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Title: **Education: The Intersection of Sex and Race**

Synopsis

[1] At GCSE, based on year 2015 "mean best 8 scores" (defined in Notes),
- girls do better than boys in every ethnic and socioeconomic group (Figures 1,2);
- for average socioeconomic groups, girls in every ethnic group do better than the whole population average, whereas White British Boys and Black Caribbean Boys do significantly worse than average.
- Poor White British Boys and Poor Black Caribbean Boys are the most disadvantaged.

[2] Whilst most ethnic groups other than Black Caribbean have lower rates of exclusion from school than Whites, boys are three times more likely to be excluded than girls, Figure 3.

[3] More women than men progress into higher education in every ethnic and socioeconomic group, Figures 4,5.

[4] The excess of women over men progressing into higher education is largest for Black Caribbean (91%) and White British (45%) ethnic groups, and the associated mixed race, Figure 6.

[5] The ethnic group with the smallest progression rate into higher education is White British, with White British Men the lowest of all.

[6] Of the eight groups defined by sex, ethnicity and free school meal status which have more than 70% progression into higher education, seven of the eight are women (the only male group is Chinese), Figures 4,5.

[7] Despite Black Caribbeans as a whole being near the bottom of the educational heap, in 2020 a poor Black Caribbean Woman was 3.4 times more likely to go to university in the UK than a poor White British Man, Figure 5.

[8] In 2020 a poor Black African Woman was 5.5 times more likely to go to university in the UK than a poor White Man, Figure 5.

Cultural / Policy Bias

a) There are undoubtedly cognitive differences between the sexes which lead to boys' poorer verbal skills in early years and this may contribute to boys' underperformance through the rest of their school career. However, this should motivate additional assistance. Instead, political policy declines to do so. Responding to an FOI in 2015, the Department for Education wrote,

"*The Department does not fund any initiatives that just focus on addressing boys' underachievement*", Ref.[1].

The following year Ref.[7] noted that "*The Department for Education says it no longer focuses specifically on boys' underachievement*", though it is not clear that it ever did.

b) In the 2016 Government White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, Ref.[6], the only mention of sex was this, "*We will continue to address the gender gap in STEM subjects – supporting our ambition to narrow the gender pay gap – and are committed to increasing the proportion of entries by girls in science and maths subjects by 20%*". Failing to address the issue of boys' education is bad enough, but in this statement the Government appears to be unaware that women have dominated as undergraduates in science subjects for a great many years, and as of 2020 women also dominate in STEMM (with two Ms) – these issues to be addressed in a separate submission.

c) The refusal to assist boys' education exists in both Government and Opposition Parties. A shadow education secretary has recently opined that boys "*are under the impression that they don't need to push themselves*", Ref.[8], and that "*our universities are too male, pale and stale*", adding, in that context that "*women and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds are chronically under-represented*", Ref.[9]. The data presented here show that such statements are incorrect, indeed the opposite of the truth. But such remarks form a key component of the cultural environment which boys face in society in general and in schools in particular.

In other contexts the issues of stereotype threat and role models are emphasised, yet there is a cultural reticence about observing that the increasing dominance of teaching by women, at both primary and secondary levels, might not help boys' education. This reluctance to acknowledge the problem is related to the dominant narrative on gender, which refuses to accept that males can be adversely impacted by social forces outside themselves. Male power and privilege, we are told, means that males can only harm themselves; any disadvantages are due to their own failings and hence deserve only societal censure, not societal assistance.

d) Lamentably there is numerical evidence, at both Key Stage 2 SATS (age10/11) and A Level (age 18), that teachers' assessments are biased against boys compared with test data (to be addressed in a separate submission).

References

[1]   William Collins, *The Empathy Gap*, lps publishing, 2019.

[2]   Steven Strand, *Ethnic, socio-economic and sex inequalities in educational achievement at age 16*, 28 April 2020.

[3]   Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, *Independent report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities,* 28 April 2020.

[4]   UK Government, *Academic Year 2018/19, Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England*, July 2020.

[5]   Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, "*UCAS Undergraduate Secyor-Level End of Cycle Dara Resources 2020*", December 2020.

[6]   Department for Education, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, March 2016.

[7]   Nick Hillman and Nicholas Robinson, *Boys to Men: The underachievement of young men in higher education – and how to start tackling it*, Higher Education Policy Institute, HEPI Report 84 (2016).

[8]   Peter Walker, *White working-class boys should be more aspirational, says Labour minister*, The Guardian, 3 Jan 2018.

[9]   Richard Adams, *Labour would end free market in higher education, says Rayner*. The Guardian, 16 Feb 2019

Conclusions

The extent of male disadvantage in education is not appreciated. Whilst there may be grudging acknowledgement of boys under-performance, this is not translated into policy directives as it runs countered to the dominant narrative on gender.

Recommendations

The issue is too large to be resolved by a few snappy recommendations. However, the necessary first step is for the highest level of Government, including the Department for Education, to acknowledge that the status quo is unacceptable and must be addressed through policy directives.

Notes

GCSE

Figures 1 and 2 are based on GCSE data reported by the University of Oxford's Professor Steven Strand, Ref.[2], and reproduced in Ref.[3], Table 3. The data relates to 2015 and is disaggregated by both sex and race. The attainment measure used is the "Best 8 score". This uses the total score across the best 8 examination results achieved by the pupil. Each GCSE scores equal to its grade (i.e., a grade 9 counts 9, grade 8 counts 8, etc.). The "mean Best 8" is the average of the Best 8 scores across the ethnic and sex group in question.

The data plotted in Figures 1 and 2 are relative to a datum-zero equal to the average of the whole population's scores (i.e., over all ethnicities and both sexes). So, positive scores are better than average and negative scores worse than average.

The data has also been normalised using the standard deviation of the whole dataset (all ethnicities, both sexes). Hence the units in Figures 1 and 2 are "numbers of standard deviations above the mean" (and negative values are numbers of standard deviations below the mean).

Figure 1 provides this "mean Best 8" attainment measure for a sub-population of each ethnic group of average socioeconomic status, disaggregated by sex. The sex disparities are stark. For all ethnicities the average girl lies above the whole-population mean. In contrast, the groups which lie substantially below the mean are White British Boys and Black Caribbean Boys. The latter are the bottom of the heap (Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups would be lower still but are excluded due to very low statistics).

Note that Black African Boys do far better (close to mean, and Black African Girls are well above the mean).

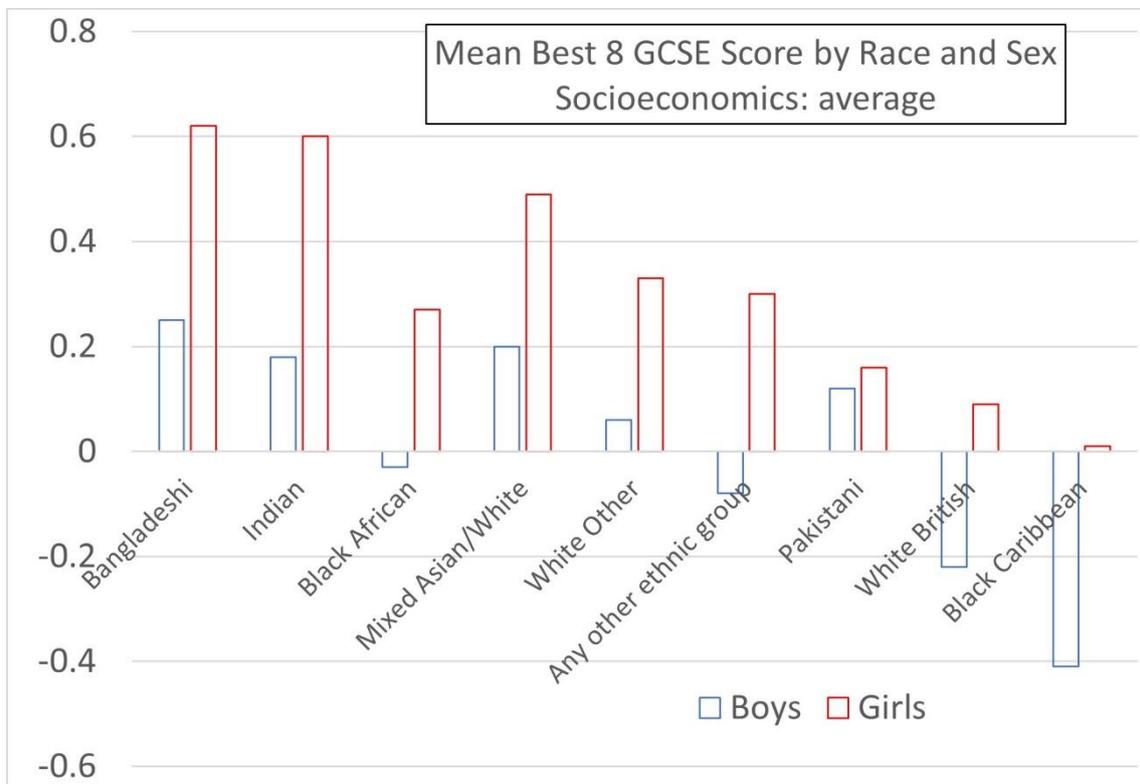<p style="text-align:center">Figure 1</p>

Figure 2 is a similar plot for the sub-populations defined at one standard deviation below the mean socioeconomic status. Very few boys from this economically disadvantaged background make it above the mean attainment, and none greatly so. In contrast, the average girl of the Bangladeshi, Indian, mixed Asian/White or Black African groups still attains well above the mean, even with this economic disadvantage. At the other end of the attainment range, the average boy of Pakistani, White

British, "other" White, or Black Caribbean groups does woefully badly – and it is the White British and Black Caribbean groups which are emphatically the worst underachievers, with boys worst of all.
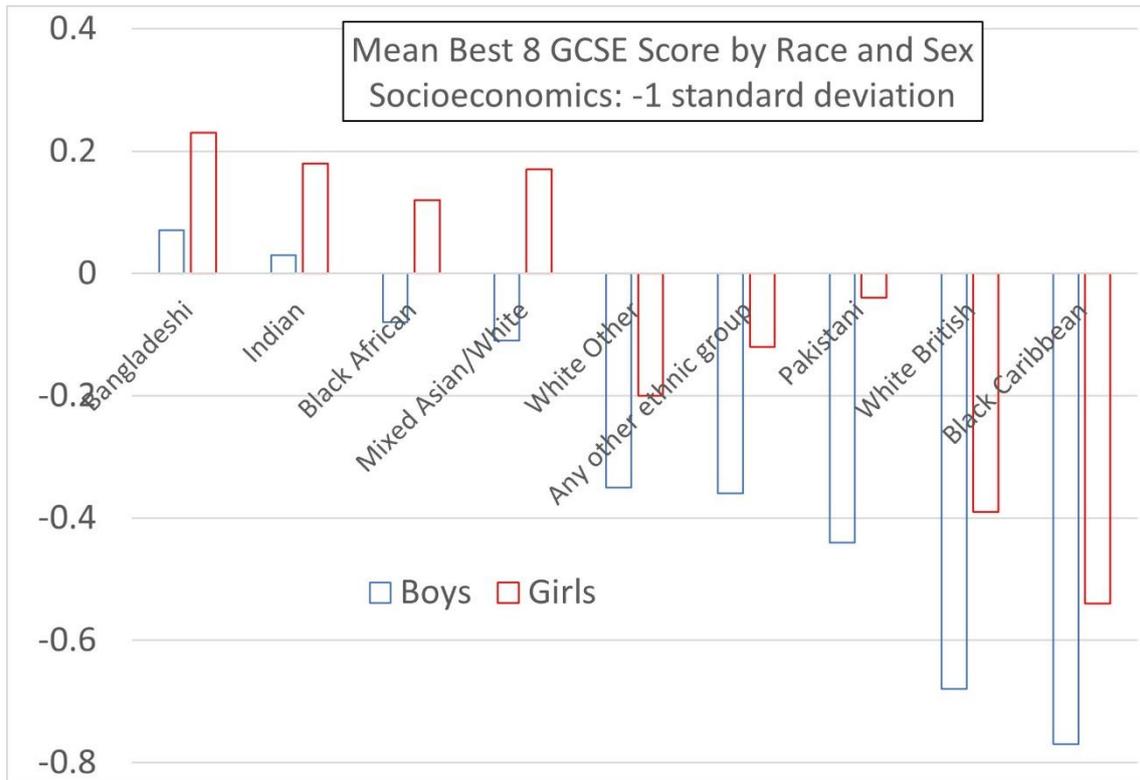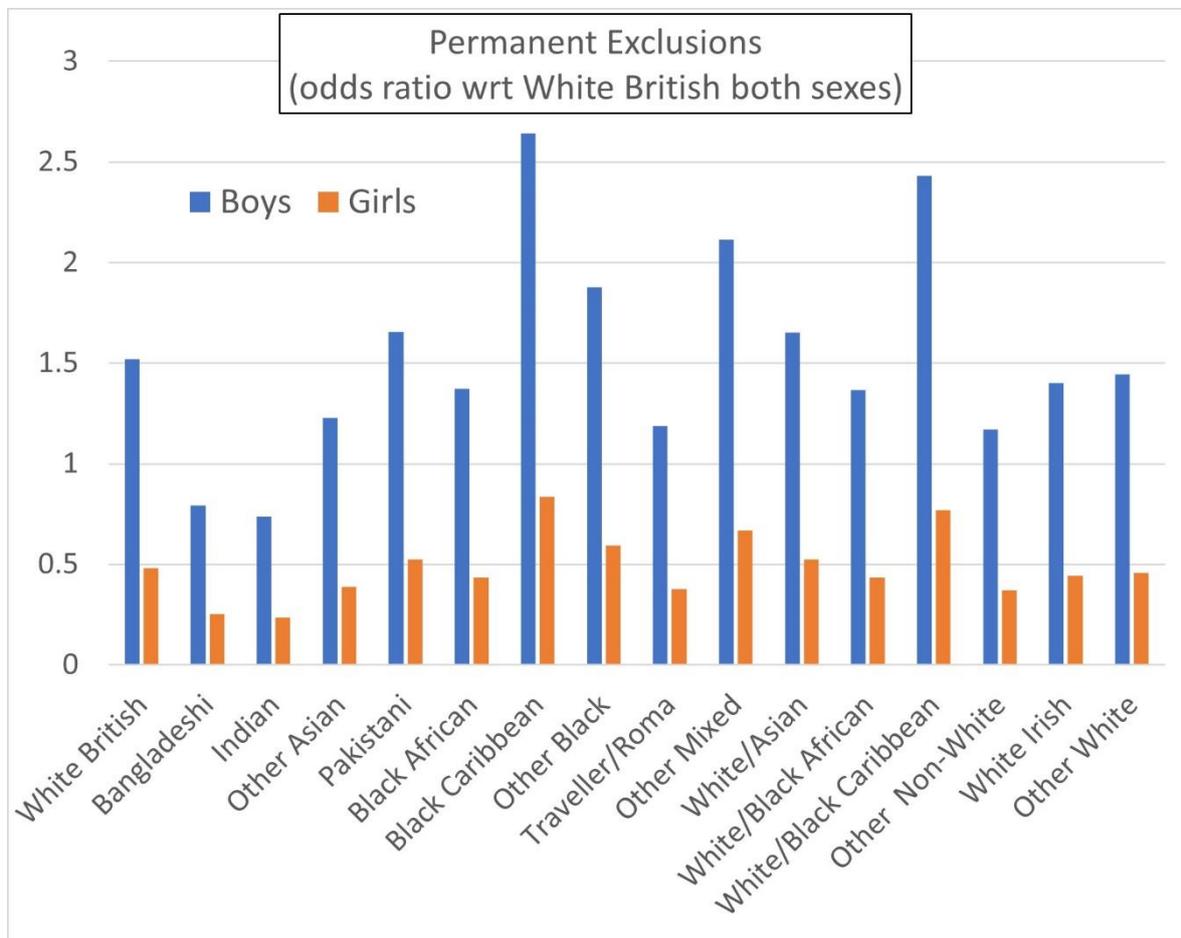
Figure 2

Figure 3

School Exclusions

Other than the small groups (White Gypsy, Roma and Irish Travellers), only Black Caribbean pupils and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils have higher permanent exclusion rates than White British pupils. All other ethnicities have lower exclusion rates than White British pupils. Ref.[3] does a good job of setting the record straight on the ethnicity issue in exclusions. However, the elephant in the room as regards exclusions is sex. Government data, Ref.[4], tells us that "*boys have more than three times the number of permanent exclusions, with 6,000 permanent exclusions, at a rate of 0.14 compared to 1,900 for girls in 2018/19 at a rate 0.05)*". Assuming this same factor applies to all ethnicities, Ref.[3], Figure 3 can be disaggregated by sex to yield Figure 3 above. Racial variations are smaller than the effect of sex.

Higher Education

Ref.[3], Table 7, presents data on the progression rates to higher education by age 19, in academic year 2018/19. However it does not disaggregate by sex. To do so I have used the UCAS data from Ref.[5]. This source gives the actual number of acceptances broken down by sex and by most of the ethnic groups used in Ref.[3], Figure 7. Hence these data provide the ratio of female to male entrants into HE by each ethnic group. Armed with this, the data of Ref.[3], Figure 7 can be used to deconvolute the progression rates separately for each sex and each ethnic group.

Note that all the HE data here relates to UK domiciled students only, not to the total UK HE entrants (many of whom are from abroad). Consequently, the ethnicity, sex and socioeconomic dependencies are specific to the UK.

Figure 4 is the resulting histogram of progression to HE for the sexes separately and for pupils who are not given free school meals. Figure 5 is the equivalent for pupils with free school meals (FSM). Comparing the spread due to ethnicity in the two Figures, it is immediately clear that this is far greater for FSM individuals, i.e., socioeconomics accentuates ethnic disparities (as is also clear from Figure 8). White British Boys do worst of all.

Finally, Figure 6 plots the percentage by which the number of UK domiciled women accepted into HE exceeds that of men in 2020, against ethnic group. This is based on UCAS data alone and is not disaggregated by socioeconomics. The sex disparity is greatest for Whites and Blacks, especially Black Caribbean, and least for the several Asian groups including Chinese.
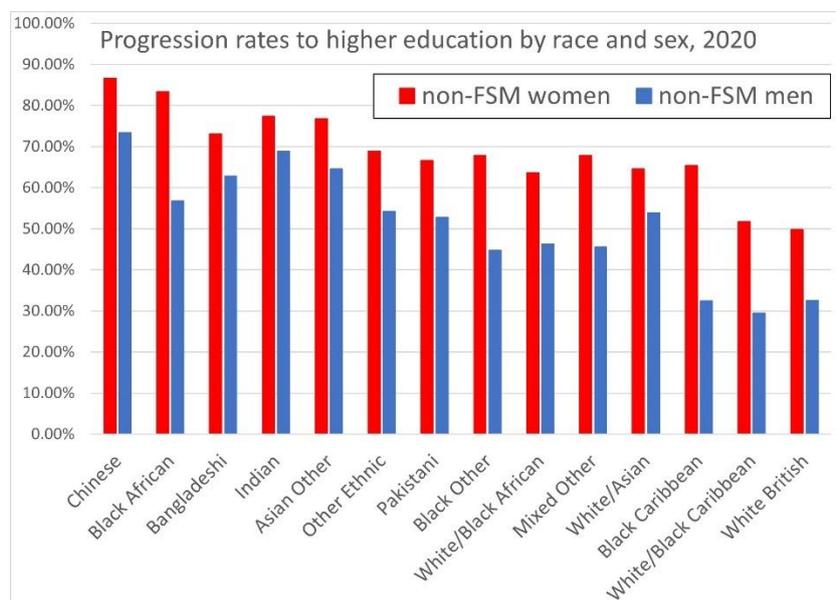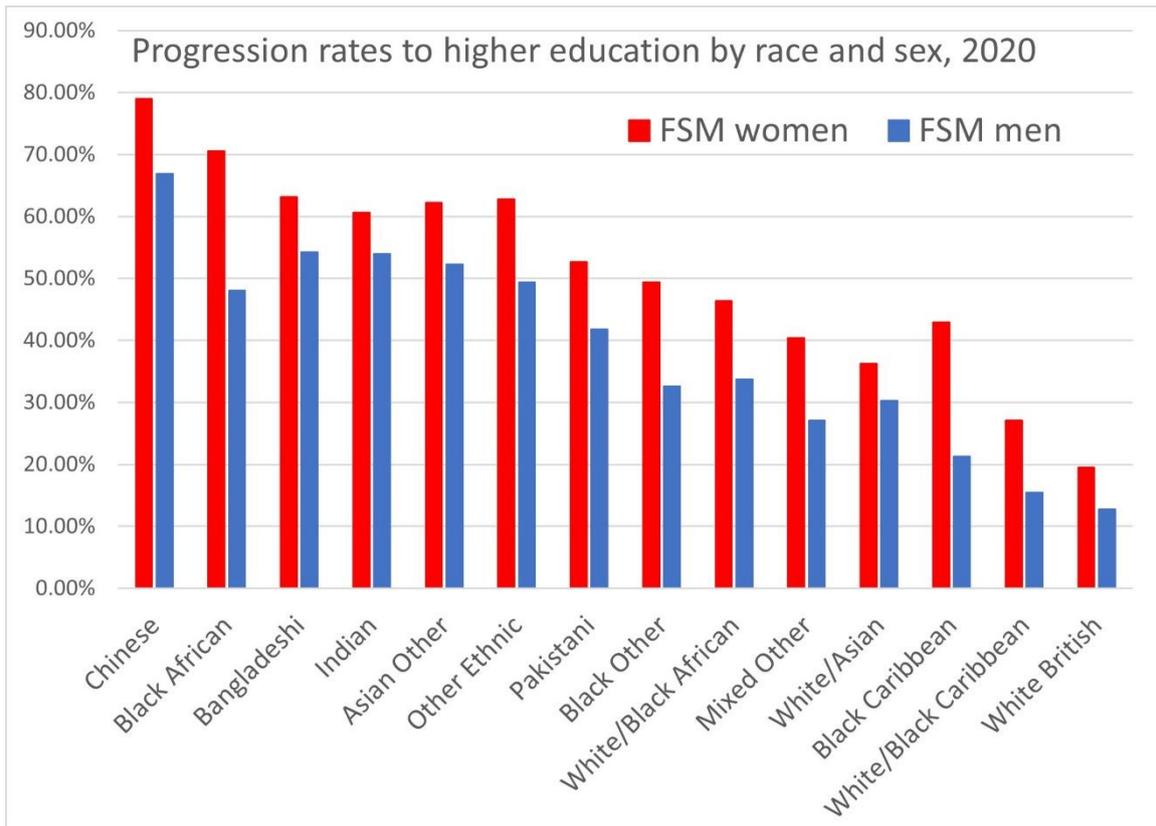
Figure 4

Figure 5

Progression rates to higher education by race and sex, 2020

Figure 6

Excess women over men progressing to higher education 2020 (UK Domiciled)