the file <http://www.glos-city.gov.uk/libraries/documents/benefits/housing%20benefit%20form.pdf>; <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3139>.

²² <http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/5312EB1E-0BE2-46B4-A3A1-70824E8EBD08/0/MonitoringFormconsultation.pdf>

school community' (Tikly *et al.* 2004: 82, 83). The parents had objected to the term because 'it suggests that mixed heritage people are somehow incomplete in terms of their identities rather than whole people'. Indeed, 'half-caste' was a term identified by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry as inappropriate (Foster *et al.*, 2005: 36). Unfortunately, few other reports on the use of terminology in official contexts offer this rich insight.

'Dual heritage' and 'mixed heritage':

'Dual heritage' was one of the terms that was most frequently identified as offensive or inappropriate in the survey and has also attracted adverse comment in the wider literature. Again, Tikly *et al.* (2004) are informative: 'Even within the official discourse employed by school and LEA personnel, there remains a good deal of ambiguity in describing pupils from mixed heritage backgrounds...Many teacher and LEA respondents used the term 'dual heritage' or 'mixed race' rather than 'mixed heritage', whereas pupils and parents mostly used 'mixed race'. Many pupils and parents had never heard of the term 'mixed heritage' before the interviews and didn't consider it to be a term they would use, considering it an 'official' term rather than one that described their lived experiences' (Tikly *et al.*, 2004: 59). They illustrate these views with two quotes:

'Well it's interesting straight away that you call them 'mixed heritage', because that in itself is an issue ... it varies from one place to another as to what's appropriate' [Teacher at school J]

'It's one of those long scientific words I don't really understand' [Male Pupil, School G, with respect to 'mixed heritage']

The dislike of 'dual heritage', in particular, is an important finding as this term frequently replaces 'Mixed' on local authority equal opportunities monitoring forms.

4. Classifications

For the purposes of this survey, three variants of the 2001 Census ethnicity question were developed for identifying as mixed race, based on census practices in Britain and North America.

- (i) ***Pre-designated categories*** option: this was the option used in the England and Wales 2001 Census question on ethnic group in which respondents were invited to tick one of four cultural background boxes ('White and Black Caribbean', 'White and Black African', 'White and Asian', and 'Any other Mixed background, *please write in*') under a 'Mixed' pan-ethnic group.
- (ii) ***Open response (free text)*** option: in this version the four predesignated options were replaced by a sole 'Any Mixed background, *please write in*' option; a free text field only for 'Mixed' was used in the Scotland and Northern Ireland 2001 Censuses.
- (iii) ***Tick all that apply*** option: in this version the 2001 Census options were replaced with the instruction to 'tick all boxes in Sections A (White), C (Asian or Asian British), D (Black or Black British), and E (Chinese or other ethnic group) that apply to you'. In the US 2000 Census respondents were invited to 'mark one or more races' to indicate what the person considers himself/herself to be. A similar instruction was used in the 2001 Canadian Census ('mark more than one or specify, if applicable') (and, indeed, in New Zealand's 2001 Census).

The two new classifications (ii) and (iii), were judged to represent 'minimal change' versions of the 2001 Census question (i) and therefore viable as alternatives. However, both would clearly affect comparability with 2001 Census findings and the development of time-series for the 'Mixed' cultural background options across censuses. The question asked in the survey is shown in fig. 1²³.

²³ In the online version of the survey, this question could not be formatted so that respondents could tick each of the three options. Instead, respondents were asked to 'look at all three versions...then answer the questions about them ('Which of these questions do you think would be easiest to complete?', etc.), so their answers were based on inspecting rather than completing the three versions.

Fig. 1. Classification options used in the survey

<p>Please complete all three ethnic group questions below, then answer the questions about them at the bottom of the page.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p>What is your ethnic group?</p> <p>◇ Choose ONE SECTION from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.</p> <p>A White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Irish</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>B Mixed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Mixed background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>C Asian or Asian British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Indian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>D Black or Black British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>E Chinese or other ethnic group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/>	<p style="text-align: center;">II</p> <p>What is your ethnic group</p> <p>◇ Choose ONE SECTION from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.</p> <p>A White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Irish</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>B Mixed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any Mixed background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>C Asian or Asian British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Indian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>D Black or Black British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>E Chinese or other ethnic group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/>	<p style="text-align: center;">III</p> <p>What is your ethnic group</p> <p>◇ Choose ONE SECTION from A to E, then tick the appropriate box(s) to indicate your cultural background.</p> <p>A White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Irish</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>B Mixed</p> <p><i>Please tick all boxes in SECTIONS A, C, D, & E (above and below) that apply to you</i></p> <hr/> <p>C Asian or Asian British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Indian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>D Black or Black British</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/> <p>E Chinese or other ethnic group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any other, <i>Please write in</i> _____</p> <hr/>

After completing the three questions respondents were asked (i) which of the questions was the easiest to complete; (ii) which of the questions was most difficult to complete; and (iii) which of these questions best enabled the respondent to describe their ethnic/racial identity. In addition two quality measures have been derived for each response based on (a) an assessment of the respondent's understanding of the question (0=left blank; 1=evidence of

misinterpretation; 2=correctly interpreted) & (b) the information content yielded by the three questions (0=no/poor/incorrect content; 2=good content (incl. equal good); 3=best content (incl. equal best).

Table 7: Options which the respondents found easiest to complete, most difficult to complete, & which best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity

	<i>Count</i>		
	<i>I 2001 Census</i>	<i>II Open response</i>	<i>III Tick all</i>
Easiest to complete ¹	P: 34 M: 42 O: 114	P: 7 M: 26 O: 91	P: 2 M: 6 O: 34
Most difficult to complete ²	P: 2 M: 11 O: 44	P: 10 M: 13 O: 38	P: 31 M: 50 O: 156
Best enabled respondent to describe their racial/ethnic identity ³	P: 15 M: 16 O: 70	P: 16 M: 43 O: 132	P: 11 M: 15 O: 34

Source: ‘Mixed Race in Britain’ Survey, 2005/6. Notes: P=pilot study; M=main questionnaire; O=online survey (respondents observed the options only)

¹ Pilot: all equal (n=2) & blank (n=2); main study: blank (n=2); online survey: blank (n=11).

² Pilot: all equal (n=1) & blank (n=3); main study: 2 & 3 (n=1); blank (n=2); online survey: blank (n=12) ³ Pilot: 1 & 2 (n=1), none (n=2), & blank (n=2); main study: blank (n=2); online survey: blank (n=14).

Table 7 shows generally similar findings across the pilot and main studies. The majority of respondents found the 2001 Census question easiest to complete and the ‘tick all that apply’ option most difficult to complete (one of the latter respondents adding in the pilot ‘had to read instructions twice’). A significant proportion (around a third) in the main study found the open response option the easiest to complete. In both surveys most respondents found the ‘tick all’ option the most difficult to complete. Almost equal numbers in the pilot survey found the 2001 Census question and the ‘open response’ option best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity; in the main questionnaire, over half found the ‘open response’ the best from this perspective (possibly, these more educated respondents from universities and colleges exercised more ethnic options and, therefore, found the unconstrained free text field the easiest to use). Although in the online survey respondents were invited only to *think* which of the surveys would be easiest to complete, etc., their views were consistent with the other evidence, most finding the ‘2001 question’ or ‘open response’ easiest, the ‘tick all’ the most difficult, and (by a substantial margin) the ‘open response’ would best enable them to describe their identity.

On the basis of the three surveys, the question used in the 2001 Census was regarded as the most satisfactory of the options by respondents, although an entirely open response was felt by most respondents in the main survey and the online survey to best allow them to describe their ethnic/racial identity.

On respondents' understanding of the question, the 2001 Census question scored best, with only one case of misinterpretation and no responses left blank (table 8). The open response question also scored highly, with only six cases of misinterpretation/no response. The tick all option incurred quality problems, with 13 cases of misinterpretation/no response. With respect to information content, only one case of no/poor/incorrect content was found in the 2001 Census option, compared with 5 in the open response option, and 11 in the tick all option. Overall, the open response option gave the best content, followed by the 2001 Census option and tick all. However, the largest number of responses with the maximum score was recorded for the open response option and the second highest for the tick all option. The most frequent way in which the open response and tick all options outperformed the 2001 Census option with respect to maximum scoring was in the specificity of the mixes given, that is, 'White British and Indian' rather than 'White and Asian', for example.

Table 8: Respondents' understanding of the question and information content yielded by the options

	<i>Count</i>		
	I 2001 Census	II Open response	II Tick all
Respondents' understanding of the questions† ¹	0=0 1=1 2=46 Score=93	0=2 1=4 2=41 Score=86	0=8 1=5 2=34 Score=71
Information content yielded by the questions† ²	0=1 1=32 2=14 Score=61	0=5 1=18 2=24 Score=66	0=11 1=15 2=21 Score=57

Source: 'Mixed Race in Britain' Survey, 2005/6. Notes: † Highest score= highest understanding & highest information content. ¹ 0=left blank; 1=evidence of misinterpretation; 2=correctly interpreted; ² 0=no/poor/incorrect content; 1= good content (incl. equal good); 2=best content (incl. equal best). Note: As the question was not actually completed in the main online survey (only views solicited based on observation), data is only presented for the pilot survey.

In the pilot survey only²⁴, respondents were asked to look again at the categorisation for 'mixed' in the 2001 Census question (option I) and to indicate whether there was anything they particularly liked and particularly disliked about this question.

²⁴ In the main questionnaire, respondents were not asked this supplementary question.

With respect to things *'particularly liked'*, 11 of the 47 respondents did not answer and 11 stated 'no', 'not really', and 'nothing'. 11 respondents indicated that it was easy to complete or simple ('easy to use', 'easy to fill in forms', 'simple – good for statistics', 'self-explanatory', 'easy to complete [tick box]', 'easy to complete, for me anyway', 'to the point', 'it's clearly outlined', etc.).

A further 8 respondents liked the fact that it catered for their specific mix:

'For me, as I fit into one of the main 'mixed' ethnic groups, it is good. A few years ago my only option was to tick the 'other' box, which felt like I wasn't acknowledged'; 'I like it because my situation is described so there is a box for me'; 'There's options to be specific'; 'It allows me to accurately describe my ethnic origin'; 'It gives me the opportunity to specify my own ethnicity'; 'It meets my heritage needs & gives me an appropriate box to tick'; 'The fact it gave me an opportunity to specify exactly what ethnic group I am, as supposed to just simply other'; and 'Makes you feel like you belong, i.e., not just other...'

Four respondents specifically mentioned the open response option amongst the four categories: 'gives option of any "other"'; 'included the any other mixed backgrounds'; 'the fact that there was room for me to write in'; and 'allows scope for weird & wonderful combinations in the free text bit'. Two respondents indicated the more general benefit of the categorisation: 'that it made Mixed race a recognised grouping in the UK (what about Scotland & NI?)' & 'that it moves 'mixed' from a general term that may not fully identify your racial identity, e.g. mixed Asian/White, when your identity is mixed Afro-Caribbean'. Finally, one respondent stated that: 'I don't have to justify the meaning of "Asian"'.

Although option I performed best of the three versions, there were things respondents *'particularly disliked'* about this question. Of the 47 respondents 13 left the question blank and 8 indicated that there was nothing they particularly disliked.

Dislikes centred around a number of issues. Four respondents were concerned about the fact that the three predesignated categories were all mixes that included 'White':

'Because it insinuates that you are white & another race'; 'It doesn't cater for nearly all the mixed race population - focuses ultimately white and minority mixes plus excludes dual minority'; 'What about mixed not including white'; and 'They all include White, whereas there are no other given categories for people who are mixed but not part white'

Two respondents disliked the fact the predesignated categories privileged 'White' as the first listed group, as in 'White and Black Caribbean', for example: 'White usually comes first, "norm", then the mix'; 'Why is white first? Mixed means any/any ethnic group. Cf. - www.mavin.org'.

Another group of respondents felt the choice was too limited:

'If I was of mixed race and I did not fall into one of the four groups I would possibly dislike the categorisation'; 'It's too restrictive and doesn't include other mixes'; 'Not enough variety of choice'; 'The question singles out Caribbeans, Africans and Asians. What if you are mixed French or any other race for that matter although you can write in'; 'There are more mixes than listed above! Some people have more than two'; 'There was not a category for me'; 'Tick boxes reflect the UK experience of mixed race & are also simple for two races, but this is a minor dislike'; 'If you do not fit into one of the main "mixed" groups - is it better to be mixed other or just other, I don't know'; and 'I dislike being described as "other"'.

There were some specific comments about the individual cultural background options:

'Not dislike but wonder if the white category could be more detailed e.g. Polish-Indian?'; 'There should be "White & African" & "White & Caribbean" for those who do not have black in them, but consider themselves part African/Caribbean'; 'White & Asian might mean White and Indian or Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, etc.'; and 'Would like White Black British/Caribbean'.

Finally, there were a few comments about the conceptual base and other aspects of the whole question:

'Firstly I don't like when the question is asked in everyday life. And secondly, if the question were to be asked, I'm not sure what is being asked. What colour skin are you, and what black-ness are you or where do you come from/origins, in which case the word "black" is irrelevant. The fact that we categorize colours (skin tones) makes us feel, I believe, that we must be more segregated and that we truly belong to a category, which I disagree with'; 'I feel it should be in alphabetical order - why does white always seem to be at the top?'; 'The question is a reference to culture and I have not been in the West Indies, nor do I know any West Indians'; 'Why is "white" a pure term that needs no other definition when black needs to be explained'; and 'I really dislike the use of the term 'White' in the census identity classification because it presumes that people who are white are similar enough not to need to be identified whereas the non-whites all have to be categorised. In fact white people can be as different as English, Saudi Arabian (they do not classify themselves as Black or Asian), Polish, Roma (gypsy), Portuguese, American etc. These

groups are as diverse culturally, and socio-economically as the various categories of Black and Asian groups. In the mixed race categories I find it offensive that they use continents to describe people from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean but everyone else can just be white – to me this still privileges ‘whites’ wherever they are from. I believe the census should say ‘European and Asian mixed race’.

The findings of both the pilot and main studies have been reported to both the Office for National Statistics and General Register Office (Scotland) (GRO(S)) with respect to their consultation programmes on the content of the ethnic group question for the upcoming 2011 Census. They have been influential in the decisions by both agencies not to introduce multiticking but to use very similar formats to those used in the 2001 Census. The Scottish Government & the GRO(S) cited the findings in detail and provided a hyperlink in its recent report on Scotland’s new official ethnicity classification²⁵. Additional disadvantages of multi-ticking identified by GRO(S) and the Scottish Government were that: it would make it more difficult to count the ‘Mixed or Multiple’ ethnic group; it would produce an unmanageable number of outputs; it risks obscuring the size of the main ethnic groups; it would make it more difficult to publish statistics about small areas; and it would make comparison more difficult²⁶.

A fourth classification (that was not an amended version of the 2001 Census question) was asked at the very end of the schedule: respondents were asked about their family’s ethnic origins (mother’s family and father’s family), using some of categories used on the 1991 Census form (but omitting the ‘Black-Other’ free text field & offering the ‘Other’ category as a closed option). The question also included a free-text option (see fig. 2). This question was proposed by Berthoud (1998) for use in the 2001 Census and this is the first known example of a test of it.

This question was problematic (as a possible question for the census) as an output classification would be required that combined ethnic origins of mother’s and father’s family: the putative combinations are many. Moreover, six respondents multi-ticked and 4 annotated the options. In addition, 16 respondents wrote in a description in response to the instruction. In order to derive output categories, a substantial number of edits would have been required to fully utilise the information given by respondents.

²⁵ Scottish Government & General Register Office (Scotland). *Scotland’s New Official Ethnicity Classification for Scottish Official Statistics and Recommended for Scotland’s 2011 Census*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government & General Register Office for Scotland, 2008 (July) (see p. 63 of 87).

²⁶ Scottish Government & General Register Office (Scotland) (2008), paras. 5.16.1-5.16.6 (pp. 30-31).

Fig. 2. Family ethnic origins.

Finally, what are your family's ethnic origins?

Please tick the appropriate box(es) for both (i) & (ii)

	(i) Your mother's family	(ii) Your father's family
White	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black-Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black-African	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain your family origins in more detail, if the options above are not appropriate to your particular situation:.....

Table 9: Family ethnic origins

<i>1st-named group: mother's family; 2nd-named group, father's family</i>	<i>Count</i>
White & Black Caribbean	12
White & Black African	6
White & Indian	2
White & Bangladeshi	2
Black Caribbean & White	5
Black African & White	1
White & Other	1
White & White	2
Other & White	2
Other & Black African	2
Other & Bangladeshi	1
Other & Pakistani	1
<i>Multi-ticked & annotated responses</i>	
Multi-ticking	6 ¹
Annotated responses	4 ²
TOTAL	47
Free-text explanations of family origins (all additional)	16

Source: 'Mixed Race in Britain' Survey, 2005/6. Notes: ¹ 'White+Other' & 'Pakistani+Other'; 'White+Pakistani' & 'White'; 'White+Black Caribbean' & 'White+Black Caribbean'; 'White' & 'Indian+Other'; 'White' & 'Black Caribbean+ (Caribbean) Indian+Chinese+Other'; & 'Chinese' & 'Chinese+Other'. ² 'White (European)' & 'Black Caribbean'; 'White (British)' & 'Black African (American)'; 'White' & 'Black African (American)'; 'Other (Irish)' & 'Black Caribbean'. Because of the complexity of responses, the responses to this question were only analysed in the pilot survey.

The additional free text comments were invariably used to reveal *ethnic* origins:

'My mother is Italian & my father is Iranian'; 'White & Black African American'; 'I am adopted and have been told my father is from Ghana'; 'My father's mother's origin in Persia, but her ancestors moved to India'; 'My mother was Zoroastrian. Father was Scottish'; 'Mum Dutch'; 'My mother is White Irish'; 'My mother is a UK born Muslim of Irish (mother) and Pakistani (father) parentage'; 'Step-father is Trinidadian'; 'Half Romanian, half Nigerian'; 'Father comes from a port city in Kenya, East Africa (Mombasa) & is a mixture of definitely Arab and likely also to include Portuguese & Indian'; 'Mother German/Austrian'; 'Mother - Irish/English/Jewish, father Indian & Portuguese'; 'These are the family I have been with for most of my life'; 'My mother's family originate from Malaysia, SE Asia'; 'Mother – Irish, northern and Southern –Catholic'; and 'My mother is of Anglo-Indian origin'.

With respect to the full information content of this question (including the open response explanations of family origins), this question undoubtedly provides most information. However, the high costs of processing the responses would probably rule it out as a census question. Moreover, it offers an *operational* definition of mixed race which is a different conceptual base to that of self-ascription based on ethnic group/cultural background and, arguably, a Weberian 'status group' rather than ethnic group (Smith 2002).

5. Changes in racial/ethnic identity

In the pilot survey only, respondents were asked if they had ever reported their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they usually do now. 24 respondents said they had not and 21 that they had. Those who replied affirmatively were asked what were the reasons for reporting their race/ethnic identity differently.

The largest group of respondents (8) mentioned that they had been constrained by the previous categorisation that had been used on Census and other forms:

'Because of the terminology used in ethnic monitoring pre 2001'; 'Mixed race is not on all forms'; 'No appropriate space'; 'No set grouping to identify within the 1980s & 1990s. I was "A.N.Other"'; 'Original census (1991) and other forms may not allow mixed race - so tend to tick "other" or leave out'; 'The categorisations were different in years gone by. I used to tick the box black other because that was the closest category'; 'The questions have changed over the years. I used to refuse to reply to earlier questions because they were not inclusive of mixed race/heritage'; 'passport, official forms, etc.'; and 'There was no 'mixed' category so identified as "Black"'

Others gave different explanations, including changes to their racial/ethnic identity and strategic reasons:

'As I have grown older, more confidence'; 'Because I could not be bothered with the long winded process of explanation'; 'Because I'm lots of 'things', British, Black Caribbean & mixed'; 'Better chance of acquiring a job at university union'; 'Didn't want to be pinned down on that particular form, so put "multiracial"'; 'I did not know my racial origins'; 'I do not want to be discriminated or be considered any differently and I don't see how a colour of skin or origin has any relevance, and I do not believe it should be asked in the first place (for example, in France it is illegal to ask questions on a form about your racial background). In fact sometimes I don't answer the question (which again, I believe may be held against you because you have something to hide)'; 'I identified differently at the time'; 'I strongly identify with Ireland, so have defined myself as Irish in the past. I have also reported my ethnicity as British as I am a British citizen (plus an Irish one)'; 'I used to say 'mixed race', but now I always say English/Jamaican'; 'If you ask for culture I am British & White. If you ask my race I am of mixed race. This is important. My ethnicity is Welsh. In the end its all words; I am not the description of myself'; 'Not understanding fully'; and 'Whilst younger I related more to Black'.

Respondents were asked if they could foresee a future time when they might report their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they do now. 19 respondents said no, 12 said yes, and 13 did not know. The responses reveal a range of reasons, some related to the dynamic nature of self-identification and others contextual:

'Categorisation is constantly changing therefore the terminology that I use now may not be commonly used within the next few years'; 'Hopefully I will be a human being one day! I find this to be confusion myself though I can see the inevitability of it, sadly'; 'I feel my dominant influential culture is British and would like that to be recognised and acknowledged. I have never visited either parents' country of origin yet my identity is their culture. Society should recognise that British is Black/Asian/Muslim etc.'; 'I have the right to change my ethnic/cultural allegiances throughout the course of my life, and more than once'; 'I would like such reporting to be more ethnically & culturally specific for both black and white groups'; 'If categorisation is changed to more accurately describe my ethnic origin then I would change, e.g. White British/English and Black African'; 'If for genetic screening or other reason, I would need to explore further my father's background'; 'job prospects'; Depending on the circumstances, I might report my identity differently as appropriate'; 'My identity has changed and will probably change'; 'Times change. Mixed race suits me now but other terms might be invented which are better'; and 'Well terms/trends are always changing. For my own identity, I will always say brown'.

On both the pilot survey and in the main questionnaire, respondents were asked if they described their racial/ethnic identity differently in conversation with friends to the way they reported it on official forms. In the pilot and main surveys around two in every five respondents said that they would.

Table10: Whether respondents describe their racial/ethnic identity differently in conversation with friends to the way they report it on official forms.

Whether identity reported differently in conversation	Count	
	<i>Pilot</i>	<i>Main</i>
No	31	195
Yes	13	125
Blank	0	6

Source: Pilot and main 'Questionnaire'.

The responses highlight the differences between private and public identities for some respondents:

'A lot depends on who uses the term rather than the term itself'; 'Dual heritage to be politically correct'; 'Explain full heritage & background as opposed to simplifying it'; 'I am free to talk about what I want with friends, however when filling a form I don't see how my "racial identity" is of any business whatsoever, & believe it is the most irrelevant question. Either I put "white" or sometimes "Bangladeshi" as it may be "at my advantage" to be a "minority group" in order to fill in the quota of "equal opportunities"; 'I don't tend to describe it at all. This is a new fashion that I do not subscribe to. I occasionally identify my parents as coming from somewhere'; 'I will usually be more descriptive. I usually state the country in Africa and the region of England my respective parents are from'; 'In order to counter accusations of foreignness, I often point out that I am probably no less English than someone who happens to be white but is Jewish, or half Polish, or something like that. Lets face it, it is the skin colour that causes the problems, most people never question a white person about their background unless they look different in some way'; 'Mixed heritage, "black and white and English", generally go into more detail'; 'Often on forms, except the census or equality forms at work, I define myself as British or Irish to avoid discrimination or questions over my citizenship'; 'Usually include national/religious breakdown of parents'; 'Sometimes Black or Caribbean; mixed race - that is the term which they understand and acknowledge'; and 'Brown'.

In the main survey, many respondents indicated that they would provide more detail in describing their racial/ethnic identity in conversation with friends: 'I can explain to friends where my parents originate from, rather than writing in forms'; 'I go into the history & reasons of my identity';

‘wouldn't put Palestinian on a form’; ‘When speaking to others I'll tell them that I'm also quarter Portuguese whereas in official forms I'm normally only able to tick white & Black Caribbean mix which tends to imply just White UK with black’; ‘with friends I include my Italian roots but on official forms I just associate with 'White' which I think could be taken as any nationality. I prefer to be able to include Italian in my 'White' categorisation’; ‘In forms I usually simplify it; either mixed white & Chinese/mixed white & Asian if there is no other more specific option. In conversation I describe myself as mixed white-Zimbabwean & Chinese-Malaysian’; ‘Quarter Welsh, Irish, Jamaican, and Cuban. I am British but not 'White British' as the forms say, i.e. Irish is not British’; ‘I would go into more detail, i.e. my mother is white, British, my father is Black, Jamaican’; ‘Forms don't really allow for the diversity in my genes! There isn't a box for a bit of this & a bit of that’; ‘I prefer to say I am half Filipina than half Asian as a whole continent cannot locate accurately my heritage and my identity’; ‘Because you can go more in depth and describe both parents' heritage’.

A small number simplify their ethnicity: ‘To friends I identify as mixed race, but in official forms I am required to be more specific which I refer to as Black & Latin’; ‘In forms I include that I am half white. Whereas with friends, they see me as black only and that's how I describe myself’; ‘In more official forms I am more specific in my racial identity. With friends I am more general, as more or less know by background already’.

6. Conclusions

With respect to identity, in unprompted open response the substantial majority of respondents gave a description of their racial/ethnic identity rather than a generic term only (like ‘mixed race’ or ‘mixed’). Many of these were fairly short, combining two terms, although others revealed more complex heritage. Most respondents identified themselves in the stated way because their ‘parents are from different racial/ethnic groups’; however, just over two-fifths said they felt it was their ‘own sense of personal identity’. Slightly larger numbers felt it was very/fairly important overall to identify with their known ancestry than to identify with all such specific racial/ethnic groups.

On issues of terminology, the salient general term of choice amongst respondents was ‘mixed race’. The only other terms that attracted some support were ‘mixed heritage’, ‘mixed origins’, and ‘mixed parentage’. Very few preferred ‘dual heritage’. Respondents identified around a dozen different terms as offensive, most frequently ‘half-caste’, ‘biracial’, ‘coloured’, ‘half breed’, and ‘dual heritage’. The reasons for the dislike of ‘biracial’ and ‘dual

heritage' focussed mainly on their limitation to two groups. 'Half-caste' was regarded as pejorative by several respondents on the ground of partial recognition & historical connotations. 65% of respondents thought that the term 'mixed race' should apply to 'people who are mixes of white and *any* minority racial/ethnic group' but significant proportions (40% each) selected 'People who are mixes of minority racial/ethnic groups' and 'People of disparate ethnic origins', suggesting a somewhat different (and wider) conceptualisation to that in the USA.

Four different classifications were evaluated. Of three variants of the census ethnic group question ('2001 Census', 'open response', and 'tick all that apply') the overwhelming majority of respondents found the 2001 Census question easiest to complete and the 'tick all that apply' option most difficult to complete. Respondents found the '2001 Census' question and the 'open response' option best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity. Only a small minority felt that the 'tick all that apply' option best enabled them to describe their racial/ethnic identity. On respondents' understandings of the questions, the 2001 Census question scored best and the open response question also scored highly, with few cases of misinterpretation/no response. The tick all option incurred significant quality problems. Overall, the open response option gave the best content, followed by the 2001 Census option and tick all. The things respondents particularly liked about the 2001 question were its simplicity, ease of completion, the fact that it catered for specific mixes, and also had an open response option. The things respondents disliked about the 2001 question included the fact that the three pre-designated categories were all mixes that included White, the pre-designated categories all privileged White as the first-named group, and the choices were too limited. A fourth classification that asked for family ethnic origins of mother's family and father's family yielded a high information content but was problematic with respect to the number of multi-ticks, annotations, & additional free-text, and would incur high costs in the production of output.

Around half respondents stated that they had reported their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they usually do now, the most frequently cited reason being that they had been constrained by the previous categorisation that had been used on Census and other forms. Around only a quarter of respondents stated that they could foresee a future time when they might report their racial/ethnic identity differently from the way they do now and a significant number indicated that they did not know. Two in five respondents stated that they described their racial/ethnic identity differently in conversation with friends to the way they reported it on official forms, the responses highlighting the differences between private and public identities for some respondents.

The response profile for the pilot showed a broad representation of age groups and housing tenures but with an over-representation of females and people from professional occupations. Substantially more respondents in this pilot identified as 'British' than 'English' or some other national identity.

Several of these findings are relevant to the 2011 Census Development Programme. With respect to options for 'Mixed', respondents found the 2001 Census question easiest to complete of the three variants & their understandings of this question were also the highest. On grounds of quality and content, this version should be asked in the 2011 Census. However, respondents had concerns about the lack of a 'mixed minority' option and the privileging of 'White' in the ordering of groups in the predesignated options. These issues could be addressed through minor amendments. The 'White and Asian' category is more heterogeneous than intended. This could be addressed by adding a 'White and Chinese' option. Should ONS harmonise the ethnic group question conceptually with that tested by GRO(S), then it would be important to change the conceptual base of the predesignated options to, for example, 'European and Asian' (as indeed one of the respondents suggested).

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