LSE Works: Spatial Economics Research Centre public lecture

Neighbours, Peers and Educational Achievement

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Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSEworks
Neighbours, peers and children’s education: Quantitative evidence from the Spatial Economics Research Centre

Steve Gibbons

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Outline of this talk

- Is there a ‘transformative’ role for neighbours and peers – do they really matter for children’s education outcomes?
- Overview of recent quantitative empirical work on England from SERC researchers

1. ‘Neighbourhood effects’: Who your neighbours are
2. ‘Peer effects’: The ability of your child’s school-mates
3. ‘Mobility’: How fast neighbours and peers come and go
4. Comparisons with other interventions
5. Conclusions and policy implications
‘Neighbourhood effects’: Who your neighbours are
Does it matter which neighbourhood?
Older evidence

- Association between neighbourhood quals. (1970s) and child’s adult attainment (1990s), Gibbons (2002)
Adjust for family background

- Smaller effects: ‘Sorting’ matters - higher educated families choose higher educated neighbourhoods
Social tenants in the 1970s

- Arguably, social tenants had less choice over housing location: less ‘sorting’
Parent’s education versus neighbours

- Parent’s education matters way more than neighbours’ education in 1970s
More recent evidence on neighbours

- Ideally we need an experiment
  - e.g. Moving to Opportunity Programme in US, which finds no systematic impacts on substantive outcomes
- No explicit experiments in Britain
- Alternative research designs using ‘random’ sources of variation in neighbourhood quality
- Big administrative data on England— the National Pupil Database
Timing of National Curriculum tests

KS1, age 6-7
KS1 test
Primary school

KS2, age 8-11
KS2 test

KS3, age 12-14
KS3 test
Secondary school

KS4, 15-16
GCSEs

Neighbours change between KS2 and KS3
Effects of changing neighbours on stayers

Neighbourhood at ks2
Effects of changing neighbours on stayers

Neighbourhood at ks2
Effect of neighbour changes on own ks3

- Neighbours change from average to top 10% ks1
- Neighbours change from 25% to zero FSM
- Neighbours change from 20% to zero SEN
- Neighbours change from 50% to 70% boys

ks3, unadjusted | ks3-ks2 value-added | Same school | Same school and neighb

- ks3: 8.79
- ks3-ks2 value-added: 0.05
- Same school: 0.00
- Same school and neighb: 0.02
Does moving into social housing matter?

- Compare KS3 for movers into social housing, with movers into non-social housing, before and after Key Stage 3 tests

KS1, age 6-7 → KS2, age 8-11 → KS3, age 12-14 → KS4, 15-16

Primary school

Secondary school

KS1 test

KS2 test

KS3 test

GCSEs

Pupils move to social/ non-social housing between ks2 and ks3

Pupils move to social/ non-social housing after ks3
**Evidence from movers into social housing**

- Effects of moving to social housing neighbourhoods and non-social housing neighbourhoods on KS3 scores (in percentiles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social n’hood</th>
<th>Non-social n’hood</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>‘Dif-in-dif’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move before ks3</td>
<td>34.20</td>
<td>45.71</td>
<td>-12.51</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move after ks3</td>
<td>33.07</td>
<td>45.42</td>
<td>-12.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Peer effects’: The ability of your child’s school mates
New peer groups at secondary school

Pupils move from primary to secondary school – change of peer group

KS1, age 6-7
KS2, age 8-11
KS3, age 12-14
KS4, 15-16

Primary school
Secondary school

KS1 test
KS2 test
KS3 test
GCSEs
Effect of peer group ks2 on own ks3

Secondary school peers: average compared to top 10%

Secondary school peer group: fewer poor performing peers
‘Mobility’: How fast neighbours and peers come and go
People move, neighbourhood stays the same

Neighbourhood at KS2
Effect of neighbour mobility, ks2 to ks3

Neighbourhood change from 16% turnover per year to zero

- ks3, unadjusted: 2.23
- ks3-ks2 value-added: 0.63
- same school: 0.13
- same school + neighb: 0.06
Comparisons with other inputs
Comparison with other inputs

- Effects of various education related inputs (0-100 scale)
Conclusion and policy implications

- Neighbourhood composition irrelevant for a child’s education
- Turnover seems to matter more, in neighbourhoods and schools
  - Disruption in teaching and breaking of social ties potentially important – theory rather than evidence
- School peer groups moderately important, though account for only 0.04% of the variance in pupil achievement
- No role for engineering neighbourhood mixing to address education performance or inequality
  - E.g. mixed communities planning
- We should be more much concerned about school resources and teacher quality
Works by SERC researchers referred to

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