

# Black young people in education and the youth labour market

David Drew

It has been my pleasure to work for eight months during 1990 at the University of Sheffield, Division of Education with John Gray and Nicholas Sime.

Our analysis uses data from the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales, a postal survey of 50 000 young people aged 16 to 19. It is funded by the Training Agency, the Department of Employment, and the DES. The reports so far, from the study are:

Drew, D. and Gray, J., (1990), 'The fifth year examination achievements of black young people in England and Wales', *Educational Research*, vol. 32, No. 2, pp 107-117.

This paper explores the differences in examination attainment at age 16, by race, gender, and social class, using a sample of 15 000 black and white young people. The average difference between Afro-Caribbean and white young people is approximately one O level pass, and Asians are on a par with whites.

Drew, D. and Gray, J., (1991), 'The black-white gap in exam achievement: a statistical critique of a decade's research', *New Community*, (forthcoming), pp 23.

This paper reviews critically the statistical research on examination attainments at age 16 and its limitations, including the sampling procedures used and the ways in which researchers have controlled for important variables.

Drew, D., Gray, J., and Sime, N., (1991), *Against the odds: The education and labour market experiences of black young people*, Sheffield: Training Agency Research and Development Series. In preparation. (Approximately 100 pages.)

This research report is in two parts and is based on a sample of 28 000 black and white young people. The first part is an analysis of post-compulsory full-time education. Black young people stay on in education more often and, in some respects, obtain better results than their white counterparts. The second part is an analysis of transitions of young people into the labour market. This includes a study of YTS and the routes used by different people to move into full-time employment. It also focuses on employment and the way racism affects employment opportunities.

Anyone interested in this area of research should contact me for further details at:

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A report of our findings appeared in the Afro-Caribbean paper *The Voice* with the headline, **STOP KNOCKING OUR KIDS**. A further report appeared in *The Times*, London, with the much more dubious headline **A TOUCH OF EASTERN PROMISE**. This is reproduced below.

THE TIMES MONDAY JULY 2 1990

## EDUCATION

# A touch of eastern promise

David Tytler examines a national survey of school exam results which shows what ethnic minorities can achieve in a multi-racial society

Still too little is known about whether ethnic background is important when it comes to examination achievements at 16, according to a national survey of school results published last week.

The research, by David Drew of Sheffield City Polytechnic and John Gray of Sheffield University, suggests that both gender and social background are potentially more influential than ethnic differences.

They stress, however: "This finding does not diminish the importance of ethnic differences. These still persisted, even when socio-economic group and gender were taken into account."

Ethnic origin could be one of the reasons children find themselves in certain groups because it may well have affected the kind of employment their parents obtained. They suggest that further research should be carried out to discover how the three factors combine in influencing examination results.

Using data from the national Youth Cohort Study, the researchers examined a group of 14,429 children aged 16 in 1985, breaking the figures down into 95 per cent white, two per cent Afro-Caribbean and three per cent Asian. They then split them into three social groups, professional and managerial, intermediate and manual.

About six per cent of Afro-Caribbeans or Asians were in the professional and managerial group compared with 19 per cent of the whites, while in the manual group, 60 per cent were Afro-Caribbean or Asian compared with 46 per cent white.

Young whites reported the highest results, although the gap between them and Asians was small. On the other hand, the gap between these two groups and the Afro-Caribbeans was larger.

Just over one in five whites and just under one in five Asians achieved five or more higher-grade passes, compared with fewer than one in ten Afro-Caribbeans, say the researchers.



Recipe for success: children from various backgrounds mix happily together during a school cookery lesson

They point out, however, that by concentrating on the higher levels of achievement it is possible to exaggerate the extent of the differences. If viewed across the whole pattern of results, the differences are only be-

tween one-fifth and one-third between the groups. White girls did the best, but the difference between the sexes in the other two groups was either small or insignificant.

"Perhaps the most noteworthy find-

ing to emerge is the relatively high performance of young people of Asian origin - and notably males - in the intermediate and manual groups both in comparison with whites and Afro-Caribbeans," Mr Drew and Mr Gray say.

"We found few differences in the average exam results between Asian and white students, and the results of Afro-Caribbeans were, on average, somewhat lower. This was most noticeable in terms of the proportions reaching the levels of exam achievement."

### HOW EXAM RESULTS COMPARE

	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	White
Average number of O-level A-C and CSE at grade one	1.09	1.93	2.15
Average at any grade	5.07	5.67	5.70

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