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**MINORITY ETHNIC PUPILS IN THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN ENGLAND: EXTENSION REPORT ON PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC  
EXAMINATIONS AT AGE 16**

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*Dr Steve Strand  
Institute of Education, University of Warwick*

**Executive Summary****Introduction**

Strand (2007) reported an analysis of the LSYPE Wave 1 data, specifically linked to the pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 (KS3) national tests in 2004. However, the end of KS3 (age 14) represents an intermediate stage in secondary education, just over halfway through the secondary phase. In contrast to KS3 tests, public examinations at age 16 are 'high stakes' examinations that have a direct impact on pupils' employment prospects and/or entry to further education. There is evidence that many ethnic groups make stronger educational progress during Key Stage 4 (KS4) than they do during KS3 (Strand, 2006; Demie & Strand, 2006; Wilson et al, 2005). For these reasons this extension was undertaken to consider outcomes at age 16 in 2006, and in particular associations between ethnicity and educational attainment and progress over the entire secondary phase. The report is intended and should be read as an Appendix to the original report (Strand, 2007).

**Key Findings**Raw ethnic group differences in attainment at age 16

The mean score in the KS3 national tests in English, mathematics and science for Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African groups were all substantially below the mean for White British pupils, and to roughly the same extent, by the equivalent of over a whole year of progress in terms of National Curriculum levels. At KS4, the mean score for Black Caribbean pupils is still significantly lower than White British. However, the mean score for Pakistani pupils is only just below the White British mean, and the mean scores for Bangladeshi and Black African pupils do not differ significantly from the mean for White British pupils. At KS3, Indian pupils were only marginally ahead of White British, but at KS4 they are substantially ahead.

Socio-economic status and gender

It is important to consider the overall size of ethnic group, parental socio-economic classification (SEC) and gender 'gaps' in attainment. The social class gap at KS4 is 1.34 SD (contrast between higher managerial and professional vs. long term unemployed). This is substantially larger than the ethnic gap of 0.65 SD between the highest and lowest performing ethnic groups (Indian vs. Black Caribbean). The gender gap at 0.23 SD is the smallest of all, though still significant. As a result the social class gap, and the poor attainment of pupils from low SEC homes whatever their ethnic group, ought to be seen as a cause for concern.

The attainment of White British pupils was differentiated to a greater extent than any other ethnic group by a wide range of socio-economic variables. The educational attainment of White British pupils was particularly vulnerable to low parental social class, mothers with no educational qualifications, relative poverty (entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)), living in single parent households, living in rented housing and living in deprived neighbourhoods. These factors impact negatively on attainment within most ethnic groups, but seem to be associated with disproportionately low attainment among White British pupils.

In effect, White British are the most polarised ethnic group in terms of attainment: White British pupils from high SEC homes are one of the highest attaining ethnic groups, while White British pupils living in disadvantaged circumstances are the lowest attaining group.

The results indicate the need for differentiation within ethnic groups by both gender and the SEC of the home. After controlling for the range of socio-economic variables indicated above the groups for whom low attainment is the greatest concern are:

- White British boys and girls, and Black Caribbean boys, from low SEC homes. These are the three lowest attaining groups;
- Black Caribbean pupils, particularly but not exclusively boys, from middle and high SEC homes, who underachieve relative to their White British peers.

#### Proximal influences on KS4 attainment

The above findings raises particular questions as to which factors account for greater resilience among many ethnic groups to deprivation, relative to their deprived White British peers. A wide range of parent and pupil variables were available from LSYPE and these were included in statistical models. The factors found to have the greatest impact on attainment were *pupils educational aspirations, parents educational aspirations for their child* and *pupils academic self-concept*. These are important factors through which the effect of social class is mediated.

Parental and pupil educational aspirations and pupil's academic self-concept could account for the high attainment of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African pupils, and the low attainment of White British pupils, within low SEC homes. However, Black Caribbean and Black African pupils from high SEC homes also had high aspirations and high academic self-concept, but their attainment was significantly lower than similar White British pupils. Pupils from these two ethnic groups in high SEC homes underachieved in relation to their academic self-concept and aspirations.

#### Pupil progress during secondary school

The main findings are:

- Indian pupils do not differ significantly from White British at KS2, but make more progress and have pulled substantially ahead by KS4.
- Black African and Bangladeshi pupils were well behind their White British peers at KS2 but make more progress during secondary school and have caught up by KS4.

- Pakistani pupils were well behind at KS2 but make greater progress during secondary school and almost close the gap by the end of KS4.
- Pupils of mixed heritage had similar attainment to White British pupils at KS2 and make similar progress, so they remain on a par with White British at KS4.
- Black Caribbean pupils started well behind White British pupils at KS2 and make the same progress during secondary school. As a consequence the Black Caribbean gap relative to White British pupils neither widens nor lessens and Black Caribbean remain substantially behind at KS4.

However, progress, like attainment, was strongly differentiated by ethnic group, gender and the SEC of the home. After all socio-economic variables (SES) were taken into account - including the SEC of the home, mother's education, FSM status, rented accommodation status, single parent household status and neighbourhood deprivation - White British pupils from low SEC homes made the least progress over the course of secondary school. These differences in progress reflect the fact that White British pupils started secondary school from a much higher base than their minority ethnic peers as indicated by KS2 test results.

Poor progress was most pronounced for White British boys and girls from low SEC homes, and ethnic group differences in middle and high SEC homes were far less pronounced. After controlling for all socio-economic variables, the groups with the poorest progress were: (i) White British boys in general but particularly from low SEC homes; (ii) White British girls from low SEC homes; and (iii) Black Caribbean, Black African and Bangladeshi boys from high SEC homes.

#### Accounting for differential progress

A wide range of parent and pupil variables were strongly related to educational progress. Factors which had a significant impact on progress included parents' provision of a home computer or private tuition, parental monitoring of the child's whereabouts, family discord, Special Educational Needs (SEN), attendance, school exclusion, involvement with social or welfare services and attitude to school. However the most significant factors were the frequency of completing homework, academic self-concept and pupils educational aspirations. These variables play a large part in accounting for the differential progress among pupils from low SEC homes, and could statistically explain the strong progress of minority ethnic pupils and the poor progress of White British pupils from low SEC homes. White British pupils were one of the two ethnic groups

who reported doing the least amount of homework and the ethnic group with the lowest academic self-concept and the lowest educational aspirations, and these factors are key in interpreting their poor progress.

However, the same factors revealed that Black Caribbean, Black African and Bangladeshi boys from high SEC homes made less than expected progress. Despite high academic self-concept and educational aspirations, and completing at least the same amount (in the case of Black Caribbean pupils) and significantly more homework (in the case of Black African and Bangladeshi pupils), their progress did not reflect this.

In some ways, therefore, we return to the conclusions from the initial results. The groups of primary concern in terms of low attainment are White British 'working class' pupils, both boys and girls, and Black Caribbean pupils particularly from high SEC homes.

## Conclusions

There is a need to move from a monolithic conception of White British as an homogeneous group to explicitly recognise the high degree of polarisation around socio-economic factors within the White British group. White British pupils are consistently the lowest achieving ethnic group whatever the socio-economic dimension (SEC of the home, mother's education, entitlement to FSM, rented housing, single parent households and neighbourhood deprivation). This indicates a range of socio-economic effects broader than just parental occupation, but as a shorthand the term 'White British working class' can serve to unite these findings. The group with the lowest examination attainment at age 16 are White British working class pupils, both boys and girls.

It is important to stress that the above should not be read as indicating that it is only the low attainment of White British 'working class' pupils that is a concern. Socio-economic gaps are much bigger than ethnic group differences, and the substantial gap between high and low socio-economic status is an equity issue for all ethnic groups. Also a concern for the low attainment of working class pupils should not obscure a continued focus on ethnic differentials within high SEC homes, where absolute attainment might not be as low but ethnic gaps, particularly for Black Caribbean pupils, are pronounced. However by better understanding the factors that to some extent mitigate the effects of low SEC among many minority ethnic groups we may learn lessons of benefit to all pupils.

This research has highlighted some key proximal factors that substantially impact on the size of

ethnic, social class and gender gaps in educational attainment and progress. Four factors have particularly large associations with attainment and progress, these are:

- Pupil's educational aspirations
- Parents' educational aspirations for their child
- Pupil's academic self concept
- Frequency of completing homework

This does not indicate any 'quick fix' to long standing issues of low attainment. However it does indicate areas where intervention programmes can focus, early in pupils school careers, to have the best chance of impacting on examination attainment at age 16.

These factors play an important role in accounting for the greater progress during secondary school and the high attainment at age 16 of most minority ethnic groups, as well as the low attainment White British pupils from low SEC homes. However there are still questions about why in particular Black Caribbean and Black African boys from high SEC homes underachieve relative to their White British peers, despite the high aspirations of the pupils and parents, their positive attitudes to school and high frequency of undertaking homework. The impact of factors such as teacher expectations, described in detail in the original report (Strand, 2007), need to be further investigated and acted upon.

## Additional Information

*Copies of the full report (DCSF-RR029) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DCSF Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.*

*Cheques should be made payable to "DCSF Priced Publications".*

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*Further information about this research can be obtained from Lorraine Watson, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, DCSF, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.*

*Email: [lorraine.watson@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.watson@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)*

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