

**Making education count: the effects of ethnicity and
qualifications on intergenerational social class
mobility**

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September 2005

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Abstract

The extent to which equality of opportunity is enjoyed in Britain today is a clear policy issue, with government's strong promotion of the ideal of a 'meritocracy'. The route to achieving such a meritocratic society is argued to be through educational attainment. To what extent, however, can we observe equality of opportunity? Does education mediate the effect of background? And how does ethnicity complicate the picture of class transitions, and class affect our understanding of ethnic group outcomes? This paper explores these issues by theoretically informed, empirical analysis of life chances for different ethnic groups and their relationship to background (parents' characteristics) and individuals' own characteristics in England and Wales, using the ONS Longitudinal Study. Drawing on core sociological distinctions between social integration and structural constraints, the paper argues that the positive impact of educational achievement and the negative impact of discrimination cannot be generalised but intersect with initial distributions of advantage and disadvantage. It concludes that the effect of education is differentiated across groups and that it is less powerful the more disadvantaged the initial starting point. These findings challenge the notion that a more equal society can be achieved simply through promoting equality of opportunity through education.

[1]Introduction

The extent to which equality of opportunity is enjoyed in Britain today is a clear policy issue, with government's strong promotion of the ideal of a 'meritocracy' (Blair 2001). The route to achieving such a meritocratic society is argued to be through educational attainment. This article investigates whether education mediates the effect of background; and it does this examining not only class background but focusing on the relationship between education and social class outcomes for different ethnic groups.

Taking account of ethnicity complicates our understanding of social mobility and equality of opportunity (Hout 1984). Class immobility is generally taken to indicate a closed (or non-meritocratic) society. For minority groups, however, parity with the majority and therefore relative immobility by class background may be indicative of greater openness of society to minority ethnic groups. Ethnic differences may also be more salient at particular parts of the class distribution or at different levels of educational qualification. Thus, it may not be possible to distinguish a single pattern of relationships between education, background and class outcomes across ethnic groups. Instead, it is important to consider how social relations associated with such negative factors as discrimination and such positive factors as individual and group-level aspirations intersect with structural aspects of advantage or disadvantage, such as class background and geographical concentrations.

This concern with the role of social integration versus that of structural distribution of disadvantage in explaining class outcomes echoes the transition in the ethnicity literature from a focus on general processes of ethnic minority group disadvantage to an emphasis on diversity between groups. Previous research was more concerned with overarching processes associated with migration and post-migration experiences. These included: the demand for labour in particular, often low-skilled, occupations;

the causes and pressures of racism within society; and the channelling of residence and opportunity by those providing public services such as housing (e.g. Banton 1959; Daniel 1968; Smith 1977). By contrast, current research tends to emphasise the diversity between minority groups (e.g. Modood et al 1997), and attempts to explain trajectories of specific groups. This emphasis on diversity acknowledges striking differences between groups and that such differences can be greater than between minority and majority. The danger with this focus, however, is twofold. First, the emphasis on particularity may mean that groups dissolve as distinctiveness within groups leads to a focus on ever smaller sub-groups. And second, an understanding of the ethnic minority group experience as a whole and factors that may be important across groups may get lost.

The challenge is, then, to retain a common framework for understanding minority group processes, which can nevertheless accommodate diversity in outcomes. Conceptions of ethnic or racial 'hierarchy' may retain some relevance for Britain, but they are insufficient to explain differences within as well as between groups, and they risk becoming a competition for the most disadvantaged (Song 2004). Moreover, they tend to locate explanations almost entirely in some concept of ethnicity. By contrast, others have argued that we should not consider ethnicity *per se* but characteristics that vary across ethnic groups to account for differences in outcomes. For example, Nazroo (2001) has stressed the importance of acknowledging the role of class in health outcomes as they differ by ethnic group.

This paper sets out to explore issues of equality of opportunity and engage with these questions of explanation by examining variation in social class outcomes across a range of ethnic groups. It does this for individuals living in England and Wales in 2001 who grew up in these two countries, employing analysis of the ONS Longitudinal Study (described below, section 2). It specifically examines the role of education and class background on class outcomes. It aims to acknowledge both diversity and the potential for common processes across ethnic groups; and attempts to balance understanding of changes in achievement attributable to social integration with due emphasis on structural influences and constraints (Lockwood 1992). The paper thus discusses the effectiveness of particular explanatory or theoretical frameworks in accounting for the particular patterns observed. These frameworks are outlined in the rest of this introduction. The paper uses the positions outlined to drive the stages of analysis. The results of the analysis, found in sections 3 and 4, show that education is a critical route to class success across ethnic groups, but that for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis a strong ethnic penalty remains. Moreover, while for the white majority, privileged origins have an effect on social class success over and above educational achievement, minority groups do not appear to be able to mobilise privileged origins in the same way. The paper concludes that the effect of education is differentiated across groups and that it is less powerful the more disadvantaged the initial starting point. These findings challenge the notion that a more equal society can be achieved through promoting equality of opportunity through education.

The remainder of this introduction considers, first, the role of education and class background in contributing to class or occupational success and its particular relevance for minority ethnic groups. It then reflects on the relevance of other factors important to our understanding of differentiated class success: area effects and ethnic 'enclaves', which in turn are linked to the social networks and social capital.

Educational achievement is clearly crucial to minority group success (Platt 2005a). The achievement of higher levels of qualifications across generations is a feature of most groups' experience, even if there remains an educational 'deficit' or penalty for some groups. Figure 1 illustrates the variation between groups in the distributions of their highest qualifications. This is echoed in the results for 16-24 year olds (Figure 2), though at higher rates for all groups given the increase in qualifications for younger generations.

[Figures 1 and 2]

Accounts attempting to explain the situation of what are commonly regarded as the more successful groups (Indian/ East African Asian and Chinese) have often stressed a particular group-specific attachment to education (Modood 2004; Archer and Francis forthcoming). However, while these accounts may be convincing in helping us to understand the educational and occupational success of certain minority ethnic groups, they are less satisfactory in accounting for the lack of success of other groups. Commitment to education is also well-attested among groups that achieve less educational success. And a further problem with such arguments is that group identification with education may stem from as well as contributing to educational success.

Levels of educational qualifications across groups may help explain patterns of occupational success; but they are insufficient to explain unemployment rates as they differ by ethnic group (Heath and Yu 2005). Excess unemployment among minority ethnic groups persists even when education is controlled for (Blackaby et al 1999). This finding is supported even when UK-born are distinguished from those born outside the UK (Blackaby et al 2005) and when background factors that may provide additional protection against unemployment are taken into account (Platt 2005a). Lack of motivation among those who fare less well in employment is not supported by the evidence (Thomas 1998). And the higher rates of staying on in school among minority groups, including less successful minority groups such as Caribbeans and Pakistanis (DfES 2004), suggest that minority group members are well aware of the importance of education as a necessary (if not sufficient) route to success, and that they are highly motivated.

Variation in educational qualifications, then, only accounts for part of the differences in social class outcomes between groups. Blackaby et al (1997) assert that the 'ethnic penalty' observed after controlling for education can be straightforwardly interpreted as discrimination. However, that not only assumes that all other relevant factors have been captured in the models, but, with its stress on individual level discrimination, discounts a role for structural processes perpetuating disadvantage, that may or may not be ethnically specific. Heath and McMahon (1997), in coining the term 'ethnic penalty', were more cautious, arguing that it contains both discrimination and further, unmeasured, characteristics that vary with ethnicity. One of the unmeasured characteristics they posit is parental class background.

The power of social class origins to influence future generations' class outcomes both independently and indirectly through its influence on educational achievement has been extensively demonstrated (Goldthorpe et al 1987; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993;

Goldthorpe 1997; Heath and Payne 2000). This suggests research would do well to focus on the differences in what migrants 'bring with them' in terms of resources and education to understand differences in the current groups' profiles. The few studies that have been carried out indicate that class origins are important for minority groups but that an 'ethnic penalty' remains – at least for some groups (Heath and Ridge, 1983; Heath and McMahon 2005; Platt 2005b). However, the former two studies were problematic in their measurement of origin class being predominantly pre-migration; while Platt 2005b did not extend the analysis of education to identify whether it operates consistently across groups and whether the ethnic penalty was found at all levels of educational achievement. The analysis presented here, therefore, takes account of background factors, including parental class, that are measured in England and Wales and in the same period, and develops our understanding of how the intersection of education and ethnicity can refine our understanding of mobility processes and equality of opportunity.

Parental background is still not sufficient to explain ethnic group variation or 'ethnic penalties'. Borjas (1992) has argued that it is not just the parent's human capital that makes a difference, it is also the level of human capital in the group as a whole. Such 'ethnic capital' is not directly incorporated into the analysis below, but it is possible to observe whether those groups for whom background and own education do not translate into successful outcomes are also those with lower average levels of group qualifications as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Borjas' model posited only one child, but the relevance of different family sizes, with resources shared between different numbers of children, is also an important consideration, particularly in view of much larger families among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Borjas (1995) developed his approach to take account of neighbourhood concentration of minority ethnic groups. The importance of neighbourhood on minority group outcomes in the US, independent of other characteristics has been demonstrated (Galster et al 1999). For Loury (2005), apparent ethnic group effects on children's outcomes were subsumed within the characteristics of the areas in which the children grew up. There is some support for the existence of neighbourhood effects in Britain (Buck 2001); and Clark and Drinkwater (2002) identified an independent impact from deprived neighbourhoods, which varied with ethnic group. Enclaves have been conceived of as both a geographical concentration and as a strong co-ethnic affiliation. Both positive and negative attributes have been associated with enclaves: they have been argued both to inhibit assimilation and thus upward mobility and to provide a resource for minority ethnic groups. However, Clark and Drinkwater failed to observe in Britain the positive effects posited for enclaves. In the analysis which follows, a measure of the ethnic minority concentration¹ of the ward in which the parent is living is used to try to ascertain if there appear to be intersections between ethnicity and the type of residential area as summarised by that variable.

Debates on whether ethnic group concentrations represent choices or constraints have tended to come down on the side of constraints (Smith 1989). However, 'ethnic attachment' may be a choice that certain groups can 'afford' to make if the boundaries of their ethnicity are more flexible in relation to the host community (Reitz and Sklar

¹ Theoretically, it would have been more appropriate to have used a measure of own group rather than minority group concentration in general; but the data did not allow this.

1997). This argument is consistent with Dorsett's (1998) finding of preferences for proximate residence among more success minority group members. Such 'ethnic attachment' among those who are already more effectively integrated – or less marginalised – could also constitute the mobilisation of social capital in the achievement of upward social mobility. The importance of social networks and social capital in contributing to positive outcomes has been extensively debated. A crucial distinction in terms of facilitating mobility is between 'bridging' and 'bonding' capital: 'bridging' enables connections between those at different social positions (the 'strength of weak ties') and 'bonding' consolidates connections within groups. It is clear that the relative role of bridging and bonding must vary at different points in the class distribution (Lin 2001). Individuals from certain groups may be better served by geographical distribution and group histories as well as their own characteristics to exploit the potential of 'bridging' capital to effect upward mobility. Those who start from a more disadvantaged position may be ill-placed to secure upward social mobility. This means that it is important to explore interactions between background, ethnicity and qualifications in achieving social class success, as is done in the analysis below.

[2]Data and study design

The data for this paper come from the ONS Longitudinal Study, a record-linkage study of one per cent of the population of England and Wales. It was initially obtained by taking a sample of the 1971 Census, based on those born on one of four birth dates (day and month). At each subsequent Census, information from samples taken using the same sampling criteria is linked where possible. Between censuses, members are added to the study by linking information on births and immigrations, again using the same sampling criteria. Information on death and emigration from England and Wales is also linked to the study. No further information is linked for sample members who have died or emigrate, although linkage recommences for members who return to England and Wales.

The paper examines two combined cohorts of LS members, those who were children aged 4-15 in 1971 and those who were aged 4-15 in 1981. The pooling of two cohorts was undertaken to increase sample sizes of the minority groups; and cohort controls were included in all the models. Study members' achieved class position was measured at 2001 (when they were aged between 24 and 45). Their origins, both in terms of social class origins and other family/ parental characteristics, were measured when they were children in 1971 or 1981. The study members' origins were observed directly at that earlier time point, which gives this study the advantages of a prospective design: measurement of origins is not subject to recall error and, particularly important for minority ethnic groups, is known to be their situation in England and Wales rather than that prior to migration.

Variables constructed to summarise characteristics associated with study members' origins (when they were children in 1971/81) were:

- Parents' social class: three-category CASMIN schema, that is service (the highest social class), intermediate, working, and other (where respondents did not fit one of the former classes). Where two parents were present and occupied different class positions the higher of the two was allocated as the parental social class (the 'dominance approach');
- housing tenure (owner occupation, local authority housing, private rented);

- car ownership in household (0 cars, 1 car, 2 or more cars);
- parents' qualifications (no mother (father), mother (father) has no higher qualifications, mother (father) has higher qualifications), and
- ethnic minority concentration in the ward of residence (0% minorities, more than 0 and less than 1%, 1% and less than 5%, 5% and less than 10%, 10% or more)
- age group: 4-7; 8-11; 12-15.
- cohort: whether they were first observed (and these origin characteristics measured) at 1971 or 1981

At 2001, variables constructed to measure study members' own characteristics were:

- social class: according to the NS-SeC (the 2001 equivalent of the CASMIN schema). The dominance approach was again used to allocate destination class where the study member and their cohabiting partner occupied different class positions. This study focuses on attainment of professional / managerial class positions compared to any other outcome (including unemployment or inactivity).
- ethnic group: based on the 1991 ethnic group classification, but modified to differentiate those of migrant parentage from those of non-migrant parentage. The minority groups were required to have at least one migrant parent and the white majority group was required to have both parents British born. In addition, a white migrant group was created based on white 1991 ethnicity combined with both parents being migrants. A residual category comprised those who did not fit these combinations of (non)migrant parentage and ethnicity.
- partnership status (this was particularly important as the allocation of class using the dominance approach meant that those who were partnered would be classified by their partner's class if it was higher)
- education (recoded into four categories, none, level 1, level 2, level 3 and above)

The distribution of these variables across the whole sample are summarised in Table 1. This table illustrates in particular the small proportion of parents with higher qualifications (the only form of qualifications measured at both 1971 and 1981).

[Table 1]

Table two shows these distributions across the five largest minority groups considered in this analysis² and the level of variation by ethnic group across the characteristics considered:

[Table 2]

So what is the relationship between these characteristics and do the differences in characteristics across ethnic groups explain their different chances of managerial professional class outcomes? As discussed, class background remains important in determining life chances; though whether the effect is declining or increasing is debated (Heath and Payne 2000; Blanden et al 2002). For minority ethnic groups, the effect of class origins is less clear-cut. However, that may be because class means different things in country of emigration and country of immigration, which makes a difference if the two are used alongside one another (Heath and McMahon 2005), or even if the emphasis is predominantly on the class of emigration (Heath and Ridge

² Small cell sizes prevent these distributions being shown for all the minority groups.

1983). Moreover, class position in the country of immigration may for some be depressed by discrimination and lack of familiarity with the labour market on arrival. This could, in part, explain the apparently high rates of upward mobility relative to origins among minority groups from an overwhelming concentration of migrants in the working class in 1971/81 (see Figure 3). Thus, as argued above, it becomes important not only to compare groups from comparable cohorts where origin class is measured in Britain, but also to take account additionally of other indicators of relatively advantaged or disadvantaged origins such as parental qualifications and economic resources. This can then provide a starting point for the analysis of the contribution of educational achievement. Such analysis is presented in the next section

[Figure 3]

[3] Ethnicity, education and professional / managerial class outcomes

A logistic regression model was estimated to ascertain the presence of an ethnic group effect. In the first model (Model 1 in Table 3), the relationship of ethnic group and professional or managerial class outcomes was estimated, controlling for background. In Model 2, education was included. The first model indicated that nearly all the minority groups experienced greater upward mobility (or higher class retention) relative to white non-migrants with comparable backgrounds. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficients for these groups. This would support the belief in suppressed class origins in the first generation or the theory of greater motivation among migrants in relation to the achievements of the second generation. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups show the opposite pattern. They experience less social class success than even their heavy concentration in the working classes of the migrant generation (illustrated in Figure 3), would lead one to expect.

[Table 3]

When education is included (in Model 2), the strong reduction in the size of the positive ethnic group effects and their lack of significance indicates that the upward mobility is achieved through education. This could be explained through particular motivation to achieve or through 'bounceback' from suppressed class position in the migrant generation - or the way the two feed of each other. That is, once we take account of education of the second generation, their achievement of professional / managerial class positions is only what we would expect by comparison with the white majority for these minority groups. However, the effect for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis becomes stronger (a larger negative coefficient) once education is included, indicating that their chances of professional managerial success are substantially worse than their white non-migrant peers at the same level of education.

Given the differences in overall educational attainment illustrated above, this raised the possibility that an ethnic group penalty in the attainment of professional/ managerial class position was concentrated among those without qualifications (or with lower qualifications) while those with higher levels of qualifications did not suffer a discernible penalty. Thus highly qualified Indians might have even chances with highly qualified white non-migrants, but lower qualified Pakistanis might have a substantially lower chance of such outcomes compared with lower qualified white

non-migrants. This would be consistent with the theory that ethnic penalties operate differently at different structural positions and with Portes and Zhou's (1993) theory of 'segmented assimilation'. Borjas's (1992) theory of ethnic capital might also help us to account for why the second generation from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were not achieving the same degree of success through education.

To test the idea that ethnic penalties vary with position, further models were run in which minority ethnicity and education were interacted. Sample sizes did not support interacting the minority groups individually with education, so instead the minority groups were aggregated. The aggregation took two forms: one including all minority groups and one separating out the white migrants. The white migrants formed the largest minority group and therefore had both the potential to stand alone and risked dominating the results for the other groups.

Table 4 shows the results of the interactions and how they modified the main effects for the interacted variables. Column 1 shows that there is an 'ethnic penalty' for the minority groups in the attainment of professional / managerial class outcomes, but this applies to those with no educational qualifications. Instead the interactions between ethnicity and education serve roughly to cancel out the ethnic penalty to a similar extent across all the levels of educational qualifications for those that have any. That is, as hypothesised, those with qualifications achieve on a par with their white non-migrant counterparts when backgrounds are controlled, but those without qualifications do worse. When white migrants are separated out from the other minority groups the size of the penalty for the non-white minorities increases, while white migrants themselves do not appear significantly different from white non-migrants whatever their level of qualifications. Thus this ethnic penalty is distinctive to non-white minorities and will be most evident among those groups with the greatest lack of educational qualifications. This then helps us to understand the Pakistani and Bangladeshi effects.³

[Table 4]

However, this still leaves unanswered the question of why Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are not achieving the levels of educational success associated with other groups and the very strong ethnic penalties in terms of professional / managerial class attainment. Part of the answer is likely to lie in the geographical distribution of the minority groups and their concentration in more depressed areas and ones in which schools and educational opportunities more generally may not be so conducive to educational success. The potential negative effects of ethnic 'enclaves' and of deprived neighbourhood, discussed above, would support this proposition. However, in Table 3, in both models, the impact of living in an area with a concentration of minorities was positive and significant for all levels of concentration. The possibility remains that this is an effect which applies predominantly to the white non-migrants who dominate the sample. To test whether this is the case – and whether it also applies to the other background characteristics and their effects, models were then run separately for each of the five largest minority groups, as well as for all minorities

³ The relative lack of educational success of Caribbean men is probably partly compensated for by the achievement of women. But it is worth noting the negative sign of the coefficient for Caribbeans in Table 3, Model 2, even if the effect is small and is not statistically significant.

pooled and for minorities excluding white migrant. The results from these models are illustrated in the next section.

[4]The effects of education and background within groups

Tables 5 and 6 repeat models 1 and 2 from Table 3, but for ethnic groups separately and for the pooled minority groups. Table 5 explores the impact of background factors on probability of professional / managerial class achievement without taking account of educational achievement. It shows that, for minorities, the results are broadly consistent with those for the white non-migrants (though in some cases they fail to reach statistical significance). This indicates that similar processes in relation to the impact of background characteristics operate across groups, even if the levels are different for the different groups – and they start at very different starting points (cf. Heath and McMahon, 2005). This gives some support to the strategy of including ethnic group as an independent variable in Table 3, above, and to the consequent identification of ethnic group effects in Model 1. There are two exceptions, however, to this overall consistency. The first is housing. While car ownership as a proxy for economic resources seems to work well and to have a positive effect on the attainment (or retention) of professional / managerial class position across groups, housing tenure produces rather different results. For minorities as a whole, investment in owner occupation has a positive relationship with professional / managerial class outcomes, relative to local authority housing as is the case for the white non-migrant majority. However, this effect is much stronger for white migrants than for other minorities, and for Indians, the effect is in the opposite direction. Those Indians who grew up in both local authority housing and private rented housing, have increased chances of professional / managerial class outcomes relative to those who grew up in owner occupied housing. This supports the evidence that owner occupation is not such a clear indicator of economic position or relative advantage as it is for the population as a whole (Phillips, 1997), especially given the way that owner occupation may constrain opportunities for geographical mobility.

The other exception is ethnic minority area concentration. Not only are the results here not statistically significant for the pooled minorities, but they are substantially smaller, and, for the two higher levels of concentration they have a negative rather than a positive sign. Thus area effects, in so far as they are captured by this minority group concentration variable, would not seem to impact on minority groups, though high concentrations may have a slight limiting effect. The evidence here, therefore, does not support the idea that area plays a crucial role in minority group outcomes, either collectively or specifically. Moreover, for the white non-migrant majority, living in an area of ethnic minority group concentration, whatever the level of concentration, would appear to have a positive effect. What we may be seeing here is in fact the negative effect of growing up in a ward with no minority group presence at all. Such areas are likely to include some of the most affluent areas in the 1970s and 1980s. But they may also include a substantial number of wards that did not attract a migrant presence in the period up to 1981 through lack of a dynamic labour market, that is, depressed areas with very limited opportunities.

[Table 5]

When education is included in the separate regressions, as shown in Table 6, parental background is much less important for minority groups than for the white non-migrant majority, once qualifications are taken into account. Thus, not only is education the route to minority group upward mobility to a large extent, it would appear to be almost the only route, with social class background failing to have an independent effect. On the other hand, economic resources, as reflected in car ownership, remain important in achieving or maintaining professional / managerial class positions across groups when controlling for educational level. While education is clearly an over-riding route for minority group success, the economic resources that groups can draw on would also appear to be important across all ethnic groups in supplementing qualifications levels, perhaps in assisting upward mobility through marriage.

Partnership itself can be seen to be less important for Pakistanis than for other groups as a route to occupational success, though it still has a positive and significant impact, due to the way that class is taken as the higher of the two partners. This may stem from the high levels of economic inactivity among married Pakistani women, as well as from a high degree of homogamy. The effect of educational qualifications for the Pakistanis, though still strong, is not as great as for other minorities particular at lower levels. By contrast, for Indians it is higher education that makes a big difference to the probability of professional / managerial outcomes.

It is still apparent that area effects or ethnic group concentrations have little to offer our analysis in terms of explanation.⁴ The white non-migrants continue to experience an independent and positive effect of having been brought up in wards with some level of ethnic group concentration, even with relatively high levels (by UK standards). However, there are no unambiguous effects for the minority groups. The role of area effects and minority group concentrations in both influencing educational outcomes and in influencing social class outcomes conditional upon education, remains susceptible to further exploration.

[Table 6]

Finally, a number of interactions (not illustrated) were tested within the white non-migrants and to a more limited extent (given small cell sizes and lack of variation across characteristics) for minority groups.

Origin class and educational achievement were interacted for the white non-migrants to ascertain whether there was some sort of substitution effect, reflected in a positive interaction between higher social class and lower or no qualifications. That is, whether higher class origin increased the chances of those with relatively lower qualifications of attaining a professional or managerial position, following Goldthorpe's (2003) argument that class background is more important at lower levels of qualifications. Instead, however, the interaction between service class origins and higher qualifications was positive and significant. This indicates that while service class origins are an advantage regardless of education, and while education is an advantage regardless of origin, there is a multiplicative effect between the two: those who are highly educated are even more likely to succeed if they come from higher

⁴ This may partly be a consequence of small number of minority group members at sparse levels of minority group concentration, as illustrated in Table 2.

social class origins. This could give some support to the notion of diversity within institutions in their influence in the labour market – a degree from Oxbridge versus a degree from a new university, for example (see Shiner and Modood 2002). It may also stem from the greater level of support higher class origins can give to staying in education after 18, given that the highest qualification level in this analysis combines A' levels and degrees. It may also be important that the model controls for economic resources: that is, the protective value of financial resources is already accounted for, higher social class origins thus reflect the more intangible advantages net of economic advantage, such as social contacts and cultural capital, which may serve to enhance qualifications but which are less effective without qualifications to interact with. Given that this interaction effect could not be found for minority groups, either individually or together, it may also suggest that networks and informal routes to occupational attainment are more significant for the white majority. Minority groups cannot, by this account, complement educational achievement with other forms of advantage and have to depend purely on the qualifications themselves. In this respect, they would appear to be penalised relative to the white non-migrant majority.

[5]Conclusions

This paper has found that there are, indeed, very different class outcomes across groups even when parental background is taken into account. The role of education is observed to be the route by which all groups, but minority groups in particular achieve social class success, and that they do this against the background of predominantly working class origins. However, for Pakistanis education does not mitigate a strong ethnic penalty. Social class background continues to have an important independent effect, over and above educational achievement, for white non-migrants; but such an additional effect does not operate for minority ethnic groups. This means that insofar as they mobilise any advantage they have, minorities do so to ensure educational achievement rather than through alternative strategies, such as utilising networks. Consistent with this, the ethnic penalty is much more in evidence at lower levels of educational achievement. Parents' economic resources, do, however represent an additional resource for social class success across all ethnic groups. The results appear to demonstrate that area effects (insofar as they are captured here) do not have a bearing on the outcomes of minority groups. Thus, the extent to which 'ethnic capital' is important for minority groups would seem to be in its role in securing a well-qualified second generation.

What are the broader messages from these findings and what do they imply for ideals of equality of opportunity? Do they support the idea that we are living in a meritocracy? The critical importance of education in determining social class success might well support the conviction of equality of opportunity, though we should remain alert to the fact that it may not be as effective in preventing unemployment (Heath and Yu 2005; Platt 2005a). In addition, the fact that privileged social class origins constitute an independent advantage for the white non-migrant majority, whereas they do not appear to (independently of the effect of education) for minority ethnic groups, highlights a number of levels at which England and Wales remain far from the meritocratic 'ideal' (if ideal it is: see Aldridge 2001; Goldthorpe 1997). First, the continuing relevance of origins over and above education is indicative of a stratified society, even not taking account of the fact that much educational success can be regarded as constituting a realisation of background

privilege. Second, the fact that such privileged backgrounds do not appear to ‘work’ for minority groups is indicative of a society with an ethnic penalty – otherwise they would be able to retain advantage for their children in the same way. It can be argued that any advantage is channelled more effectively among minorities through education; and certainly, the levels of absolute upward mobility are promising in this light.

However, the fact that education itself is not sufficient for all groups, with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis showing a strong ethnic penalty regardless of level of educational achievement, undermines this case. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, who remain disadvantaged relative to their white peers from comparable backgrounds and educational levels. This indicates that there are strong constraints on ethnic minority success and that these operate most severely for those coming from the most disadvantaged positions to start off with. Lack of equity, then, would appear to compound the effect of the lack of equal starting positions that vex the whole meritocratic ideal, as demonstrated so effectively in Young’s (1958) original representation of a ‘meritocracy’.

Acknowledgements

The permission of the Office for National Statistics to use the Longitudinal Study is gratefully acknowledged, as is the help provided by staff of the Centre for Longitudinal Study Information & User Support (CeLSIUS), especially Julian Buxton. The author however, retains full responsibility for the interpretation of the data. Census output is Crown copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland.

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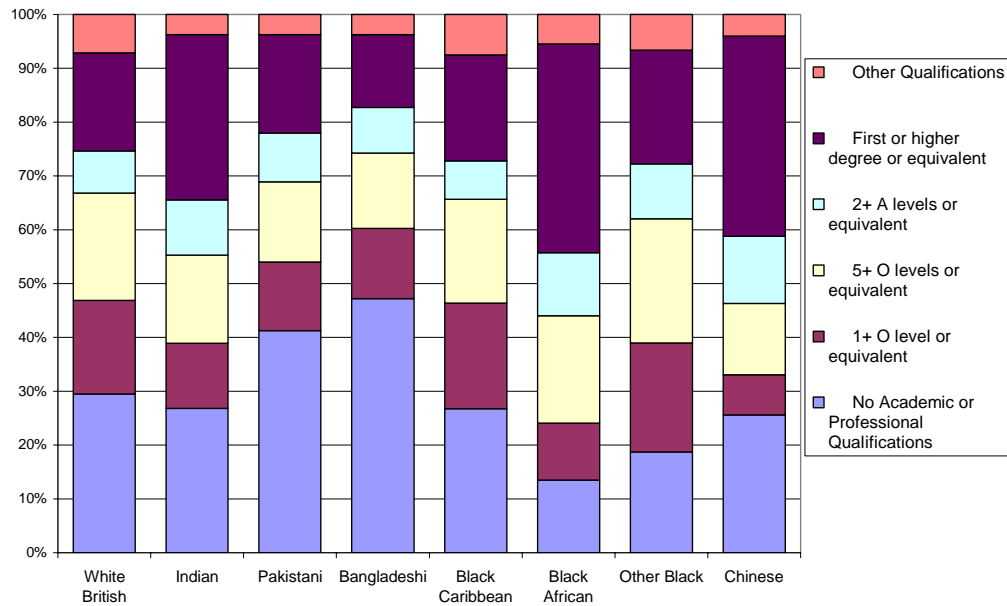
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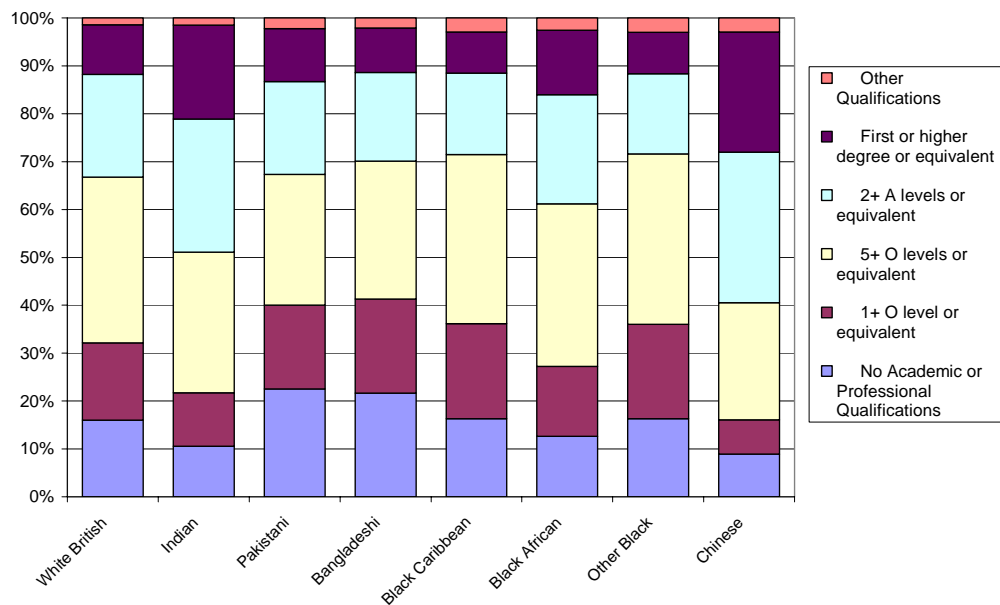
Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Highest level of educational qualifications across selected ethnic groups, 2001, all aged 16-74, England and Wales



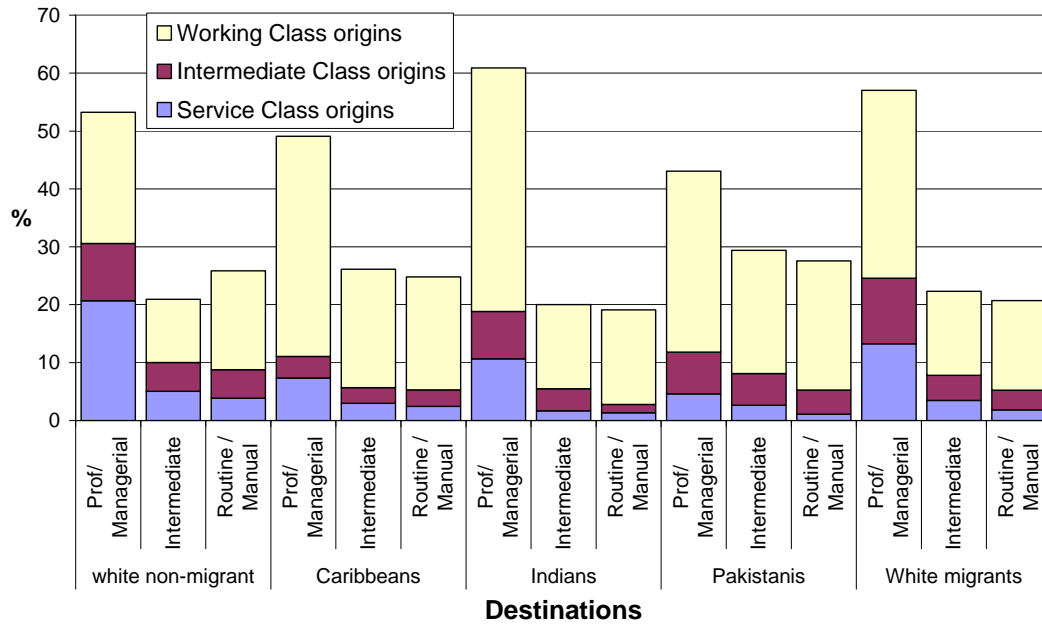
Source: 2001 Census, Commissioned Tables. Crown Copyright. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

Figure 2: Highest level of educational qualifications across selected ethnic groups, 2001, aged 16-24, England and Wales



Source: 2001 Census, Commissioned Tables. Crown Copyright. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

Figure 3: The composition of 2001 class positions according to parental social class origins 1971/81, for five ethnic groups



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

Table 1: Distributions of Selected Characteristics of Study Member (including Parent's Characteristics / Situation as a Child in 1971 or 1981), 2001

Characteristics	% distribution
Class destination (2001): professional / managerial	47.9
Class destination (2001): Intermediate	18.9
Class destination (2001): Routine / manual	23.3
Class destination (2001): Unemployed	2.8
Class destination (2001): Other	7.1
1971 cohort	51.8
1981 cohort	48.2
Age group 1: 4-7 in 1971/81	31.4
Age group 2: 8-11 in 1971/81	34.0
Age group 3: 12-15 in 1971/81	34.6
Area minority group concentration (1971/81): 0% minorities	9.6
Area minority group concentration (1971/81): 0-1% minorities	58.8
Area minority group concentration (1971/81): 1-5% minorities	20.8
Area minority group concentration (1971/81): 5-10% minorities	4.9
Area minority group concentration (1971/81): 10%+ minorities	5.9
Male	49.7
Female	50.3
Partnered (2001)	68.8
Single (2001)	31.2
Parents Class (1971/81): Service	26.3
Parents Class (1971/81): Intermediate	18.2
Parents Class (1971/81): Working	49.7
Parents Class (1971/81): Other	5.8
No co-resident mother (1971/81)	4.4
Mother no higher qualifications (1971/81)	90.8
Mother with higher qualifications (1971/81)	4.9
No co-resident father (1971/81)	5.6
Father no higher qualifications (1971/81)	84.7
Father with higher qualifications (1971/81)	9.7
Tenure when child (1971/81): Owner occupied housing	57.6
Tenure when child (1971/81): Local authority	32.7
Tenure when child (1971/81): Private rented	9.7
No car in household when child (1971/81)	29.3
1 car in household when child (1971/81)	54.2
2 or more cars in household when child (1971/81)	16.5
White non-migrant	88.7
Black Caribbean and Black Other	1.1
Black African	0.1
Indian	1.2
Pakistani	0.6
Bangladeshi	0.1
Chinese and Other	0.4
White migrant	2.6
White migrant and non-migrant parentage and minority ethnicity UK-born parents	5.3
Own qualifications (2001): none	14.9
Own qualifications (2001): level one	28.0

Own qualifications (2001): level two	25.1
Own qualifications (2001): level three and above	32.0
N	135, 447

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

Note: The bases for the raw distributions of characteristics will vary according to the presence of missing values. The N given here is for all those for whom a class destination is measured at 2001.

Table 2: Percentage distributions of Selected Characteristics of Study Member (including Parent's Characteristics / Situation as a Child in 1971 or 1981), for five ethnic groups, 2001

	White non-migrant %	Caribbean %	Indian %	Pakistani %	White migrant %
Class destination (2001): professional / managerial	48	39	55	32	50
Class destination (2001): Intermediate	19	21	18	22	20
Class destination (2001): Routine / manual	24	20	18	21	19
Class destination (2001): Unemployed and Other	9	20	9	25	11
1971 cohort	52	52	34	22	59
1981 cohort	48	48	66	78	41
Agegroup 1: 4-7 in 1971/81	31	33	33	33	27
Agegroup 2: 8-11 in 1971/81	34	35	35	35	34
Agegroup 3: 12-15 in 1971/81	35	32	32	33	39
Male	49	43	51	51	48
Female	51	57	49	49	52
Partnered (2001)	69	38	64	67	62
Single (2001)	31	62	36	33	38
Area (1971/81): 0% minorities	10	--	--	--	2
Area (1971/81): 1% minorities	62	--	--	--	26
Area (1971/81): 1+ to 5%	20	--	--	--	31
Area (1971/81): 5+ to 10%	4	--	--	--	16
Area (1971/81): 10+%	3	--	--	--	25
Area (1971/81): >0-1% minorities	73	6	4	5	29
Area (1971/81): 1+% minorities	27	94	96	95	71
Parents Class (1971/81): Service	29	13	13	7	18
Parents Class (1971/81): Intermediate	19	9	13	16	19
Parents Class (1971/81): Working	52	78	74	77	63
Owner occupied housing (1971/81)	57	50	84	87	56
Local authority (1971/81)	33	40	9	8	32
Private rented (1971/81)	10	10	7	5	12
No car (1971/81)	28	60	44	50	48
1 car (1971/81)	55	35	47	45	42
2 or more cars (1971/81)	17	5	9	5	10

No qualifications (2001)	15	11	10	20	14
Level 1 (2001)	29	30	20	21	26
Level 2 (2001)	25	26	19	19	25
Level 3 and above (2001)	31	34	51	40	35
N	125 014	1547	1691	779	3675

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

Notes: The bases for the raw distributions of characteristics will vary according to the presence of missing values and categories excluded from the calculation of distributions. The Ns given here are for all those for whom a class destination is measured at 2001, but for many of the distributions will be smaller. Not all the distributions given in Table 1 are supplied by ethnic group to avoid risk of disclosure.

Table 3: Logistic regressions of probability of professional/ managerial destination in 2001, controlling for individual and background characteristics

	Model 1 Coefficients (SE)	Model 2 Coefficients (SE)
Cohort (baseline is 1971 cohort)	-.077 (.012)	-.236 (.013)
Age (base is 12-15)		
Agegroup 1	.013 (.013)	-.192 (.014)
Agegroup 2	.041 (.014)	-.049 (.015)
Male	.015 (.012)	.076 (.014)
Partnered	1.026 (.014)	1.135 (.016)
Area concentration of minorities (baseline 0%)		
Up to 1%	.192 (.021)	.191 (.023)
1 to 5%	.301 (.024)	.349 (.026)
5-10%	.189 (.034)	.268 (.037)
More than 10%	.154 (.035)	.266 (.038)
Origin class: base is working		
Service class	.539 (.017)	.322 (.019)
Intermediate	.061 (.017)	.019 (.018)
Other	-.203 (.033)	-.096 (.036)
Mother's qualifications (base no qualifications)		
No co-resident mother	-.208 (.045)	-.123 (.050)
Mother with qualifications	.420 (.025)	.115 (.027)
Father's qualifications (base no qualifications)		
No co-resident father	.226 (.028)	.135 (.031)
Father with qualifications	.529 (.022)	.215 (.023)
Tenure at origin (base is owner occupation)		
Local authority	-.570 (.015)	-.278 (.016)
Private rented	-.303 (.021)	-.159 (.023)
Car ownership at origin (baseline is no cars)		
1 car	.274 (.015)	.173 (.017)
2 or more cars	.408 (.022)	.290 (.023)
Ethnic group (baseline is white non-migrant)		
Caribbean	.197 (.068)	-.088 (.073)
Black African	.557 (.219)	.050 (.232)
Indian	.445 (.062)	.078 (.062)
Pakistani	-.589 (.093)	-.885 (.098)
Bangladeshi	-.277 (.223)	-.536 (.219)
Chinese and other	.499 (.100)	.095 (.103)
White migrant	.257 (.041)	.070 (.044)
Sample member's qualifications (base is 0)		

Lower		1.02 (.026)
Middle		1.48 (.027)
Further		2.78 (.028)
<i>Car ownership at destination (base is 0)</i>		
Constant	-1.28 (.030)	-2.63 (.038)
N		
Chi2 Change (df)		14004(4)

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

Notes: Statistically significant results at a least the 0.05 level are highlighted in **bold**
Standard errors are adjusted for repeat observations on persons
The regression models were run both using dummies to represent missing cases and excluding all cases with missing values. The advantage of the former approach is that it maintains the sample size, however, it may do so at the expense of distorting the estimates (Allison, 2002). Checks confirmed however that there was little difference between the estimates based on exclusion of cases with missing values or on substitution of dummies for missing values. For brevity the coefficients for the dummies are not given in this Table.

Table 4: Logistic regression testing the interaction of education and ethnicity (ethnic minority groups combined compared to white non-migrant)

	Coefficient (SE)	Coefficient (SE)
<i>Education (base=none)</i>		
Level 1	1.015 (.027)	1.015 (.027)
Level 2	1.462 (.028)	1.462 (.028)
Level 3+	2.764 (.029)	2.764 (.029)
<i>Ethnicity (base= white non-migrant)</i>		
All minority ethnic groups	-.292 (.110)	
Minority ethnic groups excluding white migrant		-.742 (.172)
White migrant		.094 (.501)
<i>Interactions</i>		
All minorities x level 1	.218 (.124)	
All minorities x level 2	.368 (.123)	
All minorities x level 3+	.269 (.119)	
Non-white minorities x level 1		.611 (.190)
Non-white minorities x level 2		.647 (.188)
Non-white minorities x level 3+		.687 (.181)
White migrant x level 1		0.126 (.162)
White migrant x level 2		.143 (.161)
White migrant x level 3+		-.085 (.159)

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

Notes: Statistically significant results at a least the 0.05 level are highlighted in **bold**
Standard errors are adjusted for repeat observations on persons
Only the coefficients for the interacted variables (main effects and interaction effects) are shown: effects for all other variables were almost exactly the same as those in Table 3 model 2.

Table 5: Logistic regressions of probability of professional/ managerial destination in 2001, controlling for background and individual characteristics (excluding education), by ethnic group

	White non-migrant	All minorities	Minorities excluding white migrant	White migrant	Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani
Cohort (baseline is 1971 cohort)	-.091 (.013)	.043 (.050)	.004 (.069)	.121 (.079)	-.264 (.138)	.119 (.124)	.039 (.211)
<i>Age (base is 12-15)</i>							
Aged 4-7 in 1971/81	.009 (.014)	.053 (.055)	.057 (.075)	.039 (.084)	-.146 (.146)	.186 (.128)	.304 (.204)
Aged 8-11 in 1971/81	.035 (.015)	.125 (.057)	.177 (.077)	.044 (.086)	.021 (.151)	.219 (.128)	.443 (.207)
Male	.016 (.013)	.031 (.050)	.095 (.066)	-.028 (.078)	-.098 (.129)	.040 (.111)	.394 (.180)
Partnered	1.04 (.015)	.805 (.053)	.634 (.071)	1.078 (.084)	1.043 (.132)	.532 (.129)	.369 (.197)
<i>Area concentration of minorities base is 0% (0-1%)*</i>							
Up to 1%	.190 (.022)	.081 (.238)	.322 (.931)	.042 (.253)			
1 to 5%	.296 (.025)	.124 (.236)	.352 (.926)	.058 (.254)			
5-10%	.206 (.038)	-.113 (.239)	.097 (.926)	-.155 (.263)			
More than 10%	.142 (.041)	-.078 (.235)	.153 (.924)	-.077 (.256)			
More than 1%					-.356 (.256)	-.259 (.299)	-.063 (.380)
<i>Origin class: base is working</i>							
Service class	.543 (.018)	.432 (.080)	.340 (.110)	.456 (.119)	-.017 (.189)	.468 (.212)	.464 (.398)
Intermediate	.063 (.018)	.045 (.072)	-.077 (.102)	.128 (.105)	-.411 (.233)	-.033 (.176)	-.029 (.257)

	Other	-.234 (.036)	<i>-.129 (.094)</i>	<i>-.067 (.123)</i>	<i>-.175 (.146)</i>	<i>.109 (.219)</i>	<i>-.136 (.236)</i>	-.975 (.388)
<i>Mother's qualifications (base no higher qualifications)</i>								
	No co-resident mother	-.196 (.048)	-.379 (.134)	-.404 (.190)	<i>-.375 (.194)</i>	<i>.163 (.311)</i>	<i>-.503 (.440)</i>	<i>-.324 (.431)</i>
	Mother with higher qualifications	.438 (.027)	.339 (.098)	.396 (.146)	.318 (.136)	<i>.440 (.246)</i>	.833 (.373)	<i>.244 (.557)</i>
<i>Father's qualifications (base no higher qualifications)</i>								
	No co-resident father	.248 (.030)	<i>.067 (.088)</i>	<i>.161 (.128)</i>	<i>-.055 (.128)</i>	<i>.104 (.198)</i>	<i>.362 (.296)</i>	<i>.744 (.540)</i>
	Father with higher qualifications	.542 (.023)	.453 (.096)	.558 (.127)	.328 (.148)	<i>.465 (.320)</i>	<i>.321 (.226)</i>	<i>-.035 (.468)</i>
<i>Tenure at origin (base is owner occupation)</i>								
	Local authority	-.588 (.016)	-.226 (.063)	<i>-.017 (.088)</i>	-.532 (.092)	<i>-.202 (.146)</i>	.765 (.209)	<i>-.014 (.318)</i>
	Private rented	-.326 (.023)	<i>.058 (.082)</i>	<i>.167 (.116)</i>	<i>-.134 (.120)</i>	<i>-.155 (.229)</i>	.503 (.225)	<i>.622 (.389)</i>
<i>Car ownership at origin (baseline is no cars)</i>								
	1 car	.276 (.016)	.274 (.055)	.376 (.073)	<i>.103 (.086)</i>	<i>.088 (.139)</i>	.468 (.122)	.422 (.191)
	2 or more cars	.403 (.023)	.469 (.098)	.536 (.139)	.321 (.143)	<i>.553 (.288)</i>	.515 (.224)	<i>.452 (.439)</i>
	Constant	-1.283 (.031)	-.902 (.03)	-3.262 (.885)	-.776 (.268)	-.371	<i>-.580 (.356)</i>	-1.717 (.481)
	N	120027	7839	4395	3440	1337	1569	691

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

* An area concentration variable which distinguished simply between a minority group concentration of 0-1% and of more than 1% was created for the smaller minority group analyses due to the constraints of small sub-group sizes.

Notes: Statistically significant results at a least the 0.05 level are highlighted in **bold**

Standard errors are adjusted for repeat observations on persons

The regression models used dummies to represent missing cases. For brevity the coefficients for the dummies are not given in this Table.

Standard errors are adjusted for repeat observations on individuals

Table 6: Logistic regressions of probability of professional/ managerial destination in 2001, controlling for background and individual characteristics (including education), by ethnic group

	White non-migrant	All minorities	Minorities excluding white migrant	White migrant	Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani
Cohort (baseline is 1971 cohort)	-.244 (.014)	-.238 (.056)	-.321 (.079)	-.068 (.088)	-.493 (.148)	-.313 (.145)	-.099 (.233)
<i>Age (base is 12-15)</i>							
Aged 4-7 in 1971/81	-.190 (.015)	-.283 (.062)	-.336 (.085)	-.192 (.094)	-.323 (.155)	-.317 (.147)	-.234 (.243)
Aged 8-11 in 1971/81	-.051 (.016)	-.074 (.064)	-.087 (.087)	-.061 (.094)	-.056 (.160)	-.168 (.148)	.055 (.241)
Male	.076 (.014)	.075 (.055)	.130 (.074)	.025 (.084)	.112 (.138)	-.103 (.127)	.313 (.210)
Partnered	1.143 (.017)	1.039 (.060)	.897 (.080)	1.257 (.094)	1.127 (.141)	.948 (.150)	.579 (.234)
<i>Area concentration of minorities base is 0% (0-1%)*</i>							
Up to 1%	.183 (.023)	.025 (.243)	.302 (.871)	-.001 (.254)			
1 to 5%	.334 (.027)	.097 (.241)	.491 (.863)	-.006 (.253)			
5-10%	.278 (.042)	-.138 (.244)	.199 (.864)	-.163 (.265)			
More than 10%	.276 (.045)	-.116 (.239)	.272 (.861)	-.112 (.256)			
More than 1%					-.274 (.268)	-.267 (.325)	.177 (.458)
<i>Origin class: base is working</i>							
Service class	.328 (.020)	.155 (.088)	.076 (.119)	.171 (.131)	-.164 (.199)	.301 (.234)	-.205 (.424)

	Intermediate	.020 (.019)	.021 (.080)	-.227 (.112)	.222 (.116)	-.303 (.235)	-.113 (.208)	-.417 (.284)
	Other	-.121 (.040)	-.032 (.104)	-.269 (.139)	-.027 (.158)	.085 (.243)	.013 (.284)	-1.152 (.393)
<i>Mother's qualifications (base no higher qualifications)</i>								
	No co-resident mother	-.120 (.053)	-.177 (.156)	-.257 (.231)	-.156 (.206)	.261 (.363)	-.078 (.417)	-.176 (.626)
Mother with higher qualifications		.120 (.029)	.100 (.108)	.209 (.152)	.026 (.156)	.251 (.250)	.592 (.380)	.055 (.580)
<i>Father's qualifications (base no higher qualifications)</i>								
	No co-resident father	.148 (.033)	.072 (.098)	.120 (.143)	-.039 (.139)	.107 (.206)	.253 (.346)	1.33 (.555)
Father with higher qualifications		.224 (.025)	.199 (.102)	.291 (.135)	.114 (.163)	.331 (.315)	.052 (.247)	-.234 (.480)
<i>Tenure at origin (base is owner occupation)</i>								
	Local authority	-.293 (.017)	.013 (.070)	.169 (.099)	-.242 (.102)	-.053 (.153)	.915 (.242)	-.013 (.368)
	Private rented	-.179 (.024)	.153 (.090)	.222 (.129)	-.017 (.128)	-.095 (.242)	.386 (.249)	.533 (.446)
<i>Car ownership at origin (baseline is no cars)</i>								
	1 car	.178 (.018)	.142 (.061)	.239 (.081)	-.016 (.094)	.101 (.149)	.235 (.139)	.337 (.221)
	2 or more cars	.293 (.025)	.298 (.108)	.390 (.148)	.118 (.159)	.564 (.289)	.197(.245)	.690 (.454)
<i>Sample member's qualifications (base is 0)</i>								
	Lower	1.010 (.027)	1.244 (.121)	1.594 (.188)	.909 (.163)	1.547 (.343)	1.827 (.329)	.545 (.426)

Middle	1.457 (.028)	1.856 (.121)	2.083 (.187)	1.656 (.163)	1.970 (.345)	2.343 (.331)	1.482 (.419)
Further	2.757 (.029)	3.099 (.120)	3.436 (.184)	2.803 (.167)	2.814 (.339)	4.023 (.334)	2.995 (.380)
Constant	-2.610 (.040)	-2.610 (.263)	-3.262 (.885)	-2.289 (.293)	-2.377 (.432)	-2.799 (.478)	-3.284 (.643)
N	120027	7839	4395	3440	1337	1569	691

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study, author's analysis

* An area concentration variable which distinguished simply between a minority group concentration of 0-1% and of more than 1% was created for the smaller minority group analyses due to the constraints of small sub-group sizes.

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Standard errors are adjusted for repeat observations on individuals