

Source: FD/WHO, Changing Patterns of Oral Health

is more widely accepted. The armed have only yearly checks (and for a or pilot toothache could be a serious m). Sheiham recommends six-ly checks from age five to seven, when st permanent teeth are erupting, year-ks from seven to ten, and six-monthly s again from ten to 14 when there is "a ppening in the mouth." After that it is ter of "weaning yourself to a longer onger interval." For most adults a every two years is quite enough, he

this context, the increased dental s and the new charge for a check-up he government is proposing to intro-may paradoxically be a boon if they rage people to attend less often. But orries the dentists who are "every-looking for bums in chairs," says m. They are paid on a piece-rate basis treatment means no income.

committee on unnecessary treatment that "in many areas there are now too dentists to carry out the available thus providing a motive for unneces-treatment." And it warned that the m would get worse.

impossible to tell how many dentists liberately drilling away at perfectly y teeth. The committee, concerned to re the public, concluded that it was and that patients "should not lose ence in their dentists." But the line en deliberate abuse and overzealous ent is a fine one, and both are equally ing for the patient. Sheiham quotes n former students who return saying ntist they are working for has "told me rpen my probe" (the better, to find to fill).

committee on unnecessary treatment led that the threat from older dentists, "out-of-date treatment philosophies" ore worrying. It warned that "those

who trained 20 or 30 years ago and have not kept up with modern approaches will be practising the kind of restorative dentistry now regarded as involving unnecessary treatment."

A dramatic example of this variation in view was provided by one study in which 15 dentists examined the same 18 students. At one extreme a dentist decided that 20 tooth surfaces needed filling; his colleague at the other extreme found 153. Altogether the 15 dentists thought 326 tooth surfaces needed filling. But they were unanimously agreed on the need to fill only two of these. Medicine, we know, is not an exact science, but these findings make dentistry look about as scientific as bingo.

Out-of-date philosophies

The way to improve matters is blindingly obvious: as long as dentists are paid according to what they do they have no incentive to lay off the drill and do preventative work: advising patients how to brush their teeth properly, use dental floss, cut down on sugar and so on. A decade ago the royal commis-sion on the NHS called for the payment system to be changed and the 1980 Nuffield report on dental education described it as "a major impediment to progress" towards the development of a preventative approach.

The department of health has taken the view that switching the emphasis to preven-tative work—by, for instance, raising the fee for the routine check—might create a disin-centive to do necessary restorative work. But this simply won't wash. It should, in principle, be no more difficult to run spot checks for undertreatment than are now run for overtreatment (it ought to be easier). And patients are not going to tolerate toothache.

The government's latest pronouncement on the subject, in last November's white paper on primary care, indicates a change of

heart. It acknowledges that the present pay-ment system "provides little incentive to dentists to achieve high quality" and that it may encourage dentists to "maintain their incomes by engaging in unnecessary treat-ment." It will, therefore, "discuss new arrangements, including a new remunera-tion system, with the profession." The Brit-ish Dental Association has agreed to negoti-ate on a registration payment for accepting continuing care and responsibility for pa-tients.

An experimental scheme of this kind is already operating. Over 300 dentists around the country are being paid a capitation fee, like family doctors, to provide all necessary care to 130,000 children. The idea is to test whether the scheme "benefits children's den-tal health by giving dentists an incentive to provide more preventative services," the white paper says.

The other unresolved issue is the looming problem of too many dentists. Today's den-tal students are haunted by the spectre of future unemployment. The government re-duced the intake to dental schools by 10 per cent in 1985. Another 10 per cent cut will be made in 1989. But this is small beer—a reduction of 200 a year from 1995 in a profession with over 20,000 members. Sheiham argues that a much more savage cut, of the order of 50 per cent, is necessary.

There is an economic logic to this view. If you have too many dentists they are less likely to employ assistants. Yet for much of the preventative work you don't need some-one with five years expensive training. To meet their target gross income, dentists need to earn £40 an hour. At this rate it is not cost effective to spend time teaching someone how to brush their teeth. But if dentists were leaders of a team, acting as the diagnostician and planner, they could handle twice as many patients. The group practice of 40 staff of whom only five are dentists—a rarity today—should become the norm.

A major question is how much we are prepared to spend on looking after our teeth. Take gingivitis, the inflammation of the gum, for which thousands of people are treated by their dentists every year. It's like going to your GP with a little inflammation at the base of your fingernail. The GP sends you to the hygienist who spends half an hour showing you how to use a scrubbing brush. Then you are asked to come back every six months for "reinforcement." Dentists are demanding that £40 a year (a half hour visit every six months) be spent on helping people to save a millimetre of support for their teeth over 50 years. Yet we don't spend £40 a year on preventing heart disease because we cannot afford it.

Sheiham is fond of comparing dentists with miners. When the Coal Board declares a pit uneconomic, the miners can do little about it. But dentists, a powerful profession-al group, define and redefine need. Now a major shake-out is in prospect. Glass ionom-ers which can be painted on to the teeth and will do away with the need for drilling are already being tested. It is one more develop-ment to add to the other trends that could spell the end for dentists.

BIGOTRY IN BOROUGH OF BARNET

A 40 foot effigy, built by the Barnet Hindu community to be burnt ceremoniously at their annual Dussehra festival, was recently burnt down prema-turely in an arson attack. The organisers are certain it is part of a concerted attack on the community.

Although Barnet is the second wealthiest borough in London (the starting price for property in Thatcher's Finchley constituency is £200,000), Barnet accumulated more racial incidents last year than Hack-ney, Southall, Greenwich, Camden or Lambeth.

In the first nine months of 1987, the Barnet Community Relations Council recorded 243 "race" cases, almost double the whole of last year's total. They also issued a document of inci-dents such as the beating of two Asians by skinheads; dog mess smeared on windows; NF scrawched on woodwork after a burglary on an Asian family; battles between Jewish and non-Jewish youth; and repeated neighbour harassment.

As well as an established Jew-ish community, Barnet now has the sixth largest population of people from the New Com-monwealth in London.

The senior community rela-tions officer, David Mayer, warns against complacency: "We have always maintained that it's easy to suppress or ignore racism and this has been the way to encourage that minority of people who really are racist." Julian Kossoff ■

RACE AND SOCIETY

UPDATES

No school for Bengalis

At least 350 children in the East End of London—mainly of Bangladeshi origin—are receiving no education, in what an internal ILEA report calls an "unprecedented crisis."

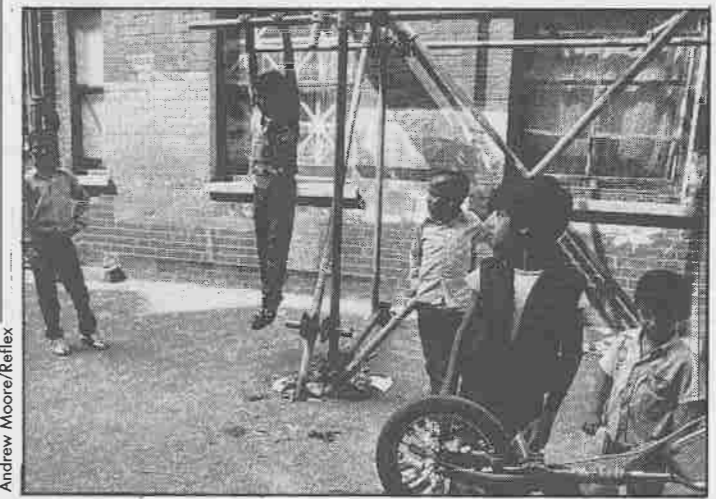
The children, most of them six years old, have never been to school because there are too few primary classes in parts of Tow-er Hamlets. Some schools have 50 or 60 children on their wait-ing lists. There are even cases of children who have missed out on school for two years.

Emergency measures are now being planned, which include

bussing children to schools in other parts of the borough and putting up huts at existing schools. There is also a danger that there will not be enough teachers to staff the makeshift classes because the borough is already 70 teachers short.

The clamour for admissions is even causing some headteachers to visit local housing estates to measure which flats are nearest the school, to be sure of accept-ing the most local children.

The ILEA report, from the building and property depart-ment to the sub-committees,



Andrew Moore/Reflex

UPVIEW

Half a loaf

But just then, big American businesses investing in North-ern Ireland started asking about equal opportunities for Catholics. Enter Tom King, Northern Ireland Secretary, making sweet promises about interven-tionist equality policies. Ditto, the PM in a personal statement, with photograph. The lobby for contract compliance on the mainland grew. It included the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, CRE, and the In-stitute of Personnel Manage-

ment; and the amendment was introduced.

Ripples of satisfaction all round, except for some angry Tories. Nicholas Ridley, the Environment Secretary, con-tinued the tradition of muddled thinking in this area, by pacifying the rebels instead of presenting arguments for an effective policy. These are that it makes commer-cial sense to use human talent, and financial incentives are excellent motivators. It is also, in principle, no different from health and safety

agreements. And contract com-pliance for equal opportunities is implicit in several international treaties signed by Britain. So, once the euphoria has died down, we need to ask what use is a policy based on a set of "approved" questions, to be asked before a contract is issued, allowing no ongoing monitoring or termination rights to an authority. Its exist-ence lets the government off the hook. It does not even tinker with fundamental structures and power relationships. Is half an old loaf really better than no loaf at all? ■

Mixed race children

The traditional stereotype of mixed race children is that they are misfits, belonging neither to the black nor to the white group. In the popular imagination, mixed race children are bound to have problems because their parents have flouted conventionality and denied them a clear membership of one "racial" group. But do mixed parentage children suffer these identity problems because of their parent's skin colour? For years, this "problem perspective" has been paramount, yet evidence to justify it is hard to find.

In part, the idea that mixed race people suffer psychological problems because of their social position can be traced to American theories of "marginality." It was argued, in the 1930s, that individuals who were on the margins of two social groups were unable to find a coherent image of themselves from which to construct their identity. However, there has been little empirical study to test this.

My research—which concentrated on British mixed race children—analysed these assumptions by studying the racial identity of 51 mixed race children, aged between six and nine. I interviewed their mothers to try to establish links between the mother's racial attitudes and her child's racial identity.

The techniques of the study were largely based on the American "doll" studies of children's racial identity. A child is presented with a doll representing a particular racial group and is then asked to respond to specific questions. These are designed to elicit categorisation (such as "Which doll looks most like a white child?"; identity—"Which doll looks most like you?"; and preference—"Which doll would you invite home to tea?"). My own study incorporated several changes into this technique; the most important were to do with categorisation.

In the American tests, two dolls were presented to the child—one black, one white. It was assumed that the children saw the racial structure in terms

of two distinct categories, black and white, and that it was from these two categories alone that they made their identity choice. This categorisation seemed inappropriate for Britain, because a small-scale pilot study had shown that children spoke of their identity in a bewildering array of vague racial terms—"brown," "mixed race," "half-Jamaican," "part black."

Although in terms of institutional racism the terms "black" and "white" were clearly the only ones of any significance, there seemed to be a secondary level of categorisation operating. The children's day to day "conversational" racial terms expressed a modified and refined view of where they belonged. On the basis of the pilot study, I decided to design the identity test so that children could construct their own racial or ethnic categories, before making a racial identity choice.

I presented the children with photographs of seven families, each one ethnically different. The father and mother were photographed together but the children (a boy and a girl in each case) were photographed separately. There was an Afro-Caribbean, an Indian and a white family. The remaining four families were inter-racial.

After testing the children for racial preference and racial identity in the same way as the American studies, I asked them to sort the photos of the children into groups according to their "race." (The pilot study had shown that even children of six years old had no difficulty understanding this instruction). After this they were asked to categorise the pictures again, this time on the basis of the groups they had identified themselves. Finally, the children were encouraged to talk about their categories and to explain the basis on which they constructed them.

As might be expected, the children's racial categories varied with age. The younger children (under eights) thought in terms of simple colour cate-

gories—"black," "white" and "brown." The distinction between each group was vague and ill-defined: the photo of a light-skinned mixed race boy was often placed in the "white" group and the majority of photos were classed as "brown." The older children used a more sophisticated range of criteria, grouping the photos on the basis of colour, parentage, culture or physical characteristics or in a combination of all of these.

Most children saw themselves as belonging to a "mixed-race" group or, in the case of younger children, a "brown-skinned" group located somewhere between the extremes of "light" and "dark" and they felt confident and positive about this. Since this response might be seen as ambiguous—the intermediate identity may simply be another way of expressing identity conflict—the response pattern of each child was examined in detail, to get the fullest possible description of how that child viewed him or herself within the racial structure.

Detailed analysis revealed three groups of children. The largest group (58.5 per cent) seemed to see themselves as mixed race and black. Despite some white orientation, their overall view of being black/mixed race was a positive one. They tended to live in multiracial areas where some form of "mixed" ethnic background was almost the norm. As a result the image of the raked social misfit simply did not apply to them.

Altogether 33.5 per cent of children either identified as white or showed some degree of identity conflict. These children tended to live in white areas and to have little or no contact with black or mixed race people.

A final group (8 per cent) identified themselves as black, with no mention of their "mixed" heritage. However, once again, these were children who lived in white areas. They had no idea what it meant to be black and displayed similar sign of conflict as those who identified as white. The percentage of children who did show racial identity conflict is comparable to that found in studies of children with two black parents.

The mother's racial attitudes,



Sally and Richard Greenhill

SHADES OF BROWN: MIXED PARENTAGE CHILDREN



Laurie Watson/ACER

as well as the area in which the child lived, seemed to influence the children's racial identity. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that mothers, either black or white, who were realistic in explaining racism to their children—mothers who told the children the system was unfair, but that it was up to black people to tackle racism collectively—tended to have children who were highly positive both about being black and mixed race.

The children whose mothers told them "work hard and racism will not affect you" tended to be among the children who showed signs of desperately wanting to be white. Clearly, they had already found out that their mothers were wrong and the responsibility of taking on a white-dominated system single-handed proved to be too great a burden.

Anne Wilson ■

Anne Wilson, *MIXED RACE CHILDREN* (Unwin Hyman; £8.95 paperback, £25 hardback).

White mums, black kids

I think it's like waking up black one day, after you have been white all your life," says Myra, a woman in her fifties. She has a half Nigerian teenage son, who looks black. One of the tediums she has to live with is the fact that when he is picked up by the police for "acting suspiciously" and she goes to the police station, initially they look at her with quizzical friendliness, (assuming that she is going to report "a lost dog or minor mugging")—when she tells them who she is, they look embarrassed for a while, and then are quietly antagonistic.

Like many other white women in similar situations, Myra has learnt to take this. "It's hard though," she says and "occasionally, I get enraged with my son, blaming him."

The commonest pattern of inter-racial relationships according to opcs statistics is white women with black men, but there has been little research done on the subject of cross-racial motherhood and the racism, sexism, and marginalisation which so many of these

women suffer. Most of them get personal abuse from strangers as a way of life. They know that the sexual symbolism of a black man raping and "polluting" the fair maiden, and the questionable morals of the aforesaid fair maiden, goes back to the pre-slave days. What none of them seem to have been prepared for is the aggression that their children provoke.

For Vron Ware, a freelance writer, it happened to her 16 month baby in the park: "This old man said, 'another fucking nigger' and I was astonished, not that it had happened, but that he could see race in a child before anything else."

Grace Parry is married to an Iranian, and has twins, a boy and a girl. The boy looks white and the girl looks conspicuously Iranian. And because they are twins, people often stop them in the street. "I noticed," says Grace, "many people would coo at Larrie, but the little brown baby they would ignore."

It is the never knowing how people feel about you that also gets many of the women. Some become over-sensitive, and it's hardly surprising. Like Myra, they have chameleon changes in behaviour to handle and to their horror it affects their attitudes to their children.

Sue has four young sons. Their father is Jamaican, and she remembers the times when she has felt contradictions within herself. "I am white. When I am on my own, I am free, but if I've got my children with me, I feel the prejudices around us. Once I was in a situation where it would have been more comfortable for my children to have been white, because I can't stand for them to be hurt. And I remember thinking, thank God, Leroy is with me, and not Jake. Leroy is light and he can pass. After that I felt so guilty."

The prejudices can also come from black people. Sue, who is doing a course in social studies was told by her black classmates that mixed parentage children were "mongrels." "That hurt me so much," says Sue. "What's the difference between them and the National Front?" The result of these attitudes is that the women feel a great need to be affirmed and supported, but

having lost co-membership of the white group, they are outsiders in black groups.

Their own families can reject them too, and this proves to be the most painful experience. Grace's father said to her, (having held and played with her babies previously) that he would not forgive her for producing half-breeds. "I felt someone was cutting through my heart," says Grace. Her father has since joined the National Front. Grace was also pinned against a wall by a cousin in a fork lift truck when she was six months pregnant. "50 points for killing this one," he shouted. "She's carrying a black child."

Sue is adopted and it took years to find her real mother who still finds it difficult to accept Sue's children. "She won't walk down the road with them. She is trying but there is something deep in her."

Sue and other white mothers, (unlike black mothers of mixed race children) are racially split from their children, and they are forced to instill a sense of pride in their blackness, which implicitly is a criticism of white attitudes. Sue tries to explain to her children about slavery and racial remarks. "Sometimes I want to cry because I feel I've got the guilt of my colour."

It is doubly difficult for her as her partner has left her with the children, and that gives people a licence for their racism. Sue is enraged at this. "I hate it when people say, sometimes in front of the children, that black men only use white women. But when he left, their black culture left too and though I try, I can only do so much."

The women had changed, some felt more cynical and nostalgic for the past. For Vron, it is important that her children know that racism is out there. "He'll need to be very strong, I am worried about how young blacks are criminalised and assumptions that will be made about them."

But Sue and the others know that: "You can't be afraid, you've got to be proud, even though our children are shoved under the carpet. But I'll tell you I'd never change them, never." A sentiment echoed by all the women. Yasmin Alibhai ■

Singing with the santoor in Wales



CATHERINE DRINKWATER reports on a school's theatre project in Wales.

It's morning assembly at the Mount Stuart Primary School in the heart of Cardiff's dockland. The seven to ten year olds are putting on *The Legend of Bala Lake*, an old Welsh folktale with a difference. For today the Welsh tale is being told by 13 dancers with classical Indian hand movements and the three small musicians on drum, cymbal and triangle have been coached by Kirampal Singh, the only player of the Kashmiri santoor in Europe.

The school is one of seven schools to be visited by eight members of Theatr Taliesin Wales. The past five days have

seen the start of an imaginative project that uses similarities in some of the world's oldest stories to create cross cultural awareness. The people's outlaw is one example. He surfaces in Robin Hood, the Welsh Twm Shon Cati and Indian Bhima Jat.

As Taliesin is a Welsh theatre group with roots in an area with a large Asian population, they began exploring the links between Celtic and Asian culture. The common ground that they found in music and folktales has highlighted their lavish, exciting productions since 1984. They drew people from the area into the cast, while retaining the professional polish that brings first-class reviews from the media.

The company's artistic co-

directors, Nigel Watson and Stuart Cox, decided to develop their theatre work and so they invited seven very different schools in Wales to join in a school's theatre project. They explain: "We want to illustrate to children that a country is not just a place on the map but a way of life."

At Mount Stuart half the pupils are Christian and the other half are Muslim. The headmistress, Betty Campbell, was born in the community in an old established black Cardiff family. She taught many of her pupil's parents, and grew up with some of their grandparents. As the company weaves its creative message into history, geography, music and dance, she comments: "It's helping them identify with cultural roots in a creative way and it's adding to their insight for the future."

If the message falls on fertile ground it's because it has been prepared by the school's attitude to race. The children's own constantly changing "special corners" feature the world's places and their people.

As the Friday concert closes with applause a mother confides, "I had my son transferred here. It wasn't just their good academic record, it was their attitude to race. They don't ignore things in the hope they will go away."

At the Yscol Idio Marganwg Primary School in the small market town of Cowbridge, Glamorgan, (another of the

seven schools being visited) the teaching medium is the Welsh language—so none of the 132 pupils is likely to sit next to a school friend from one of the ethnic minorities. But a dip into another culture proves just as exciting.

Gurminder Sikand, the visual artist in the company, finds them keen to try their hand at art and design Asian-style. Vi Richards (a Welsh language actress) finds similar enthusiasm when she coaches them for the Asian folktale they will perform in Welsh. And as Peter Stacey's (the musical director) 18th century flute blends with the santoor, they experiment with clusters of notes illustrating the basic melody shared by an Irish folk tune and an Indian raga.

What they learn will form the basis of a project in which the seven to nine year olds will do their own in-depth studies into what they found most interesting during their week with Theatr Taliesin. They will also enlarge on the Celtic-Indian geography lesson, writing about the similarities and the differences they spot in the countries.

For their headmaster, Mr Martin Cook: "It's been like opening a window on another life for them. A living experience in the arts of a wholly new culture. Working en bloc for a whole week gave it a consistency that a few hours could never have achieved. Direct experience is always better than just being told about something." ■



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EYE SORE

Roberts, showed EYE SORE an advertisement in the *Guardian* that included a picture of an Asian woman saying, "The Civil Service . . . gave me the best opportunity for an interesting and rewarding career."

The reports were published by the Cabinet Office and contained surveys covering 65 per cent of the non-industrial civil service. They found that although 5.6 per cent of respondents classified themselves as from an ethnic minority, only 1 per cent of posts of middle rank and above were occupied by people from ethnic minorities. As the *Guardian* advert promised a "sharing management structure" it is hard to see exactly who is

sharing what with whom.

The two departments with particularly poor showing were the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office. The recruitment and promotion procedures of these two departments are now being reviewed.

The typical black civil servant is a woman on low pay working in a tax, employment or benefit office. In Greater London the workforce of the Department of Health and Social Security was 20.7 per cent black.

Three quarters of ethnic minority respondents were in the two lowest pay grades (where the pay ranges from just £4,500 to more than £8,000).

PUBLICATIONS

Problems in Anti-Racist Strategy by Paul Gilroy. The Runnymede Trust (£1). A critical assessment of contemporary anti-racist strategy and actions.

Social Work in a Multi-Racial Society by P. Ely and D. Denney. Gower (£22.50). Information on anti-racist social work practice.

EVENTS

Hangings—an exhibition of work by African born Farzana Fidai. 5-29 January at Centre 181 Gallery, Hammersmith W6. Contact: 995 0826

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"The Civil Service provides resources, flexibility and a sharing management structure: it gave me the best opportunity for an interesting and rewarding career." Loba Tripathi, Corston, British Library

The day following the publication of three reports that criticised the civil service for its lack of promotion opportunities for black people, freelance journalist, Yvonne