EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

THE EFFECTS OF ETHNICITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

REPORT COMPILED BY HOLLY ANDERSON AND THOMAS MAASSEN
PUBLISHED 11/11/2014
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Executive Summary

There is a growing consensus amongst those involved in education policy of the need to raise aspirations. The Coalition government, in their 2010 white paper, stated that, “in far too many communities, there is a deeply embedded culture of low aspiration”’. Hence understanding the factors which affect aspirations is an important aspect of creating policies which will overcome the obstacles certain children face. In this report we shall be looking specifically at the effect of ethnicity and socio-economic background on aspirations and shall aim to improve reader’s awareness of the relationship between these factors and children’s aspirations for post-16 education.

This is not a problem that the UK faces alone, and many countries around the world have been looking at how to combat issues of low aspiration, which inevitably lead to low educational outcomes. We have therefore conducted comparative secondary research on the issue as found in the United States and Germany. In the United States it has been difficult to prove a consensus on the relationship between ethnicity and educational aspirations. Furthermore although the data looked at suggests a clearer link between income and aspirations for a bachelor’s degree, the causal link between the two is ambiguous. In Germany students from a migrant background are, by all accounts, heavily academically disadvantaged. They are far more likely to leave school without any qualification whatsoever. The real limiting factors for students from ethnic minorities are social background (primarily the job held by their parents and their parents’ educational history) and academic aptitude, the latter often being a consequence of the former.

We also did a comparative study with Norway, as a country where this problem is less prevalent. In general, all Norwegians attend higher secondary education. The government provides grants to those from low income families. By law, in Norway parents are obliged to financially support their kids till they have finished their secondary education, also if they are over 18 years old. These policies ensure formal equal access to post-16 education, whatever socio-economic or ethnic background. Therefore the government in the UK could draw upon the Norwegian system as a way of overcoming the barriers young people from ethnic or socially disadvantaged backgrounds face.

The effect of ethnic background on aspirations has both positive and negative aspects. In the case of ethnic minorities they are often encouraged and pushed to aim highly and in general their aspirations often match those of their parents. However for certain ethnic groups there can be a large disparity between their aspirations and their outcomes, suggesting the larger problem is how to combat factors that affect educational outcomes. In the case of white students their performance is often significantly worse than their counterparts who are from an ethnic minority, despite both often being from low socio-economic backgrounds. This suggests that the impact of social disadvantage is more significant in the case of white students, and that it is less restrictive on pupils from ethnic minorities.

Socio-economic status has proved to be a key differentiator in aspirations of both children and their parents with those in better off households more likely to want to continue studying and attend university. However the ASPIRES project has argued that aspirations are higher than is commonly understood, and that it is a lack of resources (including household income) which prevents the conversion of these aspirations into choices. Thus there is an academic divide as to whether policy should focus on raising aspirations or whether it should be concerned with providing resources to ensure aspirations can be met.
INTRODUCTION

The culture of low aspiration amongst secondary school students is currently one of the most prevalent issues in educational policy. In an era where ‘social mobility’ has become a key focus of government strategy and is part of the recruitment structure of many business, professions and university places; it is incredibly important to understand the factors which prevent it. Society has recognised that factors such as one's ethnic or socio-economic background should not prevent anyone from aspiring and achieving any goal they set. However this recognition has arguably failed to translate into practical policies that can overcome the obstacles set by these factors.

Our aim is to increase the public’s understanding of the effects of ethnicity and socio-economic background and address any misconceptions about how these factors affect aspirations for post-16 education. It is unclear whether ethnicity and socio-economic background have a greater effect on aspirations or whether the real problem lies in the resources needed for students to achieve those aspirations. It is likely that the problem will only be solved by attempting to improve both, as neither can be held to be mutually exclusive of the other. Aspirations are affected by lack of resources, and lack of aspiration means lack of ability to achieve.

We recognise that we cannot answer the question definitively, and our aim is to increase understanding and awareness. It is OxPolicy's firm belief that policy should made on the basis of sound evidence, rather than on blind assertion. Therefore it is essential to prove that these factors do have an effect on aspiration before policy makers can make decisions on how best to combat the problems which the factors cause.

In Part One, we look at the education system in England and Wales and analyse how education policy in different types of schools affects access to secondary education. This is primarily to give an overview of the problems created by different types of school and how access to these schools may be effected by ethnicity or particularly socio-economic background. In the following parts, we look at the effect of ethnicity on aspirations, the effect of socio-economic background and explore the impact on this problem of educational policy in the United States, Norway and Germany. Finally we have two case studies which highlight conclusions made in the secondary literature and provide an interesting factual example of how these factors have affected actual students.
SECTION ONE | UK POLICY ON ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

1.1 CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

The GOV.UK website gives a simple overview of the types of school which children aged 5-16 in England can attend. All children between these ages are entitled to a free place at a state school. With some exceptions, most state schools have to follow the national curriculum. ¹

Publically-Funded

Among the most common types of state school is a community school. Here, the Local Education Authority (LEA) owns the land and buildings, funds the school, employs the staff and provides support services (such as psychological and special educational needs). The admissions policy is also usually determined and administered by the LEA. However, the school is run by the governing body. ²

Foundation schools are similar to community schools, but have more independence from the LEA. The land and buildings are owned by the governing body, which is also responsible for running the school, employing its staff and providing support services. The funding is provided by the LEA. Although the admissions policy is determined and administered by the governing body, this will be in consultation with a range of other inputs, such as the LEA and other similar schools in the area. ³

Grammar schools are run by the council, a foundation body or a trust. They operate a selective admissions system based on pupils' academic ability. This is usually assessed through entrance exam such as the '11-Plus'. The central government allocates funding largely on a per-pupil basis to local authorities which then determine how much each school receives. As of 2007, there were 164 grammar schools remaining in England. ⁴

Academies are publicly funded but operate outside of LEA control, with more freedom than other state schools over their finances, curriculum, and teachers’ pay and conditions 54% of state secondary schools in England are now academies, with 210 secondary schools converting to become an academy in 2012-13 alone. ⁵ Introduced initially 12 years ago to replace failing and underachieving schools, they cannot be selective in their intake. They were formerly sponsor-led, but) schools that were judged as good or better at their last Ofsted inspection became academy converter schools since The Academies Act 2010. ⁶

⁶ Ibid
**Free schools** are a form of academy funded by the government, but not run by the local council, where within-school personnel have more control over how things operate. They cannot use academic selection criteria but can set their own curriculum, change the length of school terms and the school day, and set their own pay and conditions for staff. Free schools are run on a not-for-profit basis but can be set up by a number of different groups such as charities, universities, independent schools, community and faith groups, businesses, teachers and parents. There are more specialised forms of free school set up in order to provide a specific education for the pupils. An example of this is university technology colleges which provide practical skills and qualifications alongside academics. The performance of academies and free schools is to be inspected following the year 2013-14.

**Voluntary and Faith Schools**

There are two types of voluntary schools, which must both still follow the national curriculum. In a **voluntary controlled school**, the land and buildings are owned by a charity (often a religious organisation such as a church) and this charity can appoint members of the governing body. However the school is not run by the governing body, it is run by the LEA. This also funds the school, employs the staff, provides support services and determines the admissions policy. In a **voluntary aided school**, however, the charity which owns the buildings and land has significantly more control over the running of the school. Funds come partly from the LEA, partly from the charity itself, and partly from the governing body. The latter is also responsible for running the school and employing the staff. The LEA only has control over support services, and provides some input into the admissions policy in combination with the governors.

**Faith schools** can be any type of school. They are often a voluntary school, as above, but can be a free school, academy, or other. They are mostly run like other state schools, and have to follow the national curriculum. The exception to this is religious studies, in which they are free to teach only about their own religion. The admissions criteria and staffing policies may also be different, although anyone can apply for a place.

**Privately-Funded**

**City technology colleges** are also independent of local council control. There are only a limited number of CTCs and they are only found in urban areas. They are owned, funded and run by private companies in combination with the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The governing body employs the staff, provides the support services and determine the admissions policy of the college. The pupils must follow a curriculum similar to the national curriculum, but with a particular focus on technological and practical skills.

**Private or independent schools** are any school that is not funded by the government, but by fees paid to the school and sometimes charitable trust funds. The governing body is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school, and the head teacher employs the staff with the backing of the governing body. Support services are arranged by the head teacher and/or governing body, as is the admissions policy. Pupils do not have to follow the national curriculum. All independent schools must be registered with the government and are subject to regular inspections, with around half being inspected by Ofsted and the rest by other agencies such as the Independent Schools Inspectorate. These can be boarding and/or day schools, but not all

8 GOV.UK 2014
9 Citizens Advice Bureau 2014
10 Ibid
boarding schools are private schools. Some state boarding schools provide free education but charge fees for boarding.\textsuperscript{11} There are also schools for pupils with special educational needs which are run as above, although sometimes the LEA will pay the fees for a particular pupil if it is the best local school which meets their needs. (Citizens Advice Bureau 2014).

1.2 RANKING OF SCHOOLS

The Department for Education publish annual performance tables. These, "give information on the achievements of pupils in primary, secondary and 16-18 provision in schools and colleges, and how they compare with other schools in the Local Authority (LA) area and in England as a whole".\textsuperscript{12}

For secondary schools, the performance tables measure:

1. GCSE results of pupils who were at the end of Key Stage 4 in that school year.
2. The percentage of pupils who have met English Baccalaureate requirements.
3. The percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 who have made at least expected progress in both English and Maths.
4. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grade GCSEs in both English and Maths
5. Value Added scores, which measure the progress made by pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4.

Ofsted gives schools one of four grades in its school inspection reports:

- Grade 1 – outstanding.
- Grade 2 – good.
- Grade 3 – requires improvement
- Grade 4 – inadequate.

These are overall scores that take into account:

1. How well inspectors think the school is doing and what it could do to make things even better.
2. How well pupils are doing, both in their education and their overall well-being and personal development.
3. What parents and carers think about the school.
4. How up to date the school buildings are, including any boarding school living accommodation.
5. How any problems or complaints are dealt with.
6. How the school complies with rules and regulations.\textsuperscript{13}

As well as official performance tables, there are many unofficial rankings produced by various media outlets each year. For example, the BBC publishes league tables where schools are ranked

\textsuperscript{11} GOV.UK 2014
on the average points scored per student, and the number of students taking the relevant qualifications.  

1.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF STATE SCHOOLS

There are several entrance criteria for secondary schools that might prove an obstacle to children from ethnic minorities or lower socio economic backgrounds. These include: religious affiliation, proximity and academic ability.

Faith Schools

These are schools which combine a particular religious ethos into part of their curriculum. According to figures from Fair Admissions Campaign, 72% of places at these schools are allocated on a criteria relating to the religious denomination of the student. Many churches run or control schools in the UK, most being Anglican or Roman Catholic.

There are several mechanisms through which a school allocating places on a religious basis could reduce its accessibility to children from lower socio-economic groups. A study by the Fair Admissions Campaign (although they do have a declared interest) showed that in England, church schools of Anglican (CoE), Catholic, Jewish and Muslim groups, all admit a cohort containing fewer children on free school meals than the surrounding population. The effect of the selection procedure, rather than simply the ethos of the school, is suggested as the cause, given that comprehensive schools without faith-based admissions educate 11% more children on free school meals than expected from their community. Schools of the same type, but with faith-based admissions criteria admit 10% fewer.  

It has long been documented that middle-class families of faith are much more likely to take an active role in their churches. This led the Church of England to issue guidance in 2011, which advised the ending of ‘point systems’ where children from families who were most involved in the Church, through attendance and volunteering, were given priority for school places.  

Even where involvement-based criteria are not used, middle-class parents, with greater access to information on the quality of schools and more free time in which to focus on achieving a place in a good school may be advantaged by faith-based selection. If the criteria become simply based on ‘membership’ of the faith group, then having children baptised, attending a small number of services, or other equivalent factors will become advantageous.

Grammar Schools

These are schools which at least partly base their admissions on academic ability. There are 164 of these in England and a further 69 in Northern Ireland. Most base ‘academic ability’ on the performance of the student in an exam taken at the age of 11, though some in Northern Ireland select at 14. These schools account for only 4% of school places nationwide.

The mechanism through which they might reduce the accessibility of good school places to lower socio-economic groups is perhaps the most well-known. Given the importance of the ‘11-Plus’ examination, it is held that parents who can afford to pay for private tuition for this exam are much more likely to win a Grammar School place for their child.

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14 BBC, 2014
16 Archbishop’s Council Education Division, Admission to Church of England Schools, 2011
17 Op cit. UK Parliament
A publication has found that grammar schools contain a significantly lower proportion of deprived pupils than that living in the local area. Even conditional on their achievement in both English and Mathematics, poorer pupils are less likely to attend grammar schools, particularly in London Boroughs. This is despite the fact that they are actually more likely to live near the isolated grammar schools outside of London.

Given that the gap is reduced controlling for Key Stage 2 attainment, it seems that students on free school meals are also less likely to demonstrate the developed academic ability required by the selective process. This could be a result of factors such as attending lower quality primary schools or the reduced ability of parents without a tertiary education to prepare their children.

We are unable to ascertain whether much of the cause was the result of fewer grammar school applications from families entitled to free school meals, or a lower chance of admission conditional on application.

Interestingly, the study by Cribbs et al. emphasises the role of primary school choice. Even controlling for the pupil’s own socio-economic status, attending a school with a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students significantly reduced the probability of a child attending a grammar school. This gives rise to a compounding effect, since children on free school meals are more likely to attend such primary schools.

**Comprehensive Schools**

These schools are by far the most common type in the UK. The idea that the best schools attract middle-class parents prepared to pay more for housing inside the school catchment areas is commonly discussed in newspapers and around dining tables. Steve Gibbons of the LSE has shown, using empirical evidence and statistical techniques, that school-quality does increase the price of housing in school catchment areas.

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19 Cribbs, Sibieta, and Vignoles, *Entry to grammar schools in England for disadvantaged children*, 2013

20 Ibid

SECTION TWO | ETHNICITY AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME AS DETERMINANTS OF ASPIRATION IN THE UK

2.1 DEFINITION OF ‘ASPIRATIONS’ AND REASONS FOR RESEARCHING THEM

In recent decades, the role of ‘aspirations’ in educational attainment has been widely discussed and in turn has influenced government education policy. Aspirations, which Quaglia and Cobb succinctly and usefully define as, a student’s, “ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work towards those goals”, have been linked to education outcomes by numerous statistical studies in the United Kingdom. Aspirations differ from expectations in that they tend to be unconstrained hopes, whereas expectations reflect the economic, social and other constraints that affect the fulfilment of those hopes. A similar distinction was made by Seginer in 1983 who separates idealistic and realistic expectations. Idealistic expectations represent aspirations, whilst realistic expectations simply reflect the expectations previously discussed.

Aspirations can be viewed as a cultural capacity. The capacity to aspire is a map of a journey into the future, where the map is a document covered in unfamiliar symbols and words unless one is supplied with the information and experiences required to read it. Aspiration should be understood in this way as something which is enabled by relevant knowledge and experience. These in turn are influenced by social, culture and economic factors. Additionally the aspirations of pupils are affected by the aspirations of their parents for them, so it is important to consider how both types of aspirations are thought of by authors.

Aspirations are further used to explain variation in the attainment of students from different socio-economic groups, regions and ethnic origins. The debate has often been focused on whether the aspirations or the ability to, “make these aspirations concrete and obtainable,” is of greater importance to outcomes. However, building on Steve Strand’s work on the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), we seek to focus primarily on the former, by focusing on the significant variation in education outcomes between different ethnic groups, even when controlling for factors which most plausibly explain differences in abilities to make aspirations obtainable, such as school type, household income, previous examination results and maternal education.

Strand noted that in the LSYPE pupil aspirations were the single most significant factor in explaining the attainment gap between students from different ethnic groups when other such explanatory variables were held fixed. He also observed that the effects of aspiration differences on educational outcomes become more salient as pupils become older, which is displayed in increased disparity in the performance of different ethnic groups when income is controlled for. On the basis of such observations, further study into why aspiration varies so widely across ethnic groups could provide great insight into possible mechanisms for reducing educational underperformance across society. If aspirations are so influential, even the well-documented and most significant effect: that of socio-economic class, could be reduced if policy was directed

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23 Seginer, Parent’s Educational Expectations and Children’s Academic Achievements, 1983
24 Appadurai, The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition, 2004
25 Bok, ‘The capacity to aspire to higher education: It’s like making them do a play without a script’, 2010
26 St Clair, Kintrea, Houston, ‘Local Labour Markets; What effects Do they have on the aspirations of young people?’, 2014
to boosting the aspirations of children, just as higher levels of aspiration amongst several ethnic groups (notably Chinese and Indian) appear to allow children from these groups to outperform those from the same socio-economic stratum.

Aspirations are best viewed as an interaction of structural and individual influences, with young people exercising ‘a degree of agency’ in their choices and aspirations, but with the identity discourses and resources they can draw on being inevitably inflected by social context. Thus, as observed, they are likely to vary across social groups, but are also not determined by this context, and are potentially open to the positive effects of improved policy. Indeed, Archer et al.’s study shows a significant relationship between the receipt of simple teacher advice and student aspiration. No perfect measure of the concept exists, surveys of students about what they aspire to achieve in future education and in the labour market are both commonly used and closely linked to the phenomenon we seek to observe.

2.2 How are they measured?

Most simply, pupil educational aspirations are measured by looking at what level of schooling a pupil wishes to progress to. Indeed in a paper on poverty’s effect on psychological competencies of children, they measure aspirations by the highest school grade that a pupil wishes to progress to by using the Young Lives Sample survey responses. This measurement device is not fully specified enough as it assumes that pupils can leave education at any level. However in the UK, there has been a compulsory education until the age of 16 since 1972. More useful is to consider the measurement that Strand uses, in his paper on minority ethnic pupils. He looks at whether students want to stay in full time education against getting a job at 16, as a measure of short term aspirations, and whether students see it as likely that they want to go into higher education, as a longer term indicator. However it still doesn’t capture aspirations given the current context of the school leaving age rising. As of 2015 children in England must remain in education or training until they are 18, according to the Government. So it is also useful to make a distinction between education and training as post 16 options. Training suggests lower aspirations to education than staying at school as it is much harder to pursue further education without A Levels.

Strand measures parental aspirations by asking parents whether they aspire for their children after 16 to continue in full time education, take a trade apprenticeship/job or some other path. This is not a particularly convincing metric. Firstly it is not clear why trade apprenticeships and jobs are classified in the same aspirational bracket. It could be argued that trade apprenticeships represent a further form of training, thus indicating a higher degree of aspiration than just getting a job.

2.3 Educational Aspirations and Government Policy Background

A key focus of the Coalition government’s education policy has been seeking to raise aspirations. Their white paper of 2010 stated that ‘In far too many communities, there is a deeply embedded culture of low aspiration that is strongly tied to long-term unemployment’. Hence, understanding the relationship between aspirations, educational outcomes and household income is of considerable importance for policy making.

28 Archer, Hollingworth, Mendick, ‘Urban youth and schooling’, 2010
29 Krishnan and Deacon, ‘Poverty and the Psychological Competencies of Children’, 2009
30 Op cit., Strand
32 Op cit., Strand
**2.4 Relationship between Ethnicity and Outcomes in Education**

Chinese and Indian pupils have the greatest success in continuing to a post-16 level, whilst Whites, all forms of Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi do significantly worse. This pattern is reflected in the achievement of GCSEs, excluding the notable anomaly of Whites, who do better than the Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, but are less likely to continue to post-16 education. White children make the least progress between years. This may be explained by cultural and socio-economic factors. Across the board, poorer children do, on average, worse, but this cannot be explanatory in itself, due to the relative success of poor Chinese and Indian students. Note that ethnic minorities are more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged.

Chinese and Indian pupils make good progress between Key Stages (KS), for example 70 per cent of Chinese pupils and 72 per cent of Indian pupils who achieved the expected level 5 at Key Stage 3 went on to gain the expected level of five or more A*-C GCSEs at Key Stage 4. Black Caribbean pupils make the least progress between key stages, for example only 48 per cent of those who achieved the expected level at Key Stage 3 went on to gain five or more A*-C GCSEs. Black and White pupils also make relatively less progress between Key Stage 3 and GCSE, with only 49 per cent of each group making progress at the expected rate. However, Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils make relatively better progress, particularly, between Key Stage 3 and GCSE (the figures are 68 per cent, 67 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

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**Table 1 - Pupil Progression from Key Stage 3 2000 to 5+ A*-C at GCSE/GNVQ 2002 by ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Pakistani</th>
<th>Bangladeshi</th>
<th>Black Caribbean</th>
<th>Black African</th>
<th>Black Other</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bhattacharyya, Ison & Blair, Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training, 2003*
Note that for all ethnic groups, children eligible for free school meals (FSM), are significantly less likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C than children of the same ethnic group who are not eligible for free school meals. However, socio-economic factors are not the sole explanation for lower attainment, as not all children from low-income families have low attainment at GCSE. For example, Chinese children eligible for free school meals, whilst a small group, are more likely to achieve five or more GCSEs than all other ethnic groups, except Indian non-FSM pupils.

2.5 Relationship Between Ethnicity and Aspirations

Students from minority ethnic groups are more committed to staying on in education after the age of 16. They are also more likely to aspire to professional (and high-paid) employment. The same applies to parental aspirations.

Table 2 - Pupils’ educational aspirations by ethnic group and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% Will stay in FTE after Y11</th>
<th>% Very/Fairly Likely to enter Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Heritage</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other group</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>86.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Of note in particular is that, for the most part, pupil aspirations match those of their parents. However, some of the most aspirational groups (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and (to a slightly lesser extent) Black Caribbean) have notable disparities between their aspirations and their outcomes. This shows that cultural differences must stretch beyond mere aspiration, and can therefore extend to relationships with teachers, academic understanding etc.

Chinese and Indian pupils possessed the following characteristics which generally set them apart from other groups: value placed on education by parents, a strong cultural tradition of respect for one’s elders, (which facilitates the transmission of high educational aspiration from parents to children), and pupils deriving positive self-esteem from constructing themselves as good pupils.

Research done through focus groups and questionnaires in poorly performing, ethnically mixed schools has shown that the educational aspirations of White British and Black Caribbean pupils tend to be lower than those of other ethnic groups. In the case of White British pupils this is correlated with coming from families that do not highly value educational attainment and a negative perception of their own potential; in the case of Black Caribbean pupils it is more closely related to negative attitudes among peers and disaffection with education.

Research has also shown that a large majority of minority ethnic pupils take the ethnic mix of higher educational institutions into account and favour those that are ethnically mixed but which contain a significant proportion of their own ethnicity when forming aspirations. In terms of choice of higher educational institutions, it was found in the same report that class differences within ethnic groups were more significant than similarities between their members. The sample size for this research, however, was very low.

Despite the fact that most ethnic minorities perform better than white pupils at school level, it has been found that minority ethnic pupils underperform relative to white British pupils in

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Table 3 – Parents’ view of what they would like the pupil to do when s/he reaches 16 by pupil gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% Continue in FTE</th>
<th>% Trade, apprenticeship or job</th>
<th>% Don’t know/Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Heritage</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other group</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

higher education, and that this disparity is only partly explained by differences in pre-university qualifications.

Some research has been done into ‘ethnic capital’, the cultural values and social structures that may be important in helping certain ethnic groups to achieve more in their education than white pupils from similar class backgrounds, but this has not been directly studied in relation to aspirations.

An important longitudinal study of pupils’ educational progress produced a number of interesting findings, some of which are consistent with our earlier findings and some less obviously so: socioeconomic variables are sufficient to explain the greater educational attainment of most ethnic minorities relative to white pupils; adjusting for social class, the greater cultural capital and aspirations that they appear to have where education is concerned do not seem to have any effect on outcomes. This seems puzzling given that ethnic minorities are more likely to be of low socio-economic background, and given that we know that in aggregate ethnic minorities of a given social background do better than white pupils of the same background. This may be worth looking into in more detail. The worse performance of Black Caribbean Pupils, however, cannot, according to this research, be fully explained by lower socio-economic status—this may link back to the earlier point about negative peer attitudes and self-perception.

‘What are the factors that promote high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups? : A focused review of the UK-based aspirations literature.’

This government report, written before post-16 education became compulsory, uses 68 studies to create a ‘systematic map’ of the aspirations literature. Regarding individual aspirations, the report finds that ‘economic gain and career advance from post-16 participation was found to motivate students to stay on post-16’ and that ethnic minority students are particularly likely to aspire to professional jobs. Black Caribbean boys were found to have the lowest individual aspirations which ‘seemed to be related to disaffected peers and a low commitment to schooling.’ The report also raises the idea of post-16 education being viewed as a ‘natural progression’ by some pupils and not by others. However, it does not go into much detail about the potential causal mechanisms behind these views.

The significance of aspirations is relatively robust - ‘of all eight levels of influence, the family and individual aspiration levels stand out as being the major determinants of post-16 education...not only in terms of aspirations for education as an end in itself and for economic gain and better job opportunities, but also in simply placing a high personal value on education and a belief that this would lead to personal satisfaction.’ This point highlights a good thing about this report is its wide-spanning review of the existing literature...

An issue with this report is that it was written before post-16 education became compulsory.

2.6 Preliminary Conclusions

Ethnic minorities, excluding Chinese and Indian groups, were more likely to be poor. They and their parents have higher aspirations, but less success. This, combined with other things, suggests:

33 Torgerson, Gorard, Low, Ainsworth, Huat See, Wright, ‘What are the factors that promote high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups?’, 2008
1. **High aspirations do not have a very strong correlation with success**, excluding within the White grouping - cultural differences must be explanatory in this case.

2. **Poverty** partially explains the success, but cannot entirely do so - white people are more likely to be rich, but are less successful/aspirational, and poorer Chinese/Indian students still do better than wealthier members of other groups.

3. **Institutional racism**, compounded by stereotypes of Chinese and Indian pupils being ‘good students’, may aid in explaining these differences, and this in turn reinforces the stereotypes.

4. **Cultural differences** combine with this factor in explaining the deficit left by the socio-economic explanation. Chinese and Indian students possess a different kind of aspiration.

The link between aspiration and success is somewhat limited therefore - the poverty of institutional racism directed toward, and cultural differences of, Black groups, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis aid us. They all aspire similarly.

White people are anomalous here, as they have low aspirations and low success. Those who do aspire but fail likely do so as a consequence of poverty and cultural differences.

### 2.7 Household Income and Educational Outcomes

A 2010 report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation concluded that:

“young people are more likely to do well at their GCSEs if they have a greater belief in their own ability at school. The Foundation believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions such as; finding school worthwhile, thinking that it is likely that they will apply to, and get into, HE, avoiding risky behaviours such as frequent smoking or cannabis use, antisocial behaviour, truancy, suspension and exclusion, and not experiencing bullying.”  

But how far does household income affect all of these things? Another report by the JRF examines how far money is important in itself when analysing the educational achievement gap and the extent to which other factors such as levels of parental education and attitudes towards parenting play a role in this. The report comes to the conclusion that money clearly does make a difference to children’s outcomes:

“Less well-off children have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes in part because they are poorer, not just because low income is correlated with other household and parental characteristics.”

The evidence that this report used included: randomised controlled trials (RCTs), natural experiments, other exogenous income changes (instrumental variable approaches), and longitudinal (fixed effect style) studies. In its examination of 34 analyses from around the world on the correlation between money and children’s incomes, the report showed that the majority agreed that:

“Low income affects direct measures of children’s well-being and development, including their cognitive ability, achievement and engagement in school, anxiety levels and behaviour.”

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34 Goodman, Gregg, Chowdry, 'Poorer children’s educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behavior?' (2010)
35 Stewart, Does Money Affect Children’s Outcomes?, 2013
Local Area as a Deciding Factor

Deprivation at local area level typically reflects the socio-economic make-up of its population, so it often becomes an influential factor in a child’s access to a good secondary school. According to the latest Ofsted report, “access to a good school is too dependent on where a child lives”. 37 Here, it is useful to look at the admission criteria for getting a place at a secondary school. Using the criteria for Oxfordshire County Council secondary schools’ admission process as an example, it is clear that the designated area is probably the most important deciding factor when children are allocated schools. Other factors include whether the child has a brother or sister at the school and whether they attended a ‘partner’ school, as well as if they are being looked after by a local authority or have Special Educational Needs.

Ofsted comments on the need for, “good education provision in every neighbourhood as even more essential given the challenges involved in raising the achievement of White children from low income families and stretching the most able” They further conclude that in the UK White children have the lowest performance levels at school. Regional inequality in the U.K. plays a central role in access to a good education, as:

“There are nine local authority areas, predominantly in London, where every secondary student attends a good or outstanding school. Conversely, there are 13 local authority areas where less than 50% of secondary students attend a good or outstanding school. Of these, five are in the Yorkshire and Humber region.” 38

Furthermore, in a report for the National Inequality Panel ‘Inequalities in educational outcomes among children aged 3 to 16’ from 2009, the data sets show a strong relationship between neighbourhood deprivation and educational achievement at all ages. The gap tends to grow from age 3 to 14, but narrow somewhat age 16. 39

The Ofsted report also reveals that there are other underlying weaknesses among low-performing local authority areas, such as fixed-period exclusions at secondary age and persistent absenteeism at secondary school level.

Post 16 Aspirations – A Study Analysis


This report provides some interesting points on the links between parental and child aspirations. Key findings included:

- Role of socio-economic status – “Socio-economic status proved to be a key differentiator in aspirations of both children and their parents with those in better off households more likely to want to continue studying and attend university”.

36 Ibid
38 Ibid
- **Parental aspirations for their children were also found to vary by a range of socio-economic indicators.** Subgroups more likely to want their children to continue in full-time education were parents in households classified to managerial and professional occupation (74%); parents in households earning at least £45,000 a year (82%); and parents who themselves continued in full-time education after the age of 18 (83%). While the latter finding suggests that parents’ own experiences are closely related to aspirations for their own children, it should be added that more than half of parents who finished their education at 16 or under want their children to continue past this point.

- **Children’s aspirations for post-16:** Unlike the parental question, this was asked as a multi-coded question – so the children could cite as many aspirations as they wanted to. The most common aspirations cited were to carry on studying (57%) and to get a job (52%) 40. Age also proved to be an important factor with, “the proportion of 15 year olds saying they would like to continue their education (73%) was almost twice the proportion of 10 year olds giving this response (38%).” Despite small base sizes making it difficult to draw conclusions about ethnicity and religion, “it was apparent that minority ethnic children (67%) were more likely to express a wish to carry on studying compared with White children (55%).” A definite gender difference existed, where, “In relation to full-time education, parents had higher aspirations for girls than boys and this is reflected in the child responses as well. 62% of girls said they would like to stay in education compared to 52% of boys.”

However the **limitations of the study** included:

- The information was collected once children had completed their education and the problem with this is that children are likely to say they aspire to do whatever they are actually doing.

- The survey conducted when post-16 education was not compulsory.

**Archer, ‘Poverty of aspiration largely a myth’, 2013**

The ASPIRES project presented findings at the 2013 British Educational Research Association’s (BERA) annual conference challenging the view that raising aspirations should be a focus of education policy. They argued that these are higher than is commonly understood, and that it is a lack of resources (including household income) which prevents the conversion of these aspirations into choices.

“Working class pupils were much less likely than those with parents with professional jobs to cite a family member’s career as an inspiration. In addition, as children grew older, middle-class families tended to ‘hot-house’ their children towards success”.

The link between schools and individual aspirations was found to be weak:

“Schools are often felt to have the potential to try to mitigate some of the advantages that middle class children have over their working class peers in terms of support for realising ambition, including by providing good careers advice. However, the King’s study found that only four of 85 pupils mentioned school careers advice as having shaped their aspirations...

40 NB: nearly half (45%) of children who said they would like to get a job also said they would like to carry on studying.
“Professor Archer concluded: ‘There needs to be a re-think of current education policy, which focuses heavily on raising young people’s aspirations. Our findings indicate that ‘poverty of aspiration’ is largely a myth. Future education policy should focus on levelling the playing field, providing greater support to disadvantaged young people and supporting their aspirations.”

The study further recognised its own limitations:

“The ASPIRES research team at King’s conducted a survey of more than 9,000 pupils across England aged 10-11 and a follow-up questionnaire with over 5,500 of the same year group when they were aged 12-13.”

Gregg, Blanden, Family Income and Educational Attainment: A Review of Approaches and Evidence for Britain, 2004

This paper notes that it is important that aspirations for post-16 education are linked to outcomes at GCSEs or equivalent. This is because those who achieve well are likely to continue in education. Therefore the relationship between income and outcomes at the age of 16 is extremely relevant to the discussion of aspirations afterwards.

On these outcomes, in a significant conclusion they note that:

“The results suggest that a one third reduction in income from the mean increases the probability of a child getting no A-C GCSEs by around 3 to 4 percentage points, on average, and reduces the chances of achieving a degree by a similar magnitude”

There are two key inferences that can be made. Firstly, and most evidently, household income appears to have an impact on attainment. The 3-4% however should be kept in perspective, for it is far below what may have been expected. Nevertheless, although such an inference is less justified, the fact that it also affects those who go on to get a degree illustrates further evidence that aspirations are interwoven with outcomes at GCSE level.

This relationship is further established by other, more recent results:

“Just over a quarter (26.9%) of pupils eligible for FSM scored at least five C grades, including English and Maths, compared to 54.4% of those not eligible for the meals. This achievement gap of 27.5 percentage points, has narrowed slightly from 28.1 percentage points in 2006.”

We can also see the regional distribution for this relationship. The disparity here is far greater than that found in the paper by Blanden and Gregg. The reason for this is that this result is based on the criterion of free school meals, rather than a proportional change in household income. It may be possible, therefore, to argue that the lower down the income chain we go, the graver and more severe the impact of financial hardship on education performance at GCSE level. On the other hand, regional variations are also considerable. Therefore, if the statistic varies so considerably geographically, it may suggest that other factors, aside from income, are also at play. It reinforces the point that disentangling the household income from other factors, often poor parenting, is challenging.

On a slightly broader note, the data illustrates that ethnicity also affects the impact of household income on educational performance at GCSE level. It illustrates that the effect of household income is far more significant if the child is white and British. Interestingly, the effect of household income on other minorities is considerably less, in some cases. Those who are Bangladeshi, have an equal percentage receiving poor GCSE results with and without school meals.

2.8 PROBLEMS WHILE RESEARCHING

A particular problem was that much of the literature was written before post-16 education became compulsory. This means that a now irrelevant distinction that is frequently drawn between students choosing to continue education and students not choosing to continue education is no longer relevant. It is plausible that the compulsory nature of continuing post-16 education has significantly altered the aspiration-formation process.
3.1 Norway

Overview

The aim of this report is to explain how ethnicity and household income impact pupils’ aspirations for post-16 education in Norway. Furthermore, it is explained how Norway has taken political measures to ensure that the structural inequalities caused by ethnicity and socio-economic background are somewhat minimized. This brief report identifies a few of these structural policies, including the right by law to post-16 education, the principle of free education and public grants and loans, the counselling service, and the rigorous regulation of private schools.

Norway’s Pursuit of Equality

Norwegian governments’ official strategy has for decades been to pursue active policies to reduce inequalities in society. The overall goal is to reduce class distinctions and economic imbalances, and combat poverty and other forms of marginalization. A society characterized by a strong community and equality is considered across the political spectrum to provide the best framework for individuals’ opportunities to realize their lives. Societies with minor economic and social disparities are also among the most productive in the economic sense. This has led to comprehensive policy frameworks where inequality is combated on many fields. The education sector is no exception to this.

The Education System in Norway in 2014

Norway is one of the world’s greatest investors in education. As of 2013, 9% of total GDP was devoted to education, which constitutes an annual expenditure of USD 14 081 per student from primary to tertiary education (the OECD average is USD 9 300 per student). Education in Norway begins for almost all children before they are 5 years old in integrated systems of pre-primary education and care. Education is mandatory by law for all children aged 6-16. The school system is structured into three parts: Barneskole (elementary school, age 6-13), ungdomsskole (lower secondary school, age 13-16), and videregående skole (upper secondary school, age 16-19). The school year starts is divided into two terms, starting in August and ending in late June. The municipalities own and run the elementary and lower secondary schools, while the regional counties are responsible for public upper secondary schools.

Since the introduction of the Kunnskapsløftet reform (“the knowledge promotion”) in the autumn of 2006, a pupil can apply for either general studies (studiespesialisering) or vocational studies (yrkesfag). Upper secondary education thus provides three years of general education or four years of vocational training. The norm for apprenticeship training is two years of vocational training in upper secondary education, followed by one or two years of practical training in the industry. After the reform Kunnskapsløftet, pupils can choose between 12 different specializations within the general and vocational studies.

In general, all Norwegians attend higher secondary education. Though not mandatory, an astonishing 97.8% of all 16 years olds in 2012 chose to transfer directly to upper secondary education. Also 97.7% of 16 year olds born in Norway to immigrant parents chose to transfer.

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42 Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, St. meld nr. 16, 2006-7
43 OECD, 2013
44 Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2014
45 VILIBLINO, 2014 (accessed November 18, 2014)
directly. However, only 88.6% of 16 year olds born to immigrant parents chose the same. In the UK, only 78% of 15-19 year-olds were enrolled in education in 2013. The UK thus has one of the lowest percentages of 15-19 year-olds enrolled in education among OECD.

**Figure 2 - The Education System in Norway: An Overview**

**Post-16 Aspirations, Ethnicity and Socio-Economic Background**

Socio-economic background and ethnicity have major structural effects on pupils’ aspirations for post-16 education.

Several studies in Norway have determined that the group of pupils from minority backgrounds is very polarized compared to other social groups. A comparatively larger percentage either chooses to not transfer to upper secondary education at all, or attains low grades. Several studies determine that the reason why a larger percentage of minority pupils do worse at school or have lower post-16 aspirations than their peers, is because their parents tend to have far less education than other parent groups. At the same time, a comparatively larger percentage of minority pupils do very well at school, attaining excellent grade averages and often aspiring for high status educations and professions. When comparing majority and minority pupils of the same social class (middle class and labour class), minority pupils tend to have better grade

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46 Op cit, Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2014  
47 Op cit, OECD  
48 Hegna, Kristinn, Changes in educational aspirations throughout lower secondary school, 2010
averages and they more often choose the specialization in general studies, which is the prerequisite for university and college admission. 49

Pupils who have parents of high socio-economic background are more likely to choose the most advanced math courses, as are immigrant pupils and Norwegian-born pupils to immigrant parents. 50

**Social Admission, Right by Law**

Since 1994, regional governments have been required by the Education Act to offer upper secondary education to everyone who desires it and fits the criteria. Those who have attended primary and lower secondary school or its equivalent thus have a statutory right to 3 or 4 years of upper secondary education and training, depending on their choice of study program. 51 Your grades from lower secondary school and geographical location in the country determine where you are admitted. This admission policy is somewhat different from the equivalent policy in England, where admission criteria can be very different for each school. 52

You must use the right to upper secondary education during a consecutive period of 5 years when all the teaching takes place at school, and within 6 years when all or part of the education takes place as a trainee or apprentice. Your allowance must be used up by the end of the year in which you turn 24. This means that after lower secondary school, you can wait to start upper secondary school, or you can take a break for up to 2 years during the period, as long as you stick to the overall time frame of your allowance. 53 This policy provides flexibility for young people unsure about their aspirations by allowing pupils who regret their choice to choose other schools or study programs, within the relatively generous timeframe set by law.

**The Principle of Free Education**

The general principle in Norway is that all education is essentially for free. Regardless of your socio-economic background, you won’t face any formal economic restrictions on access to education. There are thus no tuition fees for public secondary schools and 85% of the student expenses for private schools are covered by the government. 54 The case of private schools will be elaborated upon later in the report.

The Lånekassen (State Educational Loan Fund) administers the public student grants and loans. There are two main support schemes: one for pupils in ordinary upper secondary education, and one for students in higher education. As a general rule, educational loans are interest-free during the period of education. In the case of ordinary upper secondary education, support is mainly awarded through grants. Such grants are means-tested against the parents’ income and against the pupil’s income from apprenticeship or social benefits. Grants that are not means-tested may be awarded for living expenses, travel, and necessary educational equipment. The pupil is awarded support for his/her education for only a limited number of years. For upper secondary education, support is only awarded during the period the pupil has the legal right to education on this level. 55

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49 Op cit., Hegna
51 Op cit. vilibili.no
52 Op cit., gov.uk
53 Op cit. vilibili.no
54 Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2014
55 Ibid
Furthermore, in Norway it is a right by law to be financially supported by your parents even after the age of 18, if you’re still a pupil in upper secondary education. This is why the State Educational Loan Fund will examine your parents’ income. Only if your household income is very low will the agency provide you with grants and loans.

**The Counselling Service**

The Education Act states that all pupils at Norwegian schools have a right to the individually necessary counselling on post-16 education, employment services, career choices and social issues. Such counselling became a right by law in 1959. Each school holds the responsibility to organize the service. It has been important that the service is localized at each school, and not in an external company or other organization, as is the case in Denmark. Thus, basically all lower secondary schools have employed their own councillors or teachers who specifically work to inform students about post-16 education. The current policy is that in order to become such an adviser you are required to both have completed the general teacher education and have worked as a teacher for at least three years.

Yet, many primary school students’ experience of the counselling service is sporadic and superficial. While receiving a lot of educational information, this information is not well enough adapted to the recipients. This constitutes a significant problem when pupils wish to make the right choice for post-16 education. It is stated in several government reports that this could be one of the main reasons why Norway is experiencing a comparatively high number of drop-out students in upper secondary education. The councillors themselves report that they have too little knowledge about the labour market and working life (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2009).

In recent years there have been several additional efforts to meet pupils’ need for more and better information about post-16 education. The probably most successful initiative in Norway is the web site Vilbli.no, the counties’ information service for applicants to upper secondary education and training. This is an easily accessible and professional web site providing both overall and detailed information about post-16 education.

**Private Schools vs. Public Schools**

Compared to the UK, very few people choose to attend private schools. As of 2006, 93% of all pupils in upper secondary education attend public schools. However, the development over time is that more pupils choose to switch from public to private schools when transferring from lower to upper secondary education. The increase in private school student enrolment is an astonishing 50% between 2004 and 2010. Whereas only 2.6% attend private primary schools, 7% choose private post-16 education. Historically, such schools have been for the privileged and wealthy, excluding those of low socio-economic backgrounds. Today, socio-economic class has a very low effect on pupils’ choice of private or public upper secondary education. The government have by law required that private schools meet the same basic standards required by public schools. Schools that are approved and that operate according to the Private School Act are entitled to public funding. The government support constitutes 85% of a government set expense level per student. Private schools can require that students pay tuition, but the tuition can be no more than the remaining 15%. This policy ensures that most people can access private upper secondary schools in Norway. Combined with the governments loan and grant programs, explained earlier in this report this results in little economic impact between choosing a public or private school. In other words, social background will usually have no say

56 Lovdata, *The Norwegian Children Act, 1981*
57 Berge and Hyggen, *Private Schools in the Nordic Countries. The extent, development and political debate*, 2011
58 Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009
in whether you can apply to a private school or not. The selection between private and public post-16 schooling seem to be more of a personal choice based on pedagogic and religious preferences.

Most private schools in Norway today are established because they offer a religious or international alternative to public schooling, such as Christian schools and the English, French and German schools. It should be noted that private schools are obliged to admit anyone from anywhere in Norway who fulfils the ordinary conditions for admission to public schools. In essence, the Norwegian policy on private schools constitutes yet another overall policy that ensures equal access to education, reducing the direct impact of household income.

Recently, a Muslim community in Oslo applied for permission to establish an Islam-based school equivalent to the Christian schools. Bureaucrats in the Norwegian Directorate on Education and Training gave this project official permission, but the political leadership in Oslo has filed a formal complaint and thus delayed the process. So far, almost no politicians are in favour of the proposal. It is considering illogical by some that there are 72 Christian schools in Norway, but there is no political support to permit one Muslim school. A counter-argument is that the school's existence could have a negative effect on the integration of religious and ethnic minorities in Oslo.

Conclusions

In general, all Norwegians attend higher secondary education. Though not mandatory, 97.1% of all students in lower secondary school still proceed to upper secondary education. This proportion falls to only 88.6% for immigrants, though 97.7% among those born in Norway to immigrant parents attend higher secondary education. These numbers are evidence of a successful education policy in terms of universal access.

By law, all Norwegians have a right to free secondary education. The government provides grants to those from low-income families. Norwegian parents are obliged to financially support their children until they have finished their secondary education, even if they are over eighteen years old. These policies ensure formal equal access to post-16 education, whatever socio-economic or ethnic background.

A comparative ranking of Norway's social mobility relative to other countries implies that Norway is a country of greater opportunity than most others.

3.2 The United States

Overview and Methodology

Statistically, students from low-income backgrounds tend to be less involved in post-secondary education, regardless of race. Aspirations among different ethnicities actually appear to be higher among ethnicities that are statistically of a lower income level, implying that income is the main roadblock on a student's road to higher education. Educational policy in the US attempts to correct this problem, with the state of Texas being a primary example.

For statistical information, this report relied on census data and studies conducted by the National Centre for Education Statistics. Otherwise, the bulk of this research was composed of secondary sources.

Tjernshaugen, Karen, 'Oslo City files complaint on the decision to permit a Muslim school', Aftenposten, April 10 2014
Main Research

The ‘American Dream’ is that anyone of any race or background who wants to can achieve success in life. In the last several decades, American high school students have aspired more and more to receive at least a four-year bachelor's degree. In 1980, about 40% of American 10th graders hoped for this. By 2002, the figure had doubled to 80%. In general, these decades have been marked by shrinking yet persistent achievement gaps between minorities and whites.

The correlation between income, ethnicity, and aspirations for higher education has been exhaustively researched by many American scholars, but with varying results. In general, the following themes seem to hold true. According to the 2010 Census, Whites and Asians have median household incomes that are higher than the median income of all races combined, while Hispanics and Blacks have median incomes that are lower (See Figure 2).

Figure 3 - Real Median Household Incomes by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2010


Following from this, there is evidence that household income does affect educational aspirations; at least insofar as students aspire to higher education in the first place. For example, students of these low income ethnicities (Hispanic and Black) rated low cost and financial aid as very important for post-secondary education decisions; more so than White or Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicities (See Figure 3). It would follow that these low-income students would have less of a presence in post-secondary education, assuming that they did not receive a satisfactory amount of aid. However, this does not imply that these students had no desire to pursue higher education; rather, they may simply have been unable to afford it.

On the contrary, aspirations amongst 10th grade students are actually greater for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites and Asians. In 2002, the percentage of 10th graders who expected to attain a high school diploma was 8% (White), 10.5% (Black), 13.5% (Hispanic), and 4.9%

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61 United States, National Centre for Education Statistics, 2012
(Asian/Pacific Islander). The percentage expecting to attain a Bachelor's degree was 39.6% (White), 40.8% (Black), 40.2% (Hispanic), and 37.2% (Asian/Pacific Islander). Despite higher aspirations for certain ethnicities, by the time these students actually attended an institute of higher education, the numbers were fairly similar. In 2012, 42.1% of Whites, 36.4% of Blacks, 37.5% of Hispanics, and 59.8% of Asians (18-24 year olds) attended a degree conferring institute of higher learning. 62

Most studies find that Hispanic students hope for college far less than their peers. Yet many of these studies do not account for heterogeneity among Latino subgroups. Mexicans, especially immigrants, tend to have much lower aspirations than non-Hispanic whites and other Latinos. Other groups (Cubans and Puerto Ricans, for instance) have comparable or even higher aspirations than their white counterparts when factors like academic achievement and family income are controlled.

Figure 3 – Percentage of high-school seniors with postsecondary aspirations who reported low postsecondary school expenses and the availability of financial aid as very important to their decisions, by race/ethnicity and sex

Source: US National Centre for Education Statistics 2004

If a higher percentage of students of black or Hispanic ethnic heritage aspire to higher education, but end up at a lower attendance rate than Whites or Asians, there must be a reason. One reason is, of course, that aspirations are not exactly an easy thing to measure, and are an even more difficult topic to use for statistical analysis. It is nearly impossible to accurately claim that a certain percentage of students “aspire” to one thing or another. But beyond this, it does seem to imply that there is some other variable affecting the attendance rates of certain ethnic groups.

When combining the income data and the aspirations, it seems likely that the reason fewer Black and Hispanic students achieve a postsecondary education is largely due to income levels. Texas, Florida, and California have tried to help aspiring minorities with “percentage plans” that are worth mentioning here. These plans (California's "ELC Program," Texas' “Top 10%” law and Florida's "Talented Twenty" program) simplify the college admissions process by guaranteeing admission to state schools for students that graduate near the top of their class.

Many minority students, especially those from immigrant families, may be daunted by the college application process. Their parents may not have comparable experience that the

62 United States National Centre for Education Statistics, 2012
students can draw from. Oftentimes this lack of information and confusion discourage poorer minority students. US colleges choose applicants based on a broad range of subjective criterion, and minorities may expect to face discrimination in this process. Percentage plans give students in poorer public schools a simple, concrete way to attend to college, and research suggests that this policy raises minority aspirations.

Texas represents an interesting case study on the potential benefits of this policy. Among the top ten percent of academic performers in Texas schools, Hispanics and blacks are less likely to apply to college. One study found in a survey of Texas high schoolers that knowledge of the Top Ten law significantly raised minority college aspirations. The researchers suggest that removing uncertainty for less privileged students raises aspirations for these minorities. Some authors have pointed out that the Top Ten incentivizes richer, white students to transfer to poorer schools where it is easier to finish in the top ten of their class. This effect, to the extent it is true, has added benefits of diversity.

**Conclusions**
Despite significant attention from American legislators and scholars, there is no consensus on the relationship between ethnicity and educational aspirations. Although the data suggests a clearer link between income and aspirations for a bachelor’s degree, the causal link between the two is ambiguous. Poverty may be caused by other factors (such as less parental education) which could be the root of lower aspirations. Some states have found policy solutions that may raise minority aspirations. Though these policies could be tweaked and have not been widely implemented, they show promise.

### 3.3 Germany

**Overview and Methodology**
This section seeks to ascertain the level to which discrimination as a result of a students’ ethnic and social background operates in the German educational system, using a regional case study as well as national research. In Germany, the idea of post-16 education is not a suitable topic for discussion, given that age 16 is not a pivotal watershed in a student’s educational career. There is, however, a chance for those at "Realschulen" to transfer to “Gymnasien" for the final years of study if they wish to attend university. The chances for students from low-income backgrounds and ethnic minorities will therefore be discussed in relation to their access to the transition to higher education.

The research is divided between that dealing with ethnic minorities and that regarding household income. Whilst there is a great deal of intersection between the two categories, the majority of sources available cover the situation with regards to either one category or the other.

**Ethnicity: A Stark, yet Taboo, Inequality**
As a student from an ethnic minority in Germany, be it as a first, second, or even third generation immigrant, carving a successful educational path is statistically an ostensibly impossible process. One must negotiate a system wrought not only with institutionalised prejudices but also inherent racism and local ghettoisation. This leads to a vicious cycle that reveals Germany’s inability to keep up with the problems posed by rapidly changing social...

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63 Leicht, Sullivan, Maltese and Lloyd, 2003
64 Cullen, Long and Reback, ‘Jockeying for position: Startegic High School Choice under Texas’ top 10 percent plan’, 2013
demographics. As an overview, Figure 4 demonstrates the educational fate of immigrant students in Germany in 2009. This recent study shows that German students are far more likely to finish and obtain their qualification from "Realschulen" or from institutions that allow them to access higher education ("Fach-Hochschulreife") such as the Gymnasien. Students from an immigrant background are, by contrast, twice as likely to come away with solely the "Hauptschulabschluss" (the lowest form of qualification) or no qualification from secondary education at all.  

Figure 4 - Qualifications of foreign and German graduates of general secondary schools in 2008 /%

Source: Mikrozensus, Second Integration Indicators Report 2011

The most frequent and problematic conclusion drawn from this report’s research is the overwhelming evidence to suggest ethnicity-based discrimination and racism is a wholly taboo subject in both schools and the German media: “Rassismus ist ein tabuisiertes Thema in der Schule” 66. Journalism on the subject attests to this established trend, that it is a “quiet but deep” problem. 67 Moreover university research conducted at the University of Konstanz also suggests that by the time German students reach university age, “dass es auch institutionelle Diskriminierung geben kann...Direkte Diskriminierung ist selten” [there can be institutional discrimination...direct discrimination is rare] making the problem even more problematic. 68

Media-Based Rhetoric: Fuelling Inequality?

A particularly bizarre trend observed in the German media is the terminology used to refer to students in Germany who belong to an ethnic minority. All are referred to as “Migrationskinder” or “Studenten mit Migrationshintergrund” 69 – see footnote. Almost every article trying to address the problem of equal opportunities in education, or lack thereof, is quick to categorise the

68 Thomas Hinz, the University of Konstanz: „ Studium mit Migrationshintergrund: Voraussetzungen, Motivation und Verlauf“ 25. Oktober 2012/Komm, mach MINT
children they are dealing with in such a way, regardless of whether they are first, second or even third generation immigrants to Germany. These students are unable to shake off the stigma of the fact that they simply do not “come” from Germany due to a family history of immigration. Germany does not want to accept them as their own, no matter how long they have been there or what citizenship they hold, therefore assimilation is all the more difficult.

**Representation in the media** thus perhaps goes some way to making the task of integration even more difficult, be it in the UK or Germany. German newspapers highlight the problem and simultaneously root it in time, meaning these pressing social issues simply stagnate. Whilst in any country ultimate responsibility lies with its government to ensure fairness and equality pervades in its education system, there are other areas that contribute to and strongly influence public opinion that in turn create policy.

**Subtle Discrimination – Berlin Case Study**

Educational policy is decentralised in Germany, as schools are controlled by self-governing regions. As a result the situation from one Bundesland to another can be vastly different. More can therefore be gained by focusing on a single case study. Whilst this runs the risk of ignoring trends of discrimination and racism elsewhere in the country, Berlin is a particularly important focal point due to the 13.2% of non-German citizens that form part of its population and students from a migrant background make up almost 25% of students in Berlin (compared to a 20% nationwide average). Open Society Foundations have conducted recent grassroots research in Berlin where there is an apparently unspoken yet rife issue with discrimination. Gülten Alagöz, a teacher and member of district council in Tempelhof, reveals “people are quite aware of [discrimination in Berlin schools]. The problem is that no one talks about it in public.” The presence of discrimination is supported by data on Berlin that concludes “for students who come from families whose original language is not German less than a third leave with a university entrance qualification (compared to half of the state’s native German students).”

This dire situation is made worse by segregation in Berlin schools – a local newspaper story from 2012 reports that, in the district of Kreuzberg, Turkish parents protested against the segregation of their children (not native speakers of German) from ethnic Germans in a primary school, in an attempt to address their language skills. In this case the parents protested successfully, but this shows that the approach taken by local educational authorities to deal with a diverse student population is inherently flawed. What may have begun as a well-intentioned attempt at teaching immigrant students German has led to segregation and unequal opportunities, suggesting that classes to improve integration via segregation during

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74 Sylvia Vogt, „*Türkische Eltern protestieren gegen Trennung nach Herkunft*“ in Der Tagesspiegel, 17.8.2012
school hours is not the answer. Language is thus used against students to further segregation, or “as a proxy for separating these students from native Germans.”

Furthermore, institutional racism is plainly obvious in Berlin where schools are trying to attract parents of ethnically German students by allowing parents to choose their child’s "religious instruction, second foreign language or "social preference". This fact was discussed and substantiated at the recent symposium in Berlin, where "Diskriminierung an Berliner Schulen benennen" revealed the extent to which the running of entire schools are subtly influenced by discriminatory beliefs. An example of such endemic policy is "Es gibt subtile Diskriminierungsformen in den Schulen durch schulorganisatorische Maßnahmen wie z.B. Fremdsprachen- und Religionsunterricht oder wenn die Schulklassen nach den Schultypempfehlungen aufgeteilt werden. Mit diesen Maßnahmen wird auch dafür gesorgt, dass die weiße deutsche Klientel an den Schulen bleibt – das ist eine Art strategische Diskriminierung." [There are subtle forms of discrimination in schools through measures such as foreign language and religion classes, or when school classes are separated as a result of teacher recommendations. These measures are used to ensure the white German clientele stay at the school – a type of strategic discrimination]. This suggests the German system is similar to the British system according to Gillborn in its systematic or “conspiratorial” racism, the only difference being the target is primarily the Turkish minority.

The Route to Higher Education and the Role of Teacher Recommendations

Whilst many statistics, surveys and media reports conclude that the situation is indeed dire for ethnic minorities, this cannot be taken as true beyond question. The role of teachers in the future of children post-primary school (Grundschule) has been discussed as a probable starting point for the disadvantages faced by students that were not of ethnic German origin. Teachers must provide a recommendation as to what secondary school a child would be best suited to, a recommendation based not only on grades but also on a “general assessment” of behaviour.

This decision, or “Gymnasialempfehlung,” is down to teachers alone. Figure 5, however, elaborates often misconstrued statistics. It is taken from a recent study by the Berlin Social Sciences Research Centre and illustrates the percentage of students given a recommendation to the Gymnasium (and, therefore, further study) in Modell 1 – an alarming statistic that shows children from ethnic minorities are disadvantaged. However, this is then compared to the percentage of children whose parents all graduated with at least Realschulabschluss (a diploma from the second best secondary school) and an average professional job (Modell 2) and the percentage of children given a recommendation who all have the same social (not ethnic) background AND the same scholastic aptitude (Modell 3). The conclusions drawn are therefore that there is no evidence of unequal treatment on the part of teachers. Students and students with an immigrant background receive at least as frequent a recommendation for a Gymnasium as children without a migration background - if they have comparable academic performance and their parents belong to a similar social class.
A 2008 experiment conducted by the Otto Friedrich University of Bamberg also supports these findings. 237 primary school teachers were given sample essays to mark and base a recommendation on. These essays were ascribed a variety of names from 3 categories: “upper class German”, “lower class German” and “Turkish”. The thorough study found no evidence for teachers discriminating based on a child’s name. This study is evidently limited by the likelihood of teachers perhaps intuiting the fact that they were participating in a sociological study and were therefore more tolerant. The problem is thus ascribed to social background combined with ethnic background as a determining factor in a student’s academic prospects – ethnicity alone is not cause for ultimate disadvantage. This is supported by a thorough study undertaken by the University of Mainz which surveyed over 2000 primary school children in the local area and came to the following conclusion: 66% of non-immigrant children are recommended for academic secondary schooling that provides a path to higher education, compared with only 50% of immigrant children. Children from immigrant families therefore have fewer educational opportunities than German children. “This gap can be almost entirely traced to the poorer income

Source: Social Science Research Centre Berlin, 2012

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and educational status of the households with an immigration background. The poorer educational opportunities of immigrants are thus ultimately an ‘underclass phenomenon’.  

However, reports of smaller incidents of racism such as segregated primary schools and even racial slurs inside and outside the classroom suggest an accumulation of discrimination is the problem, and this cannot be ignored. Whilst it is often stressed that students from ethnic minorities have no fewer opportunities than German students from a similar social background, the very fact that so many more people with an "Immigrationshintergrund" are living in poverty means the probability remains that this disadvantage is a result of entrenched, if “quiet”, discrimination on a national level – a social inequality that will be more closely examined in the following report, as the existence of stark social inequality is just as divisive as ethnic discrimination.

Initiatives to Encourage Equal Opportunities

Despite the suspiciously insistent denial found in the aforementioned studies that students from ethnic minorities are in fact not subject to discrimination (when the personal experiences of teachers, parents and pupils so often run contrary to these facts), there is currently policy in place to encourage equal opportunities and to change the economic situation and social perception of students from minority groups.

The Boell Foundation is one such example of an organisation that offers scholarships and particularly seeks applications from ethnic minority students. A positive example is also being set by the University of Duisburg-Essen where such students are encouraged to follow a path to higher education by attending a workshop run by the university academic counselling centre. They are informed about available opportunities and moreover encourage that “ihr Migrationshintergrund auch etwas Positives hat” [coming from an immigrant background is something positive], as they have acquired both language and assimilation skills.

The START Foundation is a specific source of scholarships for students that are not ethnically German. It too uses the immediately pigeon-holing term of "Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund". Yet in this context it is perhaps necessary to categorise students in such a way as there is no use ignoring that they are highly economically disadvantaged, if not openly discriminated against.

Organisations Fighting for Change – A Model for the UK?

Similar nationwide initiatives could thus be set up in the UK. Whilst the German media is somewhat unapologetic in that it does not like to expose the country as still being host to a plethora of racially discriminatory views given its history, Germany is on the other hand very openly confronting the need for equality through the aforementioned targeted scholarship schemes and organised initiatives.

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80 Dr Stefan Hradil: School transition: Discrimination against children of less-educated, lower income parents, The University of Mainz http://www.uni-mainz.de/presse/12759_ENG_HTML.php (accessed November 16, 2014)
83 http://www.boell.de/de/stiftung/stipendien (accessed November 16, 2014)
85 http://start-stiftung.de/ (accessed November 16, 2014)
One such initiative is "Schule ohne Rassismus"\(^{86}\) [Schools without racism], a title given to schools that fulfil a certain criteria, that particularly seeks to involve and attract young people with merchandise, posters and school activity days. Implementing equality quietly through policy because inequality is simply embarrassing in this day and age (an embarrassment that is particularly endemic to Germany) is therefore not working, as inequality persists in many German schools. Starting from the ground up is a viable method of changing the values that lead to such discrimination.

Given the UK’s reputation for relative tolerance on the matter – or what many call the assumption that it is a “post-racial society”\(^{87}\), one could argue there is not enough work done to reinforce the essentiality of racial equality for each generation that goes through education; thus a similar standardised, national scheme of a tolerance-based award for schools could go a long way in assuring children from an ethnic minority background that they are equally valued.

**Conclusions**

Students from a migrant background in Germany are, by all accounts, heavily academically disadvantaged. They are far more likely to leave school without any qualification whatsoever. Discrimination also extends to the anachronistic strategy of segregation within schools themselves, particularly in areas where there is a high percentage of non-ethnically German students.

Referenced-based access to higher education is not entirely flawed, as teacher prejudice is often exaggerated. The real limiting factors for students from ethnic minorities are instead social background (primarily the job held by their parents and their parents’ educational history) and academic aptitude, the latter often being a consequence of the former. Germany is flawed in its approach in many respects, perhaps due to the autonomy given to local authorities over schools, as well as its being limited by a narrow media rhetoric that problematises the fate of anyone not wholly, ethnically German (“mit Migrationshintergrund”). However, extant initiatives are both spreading awareness of the unacceptable levels of inequality as well as encouraging disadvantaged students to reach higher education.

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\(^{87}\) Hugh Muir: 'Post-racial' Britain and what lies beneath the surface in The Guardian 13.10.2013
We conducted two case studies in order to highlight sections of our report and show how ethnicity and socio-economic background effect aspirations. This research was undertaken retrospectively and therefore it cannot be used to draw any conclusions. However elements of what was said by the participants can be supported by secondary academic literature and thus the case studies serve as an interesting, practical assessment of the issue we are exploring.

4.1 Case Study 1

Profile:
Age: 20
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: Mixed Black African and White
Socio-economic indicator (eg. EMA, Bursary, Free School Meals): EMA
Type of secondary school attended: Grammar School; Private 6th Form College (full scholarship)
Current occupation/school/university: Classics Undergraduate Student at Queen’s, Oxford University
Grades at GCSE (or equivalent): 12 A*s
Grades at A Level (or equivalent): 4 A*s

Responses to questions:

1. What did you want to do after your GCSE’s (other standard qualifications)? Be as specific as possible, did you know which A levels, which University, which career? Or did you just know you wanted to stay in education?

She knew she wanted to do A Levels and go to university. She had a fixed idea of the subjects she would take (French, Latin, Spanish and Maths). Initially she wanted to go to Cambridge and she aspired to be a teacher.

2. What factors or people do you feel affected this decision at the time?

Her mother was very driven and presented university as a necessity rather than an option. She feels her influence helped to minimise the effects of her background on her goals and ambitions. Her teachers affected her decision as they pushed her to apply to Oxford. She also noted how, at the time, her neighbors told her it was very unlikely that she would get an interview and this gave her an incentive to work hard and prove them wrong.

3. How did your socio-economic background have an impact on your decisions at the time?

Other than Oxford, all of her university choices were local as it would mean she could live at home if she couldn't secure financial grants. She can remember being unsure about tuition fees and how she would be able to afford them. Her grammar school
education influenced her degree subject choice and she wouldn't be doing classics if she hadn't been exposed to Latin at school.

4. How did your ethnic background have an impact on your decisions at the time?

She did not feel it made a major impact. Although she had worries, such as university being a white-dominated environment, she was determined not to let this get in the way.

Support in Secondary Literature


This report corroborates many aspects of interviewee’s experiences. Minority ethnic groups are more likely to stay in education post-16. Girls are more likely to stay in education than boys. The report suggests there is a strong link between parental aspirations for child and aspirations of child him/herself and this is evident in the interviewee’s experience. However socio-economic factors such as parents employed in professional occupations or high household income suggested to improve aspirations and in the interviewee's case worse socio-economic circumstances seemed not to significantly decrease desire to continue education.

‘Department for Children, Schools and Families, comp. The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Education.’

This report supports findings that parental involvement in their child’s education, boosts attainment and aspirations. It also finds that there is a greater level of involvement from mothers and parents of black children. This backs up the interviewee’s belief that her mother had significant effect on her aspirations.

4.2 Case Study 2

Profile

Age: 20

Gender: Female

Ethnicity: British citizenship/Kenyan-Indian heritage

Socio-economic indicator (eg. EMA, Bursary, Free School Meals): NA

Type of secondary school attended: State Grammar

Current occupation/school/university: Oxford University Student

Grades at GCSE (or equivalent): 9A*

Grades at A Level (or equivalent): (IB) 44/45

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88 National Archives, Parental Involvement, 2008
(accessed November 17, 2014)
Responses to questions:

1. **What did you want to do after your GCSE’s (other standard qualifications)? Be as specific as possible, did you know which A levels, which University, which career? Or did you just know you wanted to stay in education?**

She definitely wanted to go to sixth form and as her predicted grades were good she was looking at applying to top universities. However she didn't expect to get into Oxbridge. She found it hard to choose between subjects so opted for IB, as it would leave broader choice than A Levels.

2. **What factors or people do you feel affected this decision at the time?**

Attending Latimer school a high-achieving state grammar influenced her decision but didn’t push specifically for Oxbridge. The expectation was that you would go to sixth form and in fact most people stayed on at Latimer Sixth. Her parents were biggest influence and help in making decision (suggested IB) and encouraged her to aim high for a good university. She felt they had fairly high expectations. Observations of other family members as one of her cousins got into Cambridge but went to Nottingham instead because she thought she wouldn’t fit in with the atmosphere (part of this due to the all-white stereotype). A long-term influence was knew her international primary school, which ran an IB early years programme, which acted as a ‘taster’ or ‘mini version’ of real IB. She was exposed from early years to ‘risk-taking’ (an assessment objective of the course) and international outlook (learnt about Chinese and Indian history, Samurai warriors).

3. **How did your socio-economic background have an impact on your decisions at the time?**

Not applicable to this candidate.

4. **How did your ethnic background have an impact on your decisions at the time?**

It impacted her decision to take humanities/arts subjects as the stereotype of Asians taking more science-oriented subjects made me think that I was somehow ‘not good at English’ and ‘not wired to do literature or write as well’. She remembers how one teacher consistently marked me and another Indian boy down in English to around a B/C grade but she ended up getting an A*. Her cousins did not do arts subjects and although the subjects she was best at were English, History and Art, no one in her family really did that kind of subject and she wasn’t sure she would be supported.

**Support in Secondary Literature**


As above, this report corroborates many of the second interviewee's experiences. . Minority ethnic groups are more likely to stay in education post-16. Girls are more likely to stay in education than boys. The report suggests there is a strong link between parental aspirations for child and aspirations of child him/herself and this is evident in the interviewee’s experience.
As above, this report supports findings that parental involvement in their child’s education, boosts attainment and aspirations. It also finds that there is a greater level of involvement from mothers and parents of black children. The interviewee said her parents were her biggest influence.
CONCLUSION

The aim of this report is to increase understanding and awareness of the effects of ethnicity and socio-economic background on aspirations for post-16 education. In order to do this we have given an overview of the current academic position with respect to both factors, conducted comparative research as to whether the issue exists and how it is handled in the United States, Germany and Norway.

The secondary research leads us to make several remarks, which despite not being conclusive, are useful in giving a broad picture of the current position in academia and in policy. With regard to the effects of ethnicity on aspirations, members of ethnic minorities often have high aspirations but limited success. This suggests that the problem is not that aspirations are low, but there is a lack of resources for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, who excluding Chinese and Indian groups, are more likely to be poor, which means they are unable to convert their aspirations into successful outcomes.

In terms of the effect of socio-economic background on aspirations the link is clearer. Socio-economic status proved to be a key differentiator in aspirations of both children and their parents with those in better off households more likely to want to continue studying and attend university. It is also clear that socio-economic background affects outcomes. Just over a quarter (26.9%) of pupils eligible for FSM scored at least five C grades, including English and Maths, compared to 54.4% of those not eligible for the meals. Outcomes are intrinsically linked with aspirations, as each one effects the other.

The evidence from Norway’s system of education suggests possible policies that could help minimise the effects of ethnicity and socio-economic background on aspirations. By law all Norwegians have a right to free secondary education. This is the same as in the UK. However the government provides grants to those from low income families. This used to happen in England in the form of EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance) although this was abolished under the current coalition government in 2010. It has been replaced by a 16-19 Bursary Scheme although this is far more limited in scope than the previous provision. Arguably the reintroduction of a more comprehensive scheme would help to minimise the impact of these factors on aspirations.