

# What can the sociological analysis of social mobility bring to the immigration debate?

## Examples and reflections

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# Two current achievements of sociological analysis



Enhanced our understanding of ethnic minority outcomes and inequalities into the second generation

Developed analysis and understanding of salience of social mobility

However, the two are only infrequently brought together

Yet, doing so builds on analytical strengths and offers purchase for understanding both historical and prospective minority group outcomes.

# The UK Prime Minister's vision for social mobility



‘As a nation, we are wasting too much of the talents of too many of the people. The mission of any second term must be this: to break down the barriers that hold people back, to create real upward mobility, a society that is open and genuinely based on merit and the equal worth of all.’

**Tony Blair February 2001**

"Raising social mobility in our country is a national crusade in which everyone can join and play their part."

"Britain has to be "far more upwardly mobile",

"At its core, this is a great moral endeavour."

**Gordon Brown June 2008**

"You only have to look at the make-up of the high levels of parliament, the judiciary, the army, the media. It's not as diverse; there's not as much social mobility as there needs to be,"

"I agree ...that we need a far more socially mobile country. That is something we need to do far more about ... We are making some progress but it's not fast enough and we need to go further and faster.

"What I want to see is a more socially mobile Britain. I want to see a Britain where no matter where you come from, what god you worship, the colour of your skin, what community you belong to, you can get to the top in television, the judiciary, armed services, politics, newspapers. A lot of these areas are important."

"...Don't just open the door and say we're in favour of equality of opportunity, that's not enough. You've got to get out there and find people, win them over, raise aspirations and get them to get all the way to the top."

**David Cameron, November 2014**

# Combining sociological analysis of ethnicity with that of social mobility



Better understanding of the relationship between origins and outcomes (social mobility) can provide a **long-term** understanding of

- ethnic penalties,
- ethnic and immigrant inequality
- future trends and outcomes
- the relationship between different forms of social inequality

# Immigrants and their children in Europe

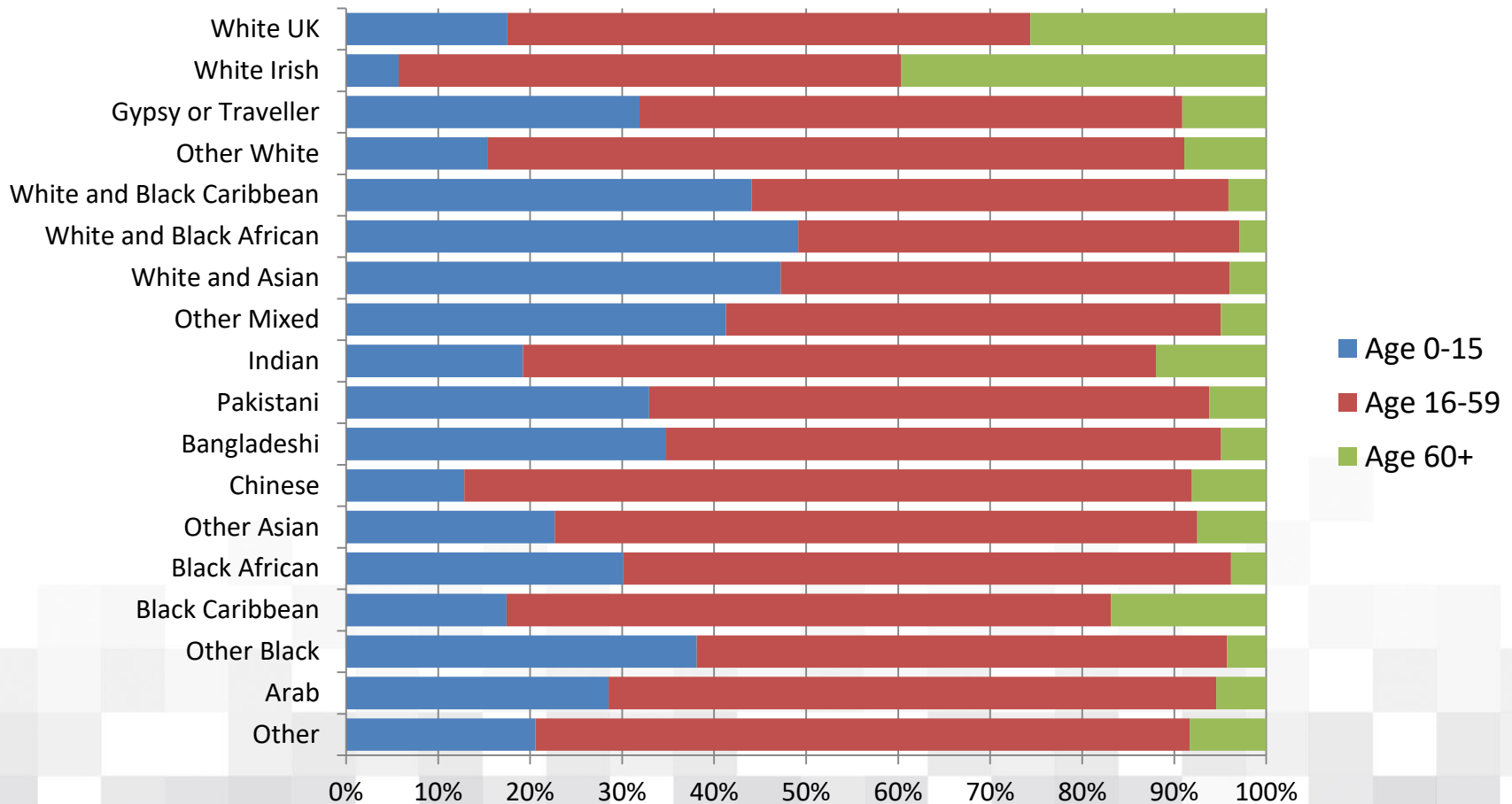


Immigrant and minority populations now form large and growing populations of many European countries

Younger profile will mean contribute increasingly to future populations

Differences in levels of recognition, acceptance, accommodation, negative discourses but also representations of 'good' and 'bad' migrants

# UK ethnic group populations by age



Source: ONS 2011 Census, England and Wales

# Good and bad migrant and minority discourses: e.g.



“Let me be clear: none of these measures will stop us from rolling out the red carpet for the brightest and the best: the talented workers and brilliant students who are going to help Britain succeed”  
David Cameron, Speech on Immigration, 21 May 2015

“... what we can't do is allow people to break into our country. A lot of people coming to Europe are coming in search of a better life. They are economic migrants and they want to enter Britain illegally, and the British people and I want to make sure our borders are secure and you can't break into Britain without permission.” David Cameron August 2015

“So if you're a troubled boy who is angry at the world, or a girl looking for an identity, for something to believe in and there's something that is quietly condoned online, or perhaps even in parts of your local community, then it's less of a leap to go from a British teenager to an ISIL fighter or an ISIL wife, than it would be for someone who hasn't been exposed to these things.” David Cameron, Global Security Forum, June 2015,

# Huge diversity across ethnic groups



E.g. in  
occupational outcomes  
educational attainment  
labour market status  
areas of settlement, and level of concentration and  
deprivation



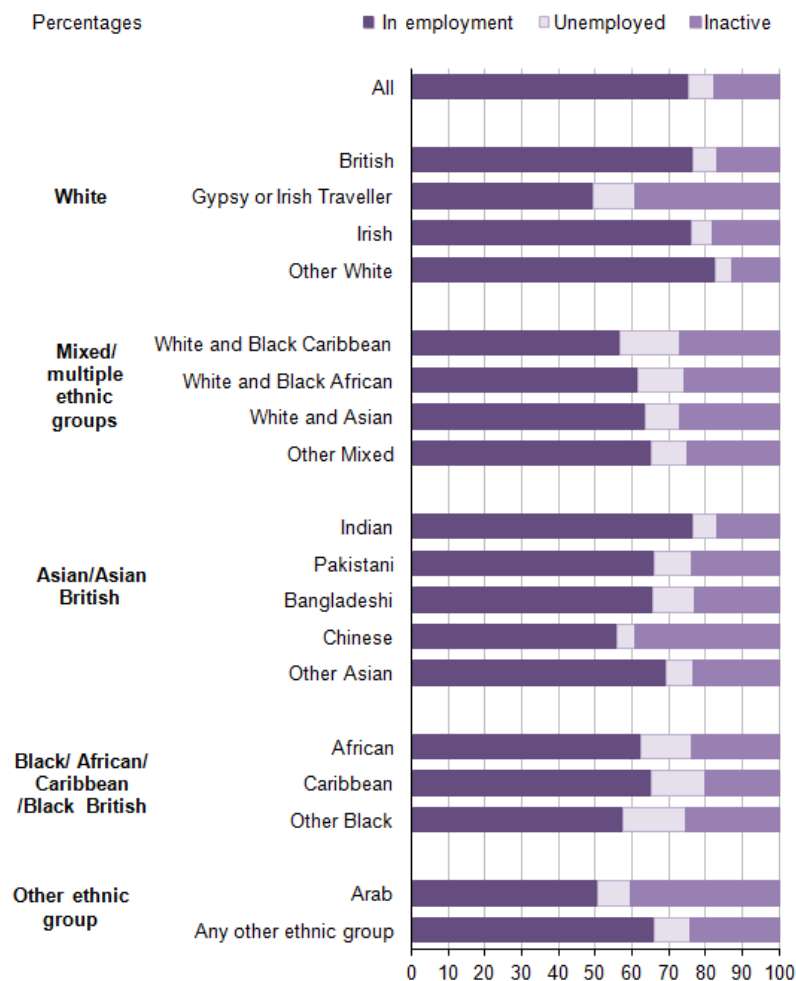


# Employment, unemployment and inactivity by sex and ethnic group: England and Wales

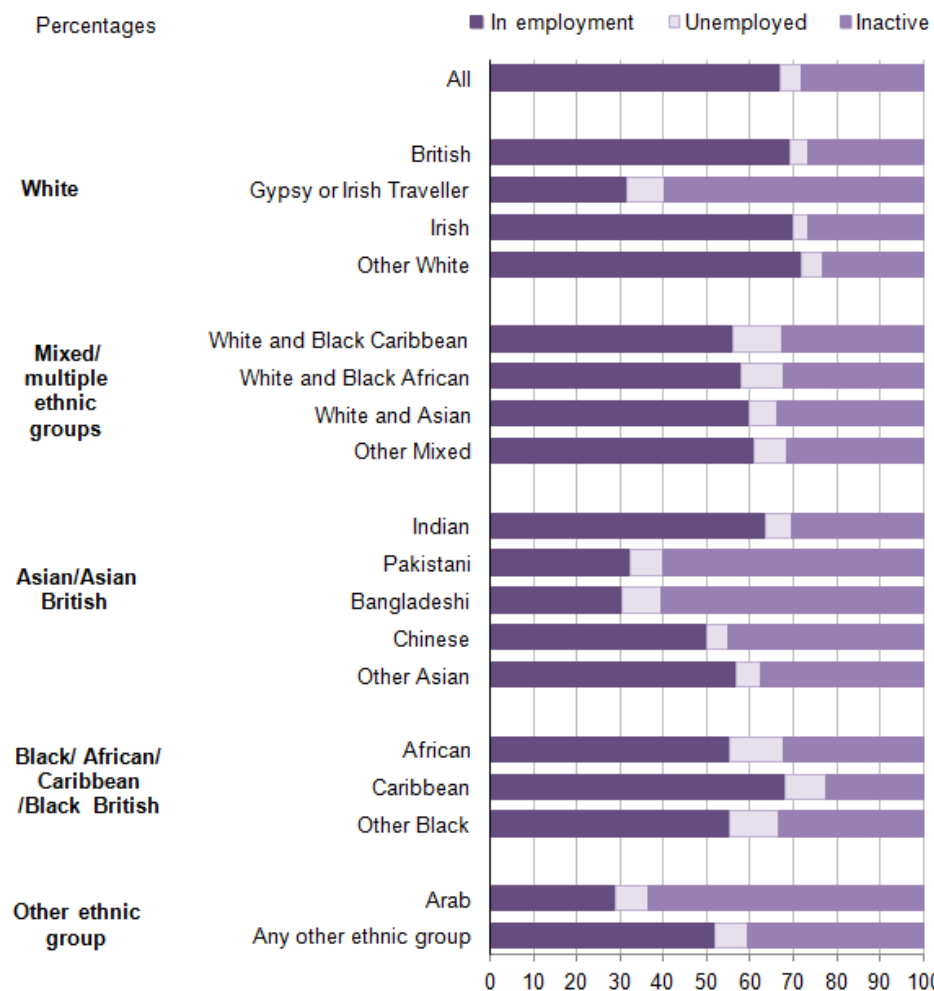


Men, 16-64

Women, 16-64

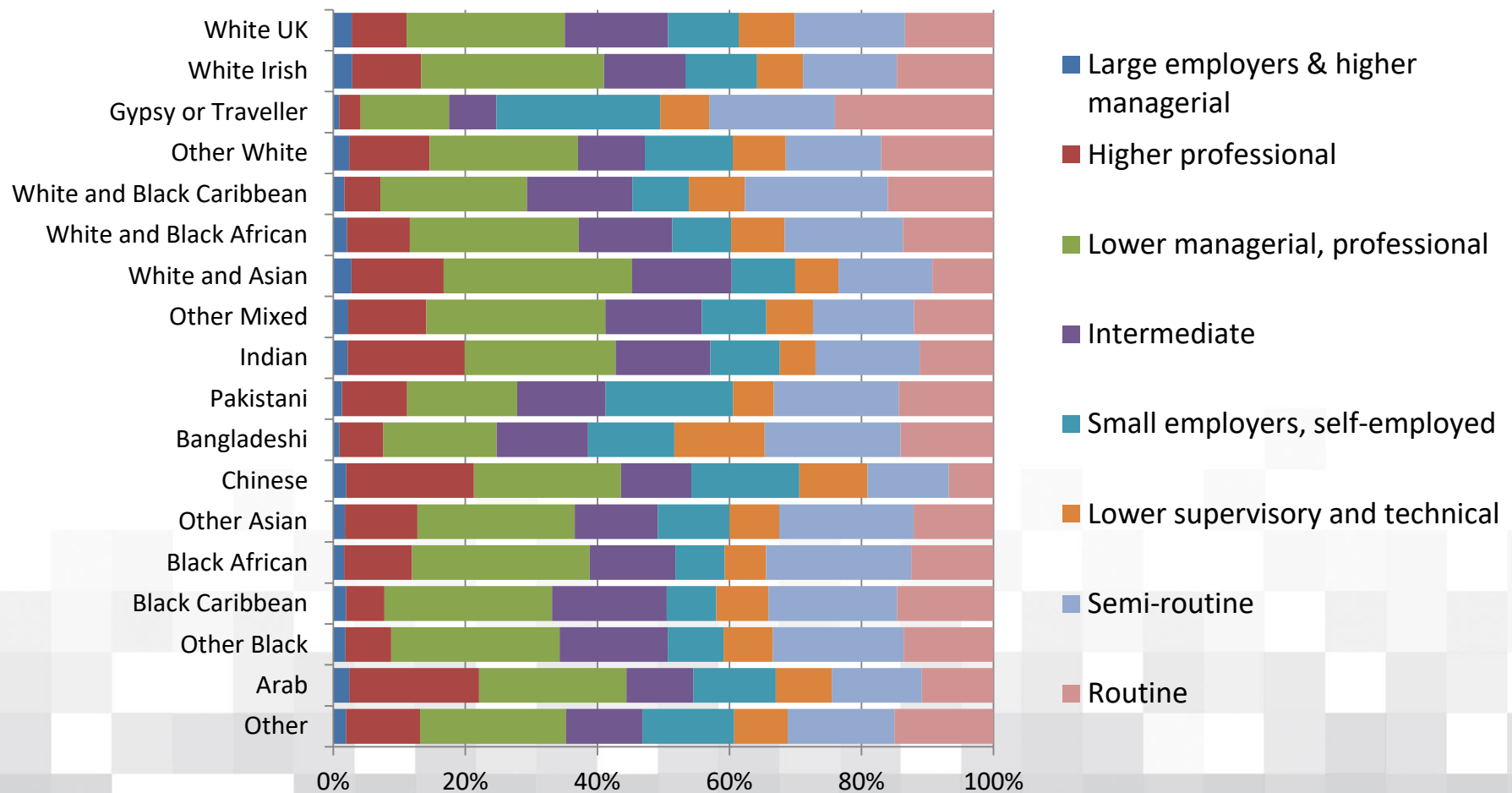


Percentages

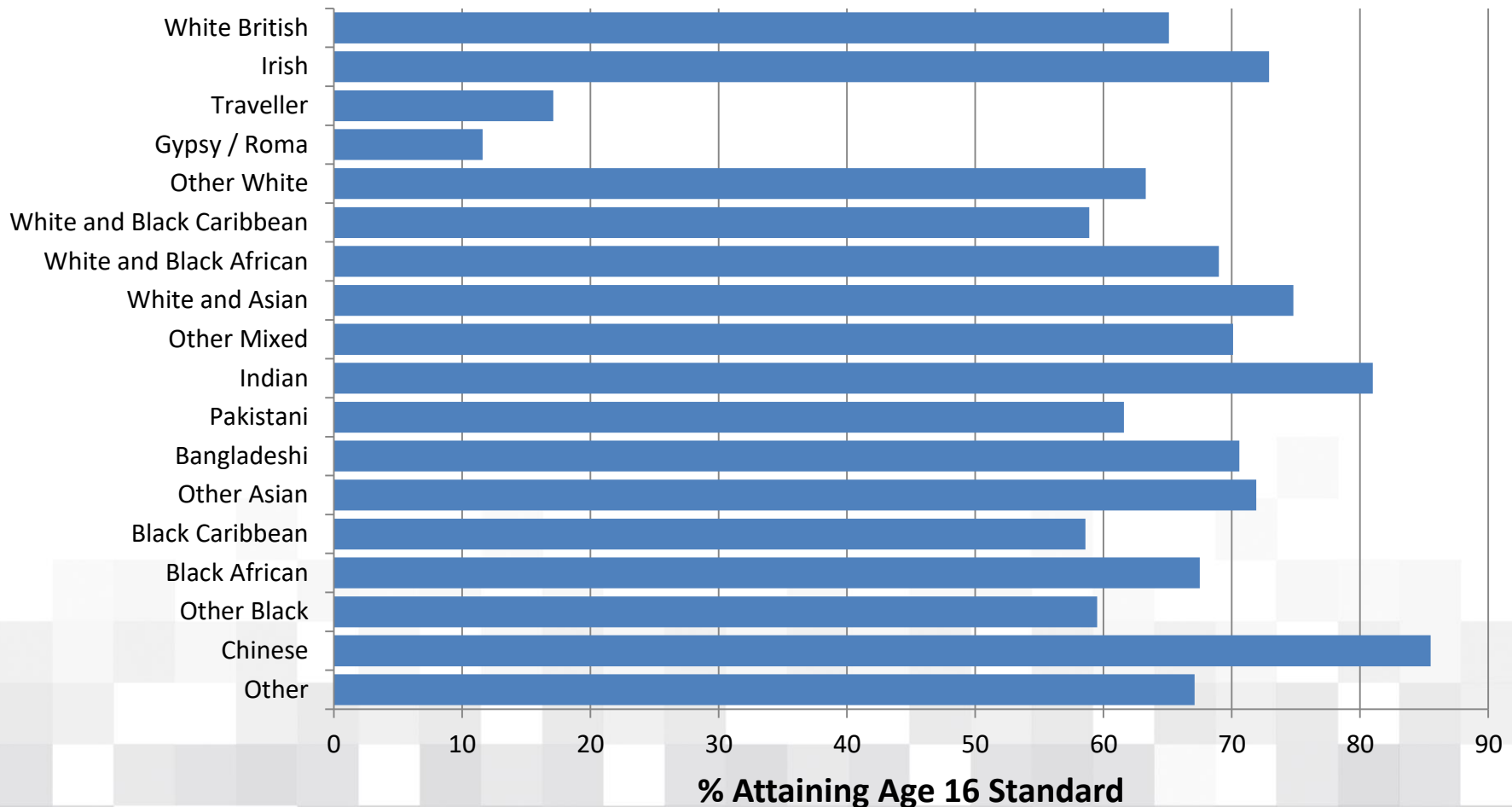


Source: Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

# Occupational group by ethnic group, England and Wales 2011



# Recommended educational level at age 16, by ethnic group, 2015



Source: England Department for Education, SFR06/2015

# Different outcomes across ethnic / immigrant origin groups...



Has tended to encourage reversion to 'cultural' accounts

But can often only explain why some groups 'succeed' and less so why others don't

(Comparison might be with earlier 'cultural' accounts of working class educational experience / outcomes)

Tends to be embedded in the immigrant rather than the ethnicity paradigm

# Two paradigms for understanding minority outcomes

## Immigrant paradigm

## Ethnicity paradigm

Individual focus; typically locating disadvantage in individual characteristics linked to immigration; immigration status seen as heritable; often deficit model; emphasis on integration as cultural

Focus on discrimination and structural inequalities; immigrant generation not always considered; inequalities form 'penalties'; focus on gaps and employment and occupational contexts

Class (mobility) implicit in both these approaches but rarely incorporated explicitly

# But...



Sociological class accounts can also offer 'universalist' explanations that nevertheless have different consequences depending on where you are placed (and what your reference category is)

Don't need to revert to individualised / group-specific explanations

We can learn from these in thinking about why common processes nevertheless might result in different outcomes across ethnic / immigration origin groups

# Processes



Desire for 'betterment'

High aspirations

Resources / position in earlier periods generations

Limited translatability of qualifications and assets across national boundaries

Reference to relevant comparators

Importance of actual and perceived context

Relevance of local circumstances, economic context and change

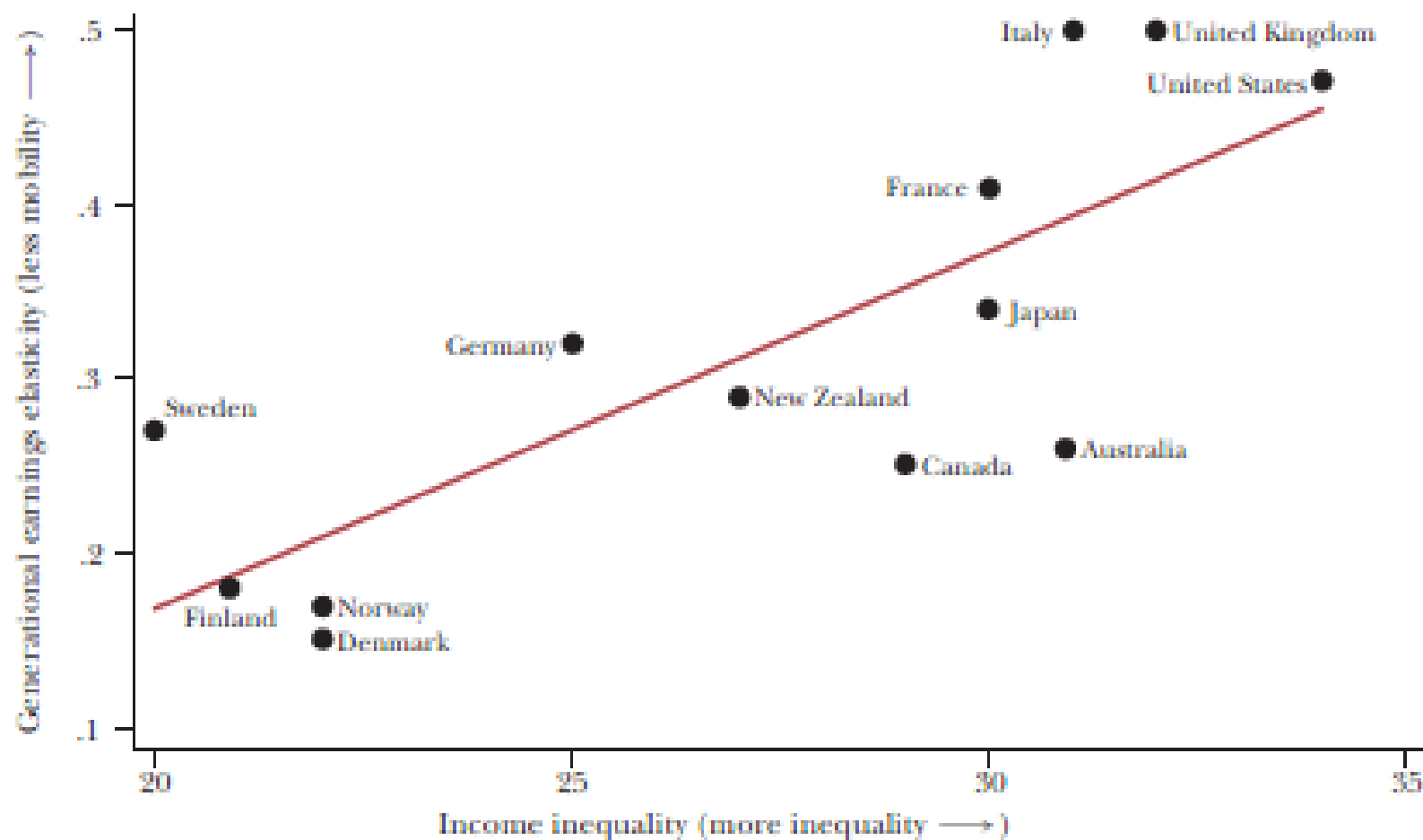
And relationship between inequality and mobility in country of residence (e.g. Great Gatsby curve)

Constants but inflected by the specifics

# 'Great Gatsby' Curve: immobility and inequality



Source: Miles Corak (2013). 'Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility'  
**The Great Gatsby Curve: More Inequality is Associated with Less Mobility across the Generations**





# Specifics – for immigrants



## Differences in

- (origin country) starting points
- Extent of (downward) mobility on migration
- push factors for migration
- routes to migration
- reception in country of destination
- economic and labour market context at time of migration

# Specifics – for second generation



## Differences in

- Parents' class & resources
- Extent of prior resources / social position
- Match between (parental) aspirations and labour market realities
- Extent of (differential) discriminatory context
- Economic and labour market context at time of labour market entry

# Key points



To understand the position of ethnic minorities and immigrant origin groups, need to pay attention to:

- a) Family origins: family socio-economic background, and how it is transmitted
- b) Migration history / origins: context at origin, timing of migration, context at destination, group as well as individual-level resources, reference groups

This will not only illuminate the past, but also help be indicative for the future

# Framework and illustration

How should we think about the outcomes of ethnic minority groups in a social mobility framework?



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# Economic outcomes and social mobility



Economic outcomes of ethnic groups can be 'good' or 'bad' (and relative to different comparison groups)

Social mobility is lack of association between parent's and child's socio-economic position

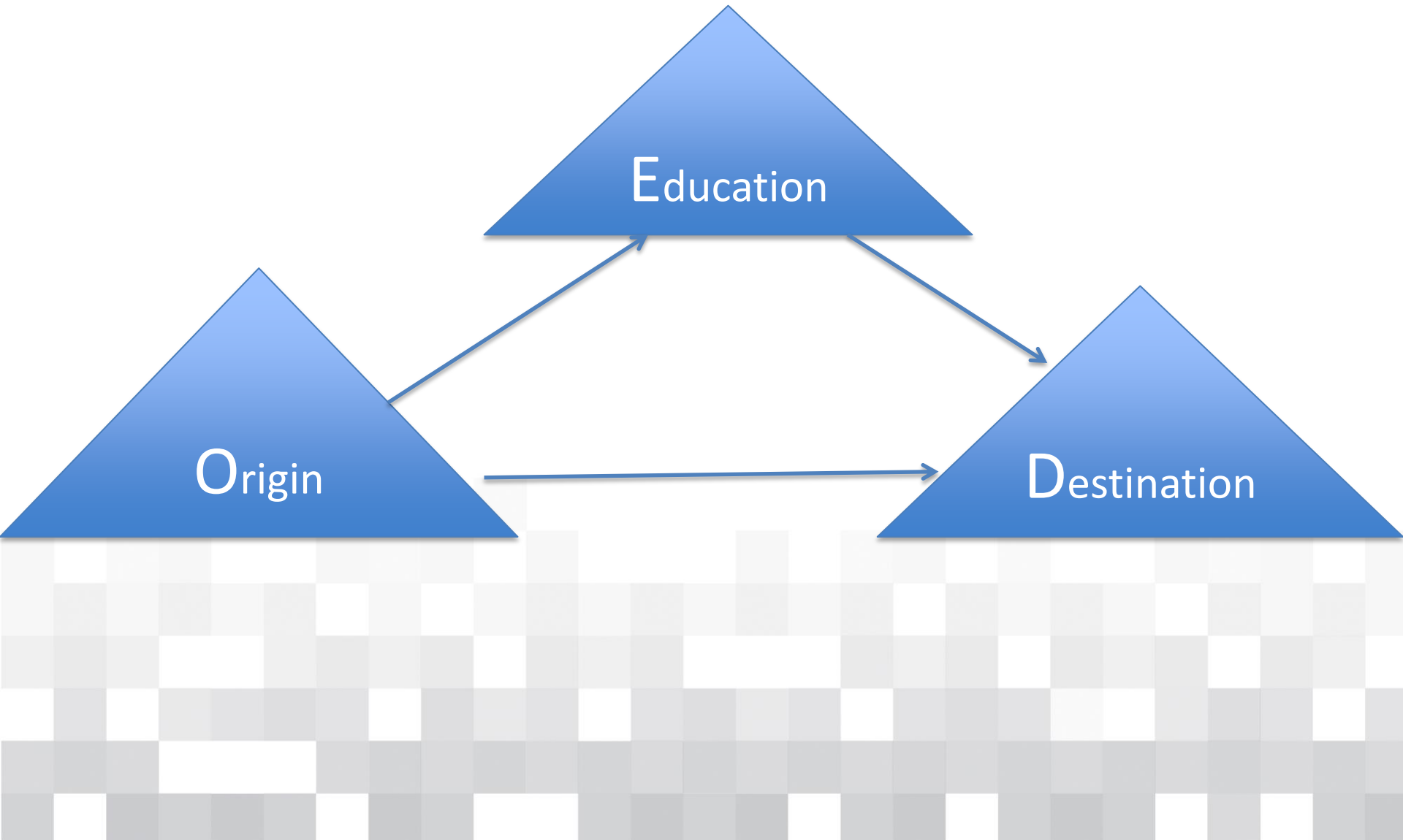
More mobility for a given group can mean more upward mobility, more downward mobility or both

Note that (more) social mobility

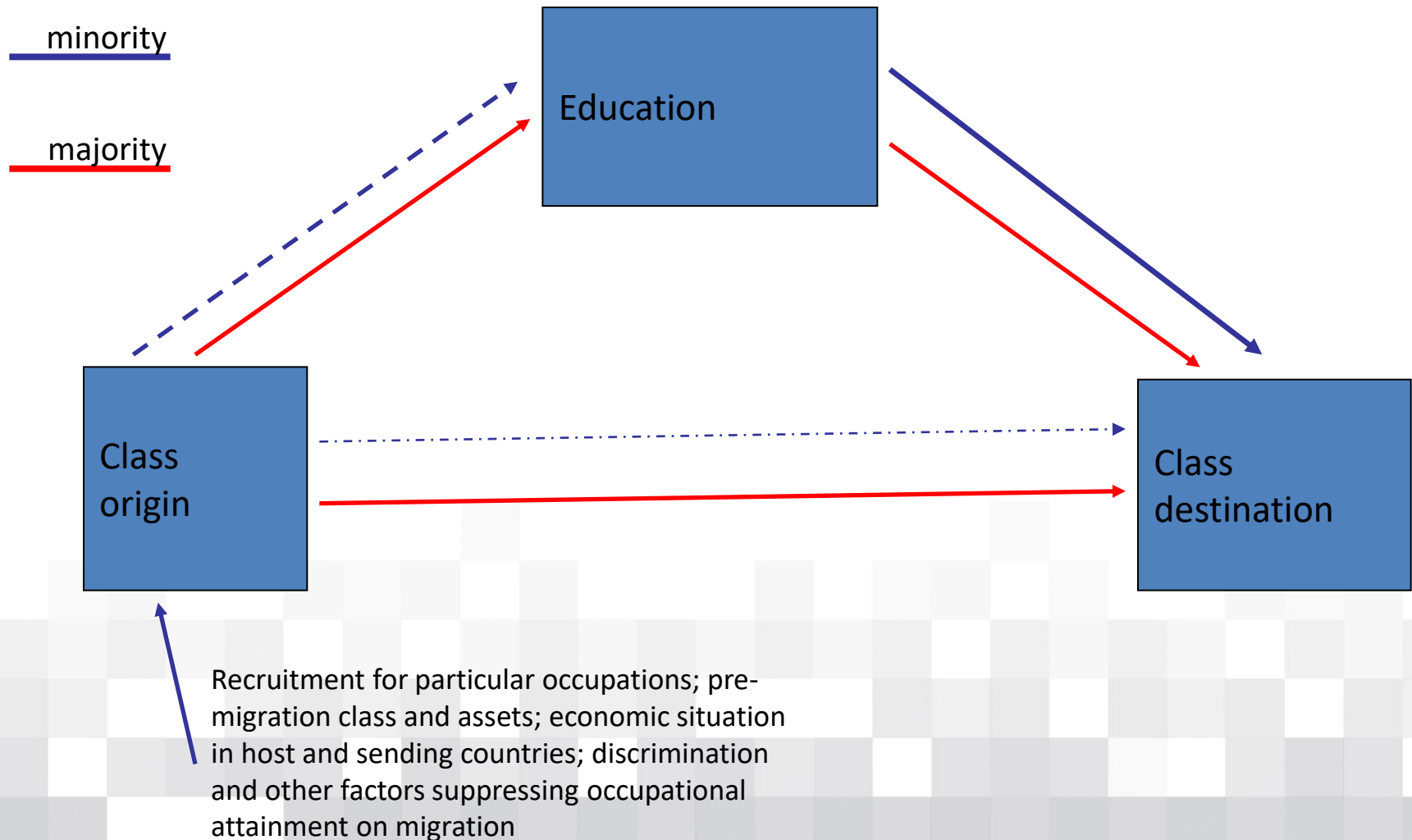
- is 'good' for migrants / minorities if they are / start off in a low position;
- is not so 'good' if it means gains cannot be retained over generations

Note also the importance of the difference between absolute and relative mobility

# The OED model



# Models of majority and minority social mobility



# Ethnicity and social mobility: expectations



We can consider:

Immigrants compared to those in origin country

Second generation compared to their immigrant parents

Second generation compared to those in country of destination

And how these intersect with

- For immigrants, whether they come from relatively advantaged or relatively disadvantaged origins
- For second generation, whether their (immigrant) parents were advantaged or disadvantaged
- For second generation, whether immigrant parental disadvantage in destination country itself represents downward mobility or a 'good fit' or even upward mobility



Outcomes will also be

- contingent on context of labour market entry (opportunities and constraints), and
- whether advantage or disadvantage / success or not is typical or atypical for group.

Then common mobility processes across groups for these combinations of factors will result in different outcomes for different groups – and differences in perceived ‘success’.

# Expected patterns for first (immigrant) generation



Relative to	Absolute upward mobility	Absolute downward mobility	Social mobility / social reproduction
Parents	More from less advantaged origins, more from labour than family migrants	More for more advantaged origins (except elites) and for forced migrants	High levels of social mobility overall
Those in country of origin	More for those from disadvantaged origins; more where disadvantage is the norm	More through discrimination; more where non-labour (less selected); more where origin country advantage norm / increasing	Greater social mobility among migrants than non-migrants
Those in destination country	More where start with advantage, less where typically less advantaged in origin	More where economic context has changed, more due to discrimination	More social mobility among immigrants than destination country populations

# Expected patterns for second generation



Relative to	Absolute upward mobility	Absolute downward mobility	Social mobility / social reproduction
Parents	Generally greater; more if parents faced downward mobility on migration.	More unemployment risks, but less in class terms; more where labour market context changed; more from advantaged origins where less typical; less from advantaged origins if more typical	High levels of social mobility overall
Those in destination country	More (through education), but less than education predicts, more if advantaged parents or parents faced downward mobility, less where group less advantaged	More where economic context has changed, more due to discrimination, more than education would predict, more from advantaged origins where less typical (less where more typical)	More social mobility among second generation minorities than majority populations

# Examples



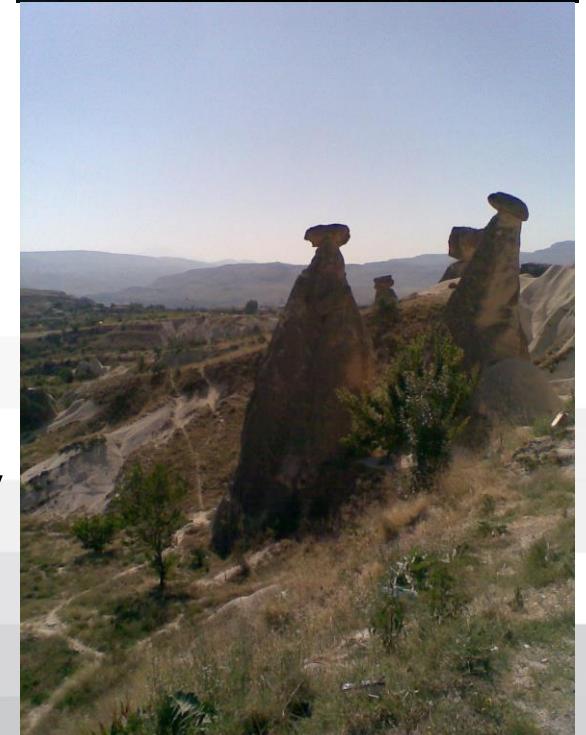
1. Comparison of different groups with majority population in one destination country: UK

Data: ONS Longitudinal Study:  
England and Wales (ONS LS)

(see Zuccotti 2015)

2. Comparison of group in multiple destinations from one origin country (Turkey) with non-migrant population in origin country

Data: 2000 Families study: Migration  
Histories of Turks in Europe: Turkey  
and multiple European destinations  
(2000 Families)



# More on data



## ONS LS:

- Large sample sizes (1%, so around 500,000 at any given census, around 300,000 over any two censuses)
- Long time period since 1971
- Genuinely longitudinal – not dependent on retrospective recall; parental 'origins' measured in UK
- Information on co-resident family members
- Research design: 1971/81/91 (origins)-2001/2011(destinations)

## 2000 Families

- Largescale study – 2000 families with information on around 20,000 adult family members across three family generations
- Comparison group – can genuinely test impacts of migration
- Multiple generations – can look beyond parent to child pairs
- Detailed migration histories and other measures
- Multiple destination countries, not just one 'context'
- Research design: comparison of those who migrated from each of three family generations with non-migrants in Turkey

# Findings



1. Turks in Europe and Turkey from ancestors who were young adults during peak labour migration period (1960-74)
2. England and Wales: 2<sup>nd</sup> generation from key groups with different histories and resources
  - A. Caribbeans
  - B. Indians
  - C. Pakistanis
  - D. *Bangladeshis*
  - E. *Black Africans*
  - F. *Chinese*

# Findings 1: Migrant Turks in Europe and Turkey



Labour migrants absolute upward mobility on migration  
i.e. fare well by comparison with non-migrants

Greater social mobility than non-migrants (in both  
directions, i.e. also unable to translate advantage/  
resources/ education into advantage on migration)

Labour migrants were already more mobile (couldn't  
capitalise on resources) *prior* to migration

Differences by type of migration – less upward mobility  
– and social mobility for family migrants.

Migration routes and selectivity changing for current  
generations

# Findings 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Caribbeans in the UK



Absolute upward mobility (from parents) - no different to majority population, and in line with education

Face substantial downward mobility – into unemployment

- Advantaged origins and education are not protective

Labour market constraints both in terms of changing occupational distribution, but also in terms of economic cycles

Align with a stratified labour market but with additional obstacles



# Findings 3: 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indians in the UK



Substantial absolute upward mobility from disadvantaged origins

Substantially better occupational outcomes than majority group comparators – though not as much as education would suggest.

Education provides some protection against unemployment

Where first generation advantage, it is maintained as much as or more than with the majority population

Hence success – and alignment with majority group class structure, but with constraints

# Findings 4: 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistanis in the UK



Achieving in line with majority population but from much more disadvantaged first generation origins,  
Hence, considerable mobility from first to second generation

Achieving this through education, though not as much as education would predict.

Education and class background don't protect against greater risks of unemployment (downward mobility)

Overall, much more mobility than among the majority population

# Summary



Relative to:	Upward mobility	Downward mobility	Social mobility / social reproduction
Country of origin	Upward mobility from origins	Some indications of suppression of origin class for some groups	More social mobility among migrants than non-migrants
1 <sup>st</sup> Immigrant generation	Substantial upward mobility from disadvantaged origins	Advantaged origins don't necessarily protect	More advantaged groups show more social reproduction
Destination country	More upward mobility among most groups	More downward mobility, particularly into unemployment among some groups	More social mobility among migrants
Role of education	Key to upward mobility	Not sufficient to avoid downward mobility	Education route to more mobility <i>and</i> reproduction

# Conclusions and reflections



Migrant and minority groups in western societies have very divergent outcomes, though often disadvantaged relative to majority populations.

However, if we taken into account origins we find that many groups are achieving substantial upward mobility from disadvantaged origins, largely through education

At the same time, constraints such as discrimination and timing (reason for) migration or of labour market entry and how that relates to labour market restrict options, particularly for those groups with fewer family origin or group-level resources

# Conclusions and reflections (2)



A lot analysis has tried to understand the situation and outcomes of specific groups.

This has dramatically enhanced our understanding of ethnic penalties, ethnic successes, the role of neighbourhood etc.

However, it has also been criticised that it may not be so relevant to the shifting profile of current migration; and, in some cases, that it prioritises cultural accounts or feeds into more individualised accounts that locate inequalities 'in' the migrant / minority

'Positive' stories can also risk feeding into discourses of 'good' and 'bad' immigrants, that also locate the sources of disadvantage in group-level characteristics

# Conclusions and reflections (3)



Sociological analysis can bring understanding of wider structural processes of class mobility and structural inequalities and their maintenance to understand how some groups are faring better than others, and to demonstrate the implications for increasing diversity *within* as well as *between* groups

It has the potential to offer an analysis that while sensitive to, does not limit itself to the specifics of particular groups

# Conclusions and reflections (4)



Instead, it can demonstrate how

- common processes can lead to different outcomes, and
- the long-run consequences of advantage or disadvantage

to provide an account that can explain past particularities as well as potential future consequences of wider structural inequalities

# Conclusions and reflections (5)



In addition, analysis of social mobility across ethnic groups can

- A) help to illuminate the black box of social reproduction (under what circumstances does it apply / not apply)
- B) highlight the limits of social mobility as an end in itself.
  - Relative position is a function of multiple dimensions of inequality
  - absolute outcomes remain of interest



In sum,



Sociology has been remarkably successful in highlighting the 'unfairness' of lack of social mobility

“The true test of fairness is the distribution of opportunities. That is why improving social mobility is the principle goal of the coalition Government’s social policy. “

Nick Clegg, Strategy for Social Mobility 2010.

Challenge now is

- A) To integrate this with understanding of other aspects of inequality / opportunity
- B) To develop better recognition of its limits!

# Thank you for your attention!

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