**Ethnicity and Educational Achievement**

**TRENDS**

In this Section, we shall be examining the relationship between ethnicity and educational achievement. Firstly, we shall consider trends in educational achievement among different ethnic groups. It has been noted that although the academic performance of certain ethnic minorities may be lower, the progress they make during their key stage three and four education is much higher than that of white students. The current graph that we are analysing presents data on the national average of attainment aid score, which is 46.5. Upon analysing this data, we observe that Pakistani and Black African students' performance is like the national average, while white students' performance is also close to the national average. However, Indian, and Chinese students tend to perform significantly better than the national average and particularly the white majority.

On the other hand, there are two groups that tend to perform less well and underachieve at GCSE. These are Black Caribbean students and Irish Traveller or Romani students, and there is a considerable difference in their performance compared to the national average. The Irish Traveller community students' average score is 18.2, while the Black Caribbean students' average score is 39.6. It is therefore important to note that we cannot combine students into Black or Asian categories as there are significant differences within those communities. For example, Indian students tend to outperform Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, averaging 56.3 in GCSE. Similarly, among Black students, Black African students significantly outperform Black Caribbean students, scoring an average of 47.5 and 39.6, respectively.

It is crucial to consider these ethnic groups as separate entities and not just clump them all together. Even within the white community or white students, we observe that Irish students significantly outperform all other white ethnic students, scoring an average of 52.2. Conversely, Irish Traveller and Romani students underperform significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge and analyse these groups as distinct entities rather than as one homogeneous group.

Furthermore, we shall also examine A-Level trends. The national average for achieving at least three A's at A-Level is 12.9%. From the current data, we observe that Chinese and Indian students significantly overachieve compared to the national average, with Chinese students achieving 22.5% and Indian students at 15.3%. However, the Irish Traveller community has a statistically significant percentage of students achieving three A's or above at 28.6%. Nevertheless, we must note that the number of Irish Traveller students who stay in school and take A-levels is incredibly low, and it is challenging to generalize this statistic to the entire Irish Traveller community. This is because there are very few students identifying as Irish Traveller compared to white, Chinese, or Indian students.

Therefore, this analysis illustrates significant differences in educational achievement among ethnic groups. However, we must bear in mind that we are specifically analysing attainment and not progress, which would require a distinct analysis.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

In this section, we shall examine the external factors that affect educational achievement. Cultural deprivation, a concept previously discussed in the context of social class, will be explored. Material deprivation, which refers to a lack of resources such as suitable housing and adequate nutrition, will also be scrutinized. Furthermore, it is imperative to investigate the impact of racism in broader society on academic performance concerning ethnicity. As such, the issue of racism and how it affects educational achievement shall be thoroughly examined.

**CULTURAL DEPRIVATION**

Let us begin by talking about cultural deprivation, which means not having the skills, knowledge, or experiences needed for educational success. The education system is geared towards the middle class, with certain assumptions about what knowledge and skills students possess. While some ethnic minorities may be part of the middle class, they may not necessarily have these same skills and knowledge. In this section, we will explore how these differences can impact academic achievement.

**Language** - language is a fundamental aspect that influences one's social status, educational attainment, and cultural experiences. According to Bernstein's theory, there are two types of language codes - the restrictive code and the elaborated code. While both codes are equally valid, the lack of access to the elaborated code can put certain groups at a disadvantage, particularly those from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds. Ethnic minorities are more likely to lack the linguistic development necessary to access the elaborated code at home. This, in turn, puts them at a disadvantage when they start school, as educational institutions tend to operate on the elaborated code. Data gathered by the government shows that ethnic minorities are proportionately more likely to belong to the working class than the ethnic majority. As such, they are more likely to be socialised into the restricted language code. Moreover, many ethnic minority children grow up speaking multiple languages, including English as a second language. Gordon Bowker, in his book, The Education of coloured immigrants in 1968, noted that the lack of standard English is the most significant barrier for ethnic minorities in education. However, it is important to note that Bowker's data and studies were based on most first-generation immigrants, and this may not necessarily apply to subsequent generations.

**Family and Support** - One principal factor to consider when examining ethnic minority underachievement is family and support. According to many sociologists, dysfunctional family types can have a significant impact on educational outcomes. Charles Murray, from the new right perspective, argues that Afro-Caribbean families are more likely to be single parent families, resulting in a lack of male role models and inadequate socialization by mothers. This can lead to educational underachievement, as students may struggle with the transition from a home environment with little discipline to a school with high expectations for behaviour. However, it is important to note that Murray's assertions have been criticized due to more recent data indicating that Afro-Caribbean families are not necessarily more likely to be lone parent families but may be cohabitating instead of married.

Another principal factor is the role of family attitudes towards education and support. Ken Pryce in 1979 noted that Asian cultures tend to be more cohesive than Black cultures, which allows them to ignore racism more effectively, leading to less impact on self-esteem and lower educational failure rates. Ballard and Driver in 1988 similarly argue that Asian families tend to have a more pro-school attitude than Black families due to cultural expectations brought over from their home countries. In many Asian cultures, education is highly valued and seen as a privilege, leading to extremely pushy parents who constantly push their children to achieve their best. This cultural emphasis on education may help to explain why Chinese and Indian students tend to achieve much higher educational outcomes. However, it is also important to note that this emphasis on achievement may lead to burnout and may not be effective for all students. Overall, family and support are principal factors to consider when examining ethnic minority underachievement in education.

**Cultural Differences** - Scranton (1986) argues that ethnic minorities who fail to embrace British culture tend to experience educational underachievement. This issue is linked to values and beliefs. Arnot (1977) proposes that black, African, and Black Caribbean students are particularly affected by negative school role models, who reinforce through rap lyrics and music videos that education is not as important as status amongst peers. This media influence can translate into school behaviours and educational outcomes. Additionally, Hall (1992) discusses the impact of culture, specifically a culture of resistance. He argues that the loss of language, religion, and ancestry among black and particularly Black African culture can lead to individuals being less likely to integrate and assimilate with the white ethnic majority. This resistance stems from the perception that assimilation represents symbolic violence against their culture and that they are being asked to ignore their traditions and adopt those of the oppressors. This culture of resistance can also affect educational achievement and links to the ethnocentric curriculum, which teaches students how to be middle-class white Britons, rather than celebrating cultural diversity.

**EVALUATION**

So, let's evaluate these, Ballard and Driver have posited that language barriers cease to be a hindrance by the age of 16. They argue that within the education system, students become accustomed to the elaborate code, even if it differs from their native language, and can comprehend and use it by the time they reach GCSEs and A-levels. Similarly, the Swan report of 1985 found that there was minor difference in the educational achievements of children from multilingual families, bilingual families, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds who were not bilingual or multilingual, suggesting that language proficiency has little bearing on ethnic minority achievement or underachievement.

In terms of family support, Nell Keddie contends that the theory of cultural deprivation is victim blaming. She argues that blaming a particular cultural group or familial attitudes towards education for a student's achievement or underachievement places the onus on the individual student. For instance, it suggests that a student has failed to achieve because their family does not value education due to their cultural background. Keddie also refutes the assertion made by Charles Murray that single-parent families in Afro-Caribbean families are more likely to be from a single-parent family, citing census data that shows this to be untrue. Furthermore, Murray's argument that single parents are unable to adequately socialize or discipline their children has been debunked.

When examining values and beliefs, Stuart Hall's idea of a culture of resistance has been critiqued, particularly for third-generation immigrants who have developed a hybrid identity, embracing both their British and ethnic minority backgrounds. Driver also notes that ethnicity can be an advantage for ethnic minorities, as lower expectations and stereotypes lead to exceeding expectations. Therefore, ethnic minority groups may not exhibit significant differences in educational attainment. However, when we assess progress, we observe that ethnic minority groups exceed the white majority in terms of progress made over Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four education.

**MATERIAL DEPRIVATION**

The subsequent factor under scrutiny arises from the work of Flaherty and pertains to material deprivation. As we have previously discussed, material deprivation refers to a phenomenon whereby individuals are unable to meet the costs of education, such as uniforms, resources, and trips, and may also extend to housing and health. The inability to afford adequate housing can negatively impact health and hinder an individual's ability to pursue education. Flaherty discovered that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are three times more likely to belong to the poorest fifth of the population, which denotes living below the poverty line. Thus, these ethnic groups are less likely to afford the additional educational resources required, leading to underachievement. Moreover, they are more prone to reside in subpar accommodations. Additionally, Flaherty found that African, Pakistani, and Bangladeshis are three times more likely to be unemployed, which can result in a dearth of financial resources, impacting health, housing, and education's hidden costs. Finally, 15% of majority and minority groups live in overcrowded dwellings, leading to a lack of space for quiet study and work, potential health issues, and negatively affecting academic achievement. Therefore, while the concept of material deprivation remains unchanged from earlier discussions, ethnic minorities are more susceptible to experiencing it, rendering them more prone to underachievement.

**EVALUATION**

Material deprivation and ethnic minority underachievement is a paradoxical and complex issue. The crux of the matter is the uncertain relationship between material deprivation and educational underachievement. This raises questions about the causality of this relationship. Is it that ethnic minorities are underachieving due to their material deprivation, or do they become materially deprived due to other factors that hinder their educational achievement? For instance, ethnic minorities may be undervalued in terms of education due to institutional or individual racism, which could then lead to their underemployment and eventually material deprivation, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. This is a classic "chicken and egg" situation, and we are unable to determine if they are materially deprived because they belong to an ethnic minority or because they belong to the working class. Therefore, we cannot confidently discern the factors that contribute to material deprivation, which complicates our understanding of ethnic minority underachievement.

**RACISM IN WIDER SOCIETY**

In examining the external factors that affect educational achievement, one significant factor to consider is the prevalence of racism in wider society. Mason [1995] stated that “discrimination is a continuing and persistent feature of the experiences of Britain’s citizens of ethnic minority origin.” Recent events, such as the Black Lives Matter protests, have brought to light the longstanding issue of racism in society. While this is not a new issue, it has become more prominent in recent years. Research has provided evidence of racism in wider society, as exemplified by a study conducted by Mike Noon in 1993. In this study, identical letters were sent to the top one hundred companies in the UK, with the only difference being the name and title of the recipient. The results showed that letters with the name Evans received eight times more replies than those with the name Patel, regardless of gender. This demonstrates the existence of unconscious or conscious biases in the workplace, which may also perpetuate into the education system.

Racism in wider society can also lead to labelling and stereotyping, which can negatively affect educational achievement. For instance, ethnic stereotypes may lead to assumptions being made about individuals from certain ethnic backgrounds, leading to lower expectations and less support being provided to them. Moreover, racism can result in social exclusion and marginalisation, as argued by Rex in 1986. Such exclusion can manifest in various areas, such as housing, employment, and education. Individuals who feel excluded from society are less likely to engage with it and may develop anti-school subcultures as a result. These subcultures may involve rejecting the dominant culture of the school and developing alternative values and norms.

Finally, poverty is another external factor that can affect educational achievement. Racism can lead to social exclusion and marginalisation, which may result in greater poverty for ethnic minorities. This can lead to material deprivation and limited access to resources that are crucial for educational success. Thus, it is evident that racism in wider society can negatively impact educational achievement, as it can lead to labelling, social exclusion, poverty, and anti-school subcultures.

**EVALUATION**

In evaluating the impact of labels, it is important to consider the concept of label rejection. The rejection of stereotypes and societal labels is an ongoing process, which is reflected in the increasing presence of positive ethnic minority role models. As Michelle Obama once said, it is possible to rise above racism and prejudice. While there is still progress to be made, there are positive signs of change in modern society, particularly with regards to multicultural attitudes.

Some companies are implementing blind applications, which anonymize personal details such as names and contact information until after an applicant is invited for an interview. This allows employers to focus solely on an applicant's qualifications and experience, leading to fairer selection processes. In addition, there are anti-discrimination laws in place that prohibit discrimination based on ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexuality, and other factors. This legal framework ensures that job opportunities are available to everyone, regardless of their background, leading to greater opportunities for individuals to achieve their desired roles.

It is worth noting that the rejection of labels and stereotypes is an ongoing process, and there is still much work to be done to achieve true equality and fairness in society. However, the progress made so far, including changes in social attitudes, legal protections, and fairer selection processes, provide hope for a more inclusive and equitable future. Sociologists such as Stuart Hall and Pierre Bourdieu have explored the complexities of labels and stereotypes, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the power dynamics at play and the need for continued efforts to challenge and overcome them.