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## Can achievement differentials be explained by social class alone?

*An examination of minority ethnic educational performance in England and Wales at the end of compulsory schooling*

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**ABSTRACT** This article assesses the importance of social class in explaining differentials in the educational achievements of minority ethnic pupils in England and Wales. It is found to be a key factor for all groups. The analysis finds significant differences *between* ethnic groups even when pupils from the same social class background are compared. When disparities *within* ethnic groups are examined, however, it is found that the effect of moving one place down the social class structure is similar for all ethnicities. This leads to the conclusion that social class operates in a similar way for all ethnic groups without a specifically 'ethnic effect' that mitigates its impact in certain groups.

**KEYWORDS** class schemas ● education ● ethnicity ● GCSE ● gender

## INTRODUCTION

Differential educational attainment by social class has been well documented, with children from the professional and managerial classes outperforming those from the manual classes by quite some distance (see for example Halsey et al., 1980; Blackburn and Marsh, 1991; Shavit and Blossfeld, 1991; Jonsson and Mills, 1993a, 1993b; Savage and Egerton, 1997). How the effect of social class will vary by ethnicity is less clear. Little British work on black and minority ethnic educational attainment to date has been able to control adequately for social background due to the small numbers of minority ethnic students in nationally representative datasets (see for

example Drew and Gray, 1990; Drew, 1995; Demack et al., 2000; Owen et al., 2000). Some black and minority ethnic groups are heavily concentrated towards the bottom of the class structure; it might therefore be expected that many of the inequalities in performance can be explained by the differential distributions of the major ethnic groups across the occupational framework.

A key focus of this article is whether social class works in the same way for all ethnic groups in England and Wales or whether there are specifically ‘ethnic effects’ that result in socioeconomic status having a differential impact. It may be that the commonly employed social class schemas used in England and Wales are not appropriate measures of the occupational background of the first-generation ethnic minorities. Many minority ethnic immigrants of the first generation moved towards the lower end of the social class spectrum after arriving in England and Wales. This was due partly to reluctance on the part of many English and Welsh employers to recognize qualifications gained and skills learnt abroad as well as a lack of work experience on the British labour market on the part of the new immigrants. As a result, ethnic minority families in lower working-class positions might not be really comparable with white working-class families. This would suggest that measured social class might have a weaker effect on ethnic minority educational attainment than it does among white Britons.

The key aims of the article are as follows:

- 1 To assess the extent to which low social class can explain ethnic disparities in educational achievement: do pupils of the same social class from the major ethnic groups in England and Wales perform at a similar level?
- 2 To examine *within* group differences: do class and ethnicity interact to produce differential effects for social class background across ethnic groups?

In answering these questions, the performance of pupils on the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations (GCSEs) is considered. These now form the key credential at the end of compulsory education in England and Wales, taken at age 16. Typically, students study eight or nine subjects. Measures of attainment by school are usually calculated from the number of pupils who attain five or more A\*–C grades. This benchmark largely reflects its past use as a means of entry to the professions and higher education, where it has usually been the cut-off point for acceptance (see Drew et al., 1992).

British work on minority ethnic educational attainment to date has often been limited by the difficulty of controlling adequately for social background because of the small number of minority ethnic pupils in available datasets (see for example Drew and Gray, 1990; Drew, 1995;

Demack et al., 2000). This article goes some way towards addressing these limitations by drawing on a combined dataset of the Youth Cohort Study surveys from 1991 to 2000. The analysis reported here uses the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (Courtenay, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Finch et al., 2002, 2004; Fitzgerald and Finch, 2004). Until 1992, the study was carried out every year; it is now carried out every other year. The research reported here will utilize Cohorts 5 to 10 ( $N = 101,713$ ). For further details see the Appendix.

## MEASURING SOCIAL CLASS

Sociological analysis of Britain's class structure has often focused upon the economic role of the male as the primary determinant of the social class position of the family or household (Goldthorpe, 1980, 1983). Some have argued that this approach has serious limitations (see for example Britten and Heath, 1983; Bonney, 1988). Family circumstances vary and an assumption that women are *all* confined to minor or secondary roles is erroneous. One solution to this has been the 'dominance' approach, where one spouse 'whose labour-market participation may be regarded as dominant' outranks the other within a nuclear family; families or households are regarded as the unit of class analysis (Goldthorpe, 1987). Alternatively, Britten and Heath (1983) proposed a class schema that incorporates women's and men's occupational standing simultaneously. It is hypothesized that the use of a combined schema is appropriate in the context of minority ethnic educational attainment; family structure varies considerably by ethnicity. Over 40 percent of Afro-Caribbean families in England and Wales are headed by a single parent, usually the mother (Office for National Statistics, 2002). Incorporating the social class position of the mother may be especially important in this case. However, for Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, where both parents are usually present and where the father is normally the sole earner, the traditional schema may work adequately.

Three class schemas were therefore tested. The first used father's class only. The second used the parent with the higher social class to determine the background of the child (the dominance method). The final one used a combined measure that takes into account both mother's and father's social class. Comparing the goodness of fit of models using each of these schemas demonstrated that, for all ethnic groups, the third combined schema gave as good or better a fit than either of the other two (details available from the author on request). This combined schema has therefore been used throughout.

It should be noted that missing data were taken into consideration when

constructing this schema. The question asked in the Youth Cohort Study as regards parental occupation was as follows:

What are your parents' (or stepparents') current jobs (or if they are not employed what were their most recent jobs)?

Respondents were asked to simply write in the job title of their father/stepfather and mother/stepmother. This resulted in the presence of a significant amount of missing data that is impossible to categorize into meaningful groups such as 'has never worked', 'don't know' and 'not answered'. The degree of data missing varies by ethnicity. For black fathers and Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers there is a particularly large amount of data missing (47 percent, 81 percent and 88 percent respectively). Many researchers have chosen to exclude cases for which data is missing when carrying out their analysis. However, the extent to which missing data varies by gender and ethnicity makes it clear that excluding cases in this way would result in a serious selection bias problem.

Furthermore, data might be missing for very different reasons; it is not possible to assume that missing data simply indicates that the parent is not in the home. One reason might be that the respondent's parent has never worked. This explanation may be of particular relevance in the case of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, where a large proportion of mothers do not work (Office for National Statistics, 2004). Alternatively, the respondent may not know the parent's occupation because the parent does not live with them. This may be particularly the case with black respondents. There might also be a reluctance to disclose low-status parental occupations. An analysis of the consequences of having missing data for a parent reveals that that its effect on attainment is strikingly similar to that of having a working-class parent.<sup>1</sup>

The magnitude of the problem of missing data and the observation that it is systematic rather than random leads to the conclusion that its inclusion as a separate category in the analysis that follows is important.

Table 1 outlines the percentages of pupils in each combined social class grouping who attain five or more A\*–C grades.

As might be expected, the percentage of those with two parents in the salariat (professional and managerial occupations), or one parent in the salariat and the other of intermediate class, who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A\*–C is higher than that of any other class combination, at 84 percent. The group with the next highest attainment levels is that where both parents fall into the intermediate class. Those with the lowest levels of attainment are those with two working-class parents, one working-class parent and the other missing or both parents missing. The importance of including both parents in the analysis is evident, for example, by the fact that the attainment level of those with one parent in the salariat varies, depending on the occupational category of the other parent. So, while 84

**Table 1** Percentage of respondents attaining five or more A\*–C grades at GCSE by combined parental class

| <i>Class</i>   | <i>% gaining 5 or more A*–C grades</i> | <i>N</i> |
|--|--|----------|
| A: both parents salariat or one parent salariat and other intermediate | 84                                     | 9252     |
| B: both parents intermediate   | 74                                     | 13892    |
| C: one parent salariat, other working class or missing                 | 71                                     | 6731     |
| D: one parent intermediate, other working class or missing             | 57                                     | 27329    |
| E: both parents working class or missing                               | 33                                     | 44509    |
| Total  | 52                                     | 101713   |

*Source:* Youth Cohort Study 1991–2000: combined dataset, available at the UK National Data Archive.

percent of students with two salariat parents or one salariat parent and one parent from the intermediate class (class A) gain the requisite grades, only 71 percent of those with one parent in the salariat and the other of working-class occupation (class C) reach the benchmark. Similar differentials are evident for other class combinations.

## MINORITY ETHNIC PERFORMANCE AT GCSE

Descriptive analysis using the benchmark of attaining five or more A\*–C grades as the outcome measure finds a clear hierarchy of achievement. In both genders, Indians outperform whites, while blacks, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are at the bottom end of the attainment spectrum. Bangladeshis exhibit the lowest level of performance. The differences are fairly large. For example, the percentage of Indian males attaining the benchmark is almost twice that for their Bangladeshi counterparts. These findings replicate a great deal of the previous literature on minority ethnic educational attainment (see, for example, Drew and Gray, 1990; Drew, 1995; Demack et al., 2000; Owen et al., 2000; Demie, 2001; Haque and Bell, 2001).

A significant gender differential is also apparent. Indeed, a distinctive feature of the pattern of results over the last decade and a half has been the ‘gender gap’ in attainment. From the late 1980s, a pattern emerged whereby

girls outperformed boys at GCSE level; this has been sustained ever since (Arnot et al., 1998). The trend has been greatly publicized in the media and has not generally led to a resounding acknowledgement of girls' achievements (Judd, 1994; Gold, 1995; Williams, 1995; Kingston, 1996; *Independent*, 1998). Chris Woodhead (1996), a key education official at the time, asserted that the 'failure' of boys was 'one of the most disturbing problems that we face in the whole education system'.

The location of students in the class structure varies significantly by ethnic group. As would be expected from Modood's (1997) analysis, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have a very low percentage of respondents who have any parent in the salariat. A large majority of Bangladeshis, 85 percent, fall into groups where both parents are working class or missing (as observed above, 'missing' data has a similar effect on educational attainment as having a parent in the working class). This is also in line with Modood's (1997) findings. The figure is also high for Pakistanis at 79 percent, compared to 42 percent for whites, 52 percent for blacks and 53 percent for Indians (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

Table 2 summarizes the attainments of ethnic groups in England and Wales by social class. From this, it is clear that social class is an important factor in explaining educational attainment. Within all ethnic groups, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades decreases quite significantly as one moves down the class structure.<sup>2</sup>

There are, however, differences between the performances of the ethnic groups for pupils of the same social class. One striking feature is that in almost all class categories Indians perform above the average for any given class. Both blacks and the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group appear to perform at a low level regardless of class. This low performance is generally more marked in the case of blacks; in all classes their distance from the average

**Table 2** Percentage of respondents gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE by ethnicity and parental social class (numbers in parentheses)

|   | <i>White</i> | <i>Black</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Pakistani/Bangladeshi</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| A | 84 (8705)    | 73 (97)      | 93 (177)      | 80 (30)                      | 84 (9211)    |
| B | 74 (12989)   | 61 (165)     | 73 (339)      | 62 (65)                      | 74 (13844)   |
| C | 71 (6244)    | 65 (69)      | 83 (167)      | 68 (69)                      | 71 (6698)    |
| D | 57 (25406)   | 41 (488)     | 67 (510)      | 55 (311)                     | 57 (27213)   |
| E | 33 (38103)   | 25 (892)     | 41 (1336)     | 27 (2014)                    | 33 (43336)   |

\*The total includes an 'other' ethnicity category not reported in this table.

Source: Youth Cohort Study 1991-2000: combined dataset, available at the UK National Data Archive.

is greater than that of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. These marked differences *between* ethnic groups suggest that additional explanations must be sought beyond that of low social class.

Table 3 shows the differences in the percentages gaining five or more A\*-C grades *within* social class groupings. It is arresting how similar the distances between class A and class B, class A and class C and so on are for each ethnic group. In other words, although the starting points are not identical for all ethnicities, being in a given class grouping does appear to have a similar impact for each group.

These results are now tested formally with a series of binary logistic regression models (see Table 4). The use of these models is important because they are able to reveal how far class explains the differences observed and to what extent additional explanations for the achievement patterns need to be sought.

Model 1 confirms the earlier findings; there is a hierarchy of attainment topped by Indians, with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis at the bottom. For females, however, the difference between the Indian group and their white counterparts is insignificant. Black girls perform at a higher level than their male peers; the opposite is the case within the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group.

For all occupational background categories, the size of the effect of social class is slightly bigger for females than males. For females, therefore, being in a lower social class grouping is more detrimental to achieving the attainment benchmark than for males. In terms of the change in the *ethnicity* coefficient in model 2, however, the pattern for males and females is more comparable. For both genders in all ethnic groups, the coefficients are significantly reduced. The magnitude of the change for males and females within each group is similar.

The impact of the addition of social class in model 2 is particularly large for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi group for both males and females (from -0.88 in model 1 to -0.30 in model 2 and from -0.96 in model 1 to -0.38 in

**Table 3** Percentage differences between social classes (gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE) by ethnicity and parental social class

|     | <i>White</i> | <i>Black</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Pakistani/Bangladeshi</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| A-B | 10           | 12           | 20            | 18                           | 10           |
| A-C | 13           | 12           | 10            | 12                           | 13           |
| A-D | 27           | 32           | 26            | 25                           | 27           |
| A-E | 51           | 48           | 52            | 53                           | 51           |

*Source:* Youth Cohort Study 1991-2000: combined dataset, available at the UK National Data Archive.



**Table 4** Logistic regression of pupils attaining five or more A\*–C grades at GCSE with year, social class and ethnicity as explanatory variables

|                           | <i>Model 1</i><br><i>Males</i> | <i>Model 2</i><br><i>Males</i> | <i>Model 1</i><br><i>Females</i> | <i>Model 2</i><br><i>Females</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Year (1991)               | 0                              | 0                              | 0                                | 0                                |
| 1994                      | 0.23 (0.03)***                 | 0.25 (0.04)***                 | 0.31 (0.03)***                   | 0.31 (0.03)***                   |
| 1996                      | 0.50 (0.03)***                 | 0.50 (0.04)***                 | 0.61 (0.03)***                   | 0.60 (0.04)***                   |
| 1998                      | 0.42 (0.04)***                 | 0.43 (0.04)***                 | 0.56 (0.03)***                   | 0.58 (0.04)***                   |
| 2000                      | 0.67 (0.04)***                 | 0.73 (0.04)***                 | 0.91 (0.04)***                   | 0.94 (0.04)***                   |
| Class (A)                 |                                | 0                              |                                  | 0                                |
| B                         |                                | –0.62 (0.06)***                |                                  | –0.71 (0.06)***                  |
| C                         |                                | –0.70 (0.07)***                |                                  | –0.91 (0.07)***                  |
| D                         |                                | –1.38 (0.05)***                |                                  | –1.47 (0.05)***                  |
| E                         |                                | –2.32 (0.05)***                |                                  | –2.49 (0.05)***                  |
| Ethnicity (white)         | 0                              | 0                              | 0                                | 0                                |
| Black                     | –0.84 (0.10)***                | –0.71 (0.10)***                | –0.80 (0.08)***                  | –0.62 (0.08)***                  |
| Indian                    | 0.20 (0.07)**                  | 0.38 (0.07)***                 | 0.06 (0.07)                      | 0.28 (0.07)***                   |
| Pakistani/<br>Bangladeshi | –0.88 (0.07)***                | –0.30 (0.07)***                | –0.96 (0.07)***                  | –0.38 (0.07)***                  |
| Constant                  | –0.22 (0.03)                   | 1.25 (0.05)                    | –0.10 (0.02)                     | 1.56 (0.05)                      |
| $\chi^2$                  | 690.87                         | 5453.70                        | 1152.99                          | 6809.20                          |
| <i>p</i>                  | .000                           | .000                           | .000                             | .000                             |
| <i>N</i>                  | 34660                          | 34660                          | 40429                            | 40429                            |

\* Significant at 0.5 level; \*\* significant at 0.01 level; \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level.

Source: Youth Cohort Study 1991–2000: combined dataset, available at the UK National Data Archive.

model 2 respectively). In fact, once this is taken into account, there is very little of the differential left to explain. The particularly large change in the coefficients relative to those for other ethnic groups would be expected given the fact that members of the group in question predominantly sit at the very bottom of the class structure. For black children, the change in the coefficient is far smaller, suggesting that an investigation into other factors that affect attainment is important. For males, the coefficient is reduced to –0.71 from –0.84 and for females to –0.62 from –0.80. The performance of Indians is confirmed to be even more impressive once social class is taken into account; the coefficient for males rises from 0.20 to 0.38 and for females

it increases to 0.28 from 0.06. Despite the fact that Indians come, on average, from lower social class backgrounds than whites, their performance is better.

In terms of *within* group differences, the analysis suggests that their magnitude is similar for all ethnic groups. Social class\*ethnicity interactions were tested for, but none was significant. The chi-squared figure increases only slightly, and the model uses up an additional degree of freedom, suggesting that the interactions do not improve the fit.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of the areas for investigation stated at the beginning of the article was that of establishing the most appropriate class schema to employ in analysing the educational attainments of minority ethnic students in England and Wales. It was posited that the use of the combined class schema in the context of minority ethnic performance makes good theoretical sense. Family structure varies considerably by ethnicity, and in ethnic groups such as Afro-Caribbeans in England and Wales, it is crucial to take account of the mother's social class because a great many fathers are absent from the home. It was suggested that for Pakistani and Bangladeshi families where both parents are usually present and where the father is the sole earner in the majority of cases, the traditional schema may work adequately. The finding here was that the combined social class schema gave the best fitting model for *all* ethnic groups and for both males and females. On this basis, the combined method was employed in the final analysis.

A second issue that the article set out to investigate was the extent to which low social class could explain the lower performance of some minority ethnic groups, relative to whites. It was posited that much of the poorer performance might be due to lower occupational background. Indeed, the analysis found that the class distribution of the main minority ethnic groups in England and Wales is very different from that exhibited by whites. Whites dominate the higher echelons of the class structure. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are almost twice as likely to be in the manual classes as any other group. Because GCSE performance is so stratified by class, it would be expected that a great deal of the poor performance of the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group is explained by their position in the class structure. Blacks also exhibit an internal class structure that is different from that of whites; their numbers are more heavily loaded towards the manual classes and are less dominant at the top of the class structure. One would not expect the effect of class to be as large as that for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis because their distribution is more heavily weighted towards the bottom of the class schema. The findings support these expectations. For

Pakistani and Bangladeshi males, there is only 33 percent of the discrepancy between themselves and whites to explain once social class has been controlled for. For black males the figure is 85 percent. For females, 40 percent of the distance between the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group and its white counterparts is left to explain after social class has been added to the model. For black females there is slightly less left to explain than for male blacks, but 78 percent of the differential remains to be explained.

For one ethnic group, Indians, lower average social class background did not appear to be associated with poorer achievement. This has an important implication in that gross measures of attainment consistently underestimate Indian success. Many minority ethnic immigrants of the first generation evinced a movement towards the lower end of the social class spectrum after arriving in England and Wales. This was in large part due to a refusal of many English and Welsh employers to recognize qualifications gained and skills learnt abroad as well as a lack of work experience on the English and Welsh labour market. This issue is particularly pertinent in the case of Indians, most of whom came from urbanized backgrounds where they could be found in relatively skilled jobs. This argument accords with Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) concept of 'risk aversion', whereby young people evince the desire to achieve at least the occupational level of their parents. In terms of aspirations, Indian students may refer to their parents' social class in the country of origin rather than their social class as measured by their current occupational level in England and Wales.

However, if class is defined by the 'relations of employment' (Goldthorpe, 1981; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) the schema used here is less problematic. Rather than emphasizing 'cultural differences' this definition of social class places emphasis on current 'material circumstances'. The concept of low social class in this sense has multiple dimensions, encompassing temporary and enduring aspects of current material circumstances such as low family income, financial stress, economic dependency and living in a crime-ridden neighbourhood. In addition, there is evidence that, as a group, first-generation Indians in England and Wales experienced some absolute upward mobility. Heath and Smith (2003) found that 19 percent moved up into salaried occupations and that only 8 percent were downwardly mobile. In terms of relative mobility (which takes into account the starting occupational positions of the ethnic groups examined), the odds of a first-generation Indian male of working-class origin gaining access to a salaried position were found to be similar to those for whites. The social class measure used here may therefore be more appropriate for Indians than has sometimes been suggested.

A third focus of this article has been on whether social class works in a similar way *within* all ethnic groups or whether there are specifically 'ethnic effects'. A striking and surprising pattern was found. The effect of social class background appeared to be very similar for all ethnic groups. The raw

differences between class A and class B, class A and class C and so on are roughly comparable. In other words, although the starting points are not identical for all ethnicities, being in a given class grouping does appear to have a similar impact for each group.

Finally, the paper aimed to establish the differences between ethnic groups. Even once social class had been controlled for, differences were observed between the performances of the major minority ethnic groups in Britain. In the case of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis low social class explained more than half the difference. However, for blacks of both genders social class offered proportionally less in terms of an explanation. Therefore, although the importance of social class in the context of ethnic differentials in educational achievement has been established, there is a need to seek some additional explanation.

The differential remaining after controlling for social class was largest in the case of black males. A number of explanations have been put forward for this, for which the most prominent has been an absence of black male role models within and outside the school (Abbot, 2002; Clunis, 2002). A lack of connection with the school due to cultural and linguistic differences may also lead to an inability to view teachers and other adults at the school as positive role models. For black and minority ethnic children, the paucity of co-ethnic adults in educational institutions might compound this. Some researchers have suggested that this is a major factor in explaining the low attainment of some ethnic groups. Mac an Ghaill (1991), for example, has pointed to the conspicuous success of black voluntary schools.<sup>3</sup> It has also been suggested that teacher "racism" or the misinterpretation of black boys' "style" of behaviour may play a part (Kochman, 1981; Callender, 1995).

It is also possible that residential patterns may have an important impact on attainment levels. Greater levels of contact with disenchanted majority working-class youth can lead to negative engagement with school and poorer levels of attainment for all groups, including whites (see Portes and Zhou, 2001[1993] for a specifically minority ethnic framework). Afro-Caribbeans in England and Wales tend to have the lowest levels of residential segregation of the major black and minority ethnic groups and therefore a greater level of contact with disillusioned majority youth (Peach, 1996, 1998; Johnston et al., 2002). It has been suggested that the amount of intra-ethnic contact children experience has a direct impact on their life-chances (Borjas, 1995).

The greater propensity of black and minority ethnic students to be from working-class backgrounds also means that they are more likely to attend schools in poorer areas. It has been argued that this has been exacerbated by government policies that have been designed to introduce market processes into education (Ball, 1993; Walford, 1996). For Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in particular, who represent the poorest groups and are more

residentially segregated, this may be quite important (Peach, 1996, 1998; Johnston et al., 2002). They are likely to live in the very poorest areas; a direct comparison with the white working class may not be appropriate in terms of living conditions and the poverty of the community.

Parental expectations may be a factor. Modood (2005) points to the motivational drive for self-improvement that some ethnic minorities have for themselves and their children. This ties in with Inglehart's (1981, 1997) theory of post-materialism. Young white students in England and Wales today will have been born to the 'baby boomers' that grew up in a period of relative affluence following the Second World War. Such parents, Inglehart argues, possess post-materialist values – i.e. value goals other than upward mobility through material gain, for example, self-actualization. Minority ethnic parents born in the same era may have very different priorities for their children. Growing up in environments of insecurity, they may have developed what Inglehart terms materialist values that place emphasis on economic advancement. As a result of this, they view the academic achievement of their children as a concern of the greatest importance. If this is the case, parental values might mitigate the damaging effects of low social class for many ethnic groups through a culture of high expectations.

## Notes

- 1 Seventy-three percent of students with a father in the salariat and a missing mother gain five or more A\*–C grades, while 71 percent of those with a father in the salariat and a working-class mother do. Similarly, 68 percent of those with a salariat mother and a father missing achieve five or more A\*–C grades; the figure for students with a mother in the salariat and a working-class father is 65 percent.
- 2 There is only one exception to this: performance for Indians in class C is higher than that in class B
- 3 These are private schools, but are often linked to the state sector through funding from Local Educational Authorities or Community Relations Councils. The teachers are black and the schools are closely linked to the communities that they serve. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in the running of the school. Specifically black material is incorporated into the curriculum. These characteristics lead to more positive engagement with school on the part of black children and to higher educational attainment.

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## APPENDIX

Cohorts 5 to 10 of the Youth Cohort Study all have slightly different coding for the ethnicity variable. Ideally, the black group (comprising Afro-Caribbeans, black Africans and 'other' blacks) would be divided into its three constituent parts; previous research has found important differences between these groups (see for example Heath and McMahon, 1997). Unfortunately in the earlier survey years the variable does not take this form. Table A1 shows details of the coding of the ethnicity variable in each year of the Youth Cohort Study.



**Table A1** Recoding of the Youth Cohort Study ethnicity variables

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Ethnic groupings in the Youth Cohort Study</i> | <i>Recoded ethnic groupings</i> |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1991        | White   | White                           |
|             | Black   | Black                           |
|             | Indian  | Indian                          |
|             | Pakistani   | Pakistani                       |
|             | Bangladeshi                                       | Bangladeshi                     |
|             | Chinese, other Asian                              | Other                           |
| 1992, 1994  | White   | White                           |
|             | Black   | Black                           |
|             | Indian  | Indian                          |
|             | Pakistani   | Pakistani                       |
|             | Bangladeshi                                       | Bangladeshi                     |
|             | Chinese, other Asian, other                       | Other                           |
| 1996        | White   | White                           |
|             | Black Caribbean, Black African, other black       | Black                           |
|             | Asian Indian                                      | Indian                          |
|             | Pakistani   | Pakistani                       |
|             | Bangladeshi                                       | Bangladeshi                     |
|             | Chinese, other Asian                              | Other                           |
| 1998, 2000  | White   | White                           |
|             | Black Caribbean, Black African, other black       | Black                           |
|             | Indian  | Indian                          |
|             | Pakistani   | Pakistani                       |
|             | Bangladeshi                                       | Bangladeshi                     |
|             | Chinese, other Asian, any other                   | Other                           |

**Table A2** Percentage of ethnic groups occupying each social class:  
collapsed class schema

|    | <i>White</i> | <i>Black</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Pakistani/Bangladeshi</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|----|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| A  | 10           | 6            | 7             | 1                            | 10           |
| B  | 14           | 10           | 13            | 3                            | 14           |
| C  | 7            | 4            | 7             | 3                            | 7            |
| D  | 28           | 29           | 20            | 13                           | 23           |
| E  | 42           | 52           | 53            | 81                           | 47           |
| ID | 0            | 10           | 11            | 39                           | 5            |
| N  | 91447        | 1711         | 2529          | 2489                         | 2126         |

ID = index of dissimilarity, i.e. the proportion of respondents that would need to change category to create a distribution identical to that of a white group.

Source: Youth Cohort Study 1991–2000: combined dataset.