Parental ethnic identity and child development

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Outline

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  - Measures of cognitive and behavioural development

- Linking ethnic identity and child development

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Motivation

Tajfel (1978)

- Identity is "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group"

Akerlof and Kranton (2000)

- The impact of an action on utility depends in part on its effect on identity, e.g. the extent to which the action corresponds to the 'ideal' for that identity.

- The effect of someone else's action on utility depends in part on its effect on identity.

- Identity may partially be a choice.

Motivation

- Ethnic identity plays an important role in mediating the relationships between ethnic minority and majority groups

    Costa-Font and Cowell (2015); Georgiadis and Manning (2013)

- Evidence that a strong minority identity harms school performance and labour market outcomes

    Fryer and Torelli, 2010; Constant et al., 2006; Drydakis, 2013; Bisin et al., 2011

Motivation

- In psychology and sociology, ethnic identity has been favourably linked to educational aspirations and achievement in adolescents

  Byrd and Chavous, 2009; Chavous et al., 2003; Kerpelman et al., 2008

- Some recent studies in economics are also consistent with this view

  Nekby et al. (2009); Schuller (2015)

- There are a number of pathways via which parental identity could impact child development: link to community support, bolster self-esteem, buffer against experiences of racism and poverty

Our contribution

1. **We focus on the early years of children's cognitive and behavioural development.** These years have a disproportionate influence on later outcomes.

2. **We address national as well as ethnic identity.** These are two distinct dimensions which may exert differential influence on child outcomes, and covering both allows us to compare their importance.

3. **We use standardised test outcomes to capture the associations between identity and child development.** We use established tests which measure both the cognitive skills (educational attainment) and non-cognitive skills (behavioural development) of the child, these give us richer insights than others used in the economics of identity literature.

Data

- UK Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)
  - 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000-01
  - Five waves currently available:

Wave:	MCS1	MCS2	MCS3	MCS4	MCS5
Child age:	*9 months*	*3 years*	*5 years*	*7 years*	*11 years*

  - Face-to-face interviews
  - Range of household, socio-economic and demographic information about the child and their family, including parenting activities, cognitive assessment etc

Cognitive development (MCS4)

Age-appropriate standardised tests, administered by a trained interviewer

- BAS Pattern Construction test (BAS-PC)

  BAS Word Reading test (BAS-WR)

  Progress in Maths (PiM)

- We combine these measures into a single, standardised measure of cognitive ability.

Behavioural development (MCS4)

Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), completed by the mother.

- Questions relating to the child's emotional behaviour, conduct, hyperactivity, and peer relationships

- Responses are combined into a total difficulties score, with a maximum of 40

- We invert this scale, so that higher scores represent fewer difficulties

Identity: Ethnic and British (MCS3)

- To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
    - In many ways I think of myself as British
    - In many ways I think of myself as [name of ethnic group]
- Respondents may answer
    - (1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly disagree, or (6) Can't say.
- We use these responses to construct standardised scales of the strength of British and Ethnic identity.
- NB Two dimensions: There is nothing to stop an individual reporting both a strong British and ethnic identity. However, questions are asked sequentially which may set them up in opposition to each other.

Controls (MCS3)

- Ethnicity: `Mixed', `Indian', `Pakistani and Bangladeshi', `Black or Black British', `Other ethnic group (inc. Chinese and other Asian)'.

- Human capital: Highest qualification of mother and father

- Adversity: Whether mother and father are employed, log of working hours, family poverty (a multidimentional measure), area poverty.

- Other socio-economic: Child's gender; mother's Kessler score; mother's age at birth and its square; whether English is spoken rarely or never in the home; foreign born mother.

Sample restrictions

- Families with two parents and singleton children in England, Scotland, and Wales in MCS3.

- Ethnic minority mother and father

- Appear in each of MCS3 and MCS4

- Filled out the 'self-completion' part of the MCS

- n=626 (cognitive outcome), n=592 (behavioural outcome)

Table 1: Summary statistics

	mean	sd	min	max
Cognitive score	89.47	11.44	57	117
Behavioural score	32.51	5.01	12	40
Mother British identity scale	3.69	1.02	1	5
Mother Ethnic identity scale	3.98	0.92	1	5
Father British identity scale	3.87	1.00	1	5
Father ethnic identity scale	3.94	0.95	1	5
Mother kessler score	3.77	4.08	0	20
Mother age at birth	28.46	5.43	14	45
Mother working hours	11.88	14.99	0	60
Father working hours	35.99	16.59	0	100
Mother lower qualified	0.22	0.41	0	1
Mother qualification from abroad	0.09	0.29	0	1
Father lower qualified	0.14	0.35	0	1
Father qualification from abroad	0.14	0.35	0	1
Mother Indian	0.33	0.47	0	1
Mother Pakistani or Bangladeshi	0.34	0.47	0	1
Mother Black African or Carribean	0.17	0.38	0	1
Girl	0.50	0.50	0	1
English rarely or never spoken at home	0.19	0.39	0	1
Renter	0.26	0.44	0	1
Mother not employed	0.54	0.50	0	1
Father not in employment	0.10	0.30	0	1
Poor family	0.22	0.42	0	1
Poor area	0.40	0.49	0	1
Mother reported racism	0.34	0.47	0	1
Live in ethnic boost area	0.61	0.49	0	1
Mother low self-esteem	0.34	0.47	0	1
Number of siblings	1.57	1.03	0	6
Foreign born mother	0.50	0.50	0	1
N	645			

Empirical specification

- Based on an ability production function (Ben-Porath, 1967; Leibowitz, 1974)

$$Y_{it} = Z_{it}\beta_1 + Z_{it-1}\beta_2 + ... + Z_{i1}\beta_t + |\varepsilon_{it}$$

- Y_{it} is the cognitive or non-cognitive development of child i at time t.

- Z_{it} is the vector of observed factors before time t which we assume to influence development.

- ε is the residual term that includes the effect of omitted factors and endowments.

Table 2: Main results

	(1) Cognitive	(2) Behavioural
Mother British identity	-0.06	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Mother Ethnic identity	-0.03	-0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Father British identity	0.03	0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Father Ethnic identity	0.07	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)
N	626	592

Main results...

- None of the identity variables are significant at the mean…

- However, if ethnic identity has protective effects then it might interact with environments that are less conducive to good outcomes

- We consider interactions between ethnic identity and:
  - Poverty (both family and neighbourhood);
  - Mother's characteristics (employment status and self-esteem)
  - Gender of the child

Interactions (1)

Poverty in the household and in the neighbourhood

- Household poverty

  - Identity may have different association with outcomes in poor households, if more reliant on community support, ethnic pride etc.

- Neighbourhood poverty

  - Similarly, households in poorer areas may benefit more from community support in raising children.

Table 3: By family and area poverty

	(1) Cognitive	(2) Behavioural	(3) Cognitive	(4) Behavioural
Mother British identity × not poor family	-0.06	0.03		
	(0.05)	(0.05)		
Mother British identity × poor family	-0.08	-0.00		
	(0.09)	(0.08)		
Mother ethnic identity × not poor family	-0.02	-0.03		
	(0.04)	(0.04)		
Mother ethnic identity × poor family	-0.04	0.02		
	(0.08)	(0.07)		
Dad British identity × not poor family	0.03	0.02		
	(0.05)	(0.04)		
Dad British identity × poor family	0.03	-0.06		
	(0.08)	(0.08)		
Dad ethnic identity × not poor family	0.03	-0.03		
	(0.05)	(0.04)		
Dad ethnic identity × poor family	0.15**	0.13		
	(0.08)	(0.08)		
Mother British identity × not poor area			-0.06	0.01
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Mother British identity × poor area			-0.07	0.03
			(0.05)	(0.05)
Mother ethnic identity × not poor area			0.00	-0.01
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Mother ethnic identity × poor area			-0.05	-0.03
			(0.05)	(0.05)
Father British identity × not poor area			0.05	0.04
			(0.07)	(0.05)
Father British identity × poor area			0.02	-0.03
			(0.05)	(0.05)
Father ethnic identity × not poor area			0.00	0.00
			(0.06)	(0.05)
Father ethnic identity × poor area			0.11**	0.02
			(0.05)	(0.06)
N	626	592	626	592

Interactions (2)

Characteristics of mother

- Labour market status of mother

    - Identity may have different association with outcomes when mother is employed, if this reflects more daily engagement with majority society.

- Mother's self-esteem

    - Identity may be more important as a source of pride when mothers' have low self-esteem.

Table 4: By labour force status of mother and mother's self esteem

	(1) Cognitive	(2) Behavioural	(3) Cognitive	(4) Behavioural
Mother British identity × mum employed	-0.02	0.07		
	(0.06)	(0.06)		
Mother British identity × mum not employed	-0.10**	-0.02		
	(0.05)	(0.06)		
Mother ethnic identity × mum employed	-0.07	-0.11**		
	(0.06)	(0.05)		
Mother ethnic identity × mum not employed	0.01	0.06		
	(0.05)	(0.05)		
Father British identity × mum employed	0.10	0.00		
	(0.07)	(0.06)		
Father British identity × mum not employed	-0.03	0.00		
	(0.05)	(0.05)		
Father ethnic identity × mum employed	-0.09	0.03		
	(0.06)	(0.06)		
Father ethnic identity × mum not employed	0.19***	-0.01		
	(0.05)	(0.05)		
Mother British identity × not low self-esteem mother			-0.12**	0.04
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Mother British identity × low self-esteem mother			0.07	0.01
			(0.07)	(0.08)
Mother ethnic identity × not low self-esteem mother			-0.05	-0.03
			(0.05)	(0.04)
Mother ethnic identity × low self-esteem mother			0.13*	0.04
			(0.07)	(0.08)
Father British identity × not low self-esteem mother			0.06	0.06
			(0.06)	(0.05)
Father British identity × low self-esteem mother			0.04	-0.09
			(0.07)	(0.06)
Father ethnic identity × not low self-esteem mother			-0.00	-0.02
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Father ethnic identity × low self-esteem mother			0.13**	-0.00
			(0.07)	(0.06)
N	626	592	535	512

Interactions (3)

Gender of child

- Given distinct treatment of boys and girls in the home and at school, does the gender of the child alter the associations between parental identity and child development?

Table 5: By Gender of Child

	(1) Cognitive	(2) Behavioural
Mother British identity × boy	-0.01	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Mother British identity × girl	-0.12**	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Mother ethnic identity × boy	-0.01	-0.12**
	(0.06)	(0.05)
Mother ethnic identity × girl	-0.04	0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Father British identity × boy	0.02	-0.01
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Father British identity × girl	0.03	0.01
	(0.06)	(0.05)
Father ethnic identity × boy	0.11*	-0.01
	(0.07)	(0.06)
Father ethnic identity × girl	0.02	0.02
	(0.05)	(0.05)
N	626	592

Summary of results (1)

- Father's ethnic ID is good for cognitive scores
    - where child is a boy,
    - where the family is poor or lives in a poor area,
    - where mother is not employed,
    - where mother has low self-esteem.

- This is consistent with Schuller's (2015) recent result on parental ethnic identity and school placement in Germany.

- Also consistent with social-psychological literature on protective effects of ethnic identity.

Summary of results (2)

- Mother's British ID bad for cognitive scores:
    - where child is a girl
    - where mother is not employed
    - where mother does not have low self-esteem
- This is perhaps a more surprising result
    - Possible explanations:

        1. British identity has the opposite effect to that we have proposed for ethnic identity.

        2. Reporting British identity reflects the cultural distance of the mother (the Manning and Roy, 2010, argument)
    - Different results in other countries may also reflect differences in national concept.

Summary of results (3)

- Mother's ethnic identity good for cognitive scores
  - Where mother has low self-esteem

- Mother's ethnic identity bad for behavioural scores
  - where child is a boy
  - where mother is employed

Conclusions

- Ethnic and national identity are associated with cognitive and behavioural outcomes in the early years.

- We do not find a significant association at the mean, but both British and ethnic identity become more important in more disadvantaged environments.

- Father's ethnic identity tends to be favourably associated with cognitive outcomes, while mother's British identity has some negative associations.

- The results for mother's ethnic identity are more ambiguous.