

First in Family as an indicator of Widening Participation

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Agenda and introductions

Nuffield Foundation Welcome: Cheryl Lloyd (5 mins)

Presentation of results: Dr Nikki Shure & Dr Anna Adamecz-Völgyi (20 mins)

Clarification questions (5 mins)

Discussants

- Sam Friedman, Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics (10 mins)
- Penny Longman, Senior Careers Consultant, UCL Careers (10 mins)
- Laura Kwiatkowski, Development Officer, Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (10 mins)
- Vanessa Da Silva Baptista & Gemma Swan, First in family students (10 mins)

Questions and comments (15 mins)

Nuffield Foundation Welcome



Project overview

- Nuffield Foundation funded project since October 2018 aims to answer these questions using empirical population level evidence:
- Do FiF young people have different experiences at university?
- Is the FIF measure useful for actually widening university participation?
- Are non-cognitive skills different by FiF status?
- Are there differences by FiF status on the graduate labour market in terms of working hours and labour market returns compared to peers whose parents had graduated?
- Has the proportion of potential first in family students changed among more recent cohorts?

Why does it matter?

- HE plays a fundamental role in improving later labour market and life outcomes and social mobility
- University graduates on average earn more money, spend less time in unemployment, and even live longer than their non-university educated peers (Oreopoulos and Petronijevic, 2013)
- More and more people are obtaining a degree despite these increases, we haven't seen much movement in terms of social mobility
- Widening participation agenda is trying to address these inequalities

Widening Participation

- WP initiative focuses on increasing access and participation to HE from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups:
 - low income families
 - Free School Meals (FSM)
 - lower socio-economic background
 - first in family students
 - young carers and those who have been in care
 - those with disabilities or special education needs (SEN),
 - and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, all of whom traditionally had limited participation in HE in the UK (although this is changing)
 - Neighbourhood level and school level characteristics

Defining First in Family (FiF)





- ‘First in Family’ (FiF) students: those individuals who attend university (and obtain a degree), but whose [step] mother and [step] father did not
- Cannot observe siblings because of data limitations
- First generation to attend university (excl. grandparents)
- ‘Potential FiF’ are students who could be the first in family because neither of their parents have a degree (84% of the population of those born in 1989... the number is decreasing)

Data

Next Steps (formerly the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, LSYPE)

- Panel study of individuals born in 1989/90
- Latest sweep at age 25, N = 7,707 (eight waves of data)
- Linked to admin data (National Pupil Database, NPD): test results from age **11**, 14, **16** (and 17-18)
- Rich information on family background, non-cognitive traits, etc.
- Attrition, non-response (weights)
- Stratified sample: schools, individuals
 - SE's clustered by schools; controlling for peer's school average test scores
- We also make use of the Millennium Cohort Study and the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England 2 to look at more recent generations

Do FiF young people have different experiences at university ?

	Parent(s) has degree	No parent with degree
Young person obtains degree	Matched parents' education (higher education) 8.5% 	FiF (upward educational mobility) 18.3% 
Young person does not obtain degree	Downward educational mobility 7.9% 	Matched parents' education (no university) 65.3% 

Source: Weighted Next Steps, N = 7,664. Individual degree measured at age 25.

Do FiF young people have different experiences at university?

- FiF comprise more than two-thirds of graduates (68%).
- FiF group: ethnic minorities and parents with lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- FiF students are
 - 5 percentage points more likely to study LEM and 5 percentage points less likely to study OSSAH than non-FiF students
 - 3 percentage points less likely to study at a Russell Group university than non-FiF students
 - 4 percentage points more likely to drop out than non-FiF students

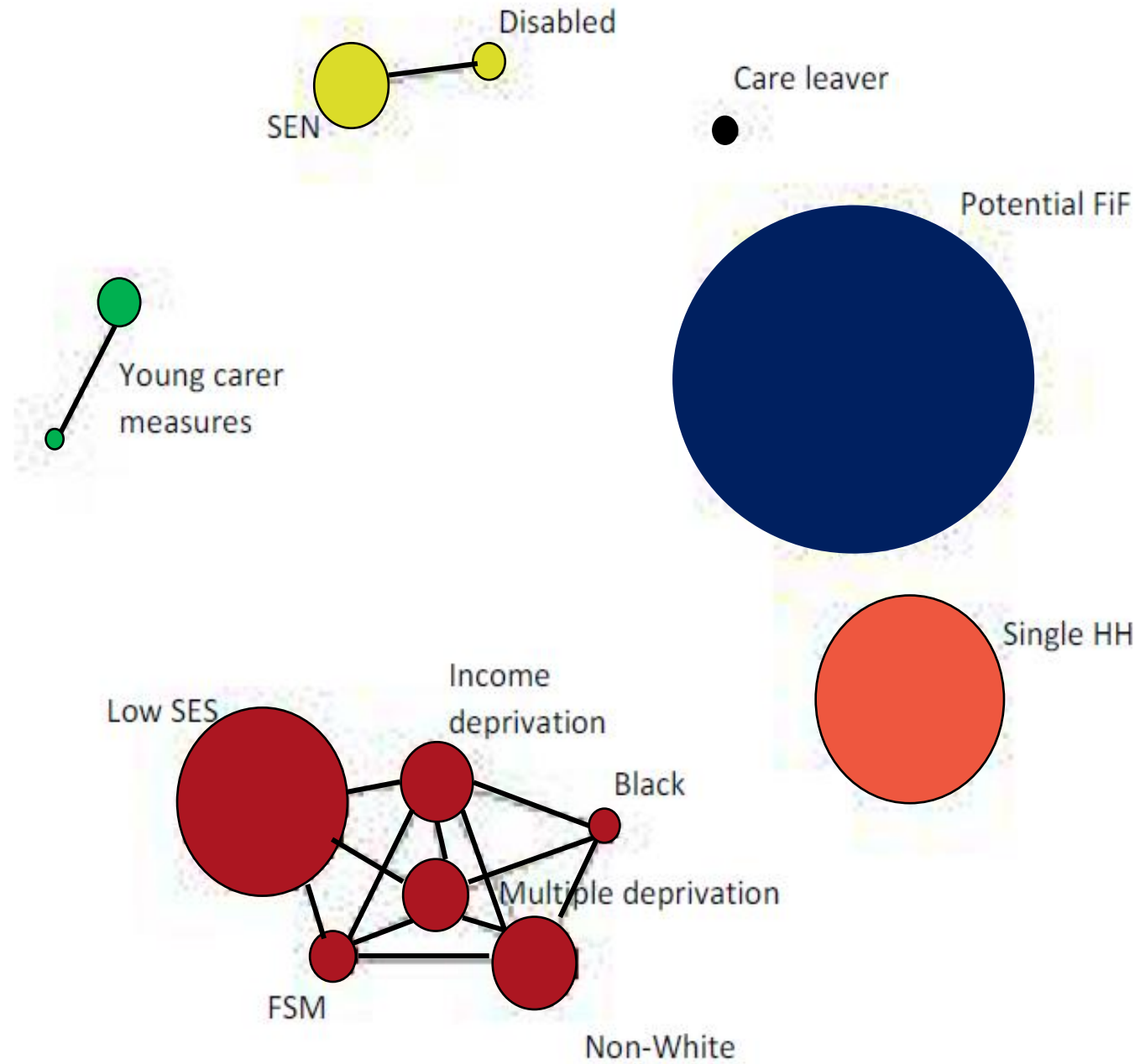
Does FiF actually widen participation?

The prevalence of socioeconomic disadvantage

Disadvantage (age of measurement)	No. of observations with non-missing data on the disadvantage	Proportion of young people with non-missing data facing the disadvantage	Proportion of these who face at least one more disadvantage
Potential FiF (by age 17)	5,020	75.8%	81.6%
Single household (by age 17/18)	5,047	41.5%	92.4%
FSM (age 13/14-17/18)	4,270	10.0%	99.8%
Low NS-SEC (age 13/14-17/18)	4,971	40.2%	94.9%
Young carer (age 13/14-15/16)	4,931	9.6%	96.7%
Young carer, >5 hours (age 15/16)	4,504	1.6%	100.0%
Black	5,047	5.5%	100.0%
Non-White	5,047	19.0%	96.2%
SEN (age 13/14-16/17))	5,023	16.4%	91.7%
Disabled (age 13/14-16/17)	5,025	5.7%	96.2%
Care leaver (age 13/14-17/18)	4,535	5.2%	98.8%
Multiple deprivation (age 14/15-15/16)	4,666	14.6%	99.9%
Income deprivation (age 14/15-15/16)	4,666	13.8%	100.0%

Notes: Weighted using Wave 8 final weights. N= 5,047. Source: University College London, UCL Institute of Education, Centre for Longitudinal Studies. (2018). Next Steps: Sweeps 1-8, 2004-2016: Secure Access. DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-7104-4

The relationship of WP indicators



Does FiF actually widen participation?

- First in family captures additional disadvantage over and above other measures
- Parental education is an important barrier to university participation and graduation, even after controlling for other sources of disadvantage
- This seems to work through the channel of early educational attainment
- Our research provides evidence that the first in family indicator could be key in efforts to widen participation at universities through the use of contextualised admissions

Intergenerational educational mobility: the role of non-cognitive skills

Non-cognitive skills

- Non-cognitive skills have been shown to be related to educational, labour market and other life outcomes
 - External locus of control: one believes that external circumstances, like luck or faith, are responsible for the outcomes of their life, and not they themselves
 - Academic self-concept: a student's general perception of their ability in school
 - Work ethic: closely related to conscientiousness, the first of the Big Five personality inventory, which has been shown to positively influence many educational and other outcomes
 - Self-esteem: captures one's perceptions on their own value

FiF graduates have the highest non-cognitive skills

- First, we compare these non-cognitive skills across the four groups that we mentioned before
- Interestingly, FiF graduates have the lowest external locus of controls, the highest work ethic and the highest academic self-concept
- Even compared to graduate children of graduate parents
 - In raw terms, graduate children of graduate parents have the highest non-cognitive skills
 - Once we control for family background and test scores, the FiF do best over three domains

The role of non-cognitive skills in educational mobility

- Why would one potential FiF young person go to university while another would not?
- Non-cognitive skills matter even on the top of other measures of family background and test scores at age 11/16 (especially work ethic and academic self-concept)
- These results indicate that having higher non-cognitive skills helps potential first in family university students to compensate their relative disadvantage
- Non-cognitive skills are malleable, so interventions targeting the development of these skills could be successful to WP

The labour market returns for FiF graduates by gender

Do FiF graduates earn more or less than non-FiF graduates?

- We use Mincer-type wage equations to compare the wages of FiF and non-FiF graduates at age 25
- We find that among women, FiF graduates earn about 7% less on average than graduate women whose parents have a higher education degree
 - This gap is explained by pre-uni educational attainment, elite university participation, degree in Education, having children, working in a job that does not require a degree, working at smaller firms
- For men, we find no such difference
 - Puzzle: FiF men compensate their relative disadvantage

Do FiF graduates earn more or less than non-FiF graduates?

- Widening Participation measures should not stop at university entry, maybe not even at graduation: FiF graduates might need continuous support in terms of how to lead their careers

University aspirations of potential first in family students across two generations born in 1989 vs in 1998

How the share and university aspirations of 16-year olds changed?

- The share of potential FiF students decreased from 79% to 69% in a decade in England (from 1989-1998)
- While the university aspirations of children of graduate parents did not change, the aspirations of potential FiF students increased
- Similarly, parental university aspirations for their children increased in the potential FiF group only
 - Thus, the increased rates of university participation on average are due to an increase in intergenerational educational mobility aspirations
- Women are more mobile: both own and parental aspirations are higher and increased more for girls/daughters than for boys/sons

Summary

Summary

- Do FiF young people have different experiences at university? **Yes**
- Is the FIF measure useful for actually widening university participation? **Yes**
- Are non-cognitive skills different by FiF status? **Yes**
- Are there differences by FiF status on the graduate labour market in terms of working hours and labour market returns compared to peers whose parents had graduated? **Yes**
- Has the proportion of potential first in family students has changed among more recent cohorts? **Yes**

Thank you, questions

Thanks to our funders and host institution



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Recommendations

- More support for FiF at university (mentoring, societies etc) needed
- A continued commitment for universities to use Contextual Admissions
- We recommend that University College Admissions Service (UCAS) increase its efforts to improve measurement and validity of the first in family measure
- Early intervention among the *potential* FiF group is important, where there should be more coordination and resource to raise attainment [and non-cognitive skills] as well as awareness of their opportunities
- Graduate employers should support the Widening Participation agenda beyond higher education, including data collection