

# How racism experienced by family members impacts on child health and development: evidence from the UK and New Zealand

---

Laia Bécaries

Workshop on Racism, Ethnic Identity and Child Development  
University of Sheffield

26 January 2016

# Racism and Racial Discrimination

- Racism: A system of structuring opportunity and assigning values to people and groups based on phenotypic properties that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, while unfairly advantaging others (Jones, 2003).
- Racial Discrimination occurs at multiple levels (Paradies, 2006):
  - Internalised (incorporation of racist attitudes, beliefs or ideologies into one's worldview),
  - Interpersonal (interactions between individuals)
  - Institutional (differential access to opportunities in society)

# Types of Racism and Racial Discrimination

- Direct (own experiences)
- Indirect/vicarious (experienced by others/witnessed)
- Experienced
- Expected – hypervigilance/anticipatory stress

# Racial discrimination and child development and health

- Systematic reviews of studies on racism and health of children and young people (Priest et al., 2012; Pachter and Garcia Coll, 2009):
  - Strong, consistent association between racial discrimination and negative mental health outcomes,
  - Negative relationship between racial discrimination and positive mental health outcomes (e.g., self-esteem)
- Large majority of studies assess children/youth direct experiences of racial discrimination
- Insufficient consideration of vicarious racial discrimination as a determinant of children's development (Priest et al., 2012)

## Study 2 – Childhood vicarious exposure

- Linked lives useful lens to examine ethnic inequalities in health → racially motivated stressors not only detrimental to the health and life chances of one isolated individual, but also impact on other family members, maintaining and reproducing social and health inequalities across and within generations (Gee et al., 2012).
- Racial discrimination experienced by one family member shown to result in detrimental consequences for other members via increased financial strain, decreased relationship quality, and intimate partner violence (Llacer et al., 2009; Murry, et al., 2001; Waltermaurer et al., 2006).

## Study 2 - Research Questions

Does racial discrimination experienced by other individuals in the **children's environment** affect children's socioemotional development over time?  
How?

1. Decrease in maternal mental health
2. Increase in harsh parenting practices

# Pathway 1: Maternal mental health

A worsening in maternal mental health following direct, family, and area-level experiences of racial discrimination will have an indirect effect on socioemotional development among children over time.

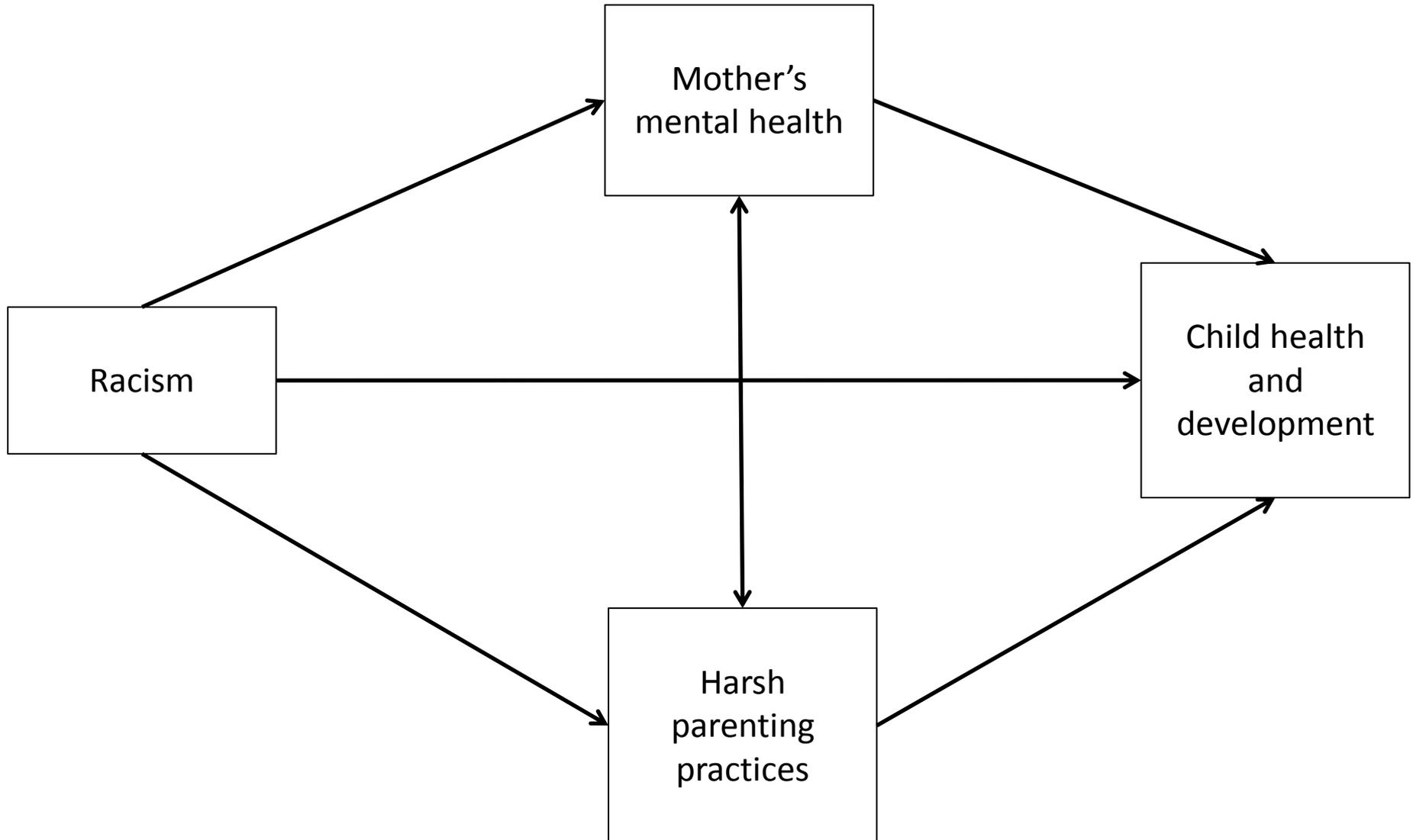
- Longitudinal association between experienced racial discrimination and poor mental health (Brody et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2000; Jackson et al., 1996; Schulz et al., 2006).
- Maternal depression linked to children's socioemotional, cognitive, and physical health, (Cummings et al., 1994; Downey et al., 1990; Goodman et al., 1990).

## Pathway 2: Harsh parenting practices

Stress caused by experiences of racial discrimination will increase maternal harsh parenting practices over time, leading to a decrease in children's socioemotional development.

- Stress associated with increased harsh and punitive parenting (Simons et al., 2002).
- Harsh parenting practices linked to adverse child outcomes, including externalizing behaviours and poor mental health (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993).

# Hypothesized Model



## Study 2 - Data: UK Millennium Cohort Study

- Prospective cohort study; 18,818 children born in 2000/2001
- Over-sample of ethnically mixed and disadvantaged areas
- Data collected when cohort member was 9 months (MCS1), 3 years (MCS2), 5 years (MCS3), 7 years (MCS4) and 11 years (MCS5)
- Study sample restricted to complete data from singletons born to ethnic minority mothers who were productive from MCS3 to MCS5 (n=1,608).

## Study 2 – Measures (I)

Collected at MCS3. In the past 12 months...

- “How often has someone said something **insulting** to you just because of your race or ethnicity?”
- “How often has a **shop keeper or sales person treated you in a disrespectful** way just because of your race or ethnicity?”
- “how often have you been **treated unfairly** just because of your race or ethnicity?”
- “how often have **members of your family been treated unfairly** just because of their race or ethnicity?”  
(0: never; 1: once or more)
- “In this **area, how common are insults or attacks** to do with someone's race or colour?”  
(0: not very, not at all common; 1: fairly, very common)

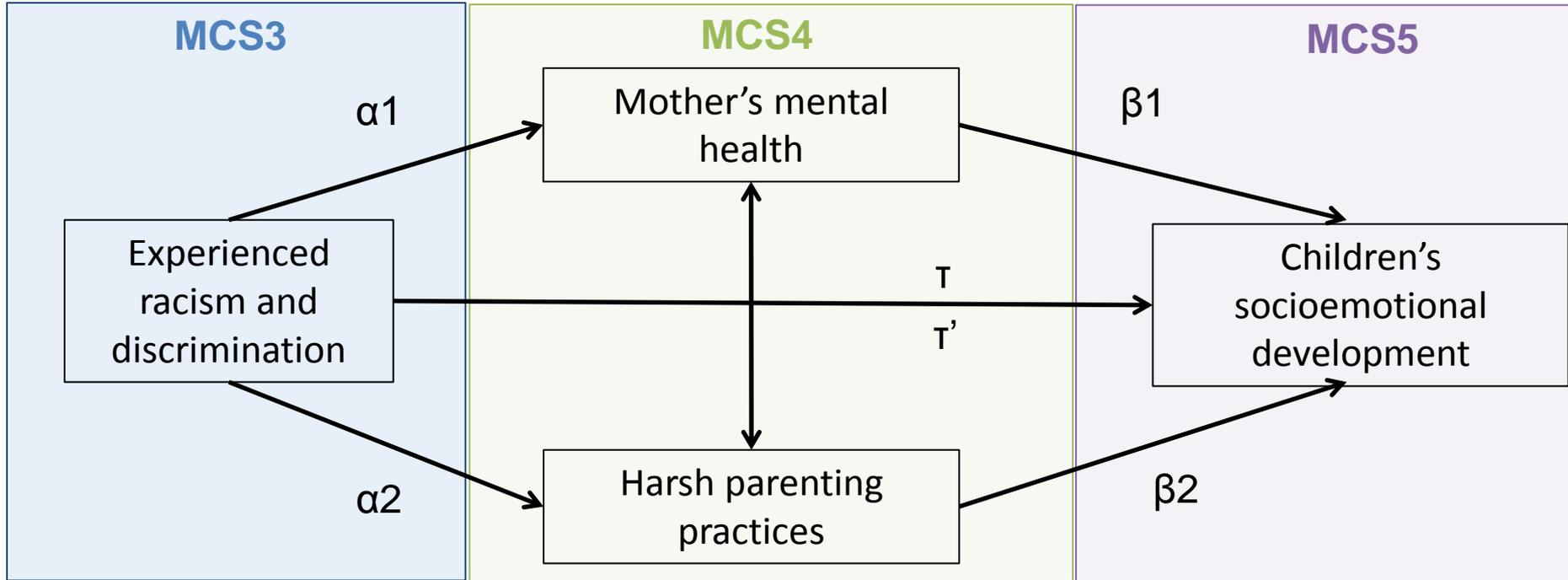
## Study 2 – Measures (II)

- Mediators:
  - Kessler 6-item scale (Kessler et al., 2002) used to measure maternal mental health (continuous variable, higher score = more psychological distress).
  - Items from Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al. 1998) used to measure harsh discipline. How often main respondent tells child off, smacks child, shouts at child if naughty (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: about once a month, 4: about once a week or more, or 5: daily). Summed variable, higher values = harsher discipline.

## Study 2 – Measures (III)

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) used to measure children's socioemotional behaviour. Questions on five domains of social and emotional behaviour: conduct problems, hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, peer problems and pro-social behaviour.
- Scores from the first four domains are summed to construct a total difficulties score.
- Reported by the mother.
- Continuous variable, higher score=increased socioemotional difficulties.

# Study 2 - Analysis Plan (I)



- Indirect effect estimated with the product of the two coefficients  $\alpha\beta$
- Statistical significance of indirect effects based on bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) of estimates. The indirect effect is significant if upper and lower bounds of bias corrected CIs do not contain zero
- Standard errors and confidence intervals computed using replicate weights with the bootstrap method (5,000 bootstrap draws; Asparouhov & Muthen, 2010)

## Study 2 - Analysis Plan (II)

- Adjusted for cohort member's gender and age, mother's age at the time of birth, languages spoken at home (only or mostly English vs. other), mother's nativity (born in the UK vs. abroad), marital status, equivalised household income, and maternal educational qualifications.
- Adjusted for maternal mental health and harsh parenting practices at MCS3.
- Models that focused on socioemotional development adjusted for SDQ score at MCS4.
- Mplus v.7 using modeling specification for complex sample data.

	Racism → Mother's mental health		Racism → Harsh parenting practices	
	Coeff.	95% C.I (Bias Corrected)	Coeff.	95% C.I (Bias Corrected)
Received Insults	<b>0.684</b>	<b>(0.05 – 1.34)</b>	0.226	(-0.04 – 0.49)
Disrespectful treatment from shop staff	<b>0.954</b>	<b>(0.26 – 1.86)</b>	-0.004	(-0.29 – 0.36)
Unfair Treatment	<b>0.763</b>	<b>(0.09 – 1.51)</b>	0.143	(-0.15 – 0.43)
Family treated unfairly	<b>0.888</b>	<b>(0.20 – 1.65)</b>	0.234	(-0.06 – 0.52)
Racism in area is fairly/very common	0.073	(-1.02 – 0.94)	-0.016	(-0.44 – 0.43)

	Mother's mental health → Children's socioemotional difficulties		Harsh parenting practices → Children's socioemotional difficulties	
	Coeff.	95% C.I (Bias Corrected)	Coeff.	95% C.I (Bias Corrected)
Received Insults	<b>0.068</b>	<b>(0.01 – 0.15)</b>	<b>0.297</b>	<b>(0.17 – 0.43)</b>
Disrespectful treatment from shop staff	<b>0.067</b>	<b>(0.01 – 0.14)</b>	<b>0.297</b>	<b>(0.18 – 0.44)</b>
Unfair Treatment	<b>0.072</b>	<b>(0.01 – 0.15)</b>	<b>0.303</b>	<b>(0.17 – 0.43)</b>
Family treated unfairly	<b>0.069</b>	<b>(0.01 – 0.15)</b>	<b>0.299</b>	<b>(0.17 – 0.43)</b>
Racism in area is fairly/very common	<b>0.077</b>	<b>(0.02 – 0.15)</b>	<b>0.311</b>	<b>(0.18 – 0.44)</b>

	Total effect	Direct effect	Total indirect effect	Indirect effect via maternal mental health	Indirect effect via harsh parenting practices
	Coeff. (95% BC CI)	Coeff. (95% BC CI)	Coeff. (95% BC CI)	Coeff. (95% BC CI)	Coeff. (95% BC CI)
Received Insults	<b>1.140</b> <b>(0.54 – 1.89)</b>	<b>1.038</b> <b>(0.42 – 1.78)</b>	<b>0.102</b> <b>(0.03 – 0.22)</b>	<b>0.042</b> <b>(0.01 – 0.12)</b>	<b>0.059</b> <b>(0.01 – 0.15)</b>
Disrespectful treatment from shop staff	<b>1.251</b> <b>(0.42 – 2.06)</b>	<b>1.195</b> <b>(0.34 – 1.97)</b>	0.056 (-0.04 – 0.20)	<b>0.057</b> <b>(0.01 – 0.17)</b>	-0.001 (0.08 – 0.12)
Unfair Treatment	0.812 (-0.04 – 1.54)	0.725 (-0.14 – 1.43)	0.087 (0.00 – 0.21)	<b>0.049</b> <b>(0.01 – 0.15)</b>	0.039 (-0.03 – 0.15)
Family treated unfairly	<b>0.821</b> <b>(0.28 – 1.55)</b>	<b>0.703</b> <b>(0.10 – 1.45)</b>	<b>0.118</b> <b>(0.02 – 0.29)</b>	<b>0.055</b> <b>(0.01 – 0.18)</b>	<b>0.062</b> <b>(0.01 – 1.80)</b>
Racism in area is fairly/very common	0.386 (-0.59 – 1.27)	0.385 (-0.56 – 1.28)	0.001 (-0.17 – 0.15)	0.005 (-0.06 – 0.08)	-0.005 (-0.11 – 0.13)

## Study 2 - Summary of Findings (I)

- Indirect effect of maternal experiences of racially motivated insults, unfair treatment, disrespectful treatment by shop staff, and reports of family being treated unfairly, on SDQ through maternal mental health.
- Direct effect of maternal experiences of racially motivated insults, maternal experiences of disrespectful treatment by shop staff, and reports of family being treated unfairly, on SDQ.

## Study 2 – More info

- Bécares, L., Nazroo, J., & Kelly, Y. (2015). A longitudinal examination of maternal, family, and area-level experiences of racism on children's socioemotional development: patterns and possible explanations. *Social Science & Medicine*, 142, 128-135

# Acknowledgments

---

James Nazroo, Yvonne Kelly, Polly Atatoa-Carr

Hallsworth Research Fellowship & ESRC Future Research  
Leaders grant

MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester

CoDE  
Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity

E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

# Thank you

---

[Laia.becares@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Laia.becares@manchester.ac.uk)