

Tackling socio-economic inequalities in Higher Education

Emilia Del Bono

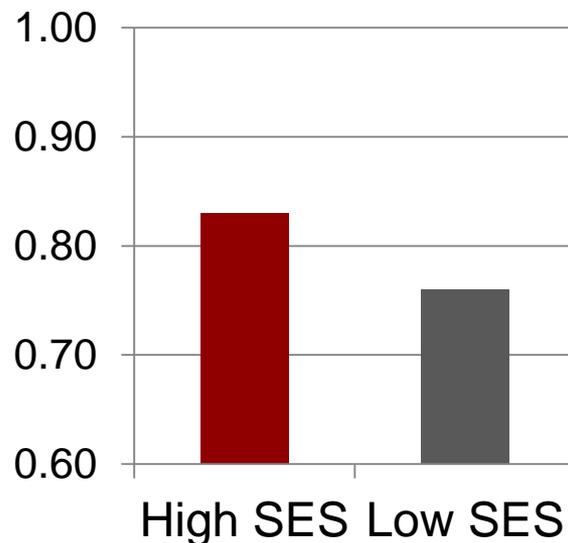
with Adeline Delavande and Angus Holford

ISER 30th Anniversary Conference,
9th December 2019

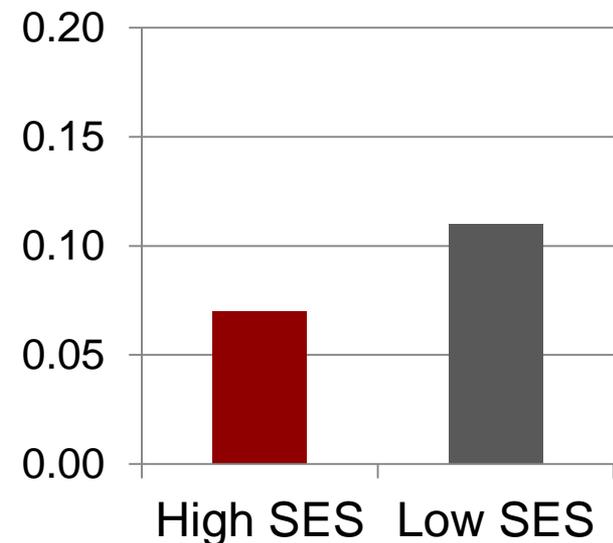
Socio-economic inequalities in Higher Education

- o Large differences in Higher Education outcomes according to social and economic background

Good Degree



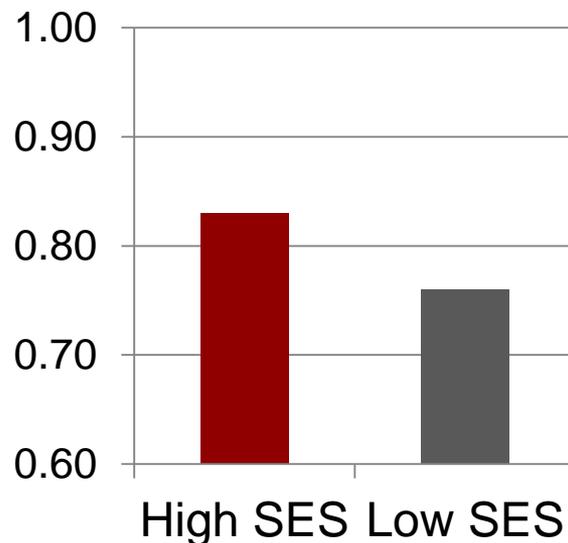
Dropout



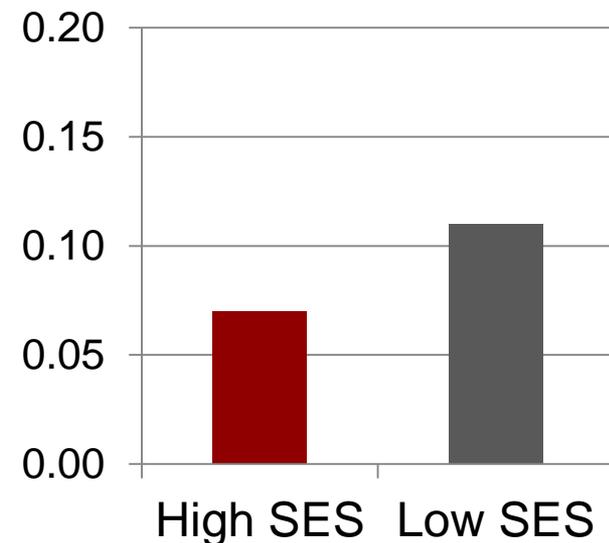
Socio-economic inequalities in Higher Education

- Only partly explained by demographics, prior educational performance, or subject of study

Good Degree



Dropout



BOOST2018

- A cohort of UK undergraduates
- ~2000 students enrolled (75% of target)
- 12 incentivised surveys online or in a computer lab



B.O.O.S.T 2018

Welcome, class of 2018
SIGN UP TO B.O.O.S.T!



Complete a few surveys
over your years at [redacted] and
receive over £100



Here's £5 as a thank
you for signing up today

Sign up at:
■ Freshers' Fair ■ Our stand, [redacted]
■ [www.\[redacted\].ac.uk/see/BOOST2018](http://www.[redacted].ac.uk/see/BOOST2018)

BOOST2018

- 3 randomised interventions
 - One each year
 - Aim: reduce SES inequalities



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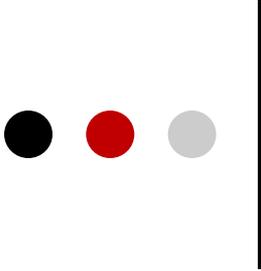


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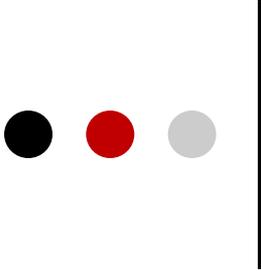
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Year 1: First intervention

Beliefs about intelligence (effort)

- Pilot survey and previous evidence
 - Low-SES students more likely to believe that intelligence is fixed
 - Lower perceived return to effort
 - More likely to be discouraged by poor performance early on



Year 1: First intervention

Beliefs about intelligence (effort)

- Our research questions
 1. Can we reduce gap in beliefs?
 2. Does this lead to more effort?
 3. Can it improve marks?
 4. Do low SES benefit most?

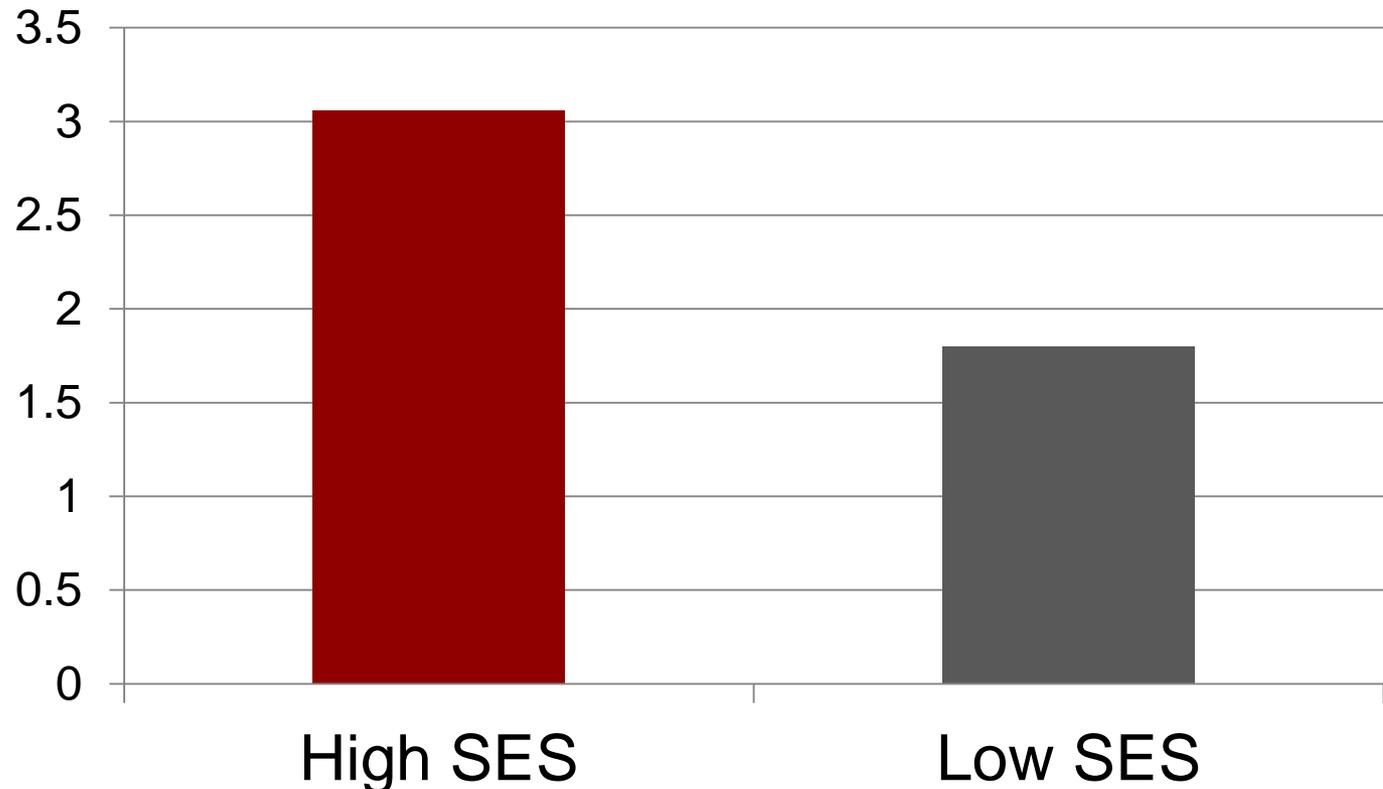
Your brain grows with exercise!

- Video showing brain connections forming under stimuli
- Experts discuss evidence
- Study tips
- Essay (incentivised)



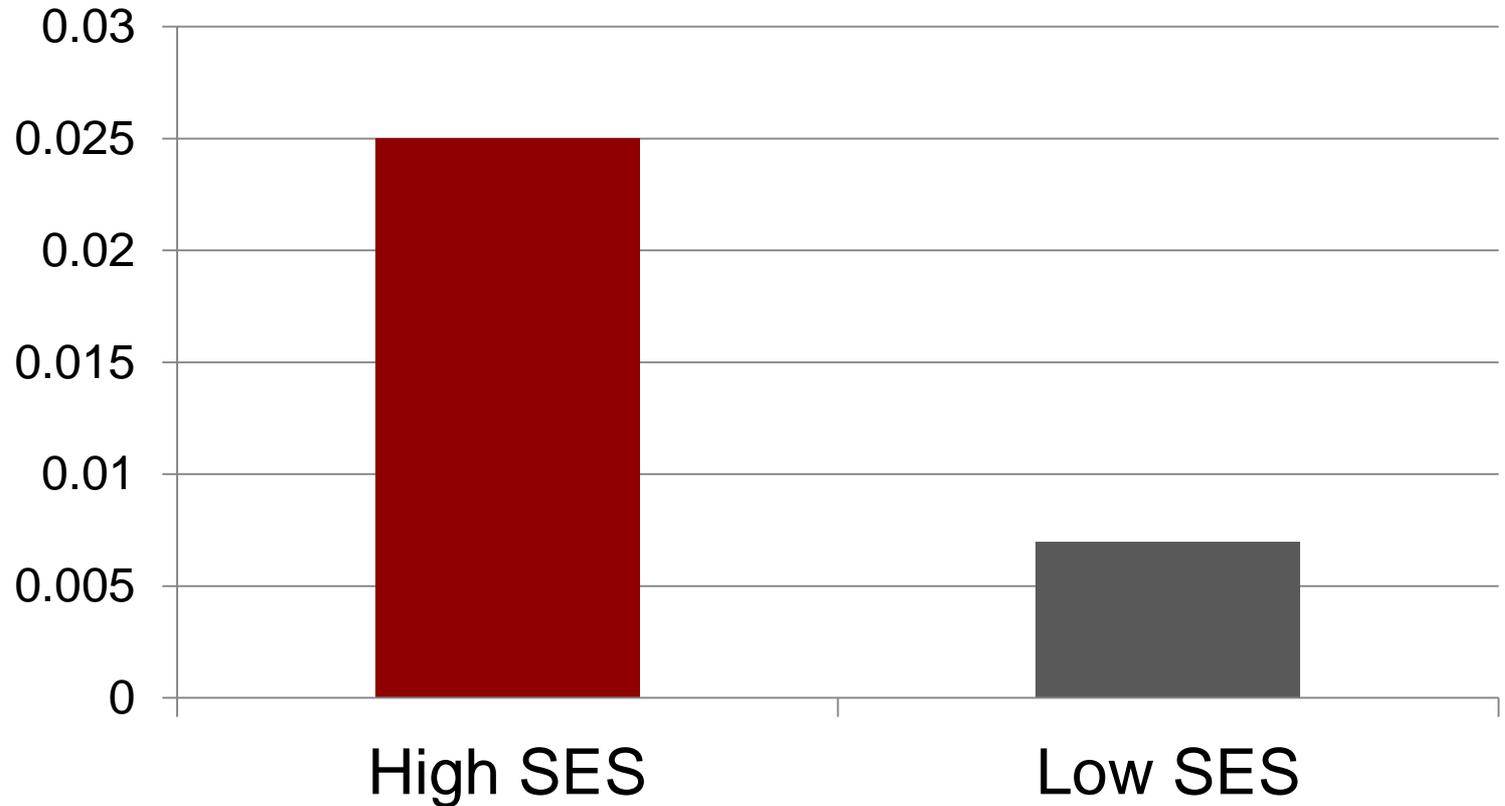
Larger benefits for High SES

- o Beliefs ability is malleable (growth mindset)



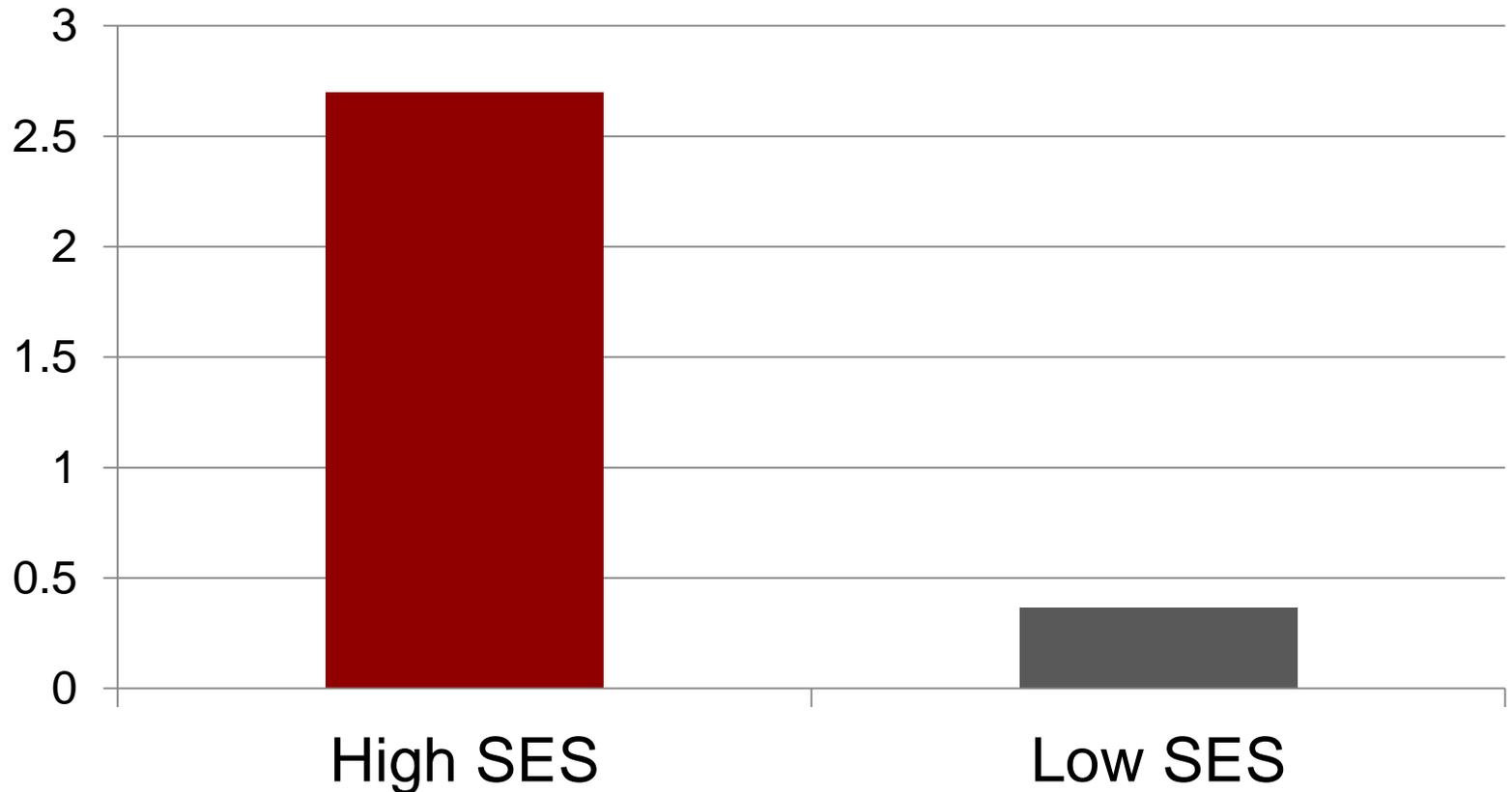
Larger benefits for High SES

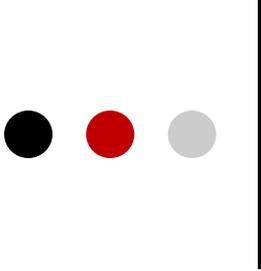
o Attendance



Larger benefits for High SES

o First year GPA



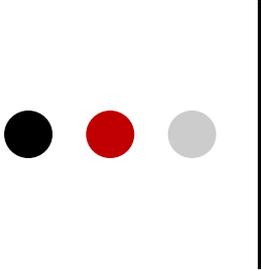


Year 1: First intervention

Beliefs about intelligence (effort)

- Our research questions

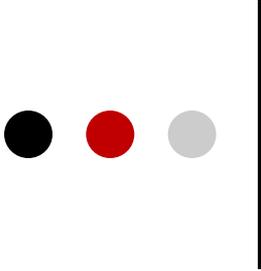
1. Can we reduce gap in beliefs? **Yes**
2. Does this lead to more effort? **Yes**
3. Can it improve marks? **Yes**
4. Do low SES benefit most? **No**



Year 2: Second Intervention

Attendance & goal-setting

- Regular attendance is important for performance
- Low self-control could lead to missing a class/lecture
- Setting a goal can increase attendance rates
 - Important: task-based goal (not performance-based)

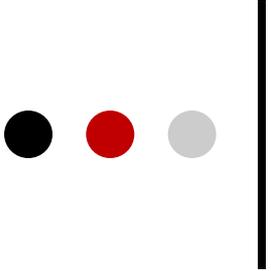


Year 2: Second Intervention

Attendance & goal-setting

- Our research questions

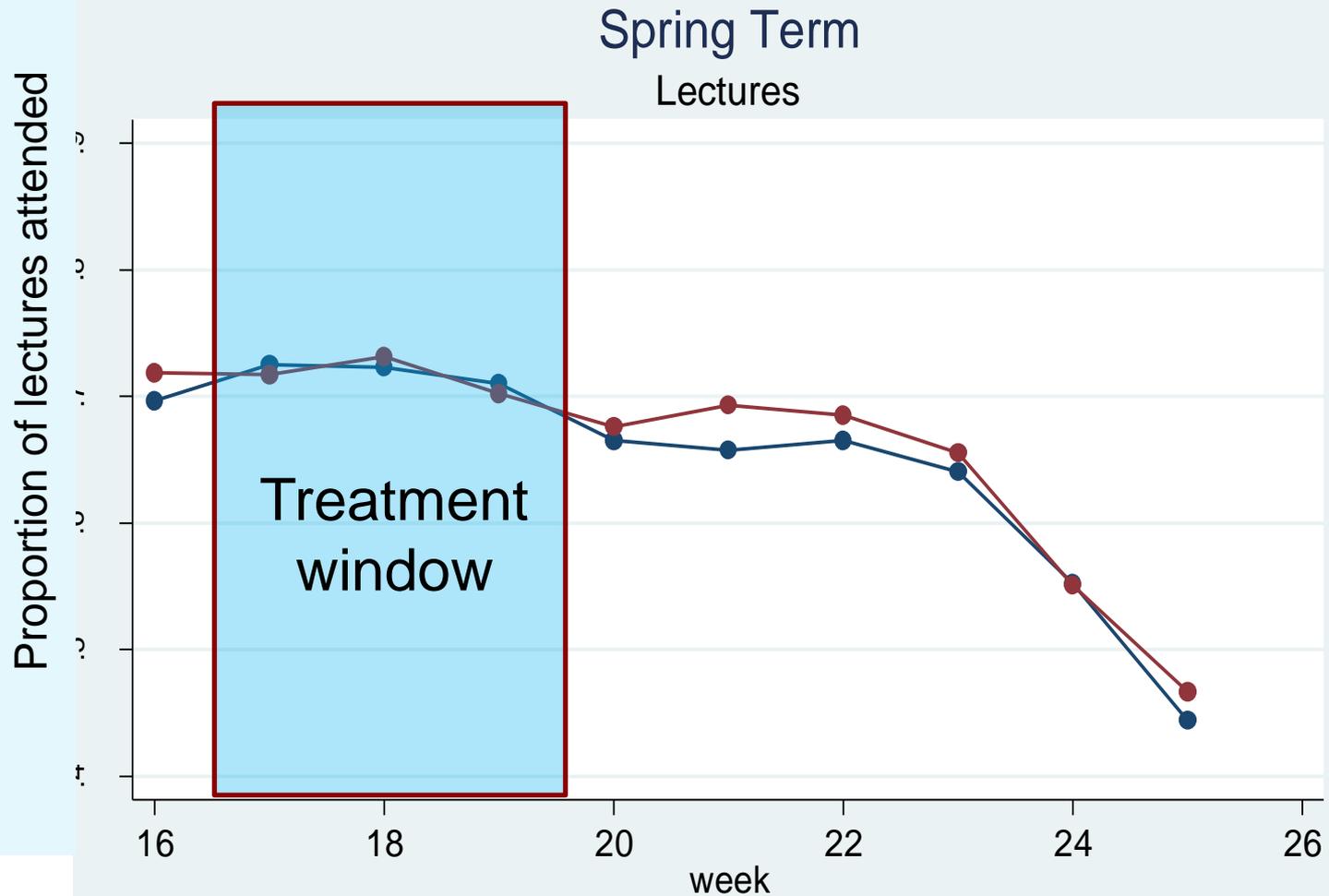
1. Can goal setting increase attendance?
2. Does this lead to better marks?
3. Do low SES benefit most?



Choose your attendance goal!

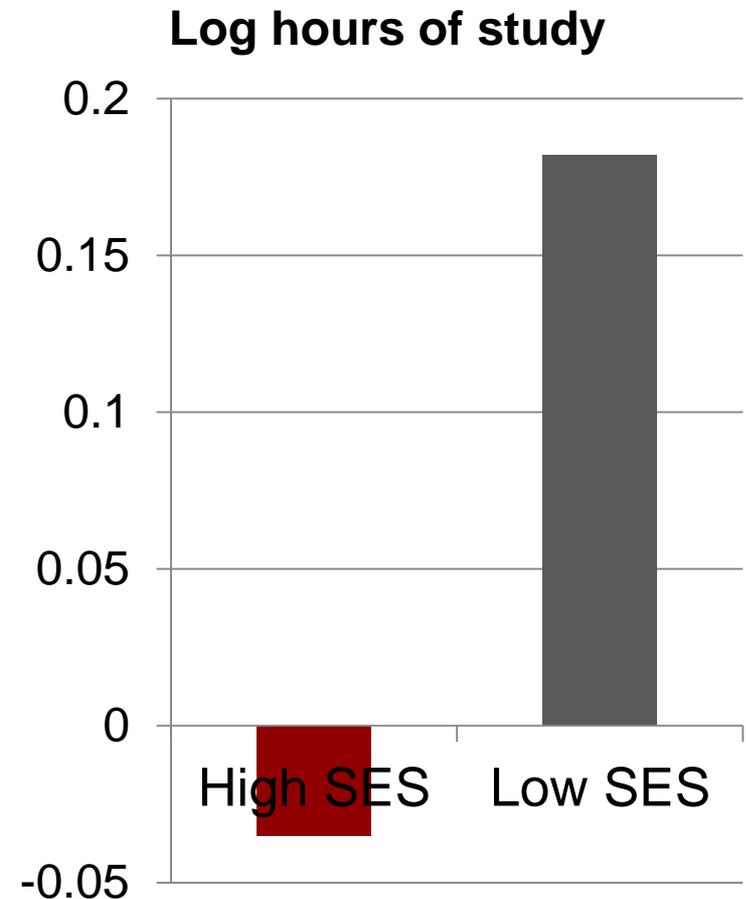
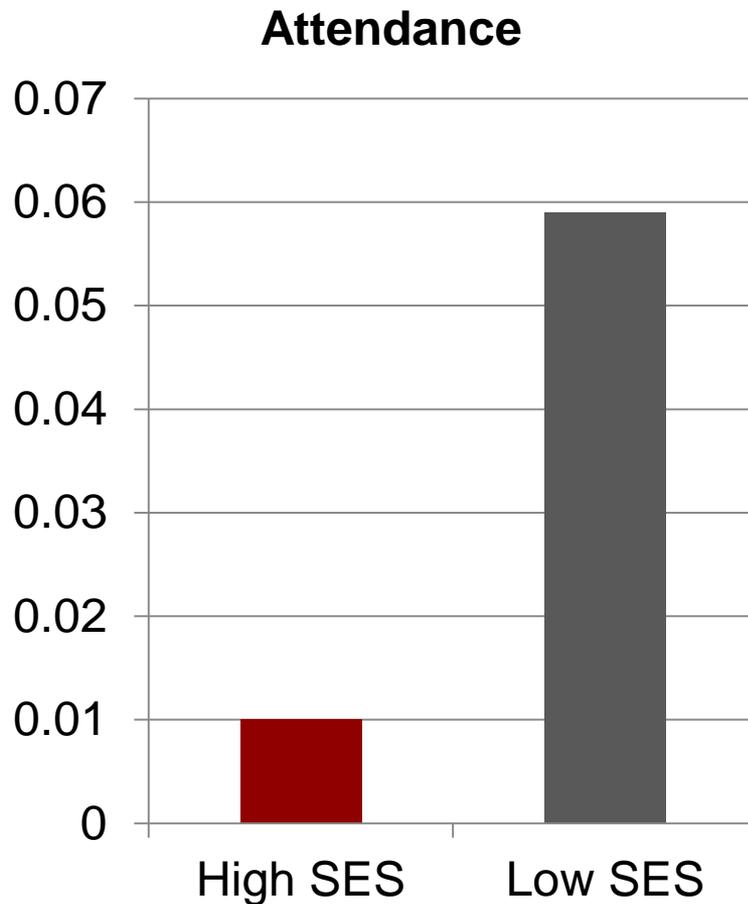
- **Information** about the benefits of regular attendance on learning and grades
- **Video** showing why **setting a goal** helps to achieve objectives
- **Ask them to set a weekly goal** for attendance to lectures and classes
- **Essay** on attendance, reasons of absenteeism (incentivised)

Improvement in attendance



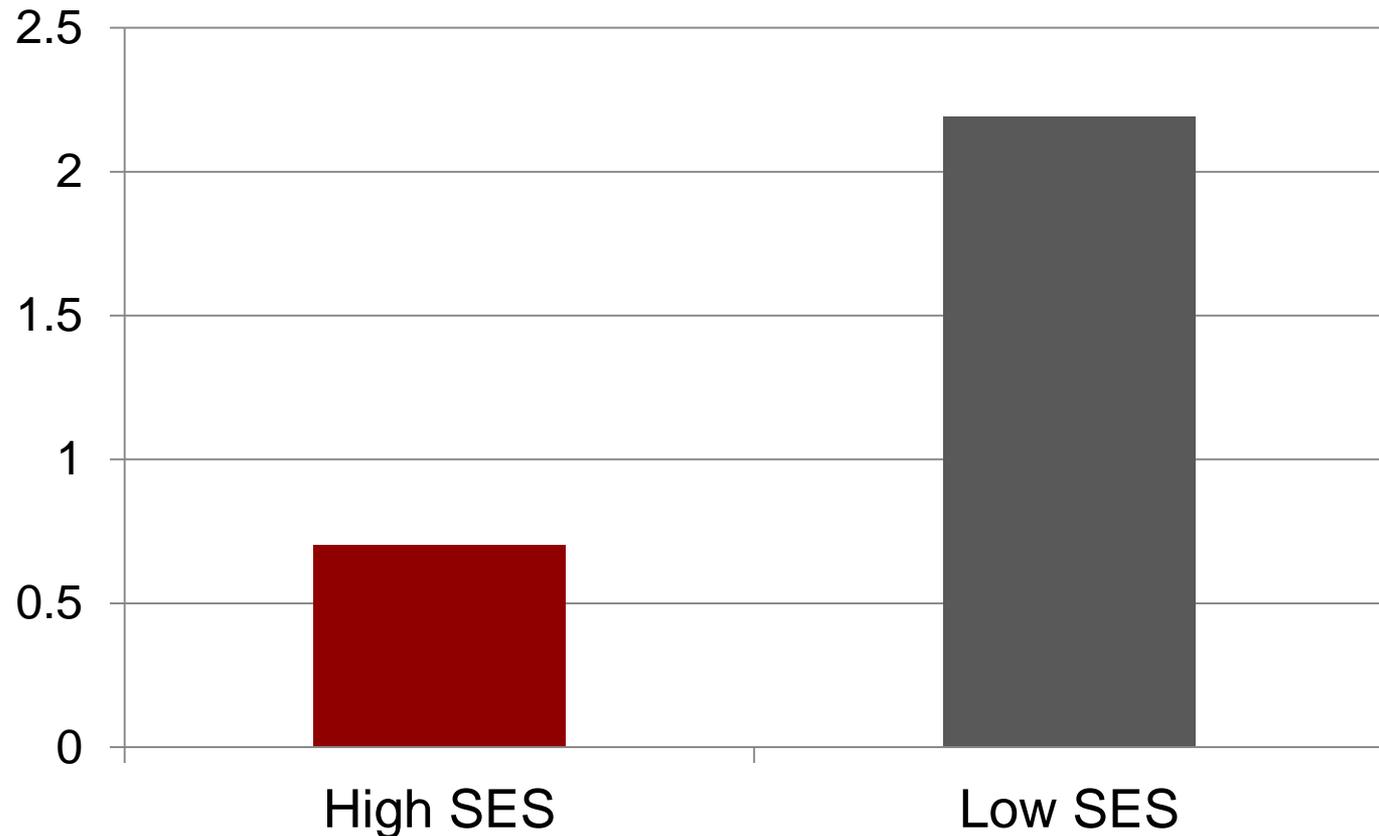
Larger benefits for Low-SES

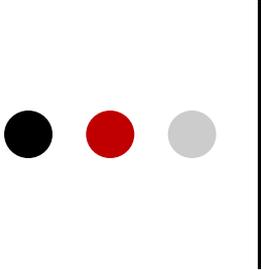
- o Attendance and study



Larger benefits for Low-SES

o Second year GPA

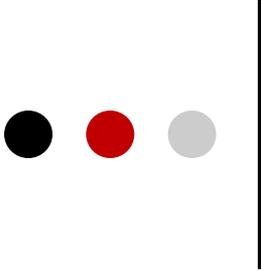




Year 2: Second Intervention Attendance & goal-setting

- Our research questions

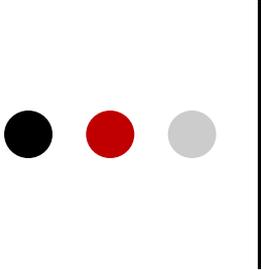
1. Can goal setting increase attendance? **Yes**
2. Does this lead to better marks? **Yes**
3. Do low SES benefit most? **Yes**



Year 3: Third Intervention

Employability skills

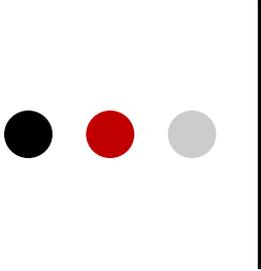
- Graduate employers look for a wide range of skills:
 - Negotiating and Influencing
 - Commercial Awareness
 - Problem-solving
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Teamwork



Year 3: Third Intervention

Employability skills

- It is not enough to have these skills. Graduates need to **signal** them to prospective employers
- Intervention aims to:
 - Increase participation in **work experience** or **extra-curricular activities**
 - Increase awareness of how these activities **translate into employability skills**

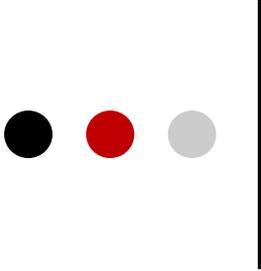


Year 3: Third Intervention

Employability skills

- Our research questions

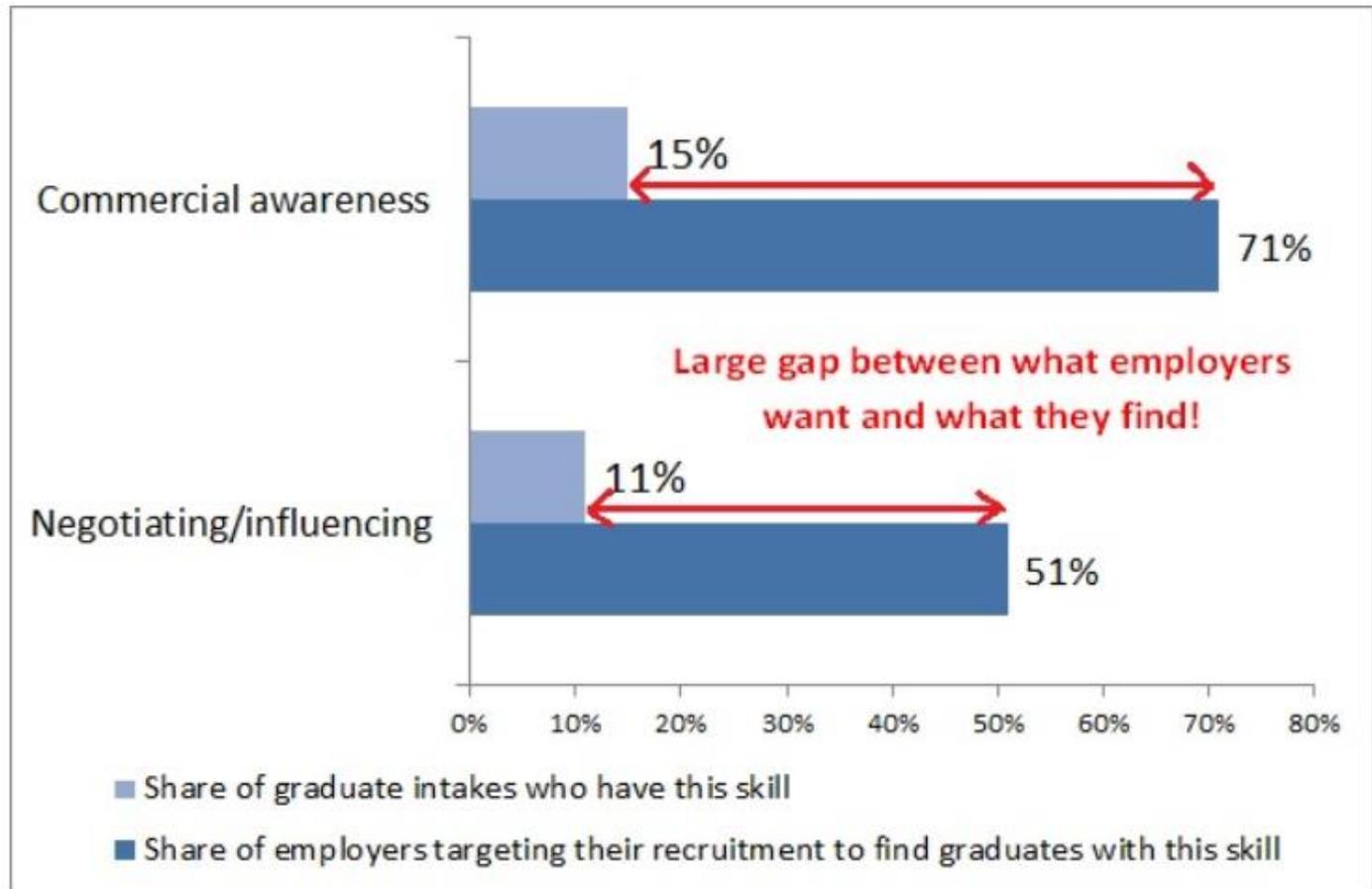
1. Can we increase awareness of the importance of these skills?
2. Can we increase participation in extra-curricular activities?
3. Do low SES benefit most?

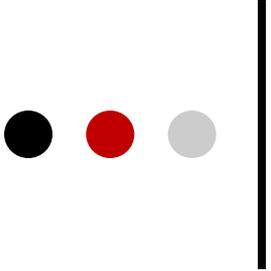


Get the skills!

1. **Video:** what recruiters look for
2. **Quiz:** match skills to definitions
3. **Information** about:
 - Skills that are essential
 - Skills in short supply
 - Employability events
 - Big Employability Award
4. **Essay**/Mock interview question (incentivised)

Acquire these skills to distinguish yourself!



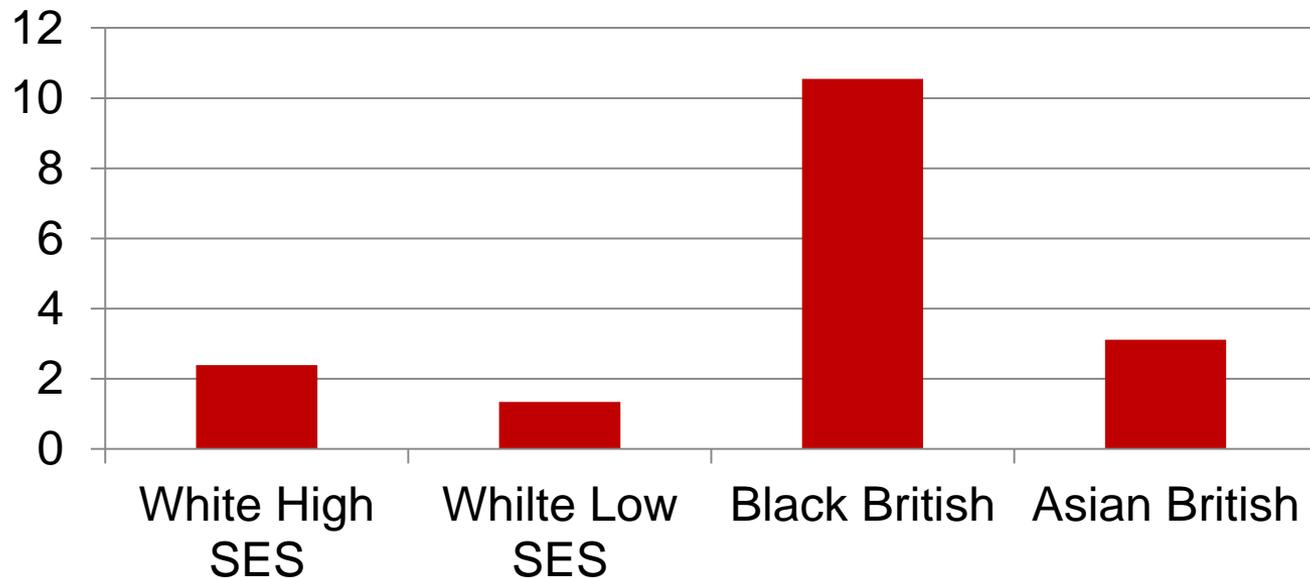


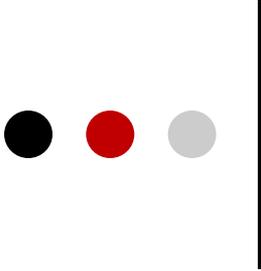
Treated students

- Increase their participation in the **Big Employability Award**
- Understand better the importance of **commercial awareness**
- Attach more value to their **non-academic experience**
- Some effects are larger for **BAME students**, but no significant low/high SES impact

Black students benefit most

o Importance of Commercial Awareness



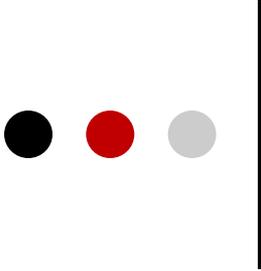


Year 3: Third Intervention

Employability skills

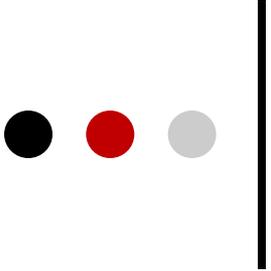
- Our research questions

1. Can we increase awareness of the importance of these skills? **Yes**
2. Can we increase participation in extra-curricular activities? **Yes**
3. Do low SES benefit most? **Not necessarily**



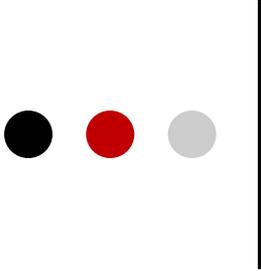
Did it help in the longer term?

We are surveying this cohort again as graduates in 2020, **so will find out!**



Lessons learned

- 1st intervention on beliefs was “successful” but did not reduce the SES-gap in achievement
- 2nd intervention on attendance reduced SES gaps although not by much
- 3rd intervention on employability skills had most of its impact on BEMA students



B.O.O.S.T 2018

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