

## **School experiences and educational attainment for children in rural compared with urban areas. (REF. BCPHD: DEX)**

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(Birkbeck College, Rural Evidence Research Centre)

### **Aims**

This study aims to analyse the Millennium Cohort Study data on young children to address the following **research questions**:

- How do children's experiences of education and schooling differ in the various rural and urban areas?
- How do children's cognitive scores at ages 3, 5 and 7 differ in the various rural and urban areas, after controlling for a range of other known predictors.
- If differences are found in children's development across rural and urban locations, can these be related to specific elements characteristics of the rural, urban or type of school arrangements in which they are located?
- Is the extent of social mix in rural areas an important predictor of educational outcomes; for example, is social heterogeneity and the associated social networks beneficial to low income groups in rural areas?
- Does children's development show signs of differing when their families have moved between rural and urban areas?

### **Data and Methods.**

This study will carry out quantitative secondary analyses of existing and future sweeps of the UK Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). MCS is a large-scale survey of 18819 of the new century's babies, and the 18553 families who are bringing them up. By the start of this studentship interviews and cognitive and behavioural assessments of the children will be available for analysis from ages 9 months, 3, 5 and shortly age 7. The data also contain urban-rural classifications of the ward-based geography in each of the 4 UK countries to be made. As well as details about MCS parents and families, MCS also contains rich histories of children's experiences of pre-school and primary school, some details about the schools attended and more neighbourhood statistics about the area families live in can be merged with the MCS.

Descriptive analyses will be undertaken first and then multivariate models will be constructed to estimate and explain children's development scores at different ages using the rich set of potential explanatory factors. It will be appropriate to use multi level statistical models to analyse the hierarchical nature of the data.

### **References**

1. House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (2003) *The Delivery of Education in Rural Areas*, Ninth Report of Session 2002-03, HC 467, London: The Stationery Office.
2. Rural Evidence Research Centre (2004) *Social and Economic Change and Diversity in rural England*, London: Birkbeck College.  
[http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/rwpreview/rwp\\_review\\_birkbeck1](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/rwpreview/rwp_review_birkbeck1)
3. Halliday J (1997) Children's Services and Care: a Rural View *Geoforum* vol 28,103-119

## **Applicants.**

You should have at least first degree (2.1) in a social science subject and the equivalent of a Master's degree in Research Methods. From your degrees, you must have a good grounding in quantitative methods of social research. You will be offered training on more advanced quantitative research methods and analyses and software packages as part of this studentship. This is an interdisciplinary topic which means a range of educational backgrounds will be suitable starting points for this project which draws mainly on interests in education, geography, child development, psychology, social statistics, economics and sociology. An interest in carrying out interdisciplinary research is also required.

As part of your application:

(1) Fill in an Application Form

Application Forms for the Institute of Education PhD/MPhil programme can be obtained from: [doc.enquiries@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:doc.enquiries@ioe.ac.uk). You need to indicate on the Form that you are interested in this Studentship, **BCPhD: DEX**

(2) also send a *short* statement of no more than 500 words:

- why you are interested in this project;
- your current knowledge of the areas it covers;
- your level of knowledge and practical experience of quantitative analysis skills and associated software packages.

(3) Send a sample piece of your academic writing which may be from your previous degree studies or an academic publication for which you were responsible.

Suitable candidates will be invited for interview in March 2008.