



Vol 17 No. 442	
OBSERVATIONS	428
NO POLITICS	429
Jann Parry	432
GRAPEVINE	433
HOW CHILDREN LEARN LANGUAGE	433
Vivian Cook	435
WHAT JOBS ARE WORTH	435
David Willings	437
PRETTY POLITICAL DEVICES	440
Joan Davies	442
SOCIETY AT WORK	445
SHOP-FLOOR HEALTH	446
David Ball	447
NOTES	449
FINDINGS	450
OUT OF THE WAY	
HOW TO BECOME A SOCIAL WORKER	
Geoffrey Parkinson	446
ARTS IN SOCIETY	
MISHIMA'S TOY SWORD	
Angela Carter	447
STAND	
THE ARCHAIC AND THE ADVERTISED	
Donald MacRae	449
BOOKS	450
Bernard Crick on the car and politics, John Gretton on France, Konstantin Bazarov on chemistry, Griffith Edwards on migraine, Clancy Sigal on Martin Luther King, Pat Thane on the Ministry of Health, Jan Marsh on Lytton Strachey, Michael Wood on Nabokov	
LETTERS	455

NEW SOCIETY  
New Science Publications  
128 Long Acre, London WC2E 9QH  
telephone 01-836 2468; telegrams  
Newscent London WC2E 9QH  
©IPC Magazines Limited

Editor: Paul Barker  
Assistant editor: Peter Watson  
Editorial staff: David Ball, John Gretton,  
Jane Morton, David White  
Art editor: Charlie Riddell  
Editorial assistant: Sybil Greatbatch  
Subscriptions: order coupon printed each  
week inside the magazine; this gives inland  
and overseas rates (airmail and seairmail)

## Immigrants at school

For a subject that has suffered so much public scrutiny over the last few years, the intellectual abilities of immigrants (children especially) have received less than their fair share of the professional attention of social scientists.

With some quarter of a million immigrant children in British schools, about 44,000 of whom are reckoned to be in need of some sort of special teaching—not to mention those who have just left full-time education and gone into jobs—it can no longer be looked upon as a marginal issue.

In situations like this there is always the danger that what research there is will be relied on too heavily. And this is the situation that could surround the publication, this week, of Judith Haynes's report, for the National Foundation for Educational Research, on the *Educational Assessment of Immigrant Pupils* (price £2—or £2.10 by post from the foundation).

The NFER is a first-rate research organisation and Miss Haynes's research is no rush job. So it is a great pity that lack of money is—for the moment anyway—preventing further work. Nevertheless, her conclusions so far still need to be put into perspective.

What Miss Haynes has done is to devise a series of tests (of learning ability) that are better predictors of a child's success in school than other techniques available—like conventional intelligence tests or teachers' estimates. Briefly, the five tests put before the child problems in totally new situations, the solutions to which do not need a knowledge of English. Some involve learning words (though not language), others learning some form of relationship—between appearances, for example, or between quantities.

With Miss Haynes's sample of 125 Punjabi-speaking Indian pupils in Ealing (a small, specialised group, she admits) these tests did prove to be better predictors of success in school (measured by comparison with five tests of school attainment two years later) than either IQ tests or teachers' estimates. There may be some criticism that her adoption of conventional attainment tests as criteria for success is to accept a too narrow definition of what intelligence is or should be anyway. But to argue about this would be to miss the main point of her exercise.

For although Miss Haynes's new tests are, on her own analysis, undoubtedly better than more conventional predictors of future attainments, they are not *that* much better. More important, as she herself shows, performance—even on these tests—is still influenced by a number of environmental variables (she looked at more than 20).

And these bear out what a few psychologists have been saying for some time—that immigrant children's language handicaps, though clearly important from the point of view of social adjustment, have diverted our attention from the more subtle, but also more important influences on their intellectual performance.

For instance, the proportion of immigrants in the school. Children in the schools which had the higher percentages of immigrants tended to obtain better scores on all the attainment tests. For instance, the teacher's attitude towards immigrant pupils. The more favourably disposed the teachers were to immigrants, the better did they perform. For instance, the teacher's experience. For instance, the child's integration with English

children (as judged by the teacher), his attitude to work and to school. For instance, the child's home background—or part of it at least. The more the family perpetuated allegiance to Indian culture (in dress, in attending temple and so on) the less successful was the child.

And, significantly, immigrant children who spoke more English at home were better adjusted socially at school—but they were not necessarily any more successful in their educational attainments.

So, in providing the educational service with a more accurate tool, Miss Haynes has given the whole debate about race and education a shove in the right direction in her surrounding analysis.

But is this attaching too much weight to one research project? It would be if it were just one and if it were not for the fact that other current research, directly or indirectly, supports the NFER project. One of these reports can be found in a recent issue of the *British Journal of Education Psychology* (vol 40, part 3). There, J. McFie and J. A. Thompson, from the department of child psychiatry at Guy's Hospital, report their research on the "Intellectual abilities of immigrant children." Their research was with West Indian and English children, but it adds to the argument surrounding the NFER report.

In giving these children a commonly-used intelligence test, McFie and Thompson found that even the English-speaking West Indian children did *worse* on the non-verbal part of the test than the verbal part. They also found that when the immigrant children were divided into those who had been in England since before they were five, and those who came after this age, there was less difference between those who had been here longer and the English children (it was seven IQ points) than there was between the two West Indian groups.

Finally, yet more support for these ideas can be found in a report to be delivered to the annual conference of the British Psychological Society at Exeter next month. This will show how the performance of West Indian pupils is also related to their teachers' attitudes.

True, this is a ragged bunch of research reports, perhaps still more suggestive than conclusive. But what the bunch does suggest, increasingly strongly, is that environmental and motivational influences on the intellectual performance of immigrant children are more important than they have previously been given credit for in Britain.

Moreover, they are not necessarily factors which only matter with emotionally maladjusted children. The Ealing study noted how teachers "frequently expressed the opinion that Indian children tend to be emotionally more stable than the children of other cultural groups, including English children."

But even if the language handicap has been put in its place, we still have only the slightest inkling—even in these studies—of to what extent these handicaps apply to immigrant children who have been born here. Whilst it may be true that the presence of immigrants in Britain only highlights the deficiencies already built into the social fabric, it is also true that the problems the immigrant faces are worse than anyone else's. And of all the injustices, stunting of intellect is the most explosive.