Key words and their meanings
This is not a glossary – a list of words with definitions – because most of the
vocabulary used to talk about cultural diversity is woolly at best and at worst a source
of contention.

The vocabulary has changed over time: 'black' was once considered offensive but is
now the preferred term when used as an adjective with an initial capital letter as in
'Black artist' but unacceptable when used as a noun, 'a black'. Some words, like
'race', have complex and contentious histories, with possible meanings that are
rooted in discredited ways of thinking.

Words considered acceptable by some are seen as offensive by others. Young
Londoners talking about identity said they thought 'minority ethnic' implied inferiority
and disadvantage1 but for others it is a preferred term. Within the arts, some terms
have acquired a widely accepted usage that may be different from the formal
definition ('cultural diversity' is one example). The very different terminologies used
by the contributors to this book, all experts in their field, illustrate the problem clearly.

The solution is to be aware that whatever words you use may be open to
misunderstanding. Whenever you work with a group or individual for the first time ask
what terminology they prefer and agree a common vocabulary.

Culture
Undergraduates write essays and academics write whole books about the meaning
of culture. Raymond Williams mapped the way the word changed over the 18th and
19th centuries to come to mean 'a whole way of life, material, intellectual and
spiritual.'[2] Ziauddin Sardar quotes a range of definitions including 'Culture is the
learned behaviour of a society or a subgroup' (Margaret Mead) and 'Culture is simply
the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves' (Clifford Geertz). The most
useful is probably his concluding definition: 'Culture seems to be (almost)
everything'.[3] An individual's culture derives from their upbringing, education and
social experiences and is a matter of choice.

Cultural diversity
This phrase is not widely used outside the arts although the most celebrated
definition was made in a speech in 1969 by the politician, Roy Jenkins: *'I do not think
that we need in this country a 'melting-pot', which will turn everybody out in a
common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced
vision of the stereotyped Englishman … I define integration, therefore, not as a
flattening process of assimilation, but as equal opportunity, accompanied by
cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.'*

This marked an important shift towards a concept of social cohesion in which
immigrants could integrate without losing their own national characteristics.
Within the arts 'cultural diversity' is used in different ways. The Museums, Libraries
and Archives Council (MLA) defines it like this: *'Cultural diversity refers to the
complex composition of society, made up of different interest groups which may be
based on region, gender, generation etc and which have their own sense of history,
values and ways of communicating.'* [4]

MLA recognises, though, that this definition may not be universally accepted and one
of the self-assessment questions in its *Access for All* toolkit asks: *'Has your
organisation developed a definition of cultural diversity and what it means for
the organisation?*[5]

Arts Council England has defined cultural diversity in a similar way to the MLA to include dimensions of age, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation, but its *Cultural Diversity Action Plan 1998–2003* focused specifically on 'African, Caribbean, Asian and Chinese Arts'. Similarly, decibel mentions a broad definition of cultural diversity but then narrows it down: *'In the context of decibel the term "culturally diverse" means ethnic diversity resulting from post-war immigration, with an increased focus on British artists of African, Asian and Caribbean descent.'*

This is a common approach: arts organisations and researchers refer to a holistic definition but then, for the purposes of the project, focus on ethnic diversity. Sometimes the broad meaning is termed 'diversity' to distinguish it from the narrower meaning intended for 'cultural diversity'.

But even this working definition is problematic, as Mary Clarke discovered when researching differences between audiences for culturally diverse work at mixed programme venues and those for the rest of the programme. Arts Council England, who commissioned the research, defined 'culturally diverse' as work by Black and minority ethnic artists, whereas several of the participating venues used a much wider definition encompassing events relating to other cultures such as flamenco, and all work featuring performers of Black and minority ethnic origin. Some venues defined work as 'culturally diverse' if it had a feature that meant it could be marketed to what Clarke terms a 'culturally diverse audience'.

Unfortunately, the lack of a clear definition has led to the term being used inaccurately to mean both 'ethnic diversity' and the opposite, 'culturally specific'. It is used inappropriately as a euphemism for Black, Asian or Chinese or, even more inappropriately, as a group identity – 'a culturally diverse artist'. There is also a tendency to group together all ethnic identities under the umbrella of 'culturally diverse' and make the inappropriate assumption that all members of a 'culturally diverse audience', for example, are alike. It is worth noting that Arts Council England has decided in future not to use the phrase 'cultural diversity' (see page 207 of the full report).

Race
Race was originally framed to describe significant biological distinctions between populations but this concept has been discredited because the differences actually consist of largely superficial physical characteristics. The divisions between 'races' come from society not biology. The British Council points out that the human race is a single race so terms like 'racial groups' are misleading. Even so, 'race equality' and 'race relations' are in widespread official use and the Race Relations Act (1976) defines a racial group as: *'a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins'*

Ethnicity
Like 'race', ethnicity is a social construct and, like 'cultural diversity', it defies simple definition. It is a fairly recent term. A report for the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) comments that the word 'ethnicity' only appeared in the English language in the 1950s. The House of Lords made a ruling in 1983 in which they said essential features of an ethnic group were 'a long shared history and distinct culture' along with the following 'relevant' characteristics that may be present: 'a common geographic origin or descent from a small number of common ancestors; a common language; a common literature; a common religion and being a minority within a larger community'. Although this ruling refers to religion, quite often faith is excluded so descriptions of ethnicity focus on geographic origin even though for some, such as

young people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, religion is a more important factor in their sense of identity.

The DCA report describes ethnicity as 'the essence of an ethnic group or the quality one must possess in order to belong to an ethnic group'. It emphasises that ethnic identity is concerned with a sense of belonging, as opposed to separateness. Ethnicity is about the distinct identity perceived by the individual themselves, but also that perceived by others.

The term is frequently mis-used to mean 'non-white' with connotations of exotic, out of the ordinary and primitive in phrases like 'ethnic clothes' and 'ethnic restaurants'. Some of the contributors to this book, in particular marketing experts from outside the arts, use the phrase 'ethnic communities' to mean non-white communities. This, like the phrase 'non-white' itself, is widely considered to be inappropriate and even offensive because it implies that it is 'normal' to be white and everyone else is 'nonstandard'. It also fails to recognise the huge ethnic diversity of white communities.

Ethnic minority, minority ethnic and BME
These phrases are in widespread use as preferred terms, often specifically to refer to people who are not white. In addition to the issues around the word 'ethnic' described above, they are problematic because of the underlying assumption that the white population is numerically larger, which is not the case in many UK neighbourhoods. 'Minority' implies 'marginal' and also that 'White British' is not an ethnic group. The issues are such that the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain decided to avoid using 'minority' and 'ethnic' altogether.

'Black and minority ethnic', was Arts Council England's preferred term in 2005. It shares all the problems of 'minority ethnic' and also implies that Black people are not part of an ethnic minority.

Black and Asian
This is often used within the arts in phrases like 'Black and Asian audiences'. People of African and Caribbean origin often refer to their identity as 'Black' alongside more specific ethnic identities – British, Nigerian, Jamaican and so on. The British Council reports that, in contrast, 'Asian' is often considered unacceptably broad. Ziauddin Sardar, like many others, objects to the phrase because it 'lumps all ethnicities together' as 'not Western' (see page 45 of the full report). Some commentators have also used 'Black' in a political sense as an umbrella term for all those of any ethnic origin who self-identify as discriminated against and excluded.

Mainstreaming
Mainstreaming refers to the integration of good equal opportunities policy and practice into every aspect of an organisation's activities rather than it being seen as a bolton. See page 88 of the full report for Marie Gillespie and Anita Sharma's discussion of the mainstreaming of multiculturalism in broadcasting.

Multiculturalism
The well-respected campaigning charity Race for Racial Justice defines multiculturalism as: *'the belief that many different cultures should be encouraged and allowed to flourish in society and that services and facilities such as health, education, the arts, etc should be delivered in a way that embodies and promotes this belief.'*

Although still widely used, several of the contributors in this book discuss multiculturalism as a concept that has outlived its usefulness. They point out that within it cultural boundaries are seen as fixed and unchanging, people of ethnic minority origin are always defined by their ethnicity, and equality is seen within a hierarchy with 'majority' cultures as 'dominant' (see Ranjit Sondhi on page 46, Lia Ghilardi on page 54 and Jorella Andrews on page 141 of the full report). Ziauddin Sardar comments that 'although multiculturalism is a great idea, it is still yesterday's ideal … too fixated with containing and managing difference.' (see page 37).

Key words and their meanings
1 Johnsson, Emily, *In-between two worlds: London teenagers' ideas about identity, cultural belonging and Black history*, ALM London, 2004
2 Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society*, The Hogarth Press, 1993
3 Sardar, Zaiuddin and Van Loon, Borin, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Icon Books, 1999
4 www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00access_02.asp
5 *Access for All Self-Assessment Toolkit: Checklist 2 – cultural diversity for museums, libraries and archives*, MLA at www.mla.gov.uk
6 www.britishcouncil.org/diversity/race_terms.htm, 11/8/2005
7 'Chapter 26: Respecting Cultural Diversity', *Information Meetings and Associated Provisions within the Family Law Act 1996: final evaluation report*, Department for Constitutional Affairs
8 Mandia v Lee
9 Johnsson, 2004