# What are the factors that promote high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups?

## A focused review of the UK-based aspirations literature

## What do we want to know?

The research question for this review is as follows:

> *What are the factors that drive high post-16 participation of many ethnic minority groups, and what strategies are effective in encouraging participation?*

The Review Group attempted to answer this question through a scoping of the research literature resulting in a 'systematic map' and two in-depth reviews. This report outlines the results of the second in-depth review.

## Who wants to know and why?

Widening participation in formal post-compulsory education and training is a policy agenda common to most developed countries, with political attention in the UK largely focused on young (potential) students aged 16-21.

Inequalities in participation in all forms of post-compulsory education have endured over the past fifty years in the UK, with significant minorities remaining routinely excluded (see, for example, Beinart and Smith, 1998). Finding ways to address these inequalities and raise post-16 participation in all ethnic groups are important policy issues.

## What did we find?

23 studies were included in the in-depth review.

The Review Group summarised all the promoters and non-promoters of post-16 participation in eight levels of influence: government policy, universities, schools, careers advice, work, religion, family and individual aspirations. A total of 21 promoters of participation and 21 non-promoters were identified. Other factors not in these levels of influence were also identified. The Review Group analysed the promoters and non-promoters focusing on those which emerged from large numbers of studies or from one or more studies of a high weight of evidence .

Of all eight levels of influence, the factors within the family and individual aspiration levels stand out as being the major determinants of post-16 participation. Sixteen studies found that parents placing a high value on education, strong parental support for post-16 participation, positive family influence, and being in a higher social class were determining factors in post-16 participation in schools and in further and higher education. On the other hand, eight studies found that parents placing a low value on education, parental influence against post-16 participation, negative family influence, and being in a lower social class could be factors acting as barriers to post-16 and further and higher education.

Fifteen studies found that individual aspirations and motivations for participation in post-16 education were major drivers for participation – not only in terms of aspirations for education as an end in itself and for economic gain and better job opportunities, but also simply in placing a high personal value on education and a belief that this would lead to personal satisfaction.

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SUMMARY

## What are the implications?

Differences between ethnic groups are largely explained by differences in cultural attitudes towards education in general and higher education in particular. Minority ethnic groups with high participation tend to have a high cultural awareness of the value of extending young people's education.

This review has identified a number of areas in which more rigorous research is required. In the systematic map of research, the Review Group did not identify any UK-based evaluations of interventions aimed at changing behaviour or attitudes using a strong design to enable causal inference (e.g. randomised trials or regression discontinuity evaluations). The data in this review is observational and consequently the results need to be treated with some caution.

## How did we get these results?

The systematic map was updated to include studies identified too late to be included in the first review. A narrower set of inclusion criteria was used to select studies for the in-depth review question. The included studies were then data-extracted and quality appraised. The results were reported and synthesised in terms of the strength of evidence for possible promoting and non-promoting factors. Finally, conclusions were drawn and implications were considered for policy, practice and research.

## For more information please contact:

Dr Carole J Torgerson (email: cjt3@york.ac.uk)

## For more information about the EPPI-Centre's systematic review programmes please contact:

Mark Newman
EPPI-Centre
Social Science Research Unit (SSRU)
Institute of Education, University of London
18 Woburn Square
London WC1H 0NR
United Kingdom

tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6575
fax: +44 (0)20 7612 6400

email: m.newman@ioe.ac.uk

## Where to find further information

The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

**SUMMARY** — Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

**REPORT** — Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

**TECHNICAL REPORT** — Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

**DATABASES** — Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at
http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2386

This document is available in a range of accessible formats including large print. Please contact the Institute of Education for assistance:

Tel: +44 (0)20 7947 9556   email: info@ioe.ac.uk