Developing Ethnic Identity Questions for *Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study*

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Non-technical Summary

Ethnicity research is at the core of the new multi-purpose social survey, *Understanding Society*, a 40,000 household strong panel survey recently launched to understand the many facets of the lives of UK residents. One area that is of much interest to potential survey users but for which adequate questions are lacking is ethnic identity. While there has been extensive research on designing survey questions to identify ethnic groups for 'counting' or demographic purposes (such as the census question on ethnic groups) very little has been done to develop survey questions for measuring people's ethnic identity.

A review of existing literature on ethnic identity and its measurement helped us to understand both researchers' interests in ethnic identity (what do they understand by it and so what do they want to measure?) and where the existing questions fail. We established that there was a lack of agreement among researchers as to what they might want measures of ethnic identity or ethnicity to capture – for some it was ethnic self-labelling, for some it was group orientation, and for others it was attitudes towards their ethnic group. There was also no consensus on what constitutes an ethnic group – is it people who speak the same language, follow the same religion, were born in the same country? We concluded that it would be difficult (perhaps impossible) to design an ethnic identity question that would satisfy all researchers – but that we could provide them with questions that would allow maximum flexibility to construct ethnic groups as they understood them. We could also provide measures of different components of identification with ethnic group (however constructed), namely group orientation, importance of group to sense of self, attitude towards group, association with members of group. We therefore set out to design a set of questions that would fulfil these aims, and which would, at the same time satisfy the criteria of good survey questions, such as respondents understanding the questions as intended, not having too many response options, and so on.

Armed with lessons learnt from the literature review and cognitive testing of some ethnic identity related questions (conducted prior to fielding of Wave 1 of *Understanding Society* by NatCen*)* as well as consultation with experts, we investigated respondents' understanding of ethnic identity, its dimensions and components, and how their responses varied by context w using focus groups, interviews and, experimental quantitative testing in the Innovation Panel of *Understanding Society*. At the end of an iterative process of exploration, testing and reflection, using a mixed methods approach, we came up with a set of questions for measuring multiple components of ethnic identity across multiple dimensions. These questions were further cognitively tested and based on the results of the cognitive interview we made recommendations for questions to be included in wave 2 of *Understanding Society*. We also identified some areas which needed further investigation,

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A report prepared for the
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Abstract

This report describes the process of development of a series of new ethnic identity questions, fielded in Wave 2 of *Understanding Society*. We describe the key features of Understanding Society and the rationale for asking respondents about ethnic identity, before detailing the process by which the ultimate set of questions was eventually arrived at. That process involved learning from existing research, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and cognitive testing of the final set of questions proposed. The suite of questions proposed for inclusion in Wave 2 of *Understanding Society* can be found as Annex E to this report.

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1. Background and rationale for ethnic identity question development

Measuring ethnicity in *Understanding Society*

Understanding Society is a major new research study designed to provide valuable new evidence about the people of the UK, their lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs. A large household panel survey which tracks individuals over time and collects data about all household members, and thus enables a wide range of research agendas to be addressed, *Understanding Society* also benefits from an ethnicity strand which specifically facilitates research on ethnicity and across and within ethnic minority groups. By ethnicity strand we refer to three aspects of the Study. First, the large sample size and supplementation of the core sample with a substantial ethnic minority boost sample allows unprecedented scope within a multi-purpose household survey for analysis across and within ethnic groups. Second, dedicated questionnaire content enables questions specifically concerned with ethnicity and the nature and formation of ethnic groups to be addressed. Through five minutes extra questionnaire time allocated to the ethnic minority boost sample and a 500 household general population comparison sample from the main part of the study, additional content on specific issues of relevance to ethnicity minority populations can be accommodated. Third, having an ethnicity strand allows content of particular salience to ethnicity research to be highlighted when establishing content plans and priorities across the survey.

Understanding Society's key features support its use for the measurement and analysis of ethnic identity. It has a very large sample size, representing all ages and all aspects of UK society, and is structured to capture information about individuals in their household context and its changes. The target sample, 40,000 households, provides a unique opportunity to explore issues for which other longitudinal surveys are too small to support effective research. Groups such as migrants will occur in sufficient numbers for certain analyses. The large sample size also allows high-resolution analysis of events in time, such as migration or marriage. And the ethnic minority boost sample facilitates analysis of particular groups and of experience within groups by generation. The longitudinal nature of the survey enables an analysis of the development of ethnic identity over time and for different age groups (for example for young people) and those with different histories, e.g. recent migrants or those who have experienced recent significant events such as marriage. Because data is being collected on all members of sampled households and their interactions it makes it possible to study the ways ethnic identity develops within the household and differently for different individuals sharing a similar household context. Moreover, the possibility of utilising an additional five minutes of questionnaire time for the ethnic minority boost and general population comparison samples makes it feasible to ask ethnic identity questions in more detail than might be possible in the main questionnaire, given the multipurpose design and time constraints on individual interviews.

Understanding Society is committed to meeting as far as possible priority research needs for a longitudinal household study. The multi-disciplinary nature of the survey implies needs for measures that will be of interest to (social) psychologists as well as

more traditional users (economists, sociologists etc.). The ethnicity strand is also concerned with reaching out not only to existing quantitative analysts in the field of ethnicity but also to engage new users and ethnicity researchers who have not previously engaged in survey analysis. To this end a wide ranging consultation process was engaged in at the start of the development of the survey. A number of topics were identified as being of particular salience for the ethnicity strand, many of which have already been included or planned for inclusion using existing or adapted instruments. For example, Wave 1 of the survey saw the collection of unprecedented detail (for a non-specialist survey) on migration background, and relationships with countries 'of origin' in addition to categorical measures of ethnic group, measures of religious affiliation and practice, and perceptions of harassment and discrimination.

Ethnic identity is not typically measured in any detail in social surveys and there were therefore no clear model questions to draw on or adapt. There are a range of psychological measures of identity or orientation towards ethnic group, and there is also a wealth of qualitative research material exploring how particular ethnic groups express or understand their ethnic identity. But there are no comprehensive suites of questions on ethnic identity from social survey research, outside specialist surveys. As Burton et al. (2008) showed, measures in censuses and most surveys tend to take the form of mutually exclusive categories. While they have been much criticised, improvements have tended to focus on the means to increase the reliability of responses rather than attempting to develop more conceptually appropriate measures. And for their part, critics have often reacted by rejecting the possibility of survey measures of ethnicity rather than attempting to develop better ones.

It became clear therefore that there was a priority for question development to better capture ethnic identity as fully as possible within a multipurpose, if ethnicity oriented, study, with questions which recognised its contingent and multidimensional nature. In this way it was hoped both to meet a research agenda and in the process to go some way towards engaging a wider range of ethnicity researchers with the survey.

The need for identity measures

Ethnicity is measured in surveys mostly for demographic (counting) purposes. While these measures of ethnicity are quite useful for the construction, implementation and evaluation of public policies and programs these fall short of being good measures of *ethnic identity*. Our aim was not to substitute existing questions on ethnicity constructed for demographic purposes but to complement those with new questions that measure ethnic identity. Ethnicity measured for demographic purposes requires ethnic (or racial) group categories that define people in fixed ways on a mixture of criteria (that can include nationality, country of birth, colour, ancestry, etc.) that are felt to approximate to relatively stable groups and can give information about population and population change. Whether respondents see themselves as belonging to certain groups is not of fundamental importance, in such instances. Nevertheless, many survey questions ask for identification when they are seeking stable, demographic measures and may therefore fall between the stools of capturing good demographic information and ascertaining individuals' ethnic identities.

For example, suppose all we want to know is whether those persons who were born in Bangladesh, or whose parents and grandparents were born in Bangladesh, have poorer life chances than those who themselves and whose parents and grandparents were all UK born. Then, asking questions about own, parents' and grandparents' countries of birth would provide us with the necessary information. Suppose instead we had asked, 'which ethnic group or groups do you belong?' and the person could choose one or more categories from a list that included 'Bangladeshi' and 'British'. A person who was born in UK but her parents or grandparents were born in Bangladesh might answer British or British & Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi. The questionnaire may be seeking the latter response, in order to answer the question of interest. And anecdotal evidence exists for efforts being made by interviewers to 'assist' respondents to choose the 'correct' category. As is evident the problem with this question is that while the information sought is about demographic ethnic groups the question being asked suggests that it is intended to measure an aspect of the person's ethnic identity. Moreover to the extent that individuals become accustomed to what is expected of them from such answers they become less likely to express their identity as they understand it themselves.

The research literature and our own investigation shows that people don't think categories necessarily say much about themselves. Instead they tend to see particular parts of their identity as more or less salient and overlapping. While there is clear preference for being able to identify multiple aspects of themselves as part of their 'ethnic identity', even multiple response questions are often restrictive in the sense that they still offer a limited set of categories to which people can affiliate. In other words, even if respondents like the ability to choose more than one category they still may not like the range of categories on offer.

When attempting to measure identity rather than demographic regularities, it seems important to move away from categories that can singly or jointly encapsulate the complexity of ethnic affiliations. While ethnic identity also requires measurement of ethnic groups, the focus in this case is on measurement of identification with one or more such ethnic groups. However, even within the psychological ethnic identity literature the concept of ethnicity or ethnic group as something self-evident and as requiring no further explanation goes unquestioned: measurement starts from a prior notion of groupness. We were faced with the question of how groups might be constructed, that allowed respondents' own conception of what constituted 'their' group, and following on from that how identity with that group might be measured that took account of the fact that, as the literature has clearly demonstrated, identity is expressed through a number of components: personal affiliation, practices, patterns of association, feelings of belonging etc. Ethnic identity is formed and develops – affiliation to a group may change. It was therefore important to generate measures that allowed for – and could measure change over time, and to identify those groups where change is likely to be most frequent or quickest. It is also clear that there is a relationship between ethnic identity and other aspects of identity such as gender, occupation, family identities that can potentially be informative in understanding both the constellation of identities and how ethnic identity is played out.

Researchers approach issues of ethnicity with different concerns and guiding concepts. For some, migration is crucial; others want to be able to see ethnicity as the intersection of a particular language, religion and country of origin. No single ethnic

group question is likely to go unchallenged, but allowing researchers maximum flexibility in how they can construct groups, by giving them a large range of the potential components of ethnicity and the extent to which individuals identify with these, can optimise the ability of *Understanding Society* to answer research questions relating to ethnicity from different disciplinary and conceptual positions.

The parameters for developing the questions were, therefore

- That they should allow for a construction of 'group' that both was meaningful to respondents and provided researchers with maximum flexibility to address their specific research questions

- That they should cover multiple and overlapping potential DIMENSIONS of ethnicity (such as language, religion, country of birth and parental country of birth, skin colour and so on).

- That they should measure the different COMPONENTS of identity (such as group identification, own group orientation, belonging, association and so on).

- That they should locate ethnic identity with broader DOMAINS of identity, such as gender identity, occupational identity, sexual orientation etc.

It would be important that the content of all the relevant dimensions had been or would be collected in the survey so that it would be possible to ascertain what it was that people were expressing an orientation towards. For example, if a respondent was proud of her mother's country of birth, it would be relevant for some research questions – and for the understanding of ethnic groups themselves – to know what that country was.

In addition, questions were needed that satisfied the criteria for good survey questions and which could be accommodated within a multi-purpose survey with limited space for individual modules. That is:

- respondents understand the questions as intended

- respondents find question wording including response options acceptable

- response choices correspond with respondents' intended responses and there are not too many response options (to avoid list effects)

- questions are positioned in the questionnaire such that the questions that appear before do not significantly affect responses to these questions. This is a particular consideration for face-to-face and telephone interviews as question order effects are smaller in self-completion where respondents can go back and forth

- questions are structured such that they elicit consistent responses across different interview modes[1]

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[1] When we started out we were anticipating that wave 2 of *Understanding Society* would involve mixed modes of questioning. While this is no longer the case for wave 2, which will be solely face to face, mixed mode design is likely to have been implemented by the time the questions are repeated.

The question development process

To take the emerging research and measurement issues forward, we drew on as much information as we could to identify the issues, problems and potential solutions in measuring ethnicity / ethnic identity, including exploring how people did and might respond to questions within the constraints of survey research, how far we could meet identified research needs, and how to locate ethnic identity within broader identities. The project comprised an extended process of reading, reflection, and specific question development activities, which took place in a number of stages.

Stage 1 highlighted the specific issues that we would need to investigate. It comprised:

- A thorough review of the literature on ethnic identity and on survey measures of race/ethnic group; and examination of existing questions used in other sources (Burton et al. 2008)

- Cognitive testing of a multiple response ethnic group question, carried out by NatCen in Spring 2008 (Gray et al. 2008).

- Consultation with others working on ethnicity and ethnic identity and drawing on their findings; in particular, drawing on the growth of work on mixed and multiple identities (for example, Peter Aspinall was particularly helpful here)

In Stage 2 we investigated issues that we had concluded were important and also explored potential prospective questions. It comprised:

- A series of focus groups with those of different backgrounds (age, categorical ethnic group, sex, educational level): we held a total of seven focus groups in London, Colchester and Sheffield

- An examination of responses to the suite of identity questions in the *Citizenship Survey* to explore response patterns, in particular, 'don't knows' and 'importance'

- Fielding of a set of questions on different aspects of identity in Wave 2 of the Innovation Panel of *Understanding* Society with additional follow-ups to the ethnic identity question

Building on Stage 2, in Stage 3 we explored individuals' constructions of their identity in more detail and sought their responses on and reactions to a trial set of ethnic identity questions, and incorporated further expert contributions. It comprised

- a series of semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of individuals (13 interviews), including cognitive testing of sample questions. We aimed at this stage to access respondents not well covered by the focus groups

- additional question wording tests, and exercises such as one with a large group of ISER staff

- discussion with the ethnicity strand advisory committee and with other key researchers

- iterative reflection on emerging findings and recapping on the underlying aims of the project

Stage 4: In this stage we finalised the set of identity questions to be included in Wave 2 of *Understanding Society*. It comprised:

- cognitive testing of the proposed suite of questions

- wider consultation on these proposed questions

- expert input on the fit between the proposed questions, the constraints (and possibilities) of the survey, and good practice in question design

- final reflection and refinement of questions before putting the finalised set of questions forward for the Wave 2 pilot and subsequent main stage

In the sections that follow, we outline the main elements of this staged process, their rationale and the key lessons learnt.

2. Developing questions: Stage 1: Exploratory testing, consultation and literature review

Initial testing of multiple response categories

Once we had identified that there was a case for collecting identity questions, that it may be expected to be multi-dimensional and that it is important for identity questions that they are meaningful, acceptable and are consistently understood across respondents, as a preliminary step, we incorporated a number of questions relating to ethnicity in the cognitive testing carried out by NatCen for potential questions for Wave 1 of *Understanding Society*. We hoped to explore how respondents understood questions on ethnicity, how acceptable they found both the questions and the response options, and how easy or difficult they found it to answer multiple response questions from which they could select one or more categories to define themselves. Amongst the other questions being tested on different topics, we tested both the Census ethnic group question as fielded in existing surveys, and an alternative set of categories from which respondents could select multiple responses.

NatCen's Questionnaire Design and Testing Hub conducted 70 interviews in the Spring 2008, which took place in the respondents' homes and were conducted face-to-face. The sample was evenly split between men and women and 15% of the sample were 18-30 years old, 50% 31-59 years old and 35% above 60 years. Ethnic minority persons constituted 65% of the sample (Gray et al. 2008).

Some of the key findings that were relevant to this study were

- When asked about the ethnic origin of members of their household, respondents did not find the question difficult to answer. But while respondents said that they did not find the term 'ethnic group' difficult to understand, nevertheless they showed different understandings of the term. This was also revealed when respondents selected 'other ethnic group' and were not sure whether the category they wanted to report could be classified under this. So, as long as their responses fitted the categories offered they did not experience a dissonance between different interpretations of ethnic group – they did not have to think about what ethnic group meant.

- Confusion about the meaning of ethnic group and the categories offered was further revealed in the testing of two versions of a census type ethnic group question. Respondents differed in relation to what they thought each version was measuring.

- Respondents liked being able to choose more than one category in a census type ethnic group question.

- On being asked to rate 'how important is your father/mother's ethnic group to you' on a scale from 0 to 10, respondents had no problem in answering.

- When asked about what they were thinking when answering 'importance' they referred to their parents' role in making them 'who they are'. In other words, respondents' parents' background was seen as playing an important role in shaping their identity.

We concluded that broadly speaking there were a number of major questions to resolve in relation to the measurement of ethnicity in a survey context

- Do people find it easy to attach ethnic group labels to themselves as a way of expressing their ethnic identity [even if allowed to choose multiple groups]?

- Can people agree on what constitutes an ethnic group or their ethnic identity?

- How would it be best to ask a question on identity in general and ethnic identity in particular?

- How would it be best to accommodate people's desire to assert multiple identities?

- How would it be best to ask questions to measure different components of ethnicity or expressions of ethnic identity?

The current state of play in relation to identity questions

A review of the literature indicated that while there are numerous comments on and criticisms of existing social survey and census questions on race/ethnic group, little attention has been paid to developing alternative survey measures that specifically cover ethnic identity. Existing research, mostly qualitative and some quantitative (especially that concerned with mixed ethnic identities), has focussed on understanding ethnic identity and broader identities, its formation at the group and individual level, its political and social implications. However, there is very little methodological research on designing questions to implement the insights of such research in the general social survey context. For a useful discussion of this point see Aspinall (2000) and also Burton et al. (2008). Meanwhile, methodological concerns around existing measures tend to focus on how to ensure response and, ideally, the 'right' response to existing questions, from a perspective that is overwhelmingly concerned with demographic distribution or with having the means to implement race equality law.

Psychological suites of measures of ethnic identity are well developed for specific research purposes. But these also have a relatively distinct focus: to measure development of identity over time; to map identities to recognised patterns of identity development, or to uncover 'orientations' that are relevant to outcomes in organisations. While theses question sets highlight the fact that ethnicity has multiple components, which are best considered separately, they tend to take ethnic group itself as an unquestioned given, and to ask individuals about their ethnic identity without acknowledging that the term itself may mean very different things to different people. We have no information on what respondents understand by the term 'ethnic group' in such contexts. In closed questions researchers pre-determine what ethnic group means by means of response options (irrespective of whether that corresponds with respondents' understanding or not). A perusal of the literature shows, however, that there is no consensus among researchers, far less respondents, about what they mean by an ethnic group. They tend to define ethnic group by one or more of a selection of dimensions: country of birth, race, citizenship, skin colour, religion,

language, ancestry, and so on, but without necessarily agreement or consistency across the selection.

Researchers also show variation in their understanding of what it means to identify with an ethnic group. Phinney (1990) reviewed this literature and classified the different concepts of ethnic group identification as ethnic self-identification or self-labelling, sense of belonging, attitude towards one's ethnic group and ethnic involvement (social participation and cultural practices). She concluded that all of these are potential components of ethnic identity and therefore deserve to be separately measured. These components provide a helpful first step for designing questions on ethnic identity, but their applicability and meaning for respondents was not established.

From this first stage, we were alerted to the need to rethink categories, to be cautious about assuming consistent understandings of ethnic group and to enable respondents to express the multidimensionality of their identification. Moreover, we recognised that ethnicity might be realised in multiple ways and that some consideration should be given to how to measure these different components of ethnicity or expression of ethnicity. We needed to recognise that even if we adequately managed to capture groups, there were still different ways in which respondents might affiliate to or identify with such groups. We therefore embarked on the subsequent stages of question development recognising that we had to work through these issues from the beginning rather than simply adapt existing questions, if we were to meet social science (and interdisciplinary) research needs and interests in relation to ethnic group analysis.

3. Developing questions: Stage 2: Focus groups and analysis of questions in the Innovation Panel of *Understanding Society*

Focus groups

We carried out a series of seven focus groups in London, Colchester and Sheffield to explore what people thought were important things about themselves, how they talked about ethnic identity, how it related to other aspects of their lives, and how it related to categorical questions and their responses to it. We structured the focus group discussions around these issues.[2]

Discussion points for the groups

The main sections of the discussion guide that we used to conduct the focus groups were as follows:

Discussion point 1: Find out what are the domains of identity (Key things about ourselves); and in relation to each aspect mentioned

- Why is this important/ why want others to know this? or why is something not important if not mentioned?

- How easy/difficult to select things important to themselves?

- How important are different aspects of themselves in different contexts – do they vary? Are they influenced by other people's expectations?

- How important are these different aspects in relation to each other? Which are more or less important?

Discussion point 2: The meaning of 'ethnicity / ethnic identity'

- What does the term 'ethnicity', mean? What are the dimensions of ethnicity?

- How do these overlap with or differ from some of the aspects of identity already discussed?

- What is the influence of their parents' background and origins, where they grew up and specific life experiences (stages in life course / experiences linked to ethnicity) on their perspective?

- Have their views changed at all in the past few years? How? Why?

Discussion point 3: Explore own ethnic identification

- How important is ethnicity to their sense of who they are?

- How much does their ethnicity say about them?

- How does the importance of ethnicity vary in different contexts?

- Are they influenced by others' expectations regarding them? If so how?

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[2] Liz Spencer designed the focus group schedule and facilitated four of the focus groups.

- How important is ethnicity compared to some of the other aspects of themselves already mentioned?

- What about the influence of their parents' background and origins, where they grew up and specific life experiences (stages in life course / experiences linked to ethnicity) on their feelings of their own ethnic identity?

- Has their perception of their ethnicity changed at all in the past few years? How? Why?

Discussion point 4: Views on the existing classification systems

- What are their views on the questions on ethnicity generally asked in survey (we show the census 2001 questions)? How do they feel about the categories used in relation to their own sense of ethnic group?

Sample

In order to address the questions across a range of respondents we identified different groupings that would allow us to hear the views of a diverse selection of individuals while retaining homogeneity in at least some key areas within each group, to facilitate the within-group discussion and allow for the emergence of consensus (Bloor et al. 2001).

Table 1: Sample characteristics of the focus groups

Location	Age and gender	Socio-economic class	Ethnicity
London	Young men and women	Middle to lower social class	Different non-white ethnic groups
London	Young men and women	Middle to higher social class	White and Ethnic minority groups
London	Older men	Middle to lower	Different non-white ethnic groups
Colchester	Young men and women	Mixed educational levels	White
Colchester	Older men and women	Middle to lower social class	White
Sheffield	Older and middle aged women	Middle to lower social class	Pakistani
Sheffield	Older and middle aged women	Middle to lower social class	Black African and Black Caribbean

Findings from the focus groups

The rich information from the focus groups reinforced what we had learnt from the survey of existing literature that ethnic identity was understood differently by different people. Our participants provided extensive information on how and why different dimensions of ethnicity (roots, religion, skin colour) were important to them, what information they wanted these to convey to others (pride, cultural differences), how integral some values and beliefs were to their ethnic identities and how they transmitted these values to their children. Some aspects, that we had not anticipated, came up spontaneously such as how their identities were expressed through particular

foods and how ethnic identity could travel back to the land of their ancestors. The following bullet points summarise, and the quotations illustrate, some of the key issues that arose from the focus group discussions.

- For minorities, there was substantial evidence of the centrality of ethnic identity for them, even if aspects of it were felt to be adaptable: *'Ethnicity for me is as important as my name because it is my identity. It's a part- on a larger scale it is my identity.' 'It always matters where you come from what origin you are; and tradition and culture it changes with time.'*

- There was also substantial discussion of other central aspects of identity. Those characteristics emphasised varied across groups but included gender, politics, family status, interests, work and a very strong emphasis in certain groups on educational level as fundamental to both identity and interpersonal relations. Groups also discussed how they could 'use' things about themselves to find points of connection with others; and how ethnicity, or components of ethnicity, related to other parts of their identity.

- For majority (and to a certain extent for white minority respondents), ethnicity was a property of 'others' (typically immigrants): *'I don't think much about my ethnic group…. It's the obvious thing for me, I'm white, I cannot change it and probably it influenced who I am at the moment, shaped me somehow, but I just don't know.'*

- All groups, and particularly the white majority groups, who struggled to talk about their own ethnicity, emphasised the centrality of being or feeling a minority to the expression and realisation of ethnic identity: *'I just think that the one time that I really kind of known where I come from or who I am is when I was living in another country because you're surrounded by a different culture, a different kind of society a different heritage almost so it kind of makes you more aware of who you are and where you come from.'*

- There was no unanimous agreement about what constitutes an ethnic group. For some it was roots – '*where I come from*', for others, language, religion, nationality, skin colour, shared values and attitudes. Some understood ethnicity as combining these different aspects: '*You can break down ethnicity into attributes likes colour, race and language*'.

- For some ethnicity went back to where ancestors came from *"…but I think that I'm an African, whether unfortunately I was taken, or my forefathers were taken to the West Indies or America or left Africa or taken to Haiti or Jamaica, that's not going to change who I am."*

- It was clear that talking specifically of 'ethnicity' introduced assumptions about what was being discussed which differed across groups, and often raised assumptions about expected responses. Discussions of different components were much more fruitful in eliciting discussion of points of differentiation and connection.

- The centrality of skin colour to others' and to self perception was evident across respondents: '*So the Black comes with the British for me.*'

- We were also struck by the strength of regional identities across our respondents: '*I wouldn't see it in terms of nationality, wouldn't be like I'm*

British or Irish, I wouldn't be proud of that. It wouldn't kind of occur to me. I'd much rather describe myself, for example, as a Londoner.'

- There was pride in ethnicity ('*being who you are*') but strong opposition to being categorised and pre-judged, '*Well we are proud, we are very proud of where we're from but what we're saying is that in everyday life when you're out there, people judge you – that's when they're asking you where you're from.*'

- It became clear that values and value systems were a very crucial and integral part of their ethnic identity: '*In ethnicity, it brings me back to the values. Ethnicity propels you proper on how you must live, and work is included it's not separated.*'

- A number of respondents stressed the importance of patterns of association to ethnic identity: '*that's my identity as a Sikh, Christian, Hindu or Moslem so I can have my society, my community - they can recognise me - I can recognise them - and to be accepted because sense of belonging is very important in the individual person. And if we lose that we've lost everything.*'

- We were struck by the extent to which respondents spontaneously expressed their identity through food (as well as through things such as language that we were more specifically asking about or prompting for). This was both in relation to food restrictions, but also their relationship to the UK and how their origins continued to be important and a way of expressing primary identities: '*I've always cooked Jamaican food and give my grandchildren Jamaican food – I'm a Jamaican'*. Yet food, unlike dress, has not featured substantially in survey questions relating to race and ethnicity. Conversely, dress really only came up only in relation to religion.

Lessons learnt
In taking forward our findings by this point and in formulating the next stage of the research, we concluded

- that ethnicity or ethnic group is not a concept that we should be directly asking respondents about

- the different dimensions of ethnicity that were emerging as significant for respondents were country of origin, skin colour, language, nationality, regional identity, roots (family origins), ancestry

- components of ethnic identity that emerged as salient were belonging, shared values, pride, ethnicity as communication, private sense of defining principles, association, differentiation, communal activities, including cooking and eating, strangeness and familiarity

- the simultaneous rejection, acceptance and utilisation of the expectations of others and the categories they imposed on individuals

As the various dimensions of ethnicity that had been identified by respondents, except for language, had already been asked in Wave 1 of *Understanding Society* of all sample members and would be asked in future waves of all new entrants, we could conceive of asking questions on identification with these components without having

to force respondents to choose self-labels based on them.[3] For example, we could ask respondents whether they identified with their religion without asking them if they considered themselves to be Muslim, Christian, Jewish, etc. However, it seemed clear that we would also have to consider how to ask about language (see Section 4). We would also need to find ways of operationalising the different components of identity (importance to self, belonging, pride and so on) that had been identified as part of how ethnic identity was understood. This led us to the next part of the development process, which involved exploring how ethnic identity was located in relation to other domains of identity, and what language was used to measure it.

Analysis of identity questions in Wave 2 of the Innovation Panel of
Understanding Society

The Innovation Panel of *Understanding Society* is an annual household panel of about 1500 households conducted each year and fielded about 12 months prior to the main-stage of *Understanding Society*. It is used for testing methodological issues relevant to *Understanding Society* for the upcoming wave/s. It is a stratified, clustered sample covering Great Britain south of the Caledonian Canal. It had 1489 responding households containing 2384 individuals interviewed in Wave 1, and 1660 individual interviews in Wave 2. As a modest sized population sample, the Innovation Panel has only a small number of non-UK born and minority group members. It was therefore not possible to break down responses by individual ethnic group or by country of birth, other than UK and non-UK. However, one of the main issues was identifying questions which would 'work' with the whole of the *Understanding Society* sample, to cover various domains of identity, and whether majority and UK-born respondents replied in ways which appeared meaningful (i.e. without non-response) and in ways which differentiated between individuals. We therefore planned to enhance our understanding of responses to identity questions by testing identity questions in Wave 2 of the Innovation Panel.

In starting the question development project we had reviewed identity questions in other surveys that might give us a starting point for wording and be tested on the Innovation Panel of *Understanding Society*, in order to establish the suitability of such questions for including in the main survey and to provide a context for the specific ethnic identity questions we were developing. As part of this process we highlighted a question set that had been fielded in the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)'s annual cross-sectional *Citizenship Survey*. The questions asked in the *Citizenship Survey* aimed to measure a person's identity in different domains (occupation, national, ethnic, income, etc). The question set ran as follows:

We'd like to know how important various things are to your sense of who you are. Please think about each thing I mention, and tell me how important it is to your sense of who you are? Please choose your answer from the card.

SHOWCARD
Your occupation?
(1) Very important
(2) Quite important

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[3] Questionnaire for wave 1 of *Understanding Society* is available at
http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/design/materials/questionnaires/wave1/wave1.aspx

(3) Not very important
(4) Not at all important
DON'T KNOW

Your ethnic or racial background?
(1) Very important
(2) Quite important
(3) Not very important
(4) Not at all important
DON'T KNOW

[The question was then repeated for the domains of: your religion, your national identity, where you live, your interests, your family, your social class (working, middle), the country your family came from originally, your gender, your age and life stage, your level of income and your level of education, in that order.]

As these questions had been carried in the *Citizenship Survey* for a number of years we could assume that these had worked well. We were more confident about the 'identity' part of the question (*'how important various things are to your sense of who you are'*) but less so about the ethnicity domain (*ethnic or racial background*). Given that we had identified the lack of consensus about the meaning of ethnic or racial group, we were sceptical about respondents' understanding of the phrase 'ethnic or racial background'. However, as mentioned earlier, ethnic identity needs to be located in relation to other aspects of respondents' identities and its relative salience (and relative fluidity) evaluated: ideally we would like to measure ethnic identity as well as other aspects of a person's identity. We also wanted to be able to evaluate the responsiveness of a general set of respondents to such a set of questions. So, we decided to use these questions as the starting point, but to use the experimental aspects of the innovation panel to test a number of aspects.

First, we hoped to shed some light on what respondents were thinking of when they evaluated the importance to their sense of 'who they are' of 'ethnic or racial background'. Second, we wanted to explore whether responses were susceptible to mode effects. That is whether there appeared to be systematic differences either to the question as a whole or to certain parts of it between respondents who answered face to face and respondents who were contacted by telephone. This would tell us about the reliability of the question for iterations using mixed mode, that is a combination of phone and face to face interviewing, which is likely to occur in future waves of *Understanding Society*. Third we wanted to explore the wording of occupational identity, since in the *Citizenship Survey* we had identified high levels of non-response for this domain (12.5 per cent) as compared to the others (between one per cent and four per cent). Of those who did not respond to this part of the question, 75 per cent did not have a job and had not looked for a job in the last five years and 50 per cent were retired. We concluded people tend to associate 'occupation' with their current job, and so, if they are not currently employed and have not been for quite some time they answer 'don't know'. We conjectured that perhaps the term, 'profession' might perform better in capturing life-time occupation.

To explore the first question we proposed a follow up question to be asked after the responses across all the domains had been collected. This would ask the respondents

what they were thinking of when they evaluated the importance of their 'ethnic or racial background' to their sense of who they are, with options for religion, national identity and father's or mother's ethnic group.

Second, to test for mode effects, we first had to make the questions comparable across the two modes. We therefore proposed that show cards not be used for the response categories when interviewed face-to-face. The response categories was reduced from four in the *Citizenship Survey* ('very important', 'quite important', 'not very important', 'not at all important') to three categories, since Sudman and Bradburn (1982) claim that 'There have generally been no problems in asking respondents on the telephone to select among three alternatives …; five alternatives are clearly too many and, four are borderline.' After considerable deliberation we decided on the response options: 'important', 'not very important', 'not at all important'. As with the *Citizenship Survey* we did not offer 'don't know' explicitly, but it would be accepted as a response – and coded as a form of non-response.

Third, we fielded two versions of the occupation domain, one using the word 'occupation' and the other using the word 'profession' for measuring occupational identity each to a random half of the sample. We also introduced a follow-up if people said 'don't know' spontaneously, to ask whether that was because they were retired.

In addition to reducing the response options, adding a follow-up and testing two versions of the occupational identity question, we also modified the *Citizenship Survey* identity question by changing some of the identity domains being measured. We found that some key domains identified as central to identity, such as marital status, political beliefs and, sexual orientation were not included in the *Citizenship Survey* and so added those. We dropped 'where your family came from originally' and instead added 'your father's ethnic group' and 'your mother's ethnic group [if different from father's]'. This allowed us to use information already collected on parental ethnic group in wave 1 to analyse responses. We also dropped 'income', as we felt it would be hard to answer and to interpret the answers, particular for those on a low income.

In analysing the question subsequently we considered whether the question appeared to 'work' for the Innovation Panel sample as measured by item non-response, and whether the distribution of responses varied by socio-demographic characteristics in an expected way.

The question that was fielded in the Innovation Panel thus took the following form[4]:

We'd like to know how important various things are to your sense of who you are. Please think about each thing I mention, and tell me whether you think it is important, not very important or not important to your sense of who you are?

READ OUT EACH AND CODE
(1) Important
(2) Not very important

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[4] For the complete questionnaire and the full question see:
http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/design/materials/questionnaires/wave2/wave2.aspx

(3) Not at all important

(a) Your occupation? INTERVIEWER: IF DK PROBE: Is that because you are retired?

[And then repeated across the other domains, which were: ethnic or racial background, religion, national identity, political beliefs, family, father's ethnic group, mother's ethnic group (if different from father's), marital or partnership status, gender, age and life stage, level of education, sexual orientation. One half of the sample received 'occupation' for the first domain, the other half received the version with 'profession'.]

And the follow-up:

Your ethnic background was [answer at ethnic or racial background] to your sense of self. When you think about your ethnic background, do you think of your...READ OUT

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1   Religion
2   National Identity
3   Your father's or mother's ethnic group
96   None of these

First, analysing the follow-up, we found that a large proportion of respondents considered national identity and their parents' ethnic group to be important constituents of their ethnic background (see Table 2).

Table 2: Response to ethnic origin follow-up, by mode

	All	**Face-to-Face**	**Telephone**
Religion	7.0%	7.2%	6.9%
National Identity	41.1%	43.5%	39.1%
Father's or Mother's Ethnic group	28.8%	26.6%	30.7%
None of these	21.6%	21.4%	21.8%
Don't Know	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%
Number of Observations	**1662**	**749**	**913**

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 as multiple responses allowed.

Parents' ethnic group was a component of their ethnic background for a larger proportion of non-white/mixed persons than for white persons, while white and UK-born respondents were more likely to say they considered national identity. About a fifth of respondents felt that none of the options reflected what they were thinking about, though that reduced to 10 per cent of non-white minorities and 15 per cent of non-UK born. The importance of religion while generally low was higher among non-white & mixed and non-UK born persons (see Table 3).

Table 3: Response to ethnic origin follow-up, by majority status

	All	White	Non-white	Not born in UK	Born in UK
Religion	7.0%	6.6%	11.1%	10.5%	6.6%
National Identity	41.1%	42.5%	16.1%	30.5%	41.9%
Father's or Mother's Ethnic group	28.8%	27.6%	60.5%	43.8%	28.3%
None of these	21.6%	22.0%	9.9%	14.3%	22.0%
Don't Know	1.4%	1.2%	2.5%	1.0%	1.3%
Number of Observations	**1662**	**1453**	**81**	**105**	**1430**

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 as multiple responses allowed.

These results indicated that

- Respondents considered the choices as aspects of ethnic identity to different degrees and in different combinations

- The list did not cover dimensions of ethnicity exhaustively as one in five respondents didn't associate any of the choices with ethnic identity

- National identity appears to be relatively salient to the majority and UK born (though it is not clear what exactly they mean by national identity), suggesting specific ways that the majority think about their ethnic or racial background[5]

- Parental ethnicity was regarded as having an important role across majority and minorities, though particularly for minorities and non-UK born

- Recognition of religion as part of ethnicity was specific to a minority of respondents, though a non-negligible minority

We found considerable mode effects for some of the items (see Table 4). This indicated that the question as it stood could not be reliably used in a mixed mode design. As we discuss in Section 4, our version of the question was, in the end, allocated to self-completion (in which form it was cognitively tested), which resolved many of these mode issues for the time being. Nevertheless, the results suggest that particularly domains of identity may be susceptible to mode effects and we may need to give some consideration to how to deal with this in the ethnic identity questions in a mixed mode context.

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[5] Note that we explored both Britishness and within UK country identities (English, Scottish, Welsh) in our semi-structured interviews as a form of 'national identity' question. But it did not perform well. A generic national identity question (as here) was not felt to be specific enough to enable clear interpretation, or to be employed as part of an ethnic group construct.

Table 4: Response to identity domains, by mode

Important to your sense of who you are	All	Face-to-Face	Telephone	Difference
Your political beliefs	38.5%	33.4%	42.6%	-9.2
Your level of education	72.3%	69.3%	74.8%	-5.5
Your ethnic or racial background	53.5%	56.3%	51.2%	5.2
Your gender	76.2%	79.0%	73.8%	5.2
Your sexual orientation	64.3%	66.9%	62.1%	4.8
Your occupation/profession	66.6%	64.3%	68.3%	-4.0
Occupation	68.5%	65.1%	71.4%	-6.3
Profession	64.7%	63.6%	65.5%	-1.9
Your national identity	72.6%	74.5%	71.0%	3.5
Your marital or partnership status	70.3%	68.5%	71.7%	-3.3
Your age and life stage	58.7%	60.3%	57.3%	3.1
Your mother's ethnic group (*if father's ethnic group is difference from mother's*)	57.1%	55.6%	58.3%	-2.8
Your father's ethnic group	48.1%	49.1%	47.3%	1.8
Your family	97.5%	98.0%	97.0%	1.0
Your religion	35.7%	36.2%	35.4%	0.8
Number of observations	**1662**	**749**	**913**	

Although we did not find much difference in the rates of item non-response across the versions asking about occupation and about profession – item non-response was slightly higher with occupation – there was more difference for the valid responses: a higher percentage reported importance when asked about occupation than when asked about profession (see Table 5). Interestingly we did not find the rates of non-response to this domain that were found in the *Citizenship Survey*.

Table 5: Response distribution of 'occupation' or 'profession' questions

	Occupation or Profession	Occupation	Profession	Difference
Important	66.6%	68.5%	64.7%	3.8
Not very important	16.4%	15.0%	17.7%	-2.7
Not at all important	15.1%	14.4%	15.8%	-1.5
Don't Know	2.0%	2.2%	1.8%	0.4
No. of observations	**1662**	**847**	**815**	**32**

Differences between these two versions were higher in telephone mode (6 percentage points), among married or cohabiting persons (5 percentage points), among 35-44 year olds (9 percentage points) and those who are not white or mixed parentage (15 percentage points) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Whether occupation or profession is seen as 'important', by socio-demographic group

	Occupation	Profession	*Difference*	Number of observations
All	68.5%	64.7%	3.8	1662
Interview Mode				
Face-to-face	65.1%	63.6%	1.4	749
Telephone	71.4%	65.5%	5.8	913
Gender				
Men	69.7%	66.3%	3.4	678
Women	65.8%	63.6%	2.1	857
Age				
16-24yrs	74.5%	71.7%	2.8	104
25-34 years	76.8%	76.8%	0.1	194
35-44 years	82.4%	73.4%	9.0	323
45-59 years	70.9%	71.2%	-0.2	418
60+ years	48.7%	48.5%	0.2	496
Ethnic background				
White	66.9%	64.7%	2.2	1453
Non-white or Mixed	82.1%	66.7%	15.4	81
Marital status				
Never married	67.0%	68.6%	-1.7	227
Married or cohabiting	72.8%	67.5%	5.2	1037
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	50.3%	49.2%	1.1	271
Employment status				
Not employed	49.1%	47.5%	1.6	657
Employed	81.3%	77.8%	3.4	873
Country of birth				
Not born in UK	77.4%	76.9%	0.4	105
Born in UK	66.8%	63.9%	2.9	1430

Overall, it was unclear which version was to be preferred.

Finally we evaluated the overall success of this suite of questions by looking at non-response across the different domains, and variation by characteristics. Item non-response as measured by percentage of 'don't know' responses was less than one per cent for all except occupation/profession (two per cent), gender (1.4 per cent), sexual orientation (1.1 per cent) (see Table 7). However, item non-response for occupation and profession was much higher among those over 60 years of age: it was six per cent and 4.6 per cent, respectively.

Table 7: Proportion reporting 'don't know', by domain

How important to your sense of who you are is	Don't Know
Your occupation/Profession	2.0%
Occupation	2.2%
Profession	1.8%
Your ethnic or racial background	0.7%
Your religion	0.2%
Your national identity	0.8%
Your political beliefs	0.3%
Your family	0.1%
Your father's ethnic group	0.8%
Your mother's ethnic group	0.0%
Your marital or partnership status	0.5%
Your gender	1.4%
Your age and life stage	0.7%
Your level of education	0.1%
Your sexual orientation	1.1%

Reassuringly, responses to these questions varied by socio-demographic characteristics in an expected way. We found that ethnic or racial background was important for 74 per cent of non-white/mixed groups as compared to 53 per cent for the white majority. Similarly it was important for a smaller proportion of those born in UK (53 per cent) than those born outside (68 per cent). Occupation and profession were important for around 49 per cent of those above the age of 60 and around 70-80 per cent for all other age groups. Marital or Partnership Status was important for 27 per cent of those who were single, 41 per cent of separated/divorced/widowed and 88 per cent of those who were currently married or in a partnership.

Overall, the results suggested that the question was by and large suitable for inclusion in *Understanding Society*; but that it might need further refinement. The observations and conclusions drawn from the analysis were fed forward into the proposed question set that was used as the basis for cognitive testing and also informed other aspects of the whole suite of questions, e.g. around dimensions of ethnicity.

In addition, spontaneous feedback from interviewers suggested that the length of the question was burdensome and that respondents tended to lose track of the original question. Periodic repeats helped to maintain the focus of the question across the domains, but the feedback suggested that it might need refining. Specifically, we considered that repeating the question for each domain seemed to be a potential way forward, and having the question wording also linked to the response options on a showcard ('very important to my sense of who I am' etc.) if we were to revert to showcards in the light of Wave 2 of *Understanding Society* being fully face to face, or a similar approach of repeating the full sentence in a self completion. In addition, it seemed that it would be helpful to reduce the number of domains. In the end, the *Understanding Society* version of this question was tested and piloted as a self-completion question, which made the implementation of these aspects

straightforward, but the insights were also fed into the ethnic identity suite of questions, where they informed the showcards and phrasing of response options and the selection of a reasonably concise set of dimensions of ethnicity.

4. Question Development: Stage 3: Semi-structured interviews, quiz and consultation

Interviews

Process and schedule

Following on from the insights from the focus groups, a series of individual interviews were planned to both understand further issues about ethnic identity that we had missed during our focus groups and examine a set of identity questions that we developed based on what we had learnt so far. The interviews took the form of semi-structured interviews, garnering individuals' histories and how they talked about themselves and their background, their relationship to their current context, and their aspirations or intentions for the next generation. This was combined with cognitive-style exploration of sample questions: with survey style questions were followed by probes about the question and their responses, the response options and different ways of asking the question. We prepared an interview schedule containing both semi-structured questions and prompts for the more general information and sample questions with specific probes to test specific question wording.

The schedule went through ten versions before it was piloted, with the project team making modifications to question wording, and identification of dimensions of ethnicity and recapping on the overall aims of the question development. Given the imperative of developing questions within a tight time-scale, we reflected on each interview or set of interviews (including replaying them) as they occurred to identify lessons and issues arising. As a result some modifications to the interview schedule were introduced as we went along. In other words, this was an iterative process using insights from the previous stages and also from further reading, from interviews themselves as they developed and consideration / reconsideration of core aims and interests within the team. (See Annexes A and B for the two interview schedules.)

In total we conducted 13 interviews along these lines (14 if we include a pilot interview), using the four project team members as interviewers. (The further 22 cognitive interviews specifically testing our recommended questions are considered in Section 5). The interviews predominantly lasted for between 60 and 90 minutes; four had shorter durations (the shortest being 27 minutes) and there was an outlier which lasted 146 minutes. The key characteristics of respondents for the purpose of the interviews are summarised in Table 8. Interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were circulated among the team members for identification of key issues, interpretation and reflection.

Table 8: Interview respondent characteristics

	Sex	Age	Ethnic Group	Level of Education	Employment status	Marital Status
I1R4	Male	24	Asian (born in Pakistan)	Bachelors doing Masters	Not employed	Married, no children
I1R1	Female	33	White British / White other (born in Germany, parents born in England and Germany)	Ph.D.	Employed, Academic Researcher	Married, no children
I2R4	Female	Mid 30s	Turkish/Dutch citizen (born in Turkey)	Ph.D.	Employed, Academic lecturer	Married, no children
I2R2	Female	25-30?	Indian / Asian (born in India)	Masters	Employed, Lawyer	Married, no children
I1R5	Female	35-40?	Chinese (born in Malaysia, mother born in China)	Ph.D.	Employed, software developer	Divorced, one teenage son
I4R2	Female	29	Black Caribbean (born in UK, mother from Barbados and father from Jamaica)	Masters	Employed, women's rights charity	Married, no children
I2R1	Female	60	Anglo American/ White (Other) (born in US)	Masters	Employed, researcher	Divorced, one grown-up daughter
I1R2	Female	26	Pakistani / Punjabi Pakistani (born in Pakistan)	Masters	Employed, software developer	Married, no children
I4R1	Male	41	Black British	Bachelors doing Masters	Employed	Single, no children
I3R1	Female	Mid 30s	Indian /Hindu North Indian / Kashmiri Pandit (born in India)		Architect	Married, one young daughter
I3R2	Female	32	Indian (born in India)	Masters, MBA	Employed, financial analyst	Married, two young sons
I1R3	Male	38	Bangladeshi (born in Bangladesh)	Masters, studying Law	Employed (part-time), waiter	Married, no children
I2R3	Female	30	South Asian / Canadian (born in UK, brought up in Canada)		Employed, campaigning around ethnic minority women	Single, no children

Aims of the interviews

As noted, it had become clear to us that it did not make sense to ask people directly about their 'ethnic identity' or 'ethnic group'. It is clear that ethnic identity will mean different things to different people and in different contexts. Instead we wanted to capture the dimensions that had emerged as important regardless of whether respondents considered them to be part of 'ethnicity' or not. From our insights into the importance of measuring dimensions separately, from the literature survey and from the focus groups, and from the exploration of the *Citizenship Survey* questions, we determined that it was important to measure the following dimensions:

- language (brought up in)
- national language of communication (English)
- religion (practised or brought up in)
- national identity
- Britishness / Britain / being a Briton
- country of birth
- region currently living in
- region brought up in
- country of birth of parents
- country of birth of grandparents
- nationality/citizenship
- skin colour / appearance
- identification as 'Black'
- land of ancestors

We had to develop ways of asking about language, ancestral land, region, skin colour and whether self-perceived as 'Black', since these were areas where there had not been questions already asked to capture the content of these dimensions. That is, there was no question in Wave 1 of *Understanding Society* on what region people came from, nor or their main/ first language. For region and skin colour, we did not propose to collect the 'content' to which their replies related; but for language it was important to have some knowledge of which language people were referring to in order to analyse this dimension of their ethnicity. Initially we worked with a question on 'language brought up in', but given the importance of adequately capturing this information across all sample members, we continued to develop and investigate ways of asking about language of upbringing and fielded a slightly different version in the cognitive interviews that was then further refined for the final question set (see Section 5).

We also wanted to explore these across various components of ethnicity that the earlier stages had identified, namely

- Personal identification / 'internal' importance to 'sense of who you are'
- Group belonging / connection / affinity

- Shared values

- Patterns of Association

- Pride

as well as giving scope for respondents to relate the relevance of previous or subsequent generations to their identity, and to evaluate the importance of temporal and geographical context.

The wording for the personal identification question echoed that used in the *Citizenship Survey* questions discussed above, and remained relatively constant throughout the question development process. But we had to develop wording for the other components. In particular we paid some attention to the question of how to capture group belonging.

Initially we worked on the basis that some positioning of self within a 'group' ('belonging' to a group) would be antecedent to identification within that group ('importance to your sense of who you are', shared values and beliefs with members of these groups, pride in these groups and pattern of association with members of these groups). This issue of belonging plus or versus identification was one we explored further as we developed, discussed, part-tested, piloted and reworked the interview schedule. In the end we concluded that there was no necessary groupness that was antecedent to identification. Nevertheless, it remained clear that feelings of groupness were important and complementary to feelings of identification. (See discussion of interviews below.)

Measuring groupness: a quiz

A remaining challenge we faced was, then, how to find a suitable language to talk about individual's affinity for those with a shared characteristic or characteristics, even once we had accepted that group belonging was not necessarily a prior for identification. Closeness, connection, sense of belonging were forms of phrasing that might capture this group feeling and we explored them further in a short quiz administered to a convenience sample of 46 co-workers, who comprised those of different countries of birth, nationalities, census ethnic group, ages, sex, and type of job, though most were educated to degree level or above. The quiz took the form of a short self-completion questionnaire, in which we compared responses to sense of belonging, connection, and closeness to different potential domains of ethnic identity. Table 9 shows the form of the quiz and the summary of responses.

Table 9 : Response distribution from identity quiz

		1) Do you feel a sense of belonging to		2) Do you feel a connection to		3) Do you feel a sense of closeness to	
		Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
A	those who speak English (or a dialect of English)?	50%	48%	76%	20%	46%	50%
B	those who speak the same language you were brought up in?	74%	24%	93%	4%	65%	33%
C	those who are of the same religion as you are?	30%	52%	33%	48%	26%	54%
D	those who live in the same city/region that you do?	41%	54%	67%	30%	46%	50%
E	the country where you were born?	83%	17%	85%	11%	67%	28%
F	the region in the country where you were brought up?	61%	39%	65%	33%	48%	50%
G	the country where your father was born?	59%	39%	70%	28%	52%	43%
H	the country where your mother was born?	65%	30%	72%	24%	59%	37%
I	the land of your ancestors?	54%	43%	67%	30%	52%	46%
J	the region in the country where your family comes from?	48%	46%	61%	33%	43%	50%
K	those who call themselves Black?	15%	85%	37%	63%	24%	74%
L	White people?	39%	57%	50%	46%	28%	67%
M	those who have the same skin colour or other physical features as you do?	35%	63%	48%	50%	24%	74%

Note: % of Yes and No for each component (A-N) for each of the three wording choices should add up to 100 unless there were some item non-response

We found that there was a gradation between stronger (closeness) and weaker (connection) but quite a lot of variation across domains. It was clear that many respondents wanted to be able to answer yes (we could not filter on a self-completion), and that having irrelevant questions provoked some frustration. For example, when asked about the importance of religion many wrote in that they did not affiliate to a religion. There was a clear desire for graduated rather than yes/no responses, which we picked up from the additional comments added to the quiz sheet. We concluded that we would pursue wording around belonging, and that, as we had recognised that groupness was a prior for identity, instead we would explore 'sense of

belonging to…' further in the interviews (following the 'important to sense of who you are question') by probing on how it worked as an alternative. In later interviews, as part of the iterative process discussed below, we developed a specific belonging/ connection question which took the form of 'happy to meet someone who comes from….'.

To summarise, by this point of beginning the semi-structured interviews, we had determined that we wanted to use them to cover the following issues:

- To reach types of respondent who had not participated in the focus groups, including those who might have strong 'alternative' (e.g. professional) identities, relatively recent migrants; those with complex migration histories; and still to cover a range in terms of age and ethnic group

- To establish whether the different dimensions (such as religion, language, country of birth…) were comprehensible and meaningful to respondents and whether they could evaluate their importance to themselves

- To test wordings of questions about ethnic identity

- To explore different components of ethnic identity (such as belonging, shared values, pride, patterns of association, etc.)

- To explore how questions on feelings of pride in aspects of identity worked across groups, and whether pride supplemented importance to sense of self and revealed a different element of ethnic identification, or not

- To garner reflections on what elements of identity were considered important for next generation (to retain) and what aspects of self would be desired as a source of pride

- To gather accounts of individuals' histories and relationship to forbears and origins, and what they spontaneously identified as part of those stories.

Developing of the interview schedule: an iterative process

In the earlier interviews we included questions covering language brought up in; English language; religion (or religion brought up in); being British; region of residence; country of birth; region brought up in; mother's country of birth; father's country of birth; land of ancestors; being Black (if relevant); being White (if relevant); skin colour. However, the question about being White worked poorly as it was not clear that it reflected a White political identity – it was asymmetric therefore with the being Black question and did not make much sense to respondents. We had included it following the input of other researchers, but despite the extensive theoretical and empirical research on 'whiteness' we found that it did not resonate with, and often confused, respondents. Instead the question on importance of skin colour to sense of self was moved to come before the question on being Black. For respondents who saw themselves as white, this question seemed to be equivalent to a question on 'Whiteness'. However, given the amount of debate this area stimulated, including within the Ethnicity Strand Advisory Committee, and following some additional small-scale testing, we did pursue the area further in the cognitive interviews, where we tested Pride in being Black and being white, for those for whom skin colour was

already regarded as being important and who regarded themselves as Black or white respectively (see Section 5).

Similarly the Britishness question, though it was meant to be potentially answerable by anyone living in Britain to capture their identity or affinity with living in the UK, also worked poorly in the earlier interviews as many respondents interpreted it as referring to citizenship or nationality. It was therefore excluded from the final interviews.

Early interviews showed that sense of self and belonging did seem to capture different ways of thinking about ethnic identity and to receive different evaluations of importance, and that there was variation across respondents in the relative weight accorded them. But establishing a good and reliable way of asking about 'belonging' still seemed difficult. Following further discussion, some trialling with team members and returning to the focus group data, we came up with a formulation involving 'happy when you meet someone who' [shares a component with you], and this was employed in the final few interviews, where it appeared to work well, and was therefore fed forward to the cognitive testing stage.

While the issue of values and of patterns of association, who they felt at ease with, and the role in their self-perception, association and contact of those who saw them as 'other' was clearly highly salient to respondents and to their self definition, the actual questions on sharing values or on association worked poorly as questions in all the interviews in the first phase. They created some confusion among respondents, especially those whose first language was not English. And following discussion and reflection on the question it was determined that these were two areas that were better captured directly by questions on actual values and by questions on actual patterns of association. It would then become an empirical question for researchers to ascertain the extent to which people did share values or associates within their 'group'. We therefore dropped these questions for the final few interviews to allow more space for the rest of the material. But we put forward the recommendation that it would be crucial to understanding the various elements of ethnicity to collect information on social networks. A number of attitudinal and value questions are already being collected within the survey.

Summary of findings from semi-structured interviews

Distinguishing respondents across dimensions and strength of identification

Respondents provided a range of responses in relation to what was important. Within individuals there was a mixture of positive and negative responses and there was no clear pattern across respondents in the evaluations of different dimensions. Similarly there was variation across components of identity: importance to sense of self, belonging (and its variants) and pride did not all follow a consistent pattern within or across respondents, which suggested that they were capturing different elements of 'ethnicity' as our review of the literature had indicated to us.

Comprehensibility of questions

The questions were generally found to be clear. Some did not make sense conceptually to respondents, and we have discussed how we excluded some elements

in the later stages; and some were seen as being too general to be relevant or as not applying. But overall there was little miscomprehension of either the question or what it was asking about. For some respondents there appeared to be a conflation of 'important to my sense of self' with 'important to me' and for one respondent this certainly seemed to make the question harder to answer, though his detailed explications in response to the probes often revealed a strong personal identification that accorded with others' interpretation of the question. Most of the respondents were clear about the link to identity of a question concerning 'importance to sense of self', and emphasised past influences, upbringing, reflection on antecedents, as well as the personal and the private to indicate that it was not just about what was 'important' to them. However, we did still consider that it was worth testing the similarity or difference between importance to self and the importance to sense of self in the cognitive interviews.

Although many had a clear interpretation of 'belonging to those who…' for some the lack of context of this question – often referring to rather large groupings and the sometimes cumbersome wording of the question itself, made it awkward to answer for certain dimensions, and some respondents simply seemed to struggle with it more. However, it usually elicited some form of response, and often different in quality to the response to the 'importance to sense of self' question. It seemed clear that many respondents held a stronger or weaker attachment to or distance from a group or a notion of being part of collective with whom they shared characteristics, and that this was different to their sense of personal identity. But we felt that there was enough uncertainty around the phrasing of this aspect of identification to warrant exploring other options. From the language of respondents, usually spontaneous, about feelings of warmth, or the pleasure they felt when the made contact with someone similar to them in some way ('if you saw another black person you were grinning your face off, in fact that's how I met my best friend'), we developed a further variant which asked about how happy people felt when they met someone who [shared the dimension with them]. This was very successful in the latter interviews, in that it appeared to strike a chord, for particular dimensions, and in two cases elicited a spontaneous illustrative anecdote. It was therefore put forward for further testing in the cognitive interviews.

Change

One of the key purposes of asking these questions in a longitudinal survey like *Understanding Society* is to measure change. So, we probed our respondents as to whether they would have answered differently at another time. Some respondents said that they would have answered differently. Some said that their responses would have been different had they been asked at a different age ('No, I wouldn't have, again as a younger adult, I was rebelling against the idea of this ethnic group - you know, I felt that I had my own personality that was not defined by my ancestors and their culture'), or before they married someone from a different ethnic group ('I think it changed because I think later on when I married someone outside my community and then I really found what it was like'), or when they had not moved away from their country of birth ('Yeah I guess I've grown more attached to the country and region where I grew up over the years - being away').

Distinction between importance to sense of self and belonging

As noted, most respondents made a clear distinction between 'importance' of the component to sense of self and 'belonging to those who' [share the component]. This was both explicitly articulate and evidenced through differential responses to the two types of question. The difference was expressed in terms of importance to sense of self being about 'identity', 'personal', what 'shapes me' the component being 'in them' and so on and 'belonging' being about groupness, relationships, 'being subservient to a bigger entity', things 'bigger than self', 'comfort', ease and 'warmth'. As one respondent said: 'So they are two different things. So the first question is asking whether India is within me and the second question is- whether I am thinking am I part of India.' And another said 'I feel I belong less to Kashmir but Kashmir is more in me.' There was variation both across respondents as to which was regarded to be the stronger expression of identification.

Pride

For some respondents pride was associated with achievement and thus was not felt in relation to their ethnicity (or dimensions thereof); for others it expressed a satisfaction or ease with who they were. Given that it was not salient in all cases and also the observation from a number of respondents that they didn't want to imply 'shame' by not expressing pride, a 'neither / nor' category seemed important adequately to capture this qualitative experience of pride. We regarded it as important that there was variation in the extent to which it was acknowledged by respondents. Interestingly, even among those who claimed that pride was concerned with achievement and so it was impossible to be proud of things that were just 'givens' there were still occasions when expressions of pride in such givens seemed vital and very definite. One respondent explained this in terms of 'process' and psychological development (consistent with psychological theory): 'If you were to say am I proud of being a black Caribbean woman then I would say 'yes' because there's been a process there, I've had to get to that point when I feel proud' (I4R2). We also found that it did reveal a different component of ethnic identification from 'importance to sense of self'. This became clearer when one respondent (I3R1) talked about how her identity changed with age and now she accepts certain things as part of her identity even if she is not proud of or agrees with those aspects.

Aspects that were not successful

Four areas of questioning worked relatively poorly in the interviews and seemed inappropriate to pursue in the identity questions. These were two of the potential dimensions: Britishness as a source of cultural or value identification, and 'black' as a political term extending beyond those with African or African Caribbean parentage; and questions relating to two components of ethnicity: those relating to interactions and to shared values.

Britishness was by and large associated with citizenship, passports, migrants in general felt that it did not apply to them – though one thought that it had cultural connotations or linked to values – but even then didn't feel any salience for self. Even among the UK born, one respondent regarded 'British' as being about 'what your driving licence says, your passport', though for another UK born respondent, Britishness at some level went deeper into shaping her and her identity: 'I'm very aware that in the way that I am, my Caribbeaness in a sense is distinctly British'.

Later however, she again regarded Britishness as being about 'passport' and citizenship: 'I was born British'. Overall the question on Britishness made so little sense to many respondents and even to those whom it was comprehensible seemed to strike so little of a chord that it seemed not to add to the suite of questions; and in the very final interviews was omitted from the list.

All of the respondents (with one exception) associated the term 'black' with being of African or Caribbean heritage. The exception was a white respondent who had 'tried really hard but I could never succeed in doing so..[identifying self as black]' and she was referring to accounting for relatively (compared to family) dark skin colour but not to a political stance or minority affinity. For the other respondents, being 'black' was utterly self-evident as referring to those with African Caribbean parentage and conversely not being black was utterly self-evident to the respondents from the Indian sub-continent – to the extent that one regarded the question as a 'mistake' and others found it clearly perplexing: 'I am brown - so I think I am not black'. One respondent from her campaigning and race equality background recognised the political connotations of claiming 'blackness' but even so did not find it personally meaningful: 'I wouldn't use the work 'black' except in writing to kind of make a point.' However, as mentioned above, given the amount of debate and the interest of some of those we consulted in pursuing the issue of 'white' and 'black' identities, we did incorporate in the cognitive interview schedule a question on pride in being Black or being white, filtered to be asked only of those for whom skin colour was already regarded as being important and who categorised themselves as Black or white respectively. Since these questions were targeted to those where they might be considered important, given the evidence from the interviews that pride formed a specific way of thinking about identity, and following on from small scale testing where a political dimension was sometimes expressed through pride, we thought that it was worth testing for one further stage. Nevertheless, as the discussion in Section 5 shows, we concluded that they did not add to the follow-up on skin colour and had the potential to create confusion.

When questioned about the extent of 'interaction' with those who shared a component with them, several respondents found the question too broad or the response categories insufficiently specific. There was confusion about what type and frequency of interaction this question referred to – talking over the phone, meeting people every day, and so on. Some thought it needed to be comparative (more interaction with one group than another), or to work on a scale where they could specify a level – 'such as 6.5'. Others found this question not very relevant, especially with respect to current region of residence – 'Yeah, a kind of silly question. It may make sense for religion etc. but this question should not apply to a place you are at that moment, right.'

The question on values and beliefs shared with others with the same ethnicity dimension did not work for most dimensions except for, in some cases, religion. Often the groupings that the components referred to were, respondents thought, too large to have a cohesive set of core values and ideals. So, they found it difficult to pin-point what those core values and beliefs were for each group. This was less problematic for religion but even for this component some respondents found that religion-based grouping was too diverse (I1R2, I1R5) to be associated with a potential set of common values.

Summary of findings

To summarise, we concluded that:

- Personal *identification* and *belonging* are distinct and both relevant and important

- Expression of 'importance to sense of self' appeared to work for personal *identification*; as did 'happy to meet someone who…' for *belonging*

- Language of upbringing was meaningful to respondents as linking to formative experiences

- Similarly *religion of upbringing*, for those who didn't see themselves as currently religious still had the potential to be seen as part of identity and 'shaping self'

- *Religion, region, region of upbringing, country of birth, and parental country of birth* all made sense to respondents as potential components of identity, while actual affinity with any one of theme varied substantially across individual respondents

- *Colour* was important, even if it was self-evident to most respondents. And there was no indication that they experienced discomfort in answering; although though could be doubt or hesitation for those who were not African or Caribbean or South Asian

- *Pride* produced varied responses – suggesting it can differentiate. For some it makes obvious sense, for others it is not appropriate as a way of thinking about their ethnicity

- *Graduations* (or more options) in response options, or 'yes and no' style responses were felt important for pride questions and possibly for belonging as well as in importance to sense of self questions.

- The connection between *food* and culture / identity was spontaneously made by the majority of the respondents

On the other hand,

- *Black* was rarely used in its one-time political sense, and was predominantly understood as reflecting African or Caribbean heritage

- *Britishness* was overwhelmingly associated with civil status rather than culture or values

- It became clear that is not appropriate to measure *interaction* through subjective appraisal: it is not possible to get a single question that provides a meaningful measure. Instead, *interaction* should be measured directly, through questions on social networks and their composition

- It is an empirical question, not an attitudinal one whether *values and beliefs* are shared across 'groups', however they are constructed

Feedback from the Scientific Advisory Committee

We had some initial discussion about preliminary results with the advisory committee, and feedback from them indicated that

- We should include questions on dress in parallel with those on food, which had come to seem such an important part of the story

- We should consider whiteness in parallel with blackness

- We should consider whether to include non-belief as an alternative to religious faith, for the purposes of identity

- We should consider alternative sources of identity that may be as important as (dimensions of) ethnic identity

- The importance of behavioural measures as well as subjective measures

As the discussion above shows, we considered these issues in taking through our findings to the cognitive testing stage. Thus we cognitively tested questions on dress and on pride in 'blackness' and 'whiteness'. We could not however find a fit for 'non-belief' within the conceptual framework for identity that we were creating. This is not to say that it may not be central to some people's identity, but we were not convinced that it was a component of ethnic identity. Rather we considered that like the other numerous potential affiliations and sources of identity that people have (including music, sport and so on), this remains an area for a future wave of *Understanding Society* and we have recommended that it be taken forward in future waves of the survey. (Note, meanwhile, that the cross domain questions adapted from the *Citizenship Survey* model and to be asked of all adult sample members, capture occupation, which is regarded as central to many people's identity, and came through very strongly in some of our interviews as well.) Similarly, as noted, the ways in which people form attachments and associations – what they do and who they do it with, is clearly a potentially highly relevant expression of ethnic identity and identification. Our proposals for taking forward the ethnic identity questions into Wave 2 of *Understanding Society*, also included a recommendation that patterns of association and relationships should be a high priority for Wave 3, and have extended this to a concrete proposal for question development in the areas of social engagement, in line with the existing long term content plans, and potentially to be supplemented by specific questions in the extra five minutes question time allocated to the ethnic minority boost and general population comparison samples.

Proposed ethnic identity questions

Learning from the interview findings and drawing in the experience from the focus groups and from the identity 'quiz', and the analysis of the Innovation Panel, as well as taking account of advice from the Ethnicity Strand Advisory Committee, that is, drawing together the information from all stages so far, we proposed a set of questions to capture ethnic identity and broader identity domains. These would form the basis of the final stage of questions development, cognitive testing on a mixed sample of respondents, varying in age, ethnicity and whether or not UK born (see Annex C). The final set of questions that were cognitively tested were a subset of these proposed

questions in order to pick out those areas where we felt there were outstanding issues to resolve, where further testing was needed and to make best use of the testing time available for cognitive interviews. For example, we wanted to avoid repetitive probing on equivalent phrases or concepts as they were repeated across dimensions of ethnic identity. (See Section 5 for details of the cognitive testing).

Feedback from interviewers on Wave 2 of the Innovation Panel of *Understanding Society* plus practical design issues and issues around distribution of content across the Wave 2 interview and self completion questionnaire for the mainstage of *Understanding* Society, had led us to think that the general identity questions should take the form of a self-completion question for the whole sample. Given that some of the domains in the Innovation Panel questions were now included in the ethnic identity questions we had developed, we proposed a reduced set of questions for the self completion. We also had the opportunity to increase response category options as we were no longer catering for a mixed mode context.

Drawing on the conclusions from the process to this point, we determined 'important to my sense of who I am' questions and 'happy when you meet someone who…' questions be asked of a set of dimensions, filtering out where non-applicable. For example we would only ask about country of birth of parents/grandparents if different from those who had gone before. These dimensions were:

- language spoken at home during childhood

- English language

- religion or religion brought up in

- region or city where you live

- country where you were born

- country your mother was born

- country your father was born

- country your mother's mother was born

- country your mother's father was born

- country your father's mother was born

- country your father's father was born

- colour of your skin

- land of your ancestors

Though, for practical reasons, we cannot at this point ask what region people come from (in UK or outside UK), the importance of region to identity warranted incorporating it into the suite of identification questions.

We agreed that there should be a gradation of response options for the importance to sense of self questions (very important, fairly important or not important) with yes and no being the options for the 'happy when you meet…' questions.

Pride questions were to be asked only if respondents had chosen a component to be very important or fairly important. Further, to investigate blackness and whiteness, we

suggested asking pride in being Black (or being white) to those respondents who had said that the colour of their skin was important to their sense of self and had categorised themselves to be Black (or white).

The recurrent spontaneous mention of food as a vehicle of transmission of ethnic identity and researchers' interest in dress as one other potential aspect of ethnicity, led us to develop specific questions to measure these components. We proposed additional questions on these areas which were put forward for cognitive testing.

Language

As mentioned, the design and fielding of questions could be facilitated by the fact that in Wave 1 of *Understanding Society* we had collected a great deal of information on potential and sometimes overlapping dimensions of ethnic identity. Thus we would know from Wave 1 responses respondents' census ethnic group, national identity; sense of 'Britishness', own, parents' and grandparents' country of birth, identification with mother's and father's ethnicity (defined in categories), religion and citizenship. The one significant dimension of ethnicity that was not collected at Wave 1 was language ('mother tongue', or language brought up with). For some individuals this is a critical aspect of their identity. If we were able to find out an individual's language, then we would be able to understand more about what strength of identification with that language meant. In addition, language is important for a number of research purposes as well as identity. For example, educational research is interested in how being brought up with additional language(s) may influence educational achievement.

The census is proposing a 'main language question'. However, others argue that a 'home language' question (that is, variants on 'what is the main language spoken in your home?') is preferable, and such questions are widely used in other countries. This, though, still leaves issues such as multiple language use and whether you can have a main language at home if you live on your own. More importantly both the 'main' language and 'home' language proposals come from a perspective of trying to evaluate the extent of languages other than English spoken day-to-day and to give an indication of local authority level translation needs. These, then can be seen as coming from the 'demographic' perspective rather than the 'identity perspective': with ethnic group questions, such language questions help to describe the multicultural composition of countries. But our concern in these questions is with identity – and language as part of ethnic identity – rather than language use. For these purposes some version of a 'mother tongue' question is more appropriate. However, criticisms of asking specifically about 'mother tongue' include the fact that it can be ambiguous, with respondents interpreting it as the language spoken by one's mother, which may not be / have been the main family language during childhood. We wanted to capture the notion of linguistic heritage implicit in 'mother tongue' questions (for example, in Canada, mother tongue is glossed as 'the language first learnt in childhood and still understood'), but with a different wording.[6]

We therefore suggested combining the aspects of main, home and upbringing in the formulation: 'What was the main language spoken in your home during your childhood?' This was put forward for testing in the cognitive interviews and was

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[6] Though we note that the BHPS 2000 asked about 'mother tongue'.

subsequently modified, but the principle and rationale were retained in the new question wording.

Target samples and frequency

Our recommendation was that these questions be asked not only of the ethnic minority boost plus general population comparison samples plus ethnic minorities living in areas of low minority density, who currently receive an extra five minutes of questionnaire time, but also that they be asked of recent migrants from across the sample, that is those who migrated within the last three years. The acculturation literature highlights that ethnic identity acquires some meaning only in the presence of at least two cultures. In our study we too found respondents talking about their identity being more meaningful when they were among people who were 'different' from them. In view of this, we expect that ethnic identity of recent immigrants may change over the years and may become different from what it was in the first few years of their arrival in the UK. For this reason we also proposed that the ethnic identity questions be asked of recent immigrants every 2-3 years, compared to every 5-6 years for others respondents in the relevant samples. Moreover, social psychologists argue that identity develops during adolescence and youth and in most cases stabilises after that. To be able to capture this dynamic period of identity development most effectively, we recommended that the ethnic identity questions be asked every 2-3 years for 16-22 year olds.

For the general identity module designed for inclusion in the self-completion, we recommended that it be asked every 5-6 years of the whole sample.

5. Question Development: Stage 4: Cognitive testing: and finalising the questions for Wave 2 of *Understanding Society*

Cognitive interviewing

Process

We conducted 22 cognitive interviews with respondents varying in ethnicity, age and generation (see Tables 10 and 11).[7] We tested a sub-set of the full set of proposed questions that we had designed, focusing on the key points we wanted to learn from the cognitive interviews. These were comprehension of the question on language of upbringing (the 'missing' dimension), and comprehension and response to selected dimensions for the identification ('importance to your sense of who you are'), closeness/belonging ('happy when you meet someone who…'), and pride and food and dress habits. Had we tried to cognitively test all the questions the entire length of the interview would have been long and extremely burdensome for respondents. The burden would have reduced the value of their responses for learning about how the questions worked. Moreover a lot of the probes would have been repetitive trying to capture similar issues around phrasing and concepts. So, when questions were quite similar in structure and the underlying construct we chose one of them. We therefore designed a cognitive interview schedule that contained a restricted set of questions accompanied by probes to draw out how respondents understood the questions and what considerations informed their responses.[8] The cognitive testing enabled us to refine further the proposed set of questions discussed in the previous section. (See Annex D for the cognitive testing schedule.)

Aims

As well as general issues of flow, comprehensibility, clarity etc. we specified particular areas that we wanted to test. These were:

- To ascertain how and how well people understood 'important to your sense of who you are'

- To ascertain whether response categories: very important, fairly important, not important worked and were comprehensive enough for respondents

- To ascertain whether occupation or profession made more sense to respondents and as reflecting long-term occupation rather than current job or employment status

- To examine what respondents understood by the term 'childhood' and 'main language'

- To examine what respondents understood by the term 'land of your ancestors'

- To explore what phrases/terms like 'typical food', 'meet someone' meant to respondents

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[7] The authors and four other interviewers conducted the 22 interviews

[8] We found the *Cognitive Interviewing: A 'How To' Guide* developed by Gordon B. Willis at the Research Triangle Institute very useful in structuring these cognitive interviews.

- To identify respondents' degree of comfort with some specific questions

- To check wording was understood consistently across respondents and was clear and not confusing.

Sample

The sample consisted of 6 white and 16 non-white respondents (as self-identified). There were more men than women (13 vs 9) but the sample was equally distributed across most of the age groups (16-20 years: 1; 20-29 years: 5; 30-39 years: 6; 40-49 years: 5; and 50-59 years: 5). See Tables 10 and 11. They came from a mixture of educational backgrounds, occupations and areas.

Table 10: Sample characteristics of non-white cognitive interviewees (N=16)

Gender	Age group	Born in UK	Ethnic group
Female	16-20 yrs	yes	Indian
Male	20-29 yrs	not	Indian
Male	20-29 yrs	not	Arabic Middle Eastern
Male	20-29 yrs	not	Pakistani
Male	20-29 yrs	Dk, guess yes	Black Carribean
Female	30-39 yrs	not	Chinese
Female	30-39 yrs	not	Pakistani
Male	30-39 yrs	not	Non-white
Male	30-39 yrs	not	African
Male	40-49 yrs	not	Middle Eastern
Male	40-49 yrs	not	Venezuelan
Female	50-59 yrs	not	German and Latin American
Male	50-59 yrs	not	Pakistani
Male	50-59 yrs	no	Black Caribbean
Male	50-59 yrs	not	Indian
Female	Dk, guess 40-49	not	Libyan

Table 11: Sample characteristics of white cognitive interviewees (N=6)

Gender	Age group	Born in UK	Ethnic group
Women	20-29 yrs	yes	White
Women	30-39 yrs	yes	White
Men	30-39 yrs	not	white
Women	40-49 yrs	not	White
Men	40-49 yrs	yes	White
Women	50-59 yrs	yes	White

Summary of findings

We found that respondents didn't have many difficulties with the questions, and didn't seem to find them uncomfortable. Respondents appeared to understand the questions and were able to interpret them as relating to self – even if they found it hard to explain them back sometimes.

The language question worked well for most responses, though the experience of one or two interviews suggested that it would benefit from a slight rewording to improve clarity and specificity (as well as an interviewer instruction where more than one language of upbringing). The 'important to who you are' questions appeared to work surprisingly well, in terms of consistency of understanding, as did questions on feeling 'happy to meet someone who…'.

Concerns had been raised by interviewers spontaneously about the clarity of the 'importance to sense of who you are' questions in the Innovation Panel, and questioned whether respondents distinguished them from simply things that were 'important', and we probed specifically on this issue. Interestingly, though respondents sometimes found it hard to explain the difference and one or two suggested that simply 'important' might be easier, in describing the meaning of the 'importance to the sense of whom I am question', they illustrated that they were understanding it in ways close to those intended and that distinguished it from 'important to me'. They described what the question meant to them in the following sorts of terms: 'part of me'; 'according to who I am'; 'what makes me who I am'; 'what determines the way I behave'; 'who I am'; 'things you can't compromise on'; 'what I can't live without'; 'what I am'; 'all of these things show who I am'; 'my identity'; 'something that could influence upon your personality'; 'my identity at this point in time'; 'my personality'; 'me as a person'; 'focus me on the   emotional level'; 'things that make me who I am'; 'sense of who I am comes from the inside'; 'part of identity'. They applied these sorts of understandings both to the ethnic identity questions and to the wider identity self completion questions, that were adapted from those fielded in the Innovation Panel. 'Important to me' was less closely linked to self and identity, as one respondent put it: 'it wouldn't focus me on the emotional level, so I liked the way you phrased it.'

The 'happy to meet' question seemed to work well in that respondents identified it as highlighting someone they had not met before. There was sufficient variation across respondents to indicate that it captured a different dimension from the 'importance to sense of self' question. There were, however, some concerns within the feedback as to whether the range of responses was sufficient, and external consultation on the draft Wave 2 questions (which included the proposed set of questions outlined at the end of Section 4, Annex C) elicited concerns about an 'unbalanced' question.

Pride showed a similar range of responses as we had earlier picked up in the interviews in that for some it was automatic and part of expression of 'who I am', while for others it was less relevant and for yet others it was associated with ambivalence. It thus appeared to distinguish a different dimension of identity from the earlier questions. There were particular issues however in relation to the 'proud to be white' question, which also was the one possible exception to the ease of response across the questions generally. One respondent said: 'From my national background of course, white is the people we don't like. You know, white is domination,

colonisation, supremism, all of these sort of bad things, although having said that, there is this aspiration to be white, which is horrible. So it sort of brings up all of these things and the problem I have with whiteness'. And another commented 'if you said yes you might be labelled as being racist, so I don't think the question is a proper one'. Respondents to whom this question might apply, didn't seem very clear about it.

There was considerable confusion around the clothing question: some respondents interpreted it as meaning traditional clothing of the country they came from, even if rarely worn, others as the clothing worn every day (as intended). If the clothing worn every day was considered equivalent to that worn in the UK, the confusion was intensified, as they were then perplexed by why they were being asked. Some respondents understood typical 'dress' of parents' or grandparents' country of birth to mean clothes worn by persons of that country that were specific to that country, while others thought that typical 'clothing' better captured this notion of nationally specific wear. One respondent highlighted the specificity of religious as opposed to national clothing, recapitulating one of the focus group discussions and supporting our contention that questions on dress may be better suited to a suite of questions on religious practice: 'I thought about the traditional wear. I wear the scarf but I don't think that is part of traditional dress for my country. You can have a traditional outfit without the scarf in my country. The scarf is part of my religion.' Overall, the feedback from the interviews indicated that we would struggle to get consistent understandings (and therefore interpretable responses) from a clothing question.

The land of ancestors question also elicited some confusion: one respondent had not heard the term ancestor before, while others interpreted the question as asking about land owned by their ancestors (in country of own or parents' origin).

Across questions, respondents tended to prefer range of responses rather than simple yes/no ('would have preferred a middle category') and found that the range in some cases, for example in relation to pride, enabled them to express an ambivalence (as had also come up in the semi-structured interviews).

Modifications to proposed questions

As a result of the testing, we retained the main questions on 'importance to sense of self' and 'happy to meet someone who' and pride, but introduced some modifications into the response categories. Specifically, we increased the range of response options for the 'importance to sense of self question' to give both a greater range and more balanced options; we changed the wording of the 'happy to meet question' so that it did not seem leading and to allow for unhappiness at contact as well as happiness, and thereby also increased the range of response options; we kept an indeterminate option for the pride question, to allow for those who felt either in-between or conflicted. We dropped the questions on dress and on 'land of ancestors'. We will attempt to further explore how to capture the concept of 'land of ancestors'; and dress may be included in a future module on religious practice. While most respondents were not uncomfortable answering these questions, the 'pride in being white' question did not seem very relevant to white respondents and as 'Black' was synonymous with 'colour of skin' for respondents who regarded themselves as black, we finally decided to drop these questions. The food questions worked well and we retained these.

In relation to the self completion questions on broader aspects of identity, we found that some of the domains worked more effectively than others. Individual's marital status appeared to be irrelevant to those who were single – it was either regarded as a hypothetical question or not seen as applying to them at all. Gender was straightforwardly understood by all participants and presented no problems of interpretation, and showed substantial variation in respondents' evaluation of its importance. Family was understood in relatively consistent ways across respondents and appeared to work well. In the original form of the questions there had been some which overlapped with the specific ethnic identity questions (e.g. religion) or which were subject to the same sorts of interpretive confusion that we had found in developing those (e.g. 'national identity'). We therefore removed such overlap, except for a generic question to allow for the fact that the ethnic identity questions would only be being asked in the extra five minutes and the self-completion would cover the whole sample. Overall we reduced the dimensions in the self-completion to those that were most salient and worked best, which also allowed it to allow it to be answered more quickly and to improve its appearance and 'fit' on the page, given the self-completion format.

This constituted the final point in the question development process. We had a recommended set of ethnic identity and wider identity questions to be put forward for the Wave 2 dress rehearsal. This final set of questions can be found in Annex E to this report.

Conclusions

Having reached the culmination of the development of ethnic identity questions, we now have a set of recommended ethnic and broader identity questions that we expect to be carried in Wave 2 of *Understanding Society* and at suitable intervals, thereafter.

We hope that the questions that we have developed in this project will allow researchers an unprecedented amount of flexibility to construct ethnic groups based on both demographic information (own, parents' and grand parents' country of birth, language, nationality, religion, and so on) and also based on respondents identification with these dimensions. As these questions will be asked of persons of the ethnic minority boost as well as the general population comparison sample and of recent migrants from the main sample, it will allow researchers to carry out comparative analysis of ethnic identity across minorities (however defined) and majority. The longitudinal nature of this survey and our suggestion of asking these questions every few years, and at higher frequencies for recent migrants and for young people, will allow research on changes in ethnic identity. This can include those changes following measured events (such as marriage, experience of discrimination, moving to areas of different ethnic composition – all information that is collected in this survey) as well as external events. The suite of broader identity questions will facilitate research on (among other things) the comparative importance of ethnic identity with these other aspects of identity. Last but not least, the household nature of the survey will allow researchers to use the questions on ethnic identity to understand how strength and nature of ethnic identity of different members of a family compare.

While quite fruitful in constructing questions on identification with different dimensions of ethnic identity, we have not been so successful in suggesting questions to measure certain other components of ethnic identity – shared values and beliefs, and patterns of association with members of the that group. As we know that *Understanding Society* does ask various attitudinal questions about different values (and will do so more in the future), we suggest that the question of whether persons of the same ethnic group share values and beliefs be empirically determined by researchers using information on respondents' values and beliefs and the rich information on ethnic background and ethnic identity available. Understanding patterns of association and sense of belonging will require further development of questions to measure these.

'Land of ancestors' as a dimension of ethnic identity and food that is typical of an ethnic group being an important vehicle of transmission of ethnic identity were issues that were spontaneously mentioned by the respondents. Following from that we attempted to develop questions to measure these. While we have succeeded in developing questions on frequency of consuming food that is typical of own, parents and grandparents' country of birth we found that 'land of ancestors' was a phrase that was not understood by everyone. This is an area that needs to be further researched and questions developed in the future.

As we have mentioned there are a range of complementary questions which have the potential to enhance our understanding of both ethnic identity (in relation to values and attitudes and patterns of association / social networks). In addition, we recognise that ethnic identity is only one aspect of identity and for some – or in some circumstances – not the most vital or significant one. Questions on values and attitudes in different areas will be fielded across *Understanding Society* and therefore allow for joint analysis with the ethnic identity questions. Similarly, analysts can combine other dimensions such as family status and occupation with responses on the ethnic identity module to gain a more detailed understanding of the specificities of forms of identification. In addition, we have proposed that questions on patterns of association and networks be a priority for wave 3, a proposal that is consistent with the published long-term content plans that have been consulted upon, and that the ethnic dimensions of such a module are explicitly considered in the development process. Similarly, we see alternative sources of identification as part of an ongoing development of this element of the survey and as part of the priorities for future question development. We envisage a rich seam of research emerging from different uses of these questions for a long time to come.

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