

Educational Attitudes and Social Stratification: A Multivariate Analysis of the British Youth Panel

Professor Vernon Gayle, University of Stirling, Scotland
Dr Damon Berridge, Lancaster University, England
Dr David Stott, Lancaster University, England

There is a line of argument that suggests that the observed differences in educational attainment are, in part, due to young people from different social backgrounds having different aspirations and attitudes to education

This has an initial ring of plausibility...

However, Paul Boyle is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, I am not... Is that down to my low aspirations?

British Household Panel Survey

- Major household longitudinal survey
- Began in 1991
- Based on an annual interview
- Approximately 5,000 household and 10,000 adults

British Household Panel Survey

- British Youth Panel is a component of the BHPS
- Special questionnaire
- Annual interview with young people in the household aged 11-15
- At age 16 they enter the adult survey

Structure of the British Youth Panel (BYP) (Rotating Panel)

	Waves			
	4	5	6	7
Age 11	i	vi	vii	viii
Age 12	ii	i	vi	vii
Age 13	iii	ii	i	vi
Age 14	iv	iii	ii	i
Age 15	v	iv	iii	ii
Adult Survey		v	iv, v	iii,iv,v

Present analyses are restricted to young people in (original) BHPS household in England

- This is because these household have not been over-sampled
- The young people are in they same education system and aiming/studying for the same qualifications

Observations = 4,424 from $n = 1,564$ individuals

BYP Sample Size by Number of Waves

Wave L (2002) to Q (2007) (Essex Originals)

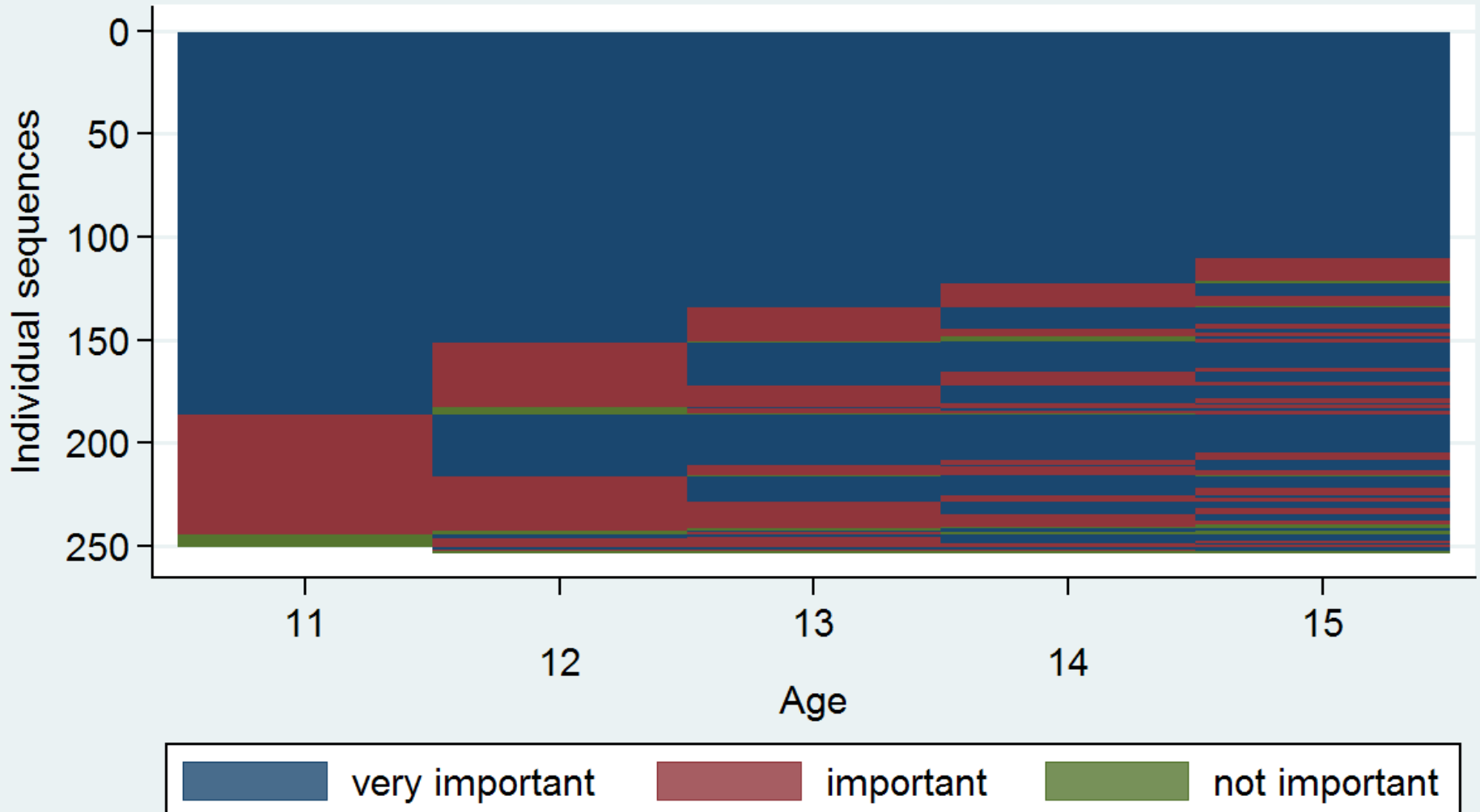
Number of waves observed	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	<i>n</i>
1	8	8	371
2	15	23	654
3	22	45	978
4	25	71	1,116
5	30	100	1,305
			4,424

Descriptive Statistics

- **Important to get GCSE exams**
 - 77% very important; 21% important
- **How do you feel about your school**
 - 32% completely happy (79% some happiness)
- **How much it means to do well at school**
 - 57% great deal; 37% quite a lot
- **I like most of my teachers**
 - 15% strong agree; 23% disagree
- **Teachers are always getting at me**
 - 8% strong agree; 18% agree;
- **How do you feel about school work**
 - 17% completely happy; 14% neither

How important is it for you to get GCSE exams

Panel of 2002 & 2003 Rising 11s



Source: British Youth Panel, n=261

Xttab one-way tabulation and decomposes counts into between and within components in panel data

Measure of the overall stability –
percentages are a normalised between weighted average of the within percentages

Important to get GCSE exams	62%
How do you feel about your school	33%
(3 categories)	56%
How much it means to do well at school	53%
I like most of my teachers	43%
Teachers are always getting at me	44%
How do you feel about school work	36%
(3 categories)	58%

Explanatory Variables

Explanatory variables implicated in the sociology of education and youth literature (and available in the data set)

- **Wave** (2002 – 2007)
- **Age** (11 – 16 years)
- **Gender** (males; females)

- **Family Registrar Generals Social Class [RGSC]**
(I professional; II managerial & technical; III n skilled non-manual; III m skilled manual; iv partly skilled; v unskilled)
 - semi-dominance approach father or mother

- **Highest Qualification (parents)**
(higher qualifications [e.g. graduates]; A' levels; O'level and equivalents; no qualifications)

- **Parents in a different household** (no; yes)
- **Lone Parent Household [mother]** (in addition mother is a lone parent)

- **Housing tenure [mother]**
(own/mortgage; local authority rented; housing association rented; other rented)

Summary of associations

	GSCE Exams	School	Do well at school	Like teachers	Teacher get at me	School work
Wave	-	-	-	-.06	-	-.06
Age	-	.18	-	.14	-.11	.11
Gender	-	-	-.04	-.08	.15	-.10
Family RGSC	.14	.05	.06	-	-.08	.04
Highest Qualifications	.15	.07	.13	.07	-.14	.07
Parents in a different house	.12	-	.06	-	-.07	-
Lone Parent Household	.14	-	.09	-	-.12	-
Housing tenure (mother)	.08	.11	.08	.06	-.16	.07

Age – decrease in school happiness; teacher likeability decreases; teacher get a pupils more; happiness with school work declines;

Gender (females) – means more to do well; like teachers; don't feel teachers are getting at them; happier with school work;

RGSC (lower groups) smaller proportions think GCSE important; unhappier with school; means less to do well at school; agreement that teacher get at me; less happy with school work;

Hi Qual (less) similar to RGSC

Random Effect Models

	GSCE Exams	School	Do well at school	Like teachers	Teacher get at me	School work
Wave	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age	-	√	-	√	√	√
Gender	-	-	-	√	√	√
Family RGSC	√	-	-	-	-	-
Highest Qualifications	-	-	√	-	-	-
Parents in a different house	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lone Parent Household	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing tenure (mother)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Random effect (scale)	√	√	√	√	√	√

Not significant -

Significant √

Bivariate Random Effect Models

Associations Between Outcome Variables

	GSCE Exams	School	Do well at school	Like teachers	Teacher get at me
School, feel about	.24				
Do well at school	.76	.28			
Like teachers	.26	.51	.34		
Teachers get at me	-.25	-.46	-.35	-.70	
School work, feel about	.35	.49	.40	.52	-.52

Substantive Conclusions

- Less switching of attitudes than we anticipated
- Overall Satisfaction with the school experience
 - + Importance of GCSEs
 - + Happy with school
 - + Doing well means a lot
 - + Mostly teachers are liked
 - Over a $\frac{1}{4}$ agree teachers are get at them
 - + Happy with school work

Substantive Conclusions

Limited evidence...

- Ageing effect, as pupil moves through school – become more less satisfied
- Gender – females are more pro-school
- Family socio-economic effect for GCSE importance
- Family education effect for doing well

Moving towards an evaluation of

The is a popular line of argument that suggests that these observed differences in educational attainment are, in part, due to young people from different social backgrounds having different aspirations and attitudes to education

Quite a long way to go...

More sociological thought about the potential relationships between attitudes and education

THE END