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Resources, Group Conflict and Symbols: Explaining Anti-Immigration Hostility in Britain

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This article analyses the causes of variation in attitudes to immigration policy in the UK. The key theoretical approaches emphasised are: the role of self-interest; group conflict over resources; and group conflict over important symbols of Britishness. The connection between perceptions of immigration and crime is also investigated. Based on the 2003 British Social Attitudes Survey, the findings indicate that self-interest has very little bearing on opposition to immigration and that British citizens instead appear to be most concerned with threats to ingroup resources posed by immigration, threats to the shared customs and traditions of British society (particularly those posed by Muslims) and – to a lesser extent – the potential for increased crime that may result from immigration.

In the past decade, anti-immigration sentiment has been on the rise in the United Kingdom, with such sentiment being increasingly expressed even among society's elites (McLaren and Johnson, 2004). Moreover, immigration has clearly become more salient in British elections.[1] As Britain continues to grapple with its somewhat delicate system of self-professed multiculturalism and the dilemma of determining whether to create policies that promote diversity or solidarity in the face of growing widespread public hostility to newcomers, it is necessary to consider the sources of such hostility.[2] After outlining the approaches taken by the British government to the issue of immigration, this article turns to research on antipathy to outgroups to inform an empirical analysis of anti-immigration sentiment in Britain. The key theoretical constructs that will be considered include: individual-level resource-based models; models revolving around notions of group conflict over economic resources; and theories that focus on the symbolic threats posed by immigrants and other newcomers. Finally, the article examines the degree to which non-minority Britons are hostile to immigration because they worry that it creates the additional social problem of crime. The findings indicate that perceptions of immigrants as being in conflict with native Britons over economic resources as well as symbolic threats to the British way of life, particularly those posed by Muslims, tend to be most important in explaining differing views on immigration, whereas personal resources appear to have little role to play. These findings generally point to the conclusion that anti-immigration and anti-immigrant sentiment do not result from fears about threats to personal resources and that such sentiment is directed instead toward the

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ingroup (that is, ingroup favouritism). They also indicate that in terms of the diversity versus solidarity debate on migration and the treatment of minorities, the British mass public clearly comes down on the solidarity side – that is, that immigration should be halted because it reduces the commonality on which the British polity and welfare system is based.[3]

Post-War Immigration to Britain: The Historical Context

Britain, like many of its European neighbours, has experienced considerable uneasiness at the prospect of becoming a country of immigration. Although policy-makers tend to express pride in Britain's comparative success at multiculturalism ('however bad things are in Britain, Europe is surely worse' goes the thinking; see Favell [2001]), Britain's experiment with multiculturalism was, in fact, an unwanted consequence of a desire to retain the British Empire at the end of the Second World War.

Thus, immigration policy prior to 1962 was primarily determined by the concern for maintaining subjecthood linkages with the Old Commonwealth of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This meant the creation of a citizenship status that treated all Commonwealth citizens as subjects and thus technically allowed for the free movement of both Old and New Commonwealth citizens to the United Kingdom. Even in the face of increasing numbers of migrants from the West Indies after the Second World War and pressure from back-bench politicians who were, in turn, under pressure from their constituents to put a halt to black immigration, Conservative governments preferred a quasi-open-door policy so that Britain might preserve Commonwealth linkages. During the race riots in August 1958 and public demands to restrict new migration from the West Indies, politicians continued to uphold the symbolic nature of a common status across the Commonwealth. It must be noted, however, that while maintaining symbolic links to the Commonwealth, governments adopted measures to restrict certain kinds of immigration, namely 'coloured' immigration. These policies were not created in the form of parliamentary acts (adopting policy which openly discriminated between Old and New Commonwealth was perceived as problematical at many different levels) but tended to come about through administrative regulations and government circulars and letters (see Spencer, 1997).[4] Governments *did* debate introducing immigration control but could not reconcile the desire to restrict 'coloured' immigration with the desire to maintain the notion of Britain as being at the centre of 'a great commonwealth of nations' (Paul, 1997, pp. xii–xiii). Indeed, some would argue that it was government itself that politicised the problems associated with coloured immigration in order to show the public the necessity of introducing immigration control (Paul, 1997).

It was not until the adoption of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 – when there were already an estimated 400,000+ migrants from the West Indies,

India and Pakistan – that the British government finally attempted to close the doors to immigration (see Layton-Henry, 1992). The 1962 Act was primarily concerned with halting the flow of *new* immigrants; thus by the time Britain tried to put a stop to immigration, the country already had a multicultural society. In addition, some argue that the Act itself served to create a multiracial, multicultural British society, as it allowed for family reunification and set fairly high quotas on new immigration from the Commonwealth (see Spencer, 1997, ch. 5).

From the time of the 1962 Act, there was a consensus across both the Conservative and Labour parties that strict controls were desirable and necessary. Along with strict controls, however, it was thought that conditions for migrants already living in Britain would need to be improved. Indeed, this has been the mantra of Conservative and Labour governments alike since 1962. Still, while the UK has been far more successful than its European counterparts at restricting immigration, and is less vulnerable to the immigrant-related effects of globalisation and to legal restrictions on political action in the realm of restricting migration (see Hansen, 2000; Joppke, 1999), new immigrants have indeed come. Some of these are individuals from former colonies who have come to join family members, but many others are from countries that were never British colonies, like those who have come from Central Europe or Iraq with the initial purpose of seeking asylum.

In general, it can be argued that immigration policy in Britain has been fundamentally driven by conflicting notions of citizenship: those related to the notion of Commonwealth membership and those related to race (see Hampshire, 2005; Paul, 1997; see also Joppke, 1997; 1999).[5] For instance, the British Nationality Act of 1948 contained an extraordinarily inclusive citizenship norm which was maintained until it was finally completely discredited and dismantled by the British Nationality Act of 1981. The original notion of citizenship in Britain as outlined in the 1948 Act was one that provided citizens of the UK and its colonies with a common citizenship. However, this conception of British citizenship became increasingly conservative over time – under both Labour and Conservative governments. It moved from exclusion based on the place from which one's passport was issued (Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962) to quasi-ancestry (Commonwealth Immigrants Bill 1968) to clear ancestry with the new concept of patriality (Immigration Act 1971). Plus, there were increasing restrictions between 1971 and 1974 as the rhetoric of Enoch Powell helped move the Conservative party into a more restrictionist mode. Thus, an initially liberal legal conception of citizenship was converted into one that made clear the importance of ancestry and heritage (and in particular, the heritage of the stock of people who had initially migrated to the Old Commonwealth) (see Hansen, 2000; Layton-Henry, 1992). As argued by Christian Joppke, 'Forced to define who belongs, British immigration policy resorted to birth and ancestry, thus introducing an ethnic marker that had so far been absent from the definition of Britishness' (Joppke, 1999, p. 105).

Finally, in keeping with the need to bring citizenship law in line with migration law and with the acceptance of the near collapse of direct colonial/commonwealth ties, the British Nationality Act of 1981 completely revamped the notion of citizenship and – arguably – the notion of what it meant to be British. While all previous legislation held on to the category of Citizen of the UK and Commonwealth (CUKC) and to the notion of subjecthood, the 1981 Act abolished the former and almost completely abolished the latter as well. A new category, UK Citizen, was established and specified a more standard form of citizenship. Essentially, a child born in the UK would be granted British citizenship if either their mother or father was a British citizen or settled in the UK, and naturalisation for those without kinship linkages was made relatively easy. As discussed above, however, it was expected that this liberal citizenship regime would coincide with a very strict initial entry policy (see Hansen, 2000, ch. 9). Moreover, despite clear hostility to the admission of individuals of different races and ethnic backgrounds in the early post-Second World War era, there appears to be greater official acceptance of Britain as multicultural than in the past – although it must be noted that official multicultural policies may be in retreat, in part because of a lack of public support for such projects (Joppke, 2004).

Reflecting the restrictionist sentiments of elites, the British public has also clearly leaned toward preferring restrictions on immigration. For instance, the 1970 British Election Study found that roughly 90 per cent of voters claimed to be hostile to further immigration to the UK (Saggar, 2003, p. 179), a figure which very likely reflects opposition to further immigration from the New Commonwealth. This figure appears to have declined to roughly 65 per cent favouring a reduction in immigration in 1995 – perhaps in response to the greater acceptance of Commonwealth migrants who had become fairly established by then. However, hostility is on the increase, as by 2003, almost 75 per cent were supportive of reductions in immigration (McLaren and Johnson, 2004, p. 172). Again, this more recent figure may reflect the changed nature of the composition of new immigrants – rather than coming almost exclusively from the Commonwealth, Britain has experienced a rise in migration from Africa, non-Commonwealth Asian countries, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.[6] The high levels of opposition to further immigration raise the question of why some Britons are more hostile to newcomers than others. Providing a clear answer to this question may give policy-makers insight into the nature of the threats that non-minorities feel, and – in turn – information regarding how better to address these fears. Using the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2003, we thus analyse the reasons for hostility to immigration in Britain. We first turn to a discussion of the possible explanations for variation in opinion regarding immigration.

Explaining Anti-Immigration Hostility: Theoretical Perspectives

Since the end of the Second World War, immigrants have become Western Europe's new minorities. In the British case, much of the early post-war

migration (excluding migrants from Ireland) was from the non-Anglo countries of the New Commonwealth, but recent years have seen a steady intake of non-Commonwealth immigrants. Although the UK government has emphasised Britain's need for migrant workers in many sectors of the economy, these individuals are often viewed in terms of threat. The dimensions of potential threat will be outlined here. It must be noted that while the construct being examined here is attitudes toward immigrants rather than attitudes toward asylum seekers, it is entirely possible that most ordinary citizens do not distinguish between these legal and theoretical dimensions. Even within the realm of policy-making in Britain, there appears to be 'a zealous and instant equation of asylum seeking with immigration' (Joppke, 1997, p. 264), with British asylum policy being structurally conflated with immigration control (Joppke, 1997, p. 285). Moreover, analyses of survey data indicate that the vast majority of citizens of the UK prefer that economic immigrants and asylum seekers be treated identically.[7] Thus, all reference to attitudes to immigration will be assumed to imply both those who have come to Britain for the sake of permanent settlement as well as those who have come seeking political asylum.

Competition for Resources: Individual-Level

We begin with approaches that revolve around notions of self-interest. In general terms, self-interest is often argued to be connected to attitude formation and behaviour. The approach clearly has logical appeal in that it seems highly likely that people consider their own interests first and develop positions on policy based on those interests. Indeed, evidence indicates that individuals tend to be rather instrumental in their attitudes to people with AIDS (Crandall *et al.*, 1997), gun control (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998), speed limits (Johansson-Stenman and Martinsson, 2005) and tax referenda (Sears and Citrin, 1985). Early work on voting behaviour also contended that vote choices were fundamentally driven by self-interest (Berelson *et al.*, 1954; Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Downs, 1957; Kramer, 1971; Tufte, 1978), and later work has indicated that candidates for office can themselves motivate voters to vote with their pocketbooks (Lau *et al.*, 1990).

Research on attitudes to minorities in the United States has also tended to point to self-interest and particularly individual-level competition for resources as a key explanation for hostility to minorities. Namely, it is contended that conflict between ethnic or racial groups is fundamentally perceived in terms of such competition (Bobo, 1983; 1988). As argued by Rachel Gibson,

> Members of the ingroup ... enjoy privileged access to scarce resources such as jobs, power, money, welfare benefits, and housing. If this access or status is challenged, however, by competition from outgroups then prejudice is manifested, as a tool to retain their grip on the 'good life' (Gibson, 2002, p. 72).

Findings from Europe and the US also point to the importance of self-interest in determining attitudes to immigration (van Dalen and Henkens, 2005; Espenshade

and Hempstead, 1996; Fetzer, 2000). With regard to the latter, it is argued that competition exists between members of the native population with lower levels of job and educational skills, on the one hand, and immigrants, on the other. Immigrants tend to be perceived as mostly unskilled workers who are willing to perform jobs at lower levels of pay than natives, placing the latter at risk of unemployment (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; see Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993 for a review of findings from the United States). As argued by Rita Simon (1987), immigrants pose the greatest threat to those of lower status – defined in terms of education, skill level and income – because those of lower status fear competition for jobs, housing, schools and social services (see also Hoskin and Mishler, 1983). Peter Burns and James Gimpel (2000) further contend that it may be the case that wealth also insulates individuals from economic pressures of low-skilled, immigrant labour flow: 'higher-income people are more secure in the labor market than the poor' (p. 205). Bivariate findings and qualitative analyses from the UK confirm that poorer, less educated members of the white majority are significantly more likely to be hostile to immigrants, minorities and asylum seekers (Lewis, 2005; Saggar, 2003, p. 185). Thus, based upon general self-interest arguments and research specifically on attitudes to minorities and immigrants, it is expected that individuals at the lowest levels of skill, income and education would indeed be the most worried about immigration and thus the most hostile to it.

Competition for Resources: Group-Level

Although it is often assumed that attitudes to social and political policies tend to be fundamentally driven by self-interest, a considerable body of research has developed that indicates that many of these attitudes are formed based on perceptions of the effect of policies on society as a whole (see Sears and Funk, 1990). For instance, while attitudes to government-sponsored social welfare programmes are partly dependent on self-interest, they are also explained by perceptions of societal interests and needs (Funk, 2000; Gelissen, 2000). Moreover, literature on voting behaviour has consistently shown that economic self-interest plays very little role in influencing how individuals vote. Instead, voting behaviour tends to be more strongly determined by perceptions of the national economic outlook as a whole, introducing the possibility that concern for society rather than personal interest is the key factor explaining how people decide to vote (Kiewiet and Rivers, 1984; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; 1981; Lewis-Beck, 1988).[8]

These findings point to the conclusion that attitudes to immigration may similarly be driven by group interest. Anti-immigration hostility may, in fact, stem from concerns about the loss of resources of one's ingroup. That is, even if the individual is not personally under threat of competition for jobs, housing, etc., they may worry that others within their key ingroup are actually in such competition. Resource-based favouritism may, therefore, be connected to ingroup protectiveness more than self-protection. This approach – group conflict

theory (Blumer, 1958) – takes as its assumption that perceptions of minority groups are seen in terms of the groups' potential for conflict with one's key ingroup; in essence, members of minority groups tend to be perceived as taking resources that 'belong to' one's own group. Such arguments are especially relevant in the case of immigrants (Quillian, 1995) because these individuals are seen as newcomers who threaten the jobs and benefits of established native-born citizens. Indeed, findings from studies of US attitudes to immigration point to the conclusion that sociotropic concerns about the economy are far more powerful than personal economic circumstances in explaining anti-immigration hostility (Citrin *et al.*, 1997; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996).

Symbols, Identity and Race

It must also be recognised, however, that key sources of threat – particularly when referring to minority groups and immigrants – may not, in fact, be economic or resource-based in nature. Instead, the threat posed by minorities and immigrants may be rather symbolic in nature and may stem from concerns about the loss of certain values or ways of life because of the presence of minority groups and immigrants. For instance, attitudes to bussing and affirmative action in the United States have been shown to be motivated by symbols or general values rather than self-interest (Bobo, 1983; Kluegel and Smith, 1983; Sears *et al.*, 1979; 1980); in addition, attitudes to minority candidates for public office tend to be driven by 'symbolic racism' rather than racial threat to one's personal life (Kinder and Sears, 1981; Sears and Kinder, 1971). Moreover, exclusionary reactions to immigrant minorities in Western Europe and the United States have been shown to be far more strongly related to the more symbolic concern about cultural threat and maintenance of cultural unity and distinctiveness than to individual or collective economic threat (Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993; Fetzer, 2000; Gibson, 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Lahav, 2004; Sniderman *et al.*, 2004).[9] As Kai Erikson (1966) argues, communities occupy not only a defined geographical space and develop an 'ethos' or 'way'; these set the community apart as a special place, providing an important point of reference for its members.

Empirical research on social identity theory points to the conclusion that identities are terribly important to individuals, and that individuals protect these identities even if they have no realistic meaning (that is, have been created by experimental design) and even if the individuals in question receive no financial benefit from them (Monroe *et al.*, 2000; Tajfel, 1970; Turner *et al.*, 1987; 1994; Turner, 1982; 1985). Outside of the experimental context, it is contended that people use established identities to provide a clear sense of self (see Sniderman *et al.*, 2004). Those identities tend to have their basis in perceptions of differences, particularly differences in values and approaches to life, and holders of identity are protective of such perceived distinctiveness. Thus, new immigrants and minorities in Britain are likely to be perceived as having fundamentally different values and ways of life that are a potential threat to the way of life in Britain. Namely, the

religious practices and general belief systems of people from religious traditions not the norm in Britain, such as Islam, may be a concern for many non-minority British citizens. And similarly customs and practices such as arranged marriages are likely to be inconsistent with the 'British' way of doing things. Indeed, qualitative analyses from Britain indicate that those who are hostile to asylum seekers do tend to express worries about changes to the British way of life, loss of British identity and degradation of community as a result of the presence of asylum seekers (Lewis, 2005).

In addition to concerns about changes in values resulting from immigration, it is likely that at least some portion of British citizens will feel negatively about immigration because they associate it with *non-white* immigration. It is clear that even among the elites in Britain in the decades following the Second World War, immigration by those of non-European descent was to be discouraged because of the perceived social problems created by non-white immigrants – e.g. racial violence was generally thought to be a result of having non-whites in the country and so the way to avoid such violence was to restrict non-white entry into the UK (see Spencer, 1997). Moreover, it is contended that elites in the 1950s racialised the notion of immigration such that immigration came to be equated with 'coloured' immigration; in addition, government officials argued that 'coloured workers' found employment difficult to obtain because of their 'low output ... high rate of turnover ... irresponsibility, quarrelsomeness and lack of discipline', 'coloured' women were described as 'slow mentally' and 'coloured' men as 'more volatile in temperament than white workers ... more easily provoked to violence ... lacking in stamina', and generally 'not up to the standards required by British employers' (quoted in Paul, 1997, p. 134). It was also contended that unchecked colonial migration would produce 'a significant change in the racial character of the English people' and that 'a large coloured community as a noticeable feature of [the nation's] social life' was 'certainly no part of the concept of England or Britain to which people of British stock throughout the Commonwealth are attached' and might well 'weaken the sentimental attachment of the older self-governing countries to the UK' (quoted in Paul, 1997, p. 143). James Hampshire (2005, p. 79) also notes that 'coloured' immigrants became connected with 'welfare parasitism', even though government reports indicated that immigrants from the New Commonwealth did not experience disproportionate levels of unemployment and were not a significant drain on welfare services. Given this historical context and the clear association traditionally made between immigration and race among British politicians, we would expect that the desire to restrict immigration could still be partly connected to fears related to allowing non-whites into the country.

Crime

Connected to the notions of realistic conflict and conflict over symbols is the notion that immigrants and minorities are associated with criminal activity. In a

symbolic sense, immigrants are often perceived as failing to share the fundamental law-abiding values of the native population, and thus may be perceived as shirking the law. At the same time, some of this concern may be related to fears that one will become a victim of crime. However, as Paul Sniderman *et al.* (2004) find in the case of the Netherlands, perceived threats to the safety of the individual and to the group as a whole are only very weakly related to anti-immigrant hostility. Thus, this article will assume that any connection between expressions of fear of increased criminal activity and immigration is likely to be mostly symbolic in nature.[10]

It has been well documented that the British public are substantially more worried about crime than the actual levels of crime would suggest they should be. According to data from the British Crime Survey for 2002–3, 73 per cent of people thought that crime in the country as a whole had increased over the past two years and 38 per cent actually thought it had increased 'a lot'. This is despite the fact that according to BCS estimates there has been a consistent downward trend in levels of crime since 1995. Most interestingly, and of relevance here, is the finding that tabloid readers were much more likely to think the crime rate has increased a lot than broadsheet readers – 43 per cent compared to 26 per cent.[11] Similarly, the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2003 indicates that 82 per cent of tabloid readers want the number of immigrants reduced (and 60 per cent reduced a lot) compared to 57 per cent of broadsheet readers (27 per cent wanting the number reduced a lot). Thus, to the extent that newspapers influence the views of their readership, it seems plausible that the news stories in tabloids are both increasing people's fear of crime and their worries about immigration, and that many readers are consciously or subconsciously linking the two. Moreover, as tabloid readers represent the majority of all newspaper readers, it is not simply a small minority of the population that is likely to be taking such cues from the media.

Data and Measures

To test these potentially competing theories we use data from the 2003 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. This is an annual survey first conducted in 1983. It is a nationally representative probability sample of adults aged eighteen or over living in Britain. The sampling frame comprises the Postcode Address File (PAF) which is a list of addresses (or, more specifically, delivery points) compiled by the Post Office. The sample is limited to those living in private households.

Most of the survey items we use in this article come from a module of questions fielded in the BSA survey as part of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). This is a cross-national programme of research where each member country annually fields an agreed module of questions on a particular topic area. In 2003 the module was on 'National Identity' and contains a number of very useful questions with which we can address our research questions. For the

purposes of this analysis we limit the cases to those respondents who were British citizens and whose parents were British citizens at the time of the respondent's birth.

Attitudes to Immigration

The dependent variable – anti-immigration hostility – is measured with the following item:

- Do you think the number of immigrants to Britain nowadays should be ... increased a lot, increased a little, remain the same as it is, reduced a little, or reduced a lot?

The responses to this survey question are displayed in Table 1, and indicate fairly overwhelming hostility to further immigration – almost three-quarters of the population believe the number of immigrants to Britain should be reduced. Furthermore, just over one half felt that the number should be reduced 'a lot'. Because of the relatively small number of responses to the 'increased' options, the variable has been collapsed into a threefold ordinal measure: the responses of 'increased a lot' and 'increased a little' have been combined with the 'remain as is' response and 'reduced a little' and 'reduced a lot' remain as separate categories. Because of the ordered nature of the response options, we use ordered logistic regression to estimate the effects of the independent variables discussed above.

Table 1: Anti-Immigration Hostility

Number of immigrants to Britain nowadays should be ...	*%*
Increased a lot	1.4
Increased a little	3.5
Remain as it is	14.5
Reduced a little	23.3
Reduced a lot	50.8
N	793

Based on the British Social Attitudes Survey, 2003 (data provided by the National Centre for Social Research).

Competition for Resources: Individual-Level

Individual-level competition for resources in the context of immigrants and immigration tends to refer to level of job skill, income and education. Thus, we measure potential competition-related fears with these variables. Moreover, we expect that the unemployed (those who wish to work and are unable to find jobs)

may feel particularly hostile to immigration because they believe immigrants to be competing with them for jobs. Also, it is expected that – if the individual-level competition argument holds – individuals receiving government benefits such as job seeker's allowance, income support and housing benefits should be most hostile to immigration.

Competition for Resources: Group-Level

Although some research contends that group interest and self-interest are not completely separable (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993), based on the review provided above, this article assumes that in the case of attitudes to immigration, group interest and self-interest may indeed be separable. The following items were combined into a summated index to measure the former:

- Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in Britain.
- Immigrants are generally good for Britain's economy.[12]

The distributions for these questions indicate that 47 per cent thought that immigrants do take jobs away from the British-born, and almost 28 per cent thought that this was not the case. Similarly, 44 per cent thought that immigrants were not good for the British economy while 20 per cent thought that they were. It is also worth noting the high levels of ambivalence, with approximately 25–35 per cent opting for 'neither agree nor disagree'. (Note that in our summated index the coding for the second question was reversed so that agreement represented a more negative view, in line with the first question.)

In addition to investigating the effect of group conflict over resources on anti-immigration hostility, the question of whether group and self-interest are separable when it comes to hostility to immigration in Britain will be explored empirically. Namely, if both sets of variables independently account for feelings about immigration, then both should have statistically significant effects on such attitudes. If, on the other hand, group interest affects anti-immigration hostility but individual-level threat items do not, the latter may still have indirect effects (i.e. be operating through group threat). If the two are conceptually and empirically inseparable, we would expect individual self-interest to explain variation in responses to the group-interest items. More specifically, it is those who are in unskilled work or who are unemployed who should feel most economically threatened by immigrants, as should those with lower incomes and education levels.

Symbols

As argued above, threats to group symbols are also thought to be conceptually and empirically distinct from threats to economic resources. Symbols tend to include things like the way of life and general values that a group holds dear (Sears *et al.*,

1979). The term has also been used to refer to identity itself, such as national identity (McLaren, 2002; 2004). Here we employ three different measures of symbolic threat. The first relates specifically to one religious group, Muslims, and is measured with the following items:

- British Muslims are more loyal to other Muslims around the world than they are to other people in this country (on a five-point agree–disagree scale).
- Some people think that Muslims living in Britain are really committed to Britain; these people would put themselves in box 1. Other people feel that Muslims in Britain could never be really committed to Britain and would put themselves in box 7. Other people have views somewhere in between in boxes 2 to 6. Please can you tell me which number comes closest to your own views about whether Muslims in Britain are really committed to Britain or not (coding reversed and reduced to five points to maintain consistency with other items in this group).
- England/Scotland/Wales would begin to lose its identity if more Muslims came to live in England/Scotland/Wales (on a five-point agree–disagree scale).

These items were chosen because they tap into the perceived values and commitments of one of the key religious minorities in the UK and the degree to which those values and commitments serve as a threat to the identity and distinctiveness of non-Muslim Britons. Although it is entirely possible that hostility to individuals of minority religious groups was directed at different such groups in previous time periods (e.g. Jews and Irish Catholics), we believe that given the post-9/11 climate in the UK in which the 2003 BSA was conducted, Muslims are likely to be the key religious target of those opposed to further immigration to Britain. The three items above are strongly intercorrelated and thus have been combined into an additive index.

In terms of the responses to these items, an overwhelming 62 per cent agreed with the proposition that British Muslims are more loyal to other Muslims around the world, while only 12 per cent disagreed. In addition, 30 per cent of Britons felt Muslims living in Britain were committed to Britain with 47 per cent feeling they could never really be committed to Britain. Finally, 52 per cent thought the country where they live (whether it was England, Scotland or Wales) would begin to lose its identity if more Muslims came to live there. Clearly, there is a considerable degree of hostility to Muslims in Britain and concern that this group poses a threat to the values and identity of non-Muslim citizens.

Because the former set of items focuses exclusively on Muslims, it was determined that a more general measure was also necessary to capture broader feelings of symbolic threat. Thus, another item has also been included as a measure of symbolic threat:

- It is impossible for people who do not share Britain's customs and traditions to become fully British (on a five-point agree–disagree scale).

Even on this more general item, it is clear that the majority of British citizens are indeed worried about maintaining the symbolic connection to things like customs and traditions and are sceptical about the possibility for those of different traditions to become one of them: 54 per cent would agree that it is indeed impossible for those not sharing Britain's customs and traditions to become fully British, while 28 per cent disagreed with this idea.

Due to the importance of race to the immigration debate in Britain (Hampshire, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Spencer, 1997), we have also included an item that taps into generalised attitudes to race:

- People have different views about what it takes to be truly British ... [S]ome say that as well as living in Britain, to be truly British you have to be white – rather than Black or Asian. How much do you agree or disagree with this?

Fifteen per cent of respondents agreed with this proposition, while 72 per cent disagreed. Thus, even based on the frequency distributions alone, it appears that race is far less of a worry than the lack of shared customs and values of immigrants.

Crime

Given the discussion of crime and attitudes to immigration above, we measure anxiety about the relationship between crime and immigration with the following item:

- Immigrants increase crime rates (on a five-point agree–disagree scale).

Nearly two-fifths (38 per cent) of Britons agreed with this statement, over one-quarter disagreed (27 per cent) and a third were ambivalent. Thus, consistent with the findings of Sniderman *et al.* (2004) there appears to be far less concern about the potential criminal activities of immigrants than about their threat to group resources and symbols.[13]

Analysis

The independent variables discussed above have been included in an ordered logistic regression analysis, along with controls for age, gender, region of residence, left–right ideological position[14] and general values of libertarianism–authoritarianism.[15] These results appear in Table 2, and predicted probabilities for each of the response options among the statistically significant independent variables appear in Table 3.[16]

The first important point to note about these results is that none of the individual-level resource items achieves statistical significance. That is, those with better incomes, better educations and higher-status occupations are just as hostile to immigration as their low-status counterparts. Moreover, being unemployed or

Table 2: Explaining Anti-Immigration Hostility, Ordered Logistic Regression Results

	Coef.	*SE*
Competition for resources: individual-level		
Salariat	–0.18	0.23
Routine non-manual	0.20	0.27
Petit bourgeoisie	0.48	0.44
Manual support	0.44	0.40
Household income	–0.03	0.03
CSE	0.51	0.38
O-level	0.58	0.33
A-level	–0.14	0.35
Higher education below degree	0.17	0.34
Degree	0.30	0.38
Unemployed	–0.27	0.53
Receive benefits from government	0.26	0.34
Competition for resources: group-level		
Symbolic threat	0.40	0.07***
Perceptions of Muslims	0.18	0.05***
Impossible for those not sharing British customs to become fully British	0.30	0.10**
Racism	–0.05	0.11
Immigrants increase crime rates	0.46	0.11***
Controls		
Age	0.01	0.01
Female	–0.22	0.20
Scotland	–0.48	0.49
North-east	–0.67	0.54
North-west	–0.68	0.51
Yorkshire-Humber	–0.13	0.49
W. Midlands	–0.36	0.48
E. Midlands	–0.03	0.47
East	–0.12	0.55
South-west	–0.37	0.50
South-east	0.42	0.43
Wales	0.21	0.52
Left–right economic values index	0.03	0.13
Libertarian–authoritarian index	0.46	0.19*
Log-likelihood	–455.50	
LR chi2(30)	337.91	
Psuedo R2	0.27	
N	620	

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$; omitted categories for dummy variables are: working class; no qualifications; and London.*

Table 3: Predicted Probabilities

	Pr ('increased' or 'remain as is')	*Pr ('reduced a little')*	*Pr ('reduced a lot')*
Low degree of economic threat (score of 2)	0.46	0.38	0.16
High degree of economic threat (score of 10)	0.04	0.15	0.81
Difference	*0.42*	*0.23*	*–0.65*
Positive perception of Muslims (score of 3)	0.32	0.42	0.26
Negative perceptions of Muslims (score of 15)	0.05	0.21	0.74
Difference	*0.27*	*0.21*	*–0.48*
Disagree that it is impossible for those who do not share British customs and traditions to become British	0.21	0.41	0.38
Agree that it is impossible for those who do not share British customs and traditions to become British	0.07	0.26	0.67
Difference	*0.14*	*0.15*	*–0.29*
Disagree that immigrants increase crime	0.27	0.42	0.31
Agree that immigrants increase crime	0.06	0.21	0.73
Difference	*0.21*	*0.21*	*–0.42*
Libertarian	0.32	0.41	0.27
Authoritarian	0.07	0.24	0.69
Difference	*0.25*	*0.17*	*–0.42*

Note: Numbers in cells are predicted probabilities for each response, holding all other variables at their means; these were created using Clarify (King et al.*, 2000).*

a recipient of government benefits also appears to make little difference in one's attitudes to immigration. This is consistent with findings on anti-immigration hostility in the US and Europe, which also indicate that personal self-interest plays only a small role in explaining such hostility (Citrin *et al.*, 1997; Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993; Gibson, 2002; see Lahav, 2004, ch. 5 for a summary).

The results presented in Table 2 further indicate that perceptions of threat to group resources posed by immigrants have a significant impact on general feelings about immigration. Those who feel most strongly that immigrants take jobs from British-born citizens and that they do not contribute to the economy as a whole are far more likely to wish to see immigration to Britain reduced a lot. Moreover, the results in Table 3 indicate that the size of the effect of this variable is considerable: those who are at the lowest levels of perceived group threat to resources have a predicted probability of 0.16 of wishing immigration to be reduced a lot, while those who are most worried about ingroup resources have a predicted probability of 0.81 of wishing immigration to be reduced a lot. This

finding is consistent with analyses from the US indicating that 'cost–benefit considerations' of the effect of immigration on social welfare benefits have a powerful effect on opposition to further immigration (Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993).

Moreover, both of the measures of symbolic threat achieve statistical significance. Individuals who question the values and loyalty of Muslims wish to see a more restrictive immigration policy, as do those who think that an individual who does not share British customs can never be truly British, and both of these have sizeable effects on attitudes to immigration (see Table 3).[17] On the other hand, our measure of racism appears to explain very little of the differences in opinion regarding immigration in Britain in this fully specified model. Note that the potential effect of this variable is not being driven out by its collinearity with other independent variables: for instance, the relationship between racism and the feeling that one must share the same customs and traditions in order to be British is 0.35 (Pearson's correlation coefficient); the correlation between the former and worrying about the effects of immigrants on the jobs and social services available to British-born citizens is 0.36; and the correlation between racism and negative perceptions of Muslims is 0.49. Certainly the latter of these is fairly high, and it may be that racism is having an indirect impact on attitudes to immigration via negative stereotypes of Muslims, but in the full model, racism itself appears to have no direct effect.

Finally, it appears that some of the variation in anti-immigration hostility can be explained by concerns about crime. Perceptions that immigrants contribute to the crime rate produce more conservative preferences for immigration control.

The significant findings among the control variables also deserve mention. In fact the only coefficient among these that achieves statistical significance (at the $p \leq 0.05$ level) is that of libertarianism–authoritarianism. Individuals who are more libertarian in their values have a predicted probability of 0.28 of wishing to see immigration reduced a lot while those who are more authoritarian in their leanings desire considerable restrictions on immigration to Britain with a probability of 0.69. This is consistent with research from the US indicating that authoritarianism correlates with negative attitudes to outgroups, including minorities and homosexuals (Altemeyer, 1998; Lambert and Chasteen, 1997; Lippa and Arad, 1999; Whitley, 1999; Whitley and Lee, 2000) and with similar research from the Netherlands (Verkuyten and Hagendoorn, 1998). The findings here confirm that even after factors like group conflict over resources and symbols are taken into account, general feelings of deference to authority and denigration of personal liberty tend to be strongly linked to anti-immigration hostility in Britain. The findings also point to the conclusion that immigrants pose a clear threat to the order that authoritarians crave, above and beyond the threats of criminal activity, resource-based threats and threats to important symbols of Britishness, and that authoritarians place higher value on immigration controls for the sake of maintaining generalised order and state sovereignty.

The findings thus far indicate that worries about immigration do not appear to be based on self-interested concern for the effects of immigration on one's own economic situation. Instead, preferring a strongly restrictive immigration policy appears to be driven mostly by concerns about the group, or British society, as a whole. Namely, people wish to reduce immigration to Britain because they fear that it threatens the values and way of life of the society, because they worry about the economic conditions of their fellow native Britons and because they fear for the effects of crime on British society. As discussed above, these findings are consistent with other research from Western Europe that also points to the importance of more symbolic concerns (Fetzer, 2000; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Lahav, 2004; Sniderman *et al.*, 2004).

However, it is important to return to the contention discussed above, which is that group interest and self-interest are inseparable. We investigate this issue further by focusing on the group-level economic threat variable used in the analysis here. If the survey items measuring group-level economic threat are indeed measuring individual-level threat then we would expect the same factors that measure individual-level interest to explain group-level threat. That is, if individuals think that immigrants have negative effects on the economy mainly because they think immigrants will have a negative effect on their *own* personal economic situation, it should be the economically vulnerable groups discussed above which express the most negative views about the effect of immigrants on the economy. The results in Table 4 indicate that only one of the self-interest-based threat measures achieves statistical significance in explaining fears about the effect of immigrants on the British economy, and that is education. Those who have achieved A-levels, who have been in some higher education, as well as degree holders are less worried about the effects of immigration on the British economy, and it is the degree holders who tend to be the least worried of all. This is consistent with qualitative analyses of attitudes toward asylum seekers in the UK, which indicate that those with less education often express economic concerns related to minorities, immigrants and asylum seekers. Whether the differences across classes are a result of differences in confidence in their own places in the British job market or due to some other factor – e.g. education is thought to make individuals more tolerant of political and social minorities (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993; Nunn *et al.*, 1978; Stouffer, 1955; Sullivan *et al.*, 1982) – is unclear. What *is* clear from the analyses here is that those with higher incomes and those with better job skills are no more or less positive about the role of immigrants in the British economy than are those with low incomes and poor job skills. Moreover, those receiving government benefits and the unemployed fail to express harsher views about the economic consequences of immigration, as would be expected if they were expressing their own self-interested views. That is, British citizens appear mostly to worry about the effects of immigrants on the ingroup as a whole. Again, these results mirror those from Western Europe which point to the conclusion that 'Attitudes to immigration may be based more on national (sociotropic) conditions than on personal threats' and that threats to

Table 4: Predictors of Economic Threat, OLS

	B	*SE*
Salariat	–0.26	0.18
Routine non-manual	–0.06	0.18
Petit bourgeoisie	–0.11	0.31
Manual support	–0.04	0.25
Household income	0.01	0.02
CSE	–0.04	0.24
O-level	0.10	0.21
A-level	–0.51	0.23*
Higher education below degree	–0.64	0.24**
Degree	–1.52	0.25***
Unemployed	–0.11	0.39
Receive benefits from govt	0.08	0.24
Constant	7.11	0.22***
Adj R2	0.09	
Root MSE	1.71	
N	678	

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$; omitted categories are: working class; and no qualifications. Coefficients provided are unstandardised OLS coefficients.*

group advantages 'may work less through realistic conflict over resources than through psychological states that produce animosity toward out-groups' (Lahav, 2004, pp. 192–3).

Conclusions

Since the end of the Second World War, immigration has become a key policy area that increasingly attracts the attention of the British public (Crawley, 2005, p. 6). With the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 and in Britain in 2005, it seems likely that the British authorities will continue to struggle with the general functioning of the country's immigration and multiculturalism policies. The findings presented in this article point to at least three conclusions regarding the immigration-related concerns expressed by British citizens.

First, it is fairly clear that people are not concerned for their own personal well-being when evaluating the immigration issue in Britain. The only piece of evidence that potentially points to the opposite conclusion is that better-educated citizens in Britain are less likely to express fears about the economic effects of migrants on the British economy. It should be noted that the better educated are also less likely to express symbolic fears related to immigration and that education may thus be capturing something other than self-interest (e.g. exposure to diverse

ideas and cultures). The lack of importance of self-interest in explaining hostility to immigration is consistent with a large body of literature from other countries supporting this same contention.

Instead, what *is* of concern is the effect of immigration on society as a whole. The key issues that appear to need further attention on the part of policy-makers in this regard are the economy, crime and symbols of Britishness. Clearly Britons fear that immigrants are threatening the jobs of their fellow citizens and this in turn has an effect on feelings about immigration policy. Although countless government officials have argued emphatically that immigrants do not take existing jobs from natives, it appears that much of the British public either has not heard the message or simply does not believe it. Thus, if the political message is, in fact, true, government will need to go further to *show* that it is true (e.g. through sponsorship of social research that further investigates such questions and provides clear dissemination).

Moreover, criminal activity on the part of immigrants is a concern to British citizens. As shown above, however, the public appears to 'get it wrong' when it comes to estimating the amount of crime and thus may be getting the numbers wrong on criminal activity of immigrants. If so, this is another issue that government can address more emphatically.

The third key concern of Britons when it comes to immigration policy, however, is far more difficult to address head-on. Britons are clearly worried about the symbolic threats of immigrants – the threat of religions that are perceived to emphasise non-British values and a terminal community other than that of Britain, and the threat to shared customs and way of life. Given the importance of such factors in the development of the modern state, we can only speculate that addressing them is a key task for government leaders. This is, in fact, a topic that leaders of both major parties have begun to address; however, given the fairly overwhelming expression of fear about the values and commitments of Muslims in particular and hostility to the notion that those who do not share the customs and traditions of Britons can be British, along with the unchangeable fact of multiculturalism in Britain, the issue will very likely need to be addressed more definitively.[18]

At the same time, it must be noted that some researchers are finding evidence of a 'new tolerant minority' in Britain (Evans, 2002). Increasing levels of education appear to be producing younger generations who are more open to social and cultural diversity. Our findings point to the conclusion that there is still some way to go when it comes to creating a tolerant majority, but they have also provided some indication of the aspects of public concerns that policy-makers must address in creating such a majority.

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Notes

1 Data from the British Election Study for the 2001 and 2005 elections are enlightening. In 2001 the proportion of respondents citing either immigration or asylum seekers as the 'most important issue facing the country at the present time' was 2 per cent. In 2005 this proportion was 22 per cent.

2 By multiculturalism, we refer both to multiculturalism as a fact – i.e. the presence of people of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds within a single political system – and as a policy – i.e. official recognition and support for the preservation (or at least partial preservation) of the distinctive heritages of a country's minorities (see Citrin *et al.*, 2001 for an overview of the meanings of multiculturalism).

3 The diversity versus solidarity controversy is too lengthy to outline completely here, but among the many intriguing arguments *against* policies that promote extreme multiculturalism (or the complete maintenance of cultural distinctiveness) is that one only need look at the US system, in which middle-class whites are unwilling to contribute to social welfare systems via higher taxes because they perceive that most of those benefits go to people who are not like them; that is, a lack of social solidarity produces considerable difficulty in the functioning of social welfare systems and ultimately in the functioning of the political system as a whole. The worry is that Britain is beginning to head down this particular route (see the article by Nick Pearce at http://www.ippr.org.uk/articles/index.asp?id=464 [accessed 15 July 2006]). See also the article by David Goodhart at http://www.guardian.co.uk/race/story/0,11374,1154684,00.html [accessed 15 July 2006].

4 See Spencer (1997, ch. 4) for a description of the difficulties posed by the prospect of adopting a clear immigration policy.

5 This is not to say that immigration policy in other countries is disconnected from citizenship policy (see, for instance, Brubaker, 1992; Fulbrook and Cesarani, 1996).

6 See http://www.statistics.gov.uk.

7 For instance, in a Eurobarometer poll from Spring 2000 (EB 53), over 70 per cent of British respondents would suggest identical treatment for people coming from Muslim countries and Eastern Europe seeking work as they would for asylum seekers. This is true even when the question about asylum is posed in terms of individuals fleeing from serious internal conflict (e.g. civil war).

8 In addition, recent analyses indicate that perceptions of national threat have a far more powerful impact on perceptions of the consequences of and possible solutions to terrorism than feelings of personal risk from terrorism (Huddy *et al.*, 2002).

9 Research on attitudes to other issues and policies also points to the conclusion that – particularly when self-interest is less clear – people tend to rely on symbolic predispositions. For instance, attitudes to trade policy appear to be symbolically driven by national identity for many Americans (Rankin, 2001; 2004), and perceptions of globalisation tend to be driven by values and ideology rather than economic self-interest (Wolfe and Mendelsohn, 2005), while attitudes to the national government's participation in war has been shown to be driven by symbolic perceptions rather than self-interest (Lau *et al.*, 1978).

10 In fact Lewis (2005) finds strong qualitative evidence that worries about crime and asylum seeking are connected even though none of the participants in her study had been victims of crimes committed by asylum seekers.

11 Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003; http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb703.pdf

12 The authors acknowledge the potential validity problems (raised by Sniderman *et al.*, 2004) in using predictors that fail to decouple immigration from general threat. However, the items used here are currently the only ones available in the study of British attitudes to immigration (other than items in the European Social Survey, which also fails to include decoupled items) and the authors believe that they are able to provide at least some initial indications of the relevance of the theoretical constructs analysed here.

13 Unfortunately, the 2003 BSA does not contain any indicators of whether the respondent has been a victim of crime, and so this potential relationship cannot be investigated.

14 This is an additive index consisting of the following items (see Evans *et al.*, 1996; Heath *et al.*, 1994 for further information about the methodological and theoretical construction of the index):

- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.
- Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers.

- Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth.
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.
- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.

15 This is also an additive index consisting of the following items (see Heath *et al.*, 1994; Evans *et al.*, 1996 for further information about the methodological and theoretical construction of the index):

- Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values.
- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.
- For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence.
- Schools should teach children to obey authority.
- The law should be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong.
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.

16 These were created using Clarify (King *et al.*, 2000).

17 See Espenshade and Calhoun (1993); Citrin *et al.* (1997) for the effects of symbolic concerns in anti-immigration sentiment in the United States.

18 Although it is difficult to find examples of good political communications that promote social tolerance, it is not too difficult to find examples of potentially problematic political communications. For instance, at a time when government officials were attempting to establish the necessity of further economic immigration, the then Home Secretary David Blunkett appeared to wage a concerted effort at undermining previous understandings of multiculturalism by suggesting that immigrants speak English in their own homes, advising Asians to stop making arranged marriages in their home countries and make them within the UK instead, and comparing Muslim forced marriages with practices of medieval England. At the very least then, government appeared to be sending rather mixed messages about immigration and minorities.

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