

British Broadcasting Corporation

Confidential

AN AUDIENCE RESEARCH REPORT

VR/68/105

RACE RELATIONS AND 'RAINBOW CITY'

1. It will be recalled that a six-episode serial, Rainbow City, was broadcast on BBC-1 on Wednesdays at 7.30pm, beginning in Week 27 last year. Since its avowed purpose was to contribute to the reduction of inter-racial tensions and to promote a sympathetic understanding of coloured immigrants, plans were made for an elaborate study of its impact and effects. Unfortunately a sudden decision to bring its transmission forward by several weeks torpedoed this plan, but from the wreckage a more modest one was hastily put together. Even this, however, was pursued by bad luck for its execution depended upon getting a substantial number of persons to 'group sessions' and in the event - perhaps because it was the height of summer* - only 164 turned up (58 had, and 106 had not seen Rainbow City).
2. This meant that one of the objects of the exercise - to arrive at conclusions about the effects produced by comparing the answers of viewers with those of non-viewers - while not completely frustrated, was rendered far more difficult of attainment, for unless these turned out to be considerable, their significance might well be in doubt by reason of the smallness of the samples. Nevertheless, it was for several reasons felt worth while to subject the data collected to a thorough analysis, not least because they would have a value in throwing light upon the problem of race relations. This paper is not the extensive account of what was done and what emerged which is necessary 'for the record'. It is rather an attempt to spell out what can be learned from this study.
3. The 164 people who took part were all Londoners and all white, but in terms of age, sex and social status they constituted a broadly representative group. One of the tasks they were asked to perform was to study a list of 23 statements about coloured people/immigrants and to say whether they agreed or disagreed with them. Some of the statements represented attitudes which were, in varying degrees, hostile and others represented favourable attitudes. The list below shows the proportions who agreed with the various 'hostile' statements and disagreed with the various 'favourable' ones.

* and certainly partly because the S.R. had just introduced its new time-table!

Anti-colour/immigrant statements and the proportion
agreeing with them

Statements with which a large majority (60%+) <u>agreed</u>	% agreeing
If an immigrant is offered a good job in the country he came from, he should take it and go home	84
One of the troubles with this country is that there are too many foreigners living there	79
It was a mistake to allow so many coloured people to settle here	78
The type of person who immigrates to this country is only interested in making money	66
Statements with which 40-60% <u>agreed</u>	
If jobs are scarce it's only fair that immigrants be the first to be laid off work	56
The standards of behaviour of coloured people are lower than those of white people	53
Most immigrants just do not fit into the British way of life	50
The government should send coloured immigrants back to their own country) 41
A few coloured people in a neighbourhood can ruin it for everybody) 41
Statements with which less than 40% <u>agreed</u>	
Segregation of coloured people from white people is probably a good thing	38
Coloured people are all right in their place but they should not expect to be treated as neighbours and friends in the same way one would treat white people) 33
There's no real difference between a Pakistani and a West Indian, they're both black) 33
Coloured people are unreliable	27
It's about time this country realised that the coloured races are inferior to the white races in nearly all respects	24
Most immigrants are trouble makers	17

Pro colour/immigrant statements and the proportion
disagreeing with them

Statements with which a large majority (60%+) <u>disagreed</u>	% disagreeing
None	-

Statements with which 40-60% disagreed

When it comes to getting a decent place to live, coloured people in this country are treated very badly	56
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If coloured people knew what things were really like in this country they wouldn't come in the first place	51
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Statements with which less than 40% disagreed

It is a national disgrace that immigrants find it difficult to be accepted as equals) 38
This country has benefitted from the immigration of both white and coloured people	

For the most part, coloured people are good workers	33
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As long as they don't interfere with anybody, people from the British Commonwealth have a right to make a living in this country	21
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Coloured people are the equals of whites and must be given equal opportunities in all ways - political, economic, social	20
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A coloured man is just as likely to make a good foreman or an inspector as a white man	19
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4. The startling, but inescapable, impression left by these results is that most of these people showed anti-colour/immigrant attitudes in at least some degree and that what can only be described as racial prejudice proved to be alarmingly common. Thus upwards of three-quarters of the informants agreed that, 'offered a good job in the country he came from', an immigrant 'should take it and go home', that 'there are too many foreigners living here' and that 'it was a mistake to allow so many coloured people to settle here'. Not far short of half of them agreed that 'the Government should send coloured immigrants home'. A very large minority did not agree that 'this country has benefitted by the immigration of both white and coloured people', and as many as one in five did not agree with the statement that 'coloured people are the equals of whites and must be given equal opportunities in all ways - political, economic and social'. (This picture is depressingly different from that presented in a not dissimilar Audience Research enquiry made before Christopher Mayhew's TV series on Race Relations in Africa in 1952. At that time, which was before the big influx of coloured immigrants into Britain, the sentiments expressed by the public were predominantly liberal.*)

5. The foregoing data relate to the group as a whole but the extent to which attitudes were associated with particular demographic and psychological characteristics was also examined. This revealed that hostility towards coloured people/immigrants was, if anything, slightly less among men than among women, slightly less amongst the younger than amongst the older half of the population, somewhat less amongst those in the upper half of the occupational scale than amongst those in the lower half and distinctly less among the better, than amongst the less, well-educated. It was also found that those who took a relatively pessimistic view of life in general were more hostile to coloured people/immigrants than were those whose attitudes were relatively optimistic. A test designed to reveal the extent to which people were authoritarian in outlook showed that, as was to be expected, the most authoritarian were the most hostile. But these results, though they showed that the degree of hostility was associated with particular demographic and psychological characteristics, were more impressive in suggesting that hostility existed with depressing frequency even amongst those groups who were least pre-disposed to share it.

6. When the answers of those who had seen Rainbow City were compared with those who had not, it was found that the viewers were, if anything, more hostile to coloured people/immigrants than were the non-viewers and it is unlikely that this was due to mere chance. But the difference between them was not large and, in any case, could quite conceivably represent differences which pre-dated the transmission of Rainbow City, in other words that the two groups didn't 'start level'. In all the circumstances by far the most probable conclusion is that the experience of viewing Rainbow City had little, if any, effect on attitudes towards coloured people/immigrants in general.

7. A quite separate test was used to throw light on attitudes towards particular characters (i.e. those who had figured in Rainbow City). Five of them were selected and an elaborate procedure was used. Respondents had to 'rate' each of them, together with 'An Englishman' on each of twenty 'scales'. The characters were described thus:

- (a) 'An Englishman'
- (b) 'A West Indian'
- (c) 'A Pakistani'
- (d) 'A person who is - a 35-year old man, married, living in the Midlands, with a university education, a coloured immigrant, a solicitor' (Referred to below as the West Indian solicitor)
- (e) 'A person who is - a 50-year old man, married, living in the Midlands, served in the R.A.F. during the war, a coloured immigrant, a factory worker' (Referred to below as the West Indian factory worker)
- (f) 'A person who - is a young housewife, well-educated, living in the Midlands, has a 5-year old daughter, is white, married to a coloured immigrant' (Referred to below as the White Wife).

8. The object of this procedure was, of course, to reveal the extent to which those who had, and had not, viewed any of the Rainbow City series, rated those characters differently. But before this is considered it is worth examining how the entire group responded. This is best judged by showing how the ratings of each character differed from those of 'the Englishman'. The proportions rating the characters above 'the Englishman' were:

(b) A West Indian	34%
(c) A Pakistani	33%
(d) A West Indian solicitor	81%
(e) A West Indian factory worker	51%
(f) A White Wife	63%

Quite clearly the three characters who were described in some detail, (d) (e) and (f), were regarded much more favourably than the other two. Prima face, this is readily understandable since by giving more detail a character assumed a greater roundness and reality for the respondent (though it does not follow of course that, so 'filled out', a character will automatically be more acceptable). That the 'West Indian solicitor' was more acceptable than the 'West Indian factory worker' was probably due to his manifestly higher social status. That the 'White Wife' was not rated so highly as her husband was probably because she was 'married to a coloured immigrant'.

9. Now to compare the answers of viewers of Rainbow City with those of non-viewers. The proportions of these groups rating the characters higher than 'the Englishman' were:

	Viewers %	Non-viewers %
(b) A West Indian	41	27
(c) A Pakistani	29	33
(d) A West Indian solicitor	79	75
(e) A West Indian factory worker	53	45
(f) A White Wife	71	56

Except for 'A Pakistani', all were rated more favourably, and three (b, e, and f) much more favourably, by the viewers than by the non-viewers. Small though the sample was, it is difficult to believe that these differences can be dismissed as mere chance. Viewers and non-viewers may not, of course, have 'started level' but it is improbable that, even if they had not, this would have accounted for the whole of the differences shown. There is no denying that non-viewers were at a disadvantage in that, at best, the characters were more shadowy for them - mere brief descriptions on paper - whereas viewers had had a chance to see all the characters in dramatic action, nevertheless, it does seem likely that viewing Rainbow City engendered favourable attitudes to all these characters (except 'the Pakistani').

10. Taking all the evidence of this enquiry together it suggests that Rainbow City succeeded in enlisting sympathy for the particular characters it presented without modifying the attitude of viewers towards coloured people/immigrants in general. This is not necessarily a criticism of the series, indeed it may well be generalizable: if a serial play which shows particular members of an 'out-group' in a sympathetic light achieves some success in inducing empathy for these characters it doesn't follow that this empathy will necessarily rub-off on to the 'out-group' in general.

11. It may reasonably be conjectured that the more deeply rooted the hostility to the 'out-group' (or the more 'justifiable' people feel their hostility to be) the less likely is such a 'rubbing-off' process to take place. This conclusion should not be seen as implying that it is futile to broadcast plays which set out to reduce tensions or contribute to better racial understanding, but only that, in the present climate of opinion, to expect them to produce spectacular results is to expect miracles.