



## 2 Attainment of Racial Minorities

Although there is a large volume of evidence about the educational attainment of racial minority groups, it is hard to draw firm conclusions. Hardly any of the studies are national, or based on broadly representative samples, and most are local. The minority groups are highly diverse; most studies have to aggregate distinct south Asian groups, and different studies represent particular linguistic or religious groups in different proportions. Also, the studies have been carried out over a period of more than 20 years. There have probably been important changes over this period, but it is hard to disentangle change over time from differences of method or approach between studies.

In spite of these difficulties, it is possible to state some general conclusions from past research, and these findings form an important part of the context for our own study.

### **Educational background of the adult population**

The best and most recent information about the educational background of the adult population belonging to the main racial minority groups is provided by the third PSI survey of racial minorities carried out in 1982.<sup>1</sup> This survey was of a representative sample of people throughout England and Wales whose families originate from the West Indies and from the Indian sub-continent (including African Asians). There was also a representative sample of white people for comparison. The findings on academic and vocational qualifications are shown in a simplified form in Table 2.1.

Comparisons have to be made within age groups. Among those aged 45 and over, the level of qualifications is much lower than among younger people; this reflects the widening of educational opportunities that has taken place since the Second World War. There are also differences between young people (aged 16-24) and those in early maturity (aged 25-44). These are a mixture of life cycle differences (people acquire qualifications after the age of 25) and changes over time (the widening of educational opportunities has continued).

In the case of Asians, the proportion having degree level qualifications is much the same as among white people, except among men aged 25-44, for whom it is higher among Asians. If we consider the proportion having qualifications at O level standard or above, the pattern is more complex. The proportion qualified at this level is about the same among older Asians as among white people; among those aged 25-44 it is distinctly lower among Asians than among white people, though the difference is not large; while among those aged 16-24, the proportion with at least O level qualifications is higher for Asian men than for white men, but lower for Asian women than for white women.

In the case of West Indians, the proportion having degrees is very low, and much lower than for white people within every group. However, if we consider the proportion having qualifications at O level standard or above, then the picture is very different. Among those aged 16-24, a similar proportion of West Indians and white people are qualified at this level (though the proportion is somewhat lower for West Indian women than for white women). However, among those aged 25-44 and 45 or over, a considerably smaller proportion of West Indian than of white people have qualifications at O level standard or above. This pattern of findings suggests that people of West Indian origin who have been through the British educational system in recent years have closed or nearly closed the gap between themselves and white people in O level qualifications that was characteristic of earlier generations. At the same time, very few West Indians are going on to higher education.

From the more detailed information given in the PSI report, it can be shown that there is among Asians a greater diversity of educational level than among other groups. A substantial proportion of adult Asians (of the women in particular) had very little education, or never went to school; equally, the proportion having higher qualifications is about the same as among white people. Asians who had very little education also tend to speak English only slightly or not at all.

Although more detailed tables are not shown in *Black and White Britain*, the previous PSI survey (which was carried out in 1974) showed that of the Asian groups, African Asians were the best qualified, while those originating from Pakistan and Bangladesh were the least qualified.<sup>2</sup> Unpublished tables from the later (1982) survey confirm these findings, and show that the differences between specific Asian groups are large.

### Recent school leavers

The largest body of information available about the qualifications of recent school leavers belonging to minority groups is that contained in the Swann Report.<sup>3</sup> This analysis is based on the school leavers survey carried out each year for the Department of Education and Science, which obtains (from the schools) information about a 10 per cent sample of leavers. In 1978/79, a special analysis was carried out for leavers within the six LEAs with the highest proportion of children belonging to ethnic minority groups, which were thought to account for about half of all leavers of Asian or West Indian origin. The analysis was repeated for 1981/82, except that one of the six LEAs dropped out. The ethnic classification was based on returns provided by the schools. In all of the published results, three broad groups are used (Asians, West Indians, all others).

For both of the years covered, the findings 'show Asian leavers to be achieving very much on a par with, and in some cases marginally better than, their school fellows from all other groups in the same LEAs'.<sup>4</sup> For both years, West Indians were shown to have achieved poorer results than Asians and all others. For example, 6 per cent of West Indians had achieved five or more higher grades at CSE or O level, compared with 17 per cent of Asians and 19 per cent of all other leavers in 1981/82. The West Indians were much further behind in mathematics than in English language. They were substantially behind in terms of A levels as well as O levels and CSEs. There was, however, evidence of substantial improvement in the results of West Indians over the three years between the two surveys (1978/79 to 1981/82). The proportion of West Indians obtaining five or more higher grades at CSE or O level increased from 3 per cent to 6 per cent, and there were also considerable improvements in the O level and CSE results in mathematics and English language considered separately. Further, the proportion of West Indians who had obtained at least one A level pass increased from 2 per cent to 5 per cent.

These findings about the qualifications of recent West Indian school leavers do not fit well with the findings from the PSI survey about the qualifications of the adult population. West Indian school leavers in areas of high ethnic concentration seem to be much further behind Asians and whites than is the case for young West Indian adults (aged 16-24) in the country at large. This illustrates the problems and difficulties involved in interpreting the findings even of large-scale studies. Two explanations for the contrast can be suggested. First, it is well established that Asians and West Indians living in areas of high ethnic concentration are much more likely to have low job levels and educational qualifications than those living in mainly white areas.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, we would expect the Swann report data to understate quite substantially the achievements of Asian and West Indian school leavers (because it is confined to five LEAs of high ethnic concentration). Also, we would expect the gap between ethnic minorities and whites to be wider in these areas of high concentration than elsewhere. This applies particularly to Asians, whose social class and educational background varies particularly strongly between areas of high and low ethnic concentration. This helps to explain why West Indians are further behind whites in the Swann school leaver statistics than in the PSI survey results for a national sample of young adults. However, it also suggests that the Swann statistics may be seriously under-stating the achievements of Asian school leavers. It would be consistent with the Swann statistics to suppose that by 1981/82 Asian school leavers nationally were substantially *better* qualified than whites.

A second important point is that people may catch up with O levels and A levels after leaving school, and in a later section we will consider evidence that West Indians are more likely to do so than other groups. For this reason, young West Indian adults may be almost as well qualified as young white people, even though West Indian school leavers are not.

The Swann statistics also show the proportion of school leavers who are going directly to full-time degree courses. In 1981/82, this was 5 per cent for Asians, 5 per cent for all other leavers and 1 per cent for West Indians. It is possible that the gap between West Indians and the rest is narrower than this in terms of the proportion who eventually go on a degree level course, but the PSI findings for young adults suggest that this is not so; they are closely in accord with the Swann statistics on this point.

The findings just considered are about the crude outcomes of the educational process; they do not necessarily show that West Indian children are achieving less well than white children whose family background is comparable. Nevertheless, it is useful to have information about the total outcomes before starting to consider explanations, which require far more detailed comparisons. The Swann report did quote evidence to support the view that West Indian school leavers have poorer qualifications than white school leavers in the same broadly defined social class groups. This evidence came from a study of all school leavers in 1979 in an outer London borough.<sup>6</sup>

### **Attainment and progress of children**

One way of approaching the analysis of educational achievement among racial minorities is to consider how the attainment of children of Asian and West Indian origin compares with that of white children at each stage of development over the years of schooling between the ages of 5 and 16. Another approach is to compare the rate of progress of the different groups, or in other words to compare their attainment at one time in the light of their attainment some years before. In practice, we can make the best use of the available evidence by using both approaches, and by considering whether the evidence about

differences in attainment between Asian, West Indian and white children at various ages fits with the evidence about rates of progress.

An important difficulty in interpreting the evidence is that there are various kinds of change over time that are hard to disentangle.

1. There are changes associated with the normal process of development through the school years from 5 to 16.
2. There are changes associated with the process of adaptation of children newly arrived in Britain. Newly arrived children may show a different curve of development from children born in Britain: for example, they might have low achievement initially, but catch up later.
3. Immigration of West Indians and Asians took place on a substantial scale in the 1950s and 1960s, but by the mid 1970s had been reduced to a low level. Consequently, the composition of the population of Asian and West Indian children has changed substantially over the past 20 years: the proportion who were born abroad was large in the 1960s but since then has reduced almost to vanishing point. There is therefore a third kind of change associated with this reduction in the proportion of racial minority children who are newly arrived in Britain.
4. Finally, there are changes over the past 20 years in schools themselves and in the wider social environment. Children growing up today are taught differently and are subject to a different set of wider influences from those growing up 20 years ago.

It is useful to keep in mind these four kinds of change when considering the available evidence. There is really no way of assessing the importance of genuine historical change (4 above) in the schools or their social environment, though it is perfectly possible, for example, that black children are being more effectively taught now than they were 20 years ago. However, a number of studies do provide evidence about the normal process of development, and about the differences between newly arrived Asian and West Indian children and those born in Britain; and from this we can make inferences about the effect of the changing composition of children in terms of the proportion who are newly arrived.

The following analysis first considers change associated with the adaptation of Asian and West Indian children, since this will affect the way we order the results of studies carried out at different times. It then considers the evidence about attainment and progress in developmental terms, starting at the age of 5 and working up to the age of 16.

### ***Change associated with adaptation***

There is convincing evidence from several studies carried out in the 1960s and early 1970s that second-generation children, both Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, tended to have higher attainment at all ages than those born abroad. It is much less clear whether second-generation children also tended to show better *progress* than those born abroad. Among the present population of school-age children belonging to racial minority groups, the great majority were born in Britain, so the earlier results could not be replicated. However, any tendency for later generations to achieve better must be taken into account when interpreting the findings from earlier studies which are often quoted, but were carried out 15 to 20 years ago.

Juliet Essen and Mayer Ghodsian analysed data from the National Child Development Study, a longitudinal study of about 16,000 children born in England, Wales and Scotland in one week of March 1958.<sup>7</sup> (At the time of writing these 'children' have just celebrated their thirtieth birthday.) Data from the same source were reanalyzed by N J Mackintosh

and C G N Mascie-Taylor for the Swann Committee.<sup>8</sup> These are the only studies based on a nationally representative sample, though the numbers are fairly small (99 West Indian children and 158 Asian children in the analysis by Essen and Ghodsian). In tests of reading at the age of 16, second generation children scored considerably higher than first generation children, and this applied to Asians and West Indians equally. There was a similar pattern for the mathematics scores, although the difference between first and second generation children was less marked.

The ILEA Literacy Survey assessed the reading standards of 32,000 children in inner London who were aged eight in 1968 and followed them up at ten, 13 and 15.<sup>9</sup> (These 'children', who were born in 1960, were two years younger than those in the NCDS study, and are 28 at the time of writing.) Complete data were collected for 1,465 children of West Indian origin, and for 196 children of Indian and Pakistani origin. At the age of eight, the reading scores of all three minority groups were well below those of whites. In the case of West Indians, the gap became successively wider at the ages of 10 and 15. On the initial test at the age of eight, West Indian children who had received only part of their education in Britain scored lower than those who had been in Britain longer, and broadly similar differences remained at later ages. The most newly arrived children tended to catch up, and the widening of the gap between West Indians and whites seemed to be due to the performance of children who had received all or most of their education in Britain.

By contrast, the gap in reading scores between Asians and whites decreased between the ages of eight and 15. This was mostly because of improvement among newly arrived Asians who had received only part of their primary education in Britain.

Michael Rutter and his colleagues studied a group of 2,281 children in one London borough who were born in the same year as the ILEA literacy cohort. They were aged 10 in 1970 when they were given a group reading test. The mean scores were 94.8 for white children, 88.7 for children of West Indian origin born in the UK, and 81.9 for children born in the West Indies.<sup>10</sup> Most of these children were again given a group reading test in 1974, when they were 14. There was still an important difference between the mean scores for children of West Indian origin born in Britain and children born in the West Indies.

These studies provide good evidence that second generation Asian and West Indian children throughout the age range do better in reading and mathematics than first generation children. There is evidence from the ILEA study that children who had only part of their schooling in Britain (both Asian and West Indian) tend to catch up between the ages of 8 and 15 with those who had all their schooling in Britain. This is not confirmed by the evidence from the Rutter studies, but the number of West Indians included in that cohort was much smaller.

These findings should lead us to expect that the performance of Asian and West Indian children today will be higher than 15 or 20 years ago, simply because most of today's children were born in Britain and have spent all of their lives here.

### ***Attainment at age 5-7***

In a study carried out in the late 1970s in a Midlands town,<sup>11</sup> Sandra Scarr and her colleagues collected the results of group reading tests routinely given in schools for all minority children and for samples of white children aged 5 to 12. Although the study had some longitudinal elements, the main results were obtained by comparing the test scores obtained by different groups of children at one time. The main sample was drawn from schools containing significant numbers of Asian or West Indian children, and most of the comparisons are between the minority groups and white children in that set of schools. A

further comparison sample of middle class white children was drawn from other schools. At the age of five, there were no differences between the scores of children of Asian, West Indian and UK origin in the same schools. At the age of six, the middle class white children had higher scores than other groups, and at the age of seven both groups of white children were ahead of both West Indians and Asians. Reading scores were lower among children of Pakistani than of Indian origin, and children of Indian origin were not far behind whites.

A longitudinal study carried out in inner London by the Thomas Coram Research Unit confirms these results for Afro-Caribbean children, using more detailed and sensitive testing instruments.<sup>12</sup> The researchers are able to make comparisons between 171 white children and 106 children of Afro-Caribbean origin; numbers of Asians were too small for separate analysis. The children were tested just before leaving nursery classes in 1982 at the age of 5; the tests covered early reading skills, early mathematical skills and early writing skills. There was no difference between the scores obtained by the black and white children. A multiple regression analysis showed that mother's educational qualifications, total parent teaching at home and parental views on the educational role of the family were each related to the test score, but there was still no relationship between ethnic group and the test score after controlling for these other variables.

A further stage in the study by the Thomas Coram Unit was addressed to factors in the home and the school that affect attainment and progress in the infant school. A longitudinal study of children aged 4-7 years was carried out and included the original 171 white and 106 children of Afro-Caribbean origin tested at nursery school. At the end of infant schooling there were still no differences in attainment between ethnic groups overall, but black girls had emerged ahead of black boys and of all the white children in reading and writing, while black boys attained less well than other groups. In maths, however, white and black boys made more progress than girls.<sup>13</sup> Classroom observation indicated that white boys had more contact with teachers about school work and received more praise than other groups. Black boys had least contact about work and received more disapproval and criticism from teachers.

These findings suggest that from the late 1970s, children of Asian and West Indian origin do not start school at a disadvantage. If they fall behind later, this will be because of the way they interact with the schools and not because of any problems they had on entry. However, we cannot use this result to interpret the results of much earlier studies, such as the ILEA literacy survey, which covered a group of children born 17 years before the group studied by the Thomas Coram Unit. It is possible that the West Indian children studied earlier, including those who had all of their education in Britain, may have already been at a disadvantage when they started at school, for example because many of their families had arrived in Britain only recently and had been subject to high stresses associated with being black in Britain at a particular epoch.

These findings also suggest that minority children do in fact start to fall behind at a very early stage of their school careers. The Thomas Coram study suggests that this is true of West Indian boys, but not girls. The study by Sandra Scarr and others suggests that it is true for West Indian children in general, and for children of Pakistani origin.

#### ***Attainment in the junior school years***

The ILEA literacy survey, which studied children in inner London born in 1960, found that at the age of eight, when they were first tested, children of West Indian and Asian origin were reading at a substantially lower level than whites. The mean scores according to country of origin were UK 98.1, West Indies 88.1, India 89.6, Pakistan 91.1. When the

children were re-tested at the age of 10, the results were similar, though the West Indian children had, if anything, lost further ground. Christine Mabey carried out an analysis to show how far the difference between the scores for West Indian and white children could be explained by differences between the two groups in terms of parents' occupation, family size, length of education in Britain, level of disadvantage ('priority') of the school attended, parent-school contact and whether the child was receiving free school meals (a measure of poverty). After adjusting the reading scores to take account of these variables, there was still a difference of four points between the West Indian and white children.<sup>14</sup>

The study of children in a Midlands town by Sandra Scarr and her colleagues in the late 1970s<sup>15</sup> showed a widening gap in reading scores between West Indian and white children between the ages of 7 and 10, but if anything this gap appeared to narrow between the ages of 10 and 12. The gap between Asians and whites that had opened up by the age of seven continued up to the age of 12. These comparisons are between children belonging to the minority groups and others (largely white children of UK origin) in the same schools. No information is available about the socio-economic group of the family or other background factors, so it is not possible to say how the reading scores of black children compared with those of white children from similar backgrounds. Since the results are not based on a single group of children who were followed through, but on different groups at each age, it is possible that the composition of the groups, in terms of background factors, changed from one age group to another. Also, the results were obtained by combining the scores from various different reading tests used for different groups of children. For these reasons, they do not provide very strong evidence, but they lend some weight to the view that there is a gap in reading skills between minority and white children by the age of seven, and that for Afro-Caribbeans it widens to some extent between the ages of seven and ten.

Recent evidence for this age group is provided by the study of inner London junior schools by Peter Mortimore and his colleagues.<sup>16</sup> Children of Caribbean origin obtained lower reading and mathematics scores at the age of seven than children of UK origin, and these differences remained when a controlled comparison was made in which the effects of background factors such as socio-economic group were removed. Similar differences were shown when the same children were tested at the age of nine and ten, and there was no evidence of any narrowing of the gap. In the case of Asian children, the results were markedly different for various linguistic groups, but the sample sizes were too small for this pattern of differences to be fully explored. Children who were not fully fluent in English, according to the class teacher, obtained markedly lower reading and mathematics scores than others. Both Afro-Caribbean and Asian children showed significantly poorer progress in reading than children of UK origin over the three years starting from the age of seven. However, there was no significant difference between the three ethnic groups in their progress in mathematics over this period.

### ***Attainment at secondary school***

N J Mackintosh and C G N Mascie-Taylor carried out for the Swann committee a new analysis of data from the National Child Development Survey.<sup>17</sup> This is the group who were born in 1958, and who are aged 30 at the time of writing; they were tested in reading and mathematics in 1969, when they were 11, and again in 1974, when they were 16. Also, their CSE and O level examination results have been analysed. Although the numbers are small for those of West Indian and Asian origin, the sample is nationally representative. Both West Indians and Asians scored considerably lower than white children on reading and mathematics at the age of 11. In reading, West Indians were behind by about the same

amount at the age of 16 as they had been at the age of 11; they had possibly caught up slightly in mathematics. By the age of 16, the Asians had narrowed the gap considerably in both reading and mathematics. Mackintosh and Mascie-Taylor carried out a multiple regression analysis, which showed that the differences in scores between the minority groups and whites were partly explained by seven variables describing the social background of the children. After adjusting the scores to take account of these background factors, there was no change between the age of 11 and 16 in the size of the gap in reading attainment between West Indians and whites, while the gap in mathematics attainment if anything reduced. In terms of the adjusted scores, the gap in reading and mathematics attainment between Asians and whites was substantially reduced between the ages of 11 and 16. If Asians who came to Britain after the age of seven are excluded from the analysis, then the remaining group score only slightly less than white children at the age of 11 and by the age of 16 they score higher even before adjusting for social background factors.

Both the Asian and West Indian children obtained fewer total passes and higher grades at O level and CSE than white children, when no allowance is made for social background factors. However, both groups obtained more total passes than white children in comparable social circumstances, and only slightly fewer higher grades.

The general pattern of these results from the NCDS is a constant gap in reading and mathematics between West Indians and whites from the ages of 11 to 16, and a narrowing gap between Asians and whites. Both groups obtained roughly the examination results that might have been predicted from a knowledge of the economic and home circumstances of the family.

The ILEA literacy survey (which covered inner London children born in 1960) showed a slight increase in the gap in reading scores between West Indians and whites between the ages of 10 (in 1970) and 15 (in 1975). In the case of the two Asian groups (originating from India and Pakistan) the gap narrowed slightly over the same period. An analysis of covariance confirmed that the reading scores of West Indians had significantly declined, relative to whites, over the whole period of the study (between the ages of 8 and 15). This had nothing to do with new arrivals, as only children tested at the age of eight are included in the analysis. The slight relative decline in the scores of West Indians occurred both among those fully educated in Britain, and among those who started school in Britain in 1965/66; among West Indians who started school in Britain after September 1966, the gap in reading scores remained constant between the ages of 8 and 16. By contrast, results for the other minority groups showed that those who had only part of their primary education in Britain started off well behind whites but tended strongly to catch up.

Two longitudinal studies, directed by Michael Rutter, of children in one London borough are an important source of information about the attainment of children of West Indian origin from the age of 10 to the point where they left school. The first was of all children attending primary schools in the borough and aged 10 in 1970 (so they have now reached the age of 28). They were given a group reading test at the age of 10, and again at the age of 14. At the age of 10, the West Indian children 'scored much less well than whites, who in turn (reflecting the inner city nature of the sample) scored below national norms for their age. Within the black [West Indian] group, children born abroad had the lowest scores of all. In both ethnic groups girls had rather higher scores than boys.'<sup>18</sup> There was little change in the reading scores of black children relative to white children between the ages of 10 and 14. Analysis of covariance was used to establish whether there were differences in progress in reading between ethnic groups (the analysis shows whether there are differences in the scores at age 14 when the scores at age 10 have been taken into

account). Among girls, ethnic group was not significantly related to progress in reading. Among boys, there was a small but significant tendency for the West Indians to have progressed slower. This small difference did seem to be related to social background. When children with parents in non-manual occupations were excluded, there were no significant differences between West Indians and whites in reading progress, either among girls or boys.

The second of these studies is of one age cohort of children attending 12 inner London secondary schools in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> For these children, seven-point teacher ratings of verbal reasoning ability were obtained at the age of 11; they were given a group reading test at the age of 14, and a record was kept of their attendance, their fifth-year examination results, and their qualifications on leaving school. More of the West Indian than of the white children obtained some graded result in the fifth year, but more of the whites than of the West Indians obtained good results. The reason that more of the West Indians obtained some graded result was that more of them stayed on to take examinations. An examination score was calculated (for examination candidates only), giving appropriate values to different grades at O level and CSE. On this measure, West Indian children of both sexes scored less well than whites, but the gap between the ethnic groups was much wider for boys than for girls. However, all of the difference in examination scores between ethnic groups was associated with the earlier difference in reading scores at the age of 14. An analysis of covariance showed that after taking account of the earlier reading scores, girls obtained better examination scores than boys, but there was no significant difference between black and white children. A similar result was obtained when the examination scores were analysed in the light of the teachers' ratings of verbal reasoning ability made when the children were 11. 'The findings gave no evidence of any relative deterioration (or improvement) in the performance of black [West Indian] candidates over this period [between the ages of 11 and 16]; their results at 16+, although poorer in absolute terms than those of whites, were essentially as might have been expected on the basis of their earlier assessed attainments.'<sup>20</sup>

Black children (especially the girls) were considerably more likely to stay on at school beyond the fifth year. As a result, the school leaving qualifications of the two ethnic groups were more alike than their results in the fifth year. A further analysis of covariance showed that the final qualifications of West Indian children were significantly higher than those of white children after their assessed verbal reasoning at the age of 11 had been taken into account. Similar results were obtained if the reading score at age 14 was used as the measure of earlier attainment. These findings mean that the final examination results of West Indian children reflected better progress through the years of secondary school than those of white children. This was largely because the black girls improved their examination scores between the fifth and sixth years and because a larger proportion of West Indian than of white children of both sexes obtained at least some qualification.

### **Further study**

There is ample evidence that both Asians and West Indians are substantially more likely than white people to pursue further study after leaving school. To a great extent, this reflects a greater motivation towards self-improvement and achievement. It may also reflect the special difficulties that young Asians and West Indians encounter in finding a job, because of continuing racial discrimination.

The Swann report provides statistics on the destinations of school leavers in 1981/82 in five local education authority areas containing high proportions of West Indians or Asians.

The proportion going onto any full-time course was 33 per cent for Asians, 28 per cent for West Indians, and 17 per cent for other school leavers in the same areas. Among these, the proportion going onto degree level courses was the same for Asians and West Indians (5 per cent) but much lower for West Indians.<sup>21</sup>

The PSI survey of racial minorities shows that in 1982, the proportions of people aged 16-19 who were in full time study were as follows.<sup>22</sup>

<b>Men</b>	Per cent
White	25
West Indian	26
Asian	58
<b>Women</b>	
White	24
West Indian	37
Asian	51

Among young people aged 16-19, the proportion continuing their education is twice as high for Asians as for whites, and this applies equally to men and women. The proportion of young West Indian women who are continuing their education is considerably higher than the proportion of young white women, while in the case of men, the proportion of West Indians and whites who are continuing their education is about the same.

Further evidence comes from a major study of West Indian and white school leavers carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for the Department of Employment.<sup>23</sup> This study followed up a sample of young people of West Indian origin in London and Birmingham who left school in 1971 and 1972. There was a comparison sample of white school leavers from the same schools, which mostly consisted of individuals matched on a range of characteristics with members of the main sample of West Indians. The sample did not include those going on to full-time education, but the results show how far the West Indians and the matched sample of white people participated in part-time courses. The authors summarise the relevant findings as follows.

The stress which West Indians placed on getting on well in their jobs and acquiring a good vocational training when we examined their general attitudes to work was manifested again in their enthusiasm for part-time further education. The differences in the attitudes of Whites and West Indians was especially pronounced amongst the girls. Whereas West Indian girls were as keen as boys to attend further education courses, white girls were much less interested. The West Indian girls' enthusiasm for further education was particularly striking in view of the fact that, in common with white girls, they were much less likely to be given time off from work to pursue their studies... In all types of occupation, however, when people failed to get time off from work to attend classes, West Indians of both sexes were much more likely than were Whites to attend courses in their own time, in the evenings.<sup>24</sup>

A more recent follow-up study was carried out of students in the fifth form at 23 comprehensive schools in six local authority areas in 1981/82.<sup>25</sup> By 1983, the proportion still at school was considerably higher among Asians (63 per cent) and Afro-Caribbeans (57 per cent) than among whites (44 per cent). The proportion in further education was also substantially higher among the minority groups (Asians 17 per cent, Afro-Caribbeans 17 per cent, whites 8 per cent).

## **Conclusions**

There are some important differences in educational background between the adult population of Asians and West Indians and white people, but generally these differences are not large, and they are much smaller than the differences in circumstances of life between the three groups. Also, the differences in educational background are much greater between age groups than between ethnic groups.

Among young people, the differences in educational attainment on leaving school between the racial minorities and whites are not very large. Asians are now obtaining similar results to whites. West Indians are obtaining poorer results, but there is evidence of improvement over a three-year period from 1978.

There is, however, an important difference between West Indians and white people in terms of higher education. A much smaller proportion of West Indians than of whites have degree level qualifications, and according to the most recent information available (1981/82) the proportion of young West Indians going onto degree level courses is still much lower than for young white people (or Asians).

There is evidence that from the late 1970s, children of West Indian and Asian origin are not already behind white children when they start school at the age of five. However, both groups have fallen behind by the age of seven. There is recent evidence that West Indian children progress more slowly than white children in reading between the ages of 7 and 10.

For Asian children, rates of progress over the junior school years are probably slower than for white children overall, but they differ widely between particular groups (defined, for example, in terms of language). It is clear that on entry to secondary school at 11, both Asian and West Indian children tend to be achieving at a lower level than white children, even if comparisons are made with children from comparable social backgrounds. There is some conflict of evidence as to whether West Indian children tend to fall further behind in the secondary school years, in terms of test results. Because of higher motivation and a tendency to stay on at school and take examinations, they obtain better qualifications than would have been expected from their attainment at the age of 11. Asian children catch up during the secondary school years in terms of test scores, and in spite of scoring much lower than white children at the age of 11, they obtain similar examination results.

There is ample evidence that both Asians and West Indians are substantially more likely than white people to pursue further study, both full-time and part-time, after leaving school. To a great extent, this reflects a greater motivation towards self-improvement and achievement. It may also reflect the special difficulties that young Asians and West Indians encounter in finding a job, because of continuing racial discrimination.

## **Notes**

1. See Brown (1984) Tables 74-76.
2. See Smith (1976) Tables B23 and B24, p208.
3. See Department of Education and Science (1985a). Annexe B (p110) gives a detailed account of the methods and findings of the analysis of the school leavers survey 1981/82, and comparisons with the 1978/79 results earlier presented in the committee's interim report.
4. See Committee of Inquiry (1985), p64.
5. See Smith (1976), Smith (1977) and Brown (1984).
6. See Craft and Craft (1983).
7. See Essen and Ghodsian (1979).

8. See Department of Education and Science (1985a), p126-163.
9. See Mabey (1981).
10. See Yule et al. (1975).
11. See Scarr et al. (1983).
12. See Blatchford et al. (1985).
13. See Tizard et al., 1988.
14. See Mabey (1981).
15. See Scarr et al. (1983).
16. See Mortimore et al. (1988), p151-162.
17. See Department of Education and Science (1985a), p126-163.
18. See Maughan et al. (1985), p115.
19. See Maughan and Rutter (1986).
20. See Maughan and Rutter (1986), p24.
21. See Department of Education and Science (1985a), p111-112.
22. See Brown (1984) Table 78, p149.
23. See Sillitoe and Meltzer (1985).
24. See Sillitoe and Meltzer, vol.1, p98.
25. See Eggleston et al. (1986).