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Comparative European research has established that public opposition to immigration is widespread and politically important. However, most existing research has suffered from a serious methodological shortcoming: it employs aggregate measures of attitudes to immigrants, which do not distinguish between different migrant groups. This paper corrects this shortcoming by examining disaggregated British attitudes to migration from seven different regions. I find evidence for a consistent hierarchy of preferences between immigrant groups, with white and culturally more proximate immigrant groups less opposed than non-white and culturally more distinct immigrants. The differences in attitudes to the various migrant groups are very large, calling into question the reliability of analyses which employ aggregate measures of attitudes to immigration. Both total opposition to migration and discrimination between migrant groups decline during the period examined. This is the result of large generational differences in attitudes to immigrants, which are in turn the consequence of cohort differences in education levels, ethnic diversity and, in particular, value orientations. Younger Britons, who are on average less authoritarian and ethnocentric, oppose immigration less and regard different immigrant groups more equally.

Keywords: Immigration; Discrimination; Ethnic Hierarchy; Britain; Race; Generational Change

Introduction

Immigration has become a hotly debated issue in Europe, as increased international mobility, population ageing and political instability in the developing world have all

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contributed to unprecedented flows of migrants (Castles and Miller 2003). Academic research has documented widespread European hostility to immigrants (Coenders *et al.* 2004), and linked it with increases in support for the extreme right (Norris 2005; Van Der Brug *et al.* 2000). However, existing work in this area is limited by current survey data, which have focused on attitudes to 'immigrants' as an undifferentiated mass, despite strong reasons to believe that European citizens regard migrants from some regions as more acceptable than others (Sniderman *et al.* 2004). This article contributes the first analysis of British attitudes to migrants disaggregated by region of origin, utilising data gathered between 1983 and 1996. I show that there are large and consistent differences in attitudes to migrant groups, with white migrants preferred to non-whites and a hierarchy of preferences between groups within each racial category. I also find large generational differences in opposition to migration in general and in discrimination against less-favoured migrant groups, as a result of education, diversity and value change. Younger Britons are much less likely to hold the authoritarian and ethnocentric values strongly correlated with both general opposition to migration and discriminatory migration preferences.

Why Might Some Immigrants be Preferred to Others? Theories and Evidence

There is now a wide range of survey data on attitudes to immigration in Britain and Europe (Coenders *et al.* 2004). Analyses of these data (Ivarsflaten 2005; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007) have shown that public opposition to immigration is widespread, and is particularly intense among the less educated, the working classes and those who feel migrants represent a threat to the national culture (Ivarsflaten 2005: 42). However, the data employed generally ask only about 'immigrants' as an aggregate group, ignoring the diversity of migration flows. Where some effort is made to be more specific about origins, the resulting questions often still conflate distinct migrant streams. For example the Eurobarometer survey asks about 'immigration from outside the EU', while the European Social Survey asks about 'poorer countries in Europe' and 'outside Europe'. In the British case, 'immigration from outside the EU' pools together significant migration flows from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Africa, America and Australia; 'poorer countries outside Europe' would only exclude the last two groups in this list. Even when disaggregated items are available, researchers often reaggregate them into an overall scale of immigration attitudes, which is only justifiable if we can accept that these items are just different measures of the same underlying construct.

When such aggregated items are analysed, we do not know what kind of immigrants respondents had in mind when they responded to the survey. This is not a problem if all immigrants are regarded similarly. Yet there is now a growing body of evidence from two main sources suggesting that this is not the case.

A long line of research on ethnic identity, originating in the United States (Alba 1985; Bogardus 1925) but now widely replicated, has shown that there are systematic

patterns of preference between ethnic groups in diverse societies. These 'ethnic hierarchies' are based on proximity to the majority or dominant group, which is inevitably at the top of the hierarchy. So in America, the pioneering research of Emile Bogardus (1925) showed that individuals preferred to socialise and live among those ethnic groups the most closely associated with the dominant White Ango-Saxon Protestant group—such as those of British, Dutch or German origin—while seeking to avoid those groups who were racially, religiously or linguistically different from the dominant group—such as African Americans, Latinos or Jews. Similar patterns have been found in Canada (Berry and Kalin 1995), Holland (Verkuyten *et al.* 1996) and the former Soviet Union (Hagendoorn *et al.* 1998).

American research has uncovered two long-term trends: a consistency in the overall ranking of ethnic groups, accompanied by decline in the levels of discrimination between groups. Kleg and Yamamoto (1998) found that their sample of Americans ranked ethnic groups in almost exactly the same order as Bogardus' (1925) respondents did 70 years previously. However, while the ranking of groups remained consistent, the overall differences in social distance from the most- and the least-favoured groups fell sharply. While some still discriminate, and do so against the same groups, contemporary Americans are much more likely than their grandparents to treat different ethnic groups equally. The emerging field of 'whiteness studies' in America has also provided in-depth insights into how new immigrant groups become aware of the ethnic hierarchy operating in American society, and adapted by adopting behaviours associated with the dominant group, while distancing themselves from stigmatised groups at the bottom of the hierarchy (Alba 1985; Roedinger 2005).

Ethnicity research would therefore lead us to expect that immigrants who are more distinct from the dominant group on a range of dimensions will receive a more hostile reception. Recent studies by Sides and Citrin (2007) and Ivarsflaten (2005) have provided indirect evidence in favour of this hypothesis. Both studies find that a preference for cultural unity is the strongest predictor of hostility to immigration in a wide range of European societies. A logical implication of this finding is that immigrants from more culturally distinctive regions, who pose a greater threat to cultural unity, will be more opposed than immigrants from more similar regions. Research on British attitudes to asylum-seekers has shown how similar arguments, often with an explicitly racist element, are used by those hostile to their settlement (Lewis 2004). In a pioneering experimental study, Sniderman *et al.* (2004) have demonstrated that Dutch hostility to immigrants is greatly magnified simply by describing the migrant group in cultural rather than economic terms. As the ethnicity literature would lead us to expect, these studies all find that different immigrants are treated differently, with more racially and culturally distinct migrants attracting more opposition. However, none of the studies has attempted to disaggregate attitudes to different immigrant groups and directly compare how immigrants' origins affect their reception.

Do the British Discriminate Between Immigrant Groups? Evidence from Public and Elite Reactions

Britain has long experience with mass immigration, with large numbers of migrants arriving from the early 1950s, many years before other European economies—recovering from the devastation of World War II—began to import labour. From the beginning, migration to Britain was diverse, with migrants arriving from a wide range of countries and continents, including Ireland, Mediterranean Europe, Australia, the West Indies, South Asia and, most recently, Eastern Europe. Has the British public discriminated between these diverse migrant groups, accepting some while rejecting others? I review evidence from two sources. Firstly, evidence on the public reactions to different migrant groups, which is limited and indirect as, prior to this study, there has been little effort to disaggregate British public opinion about immigration. Secondly, evidence from studies of elite discourse and policy formulation, where a larger evidence base exists.

Different migrant groups have excited very different public reactions in Britain. In particular, non-white immigration has been far more opposed than white immigration. While significant early settlements of Polish wartime refugees, and labour flows from Mediterranean Europe and above all Ireland sparked little organised public resistance, hostility to migrants from South Asia and the Caribbean was vociferous from the outset. On a number of occasions, this hostility spilled over into violent 'race riots' in areas such as Notting Hill (1958), Toxteth and Brixton (1981) and Bradford and Burnley (2001), where black and Asian immigrants and their British-born descendents were concentrated (Cantle 2001; Layton-Henry 1992). While Irish migrants have met sporadic hostility, particularly in regions with a history of sectarian tension such as Glasgow, there have never been riots against white immigrants on this scale. Similarly, the political focus of both Enoch Powell's movement against immigration (Schoen 1977), and far-right mobilisations by the National Front in the 1970s (Husbands 1983) and the British National Party (BNP) since 1999 (Eatwell and Goodwin 2009) has been on non-white immigrants.

Some have argued that this hostility to non-white immigration is driven principally by fear that migrants will compete successfully with native workers for jobs and government resources (Citrin *et al.* 1997; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Yet no political movement has ever mobilised in opposition to the settlement of Irish, European or Australian immigrants, despite their often larger numbers and presumably equal ability to compete for economic resources. Even in the late 2000s, with East European migrants outnumbering non-white migrants more than three to one, the main focus of the BNP's campaigns has remained non-white immigrants and Muslim minorities, and their electoral support remains concentrated in areas with large Muslim populations (Ford and Goodwin 2010). There is thus strong evidence of a racial division in public attitudes to immigration, with non-white migrants attracting much more passionate and organised opposition than white migrants. However, the indirect information we have on public opinion means

we have little idea whether the British citizenry have distinguished between different migrant groups *within* racial categories. There is, however, evidence that British policy-makers have done precisely that.

There have been a number of excellent studies of immigration policy-making (for example, Hampshire 2005; Hansen 2000; Layton-Henry 1992; Saggar 1992; Somerville 2007), which shed considerable light on how and why British political elites have distinguished between different immigrant groups. From the onset of significant postwar migration to Britain, British policy-makers, like the British public, have shown a preference for white over non-white immigrants (Hampshire 2005). This preference conflicted with an expansive imperial ideology, still strongly held by sections of the post-WWII elite and reflected in the very liberal and inclusive definition of citizenship laid out in the 1948 British Nationality Act, which conferred unrestricted British citizenship rights on hundreds of millions of people living in former British colonies. The link between British citizenship and the former British Empire was retained in some form for 35 years after this, until finally severed by the passage of the 1983 British Nationality Act. During this whole 35-year period, during which the majority of primary migration from the Caribbean and South Asia occurred, British policy-makers were engaged in a more or less explicit effort to reform this framework so as to restrict migration from non-white former colonies while retaining migration rights for the citizens of white former colonies.

Policy-makers' preferences were not formed on racial lines alone. There is also evidence that elites have discriminated between migrant groups within racial categories. Among white immigrants, the Irish have always held a privileged status, with unrestricted settlement rights. These were defended throughout all the early rounds of immigration reform, on the grounds of the 'historical, racial and geographical links' between Britain and Ireland (Hampshire 2005: 27). Immigrants from the white-majority former colonies of the 'Old Commonwealth' were also privileged. Indeed, the perceived importance of upholding their migration rights was a principal reason why the imperial notion of citizenship was not abandoned once public opposition to black and Asian migration became clear. These special rights were defended because, in the words of Conservative Home Secretary Reginald Maudling, Old Commonwealth citizens were 'kith and kin' who had an 'ancestral connection with the United Kingdom' (Hampshire 2005: 40). Policy-makers may also have defended Old Commonwealth migration rights to ensure that British citizens would continue to enjoy opportunities to emigrate to such countries. Many exercised these opportunities—over one million Britons migrated to Australia alone between 1950 and 1970. This in turn may have fostered more supportive public attitudes to migrants from these countries, as many British families would know someone who had migrated in the other direction.

Since the 1970s, the focus of British foreign policy has moved from the Commonwealth to the European Union. Britain's accession to the then EEC in 1973 meant granting unrestricted migration rights to the citizens of other EEC members, even as these same rights were being withdrawn from black and Asian

citizens of former British colonies. It is telling that this massive extension of immigration rights to a range of countries which had never before enjoyed them excited very little political debate, and is given little attention by the major studies of British immigration policy. Since accession, there has been a steady flow of migrants from Western Europe to Britain, which accelerated as Britain's economic performance improved in the 1990s and 2000s. By 2008, the population of West European migrants had grown to 850,000—larger than the Indian-born migrant community (Ellis 2009). The lack of policy-maker and public interest in West European migrants suggests that they are widely regarded as acceptable in a way that non-white migrants are not. Free movement within the European Union has also worked in both directions: Britons have emigrated in large numbers, in particular to France and Spain.[1] This in turn may have fostered more positive views of these countries and a greater openness to accepting their migrants.

While West European migrants have been uncontroversial, recent migration from Eastern Europe has been contentious. The influx of migrants from the region which followed Britain's 2004 decision to grant settlement rights to nations from the region on their accession to the EU far exceeded policy-maker expectations—by the end of 2007, over 600,000 were resident in the UK (Ellis 2009). This wave of arrivals has generated considerably more public and policy-maker attention than any previous influx of white immigrants. Eastern European arrivals are monitored through a Home Office registration scheme, and have been the subject of considerable media attention. It is not clear, however, whether this attention is the result of more negative views about Eastern European migrants, or simply due to the unprecedented scale of their inflow.

There is also some evidence of differential reactions to non-white migrant groups, at least in the early debates over migration in the 1950s. Hansen documents a greater willingness in Whitehall to defend the migration of West Indians whom they regarded as harder working and more 'British' than migrants from South Asia (Hansen 2000: 85). Reference to the greater 'Britishness' of West Indians in these debates suggest that the greater cultural and linguistic proximity of Caribbean islanders may have contributed to this preference. More recently, political debate on community cohesion and immigrant integration has focused on the religiously and culturally distinct Muslim immigrant minorities, who are thus implicitly or explicitly regarded as more problematic than other ethnic minority groups (Saggar 2009). The idea that Muslims are seen as more 'threatening' than Afro-Caribbeans is also supported by analysis of support for the extreme-right BNP, whose success is strongly correlated with the local presence of large Muslim populations but negatively correlated with the presence of a large Afro-Caribbean community (Ford and Goodwin 2010).

The existing literature on Britain thus strongly supports the argument that the British do not view all immigrants equally. There is a long-established preference for white over non-white immigration, reflected both in the reactions of the British public to migrant settlement and in the behaviour of elite policy-makers since 1948.

There is also evidence of preferences among elite policy-makers for more culturally proximate groups within racial categories. Among white immigrants, the defence of unrestricted Irish migration and efforts to exempt 'Old Commonwealth' countries such as Australia from migration controls suggest that these groups are particularly favoured. Western European migration has also been less-politically controversial than the recent wave of Eastern European settlement. Whitehall policy-makers in the early period of migration were also more willing to defend migration from the English-speaking Caribbean islands than more culturally and linguistically distinct South Asians, a distinction which has re-emerged in recent public debates over the alleged failure of South Asian Muslims to integrate into British society.

If there is an 'ethnic hierarchy' operating in Britain, what does this research suggest it looks like? Immigrants from the white, English-speaking nations with strong historical links to Britain—Ireland and the Old Commonwealth—have enjoyed the most favourable treatment from policy-makers. So we can expect them to be at the top. The large flows of migrants to and from Western Europe over recent decades, which have been accepted with little resistance from the public or policy-makers, suggest that migrants from these countries should also be high up the hierarchy. However, Eastern Europeans have been the cause of more controversy, suggesting that migrants from this region are more negatively regarded. Linguistic and cultural similarity may also encourage acceptance of non-white migrants, in which case Afro-Caribbeans may be preferred to South Asians.

Explaining Discrimination Between Migrant Groups: Education, Diversity and Values

Public attitudes towards immigrants and discrimination between migrant groups are not likely to be monolithic and unchanging phenomena, and may be influenced by a range of factors. I focus on three major influences which are likely to have an important impact on opposition to immigration in general and discrimination between migrant groups: education, diversity and values. The distribution of these factors across generations suggests a further hypothesis: there should be large cohort differences in attitudes to immigrants, with younger generations more open to immigration and less likely to discriminate between migrant groups.

A range of research shows that more-educated people, particularly those with university degrees, are less likely to express racial prejudice or discriminate against minorities (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Vogt 1997). I expect such a tolerant viewpoint to extend to immigrants, resulting in a more welcoming attitude to all migrants and less discrimination between migrants from different regions. Education levels in Britain have risen very rapidly since WWII: the proportion reporting that they left school with no qualifications at all falls from over two-thirds in the oldest cohorts to around 10 per cent in the youngest, while the proportion who have attended university more than triples. This massive expansion in education levels

may therefore have prompted a generational shift to more open and tolerant attitudes among the younger, more-educated cohorts.

Social and political values are also strongly associated with attitudes towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. Two sets of values are likely to be particularly important: authoritarianism (Adorno *et al.* 1950; Altemeyer 1995) and ethnocentrism (Kam and Kinder 2007; Levinson 1949). Authoritarians value conformity and homogeneity, and will oppose immigration as it threatens these. They may also discriminate more between migrant groups, as they may regard more-culturally distinct migrants as the greater threat to the social order they prize. Ethnocentrists divide the world into an ingroup, with which they identify and seek to support, and various outgroups, which they oppose as threatening the ingroup (Kam and Kinder 2007; Levinson 1949). Such a belief system has obvious implications for immigration attitudes: as immigrants are an outgroup, ethnocentrists will be more likely to oppose them. They will also be more likely to discriminate between immigrants, as more culturally-distinct migrants will be regarded as more threatening to the ingroup. Both authoritarianism and ethnocentrism are much less common among younger cohorts in Britain (Ford 2008; Tilley 2005), suggesting that younger generations may hold values which encourage greater acceptance of immigration.

The growing diversity of British society is also likely to have an impact on attitudes to immigration. Migrants and the children of migrants should be more open to immigration in general, while those who are from ethnic minority groups which have themselves experienced discrimination should be less likely to discriminate between immigrant groups solely on the basis of their origins. Once again, this effect is likely to result in differences between the generations. In my survey sample, the proportion of non-white respondents nearly quadruples from less than 2 per cent among those born before 1920 to over 7.5 per cent among those born after 1970.

Data and Methods

The data employed here are from six British Social Attitudes surveys conducted between 1983 and 1996.[2] Data from individual surveys are pooled to enable better examination of social differences in attitudes. During this period respondents were asked whether they thought immigration levels from seven different regions were too high, about right or too low. Few thought immigration from any region was too low, so binary variables are constructed for whether a respondent regarded immigration from a particular region as being too high.[3] These regions are: Australia and New Zealand; Western Europe; Eastern Europe; Hong Kong; Africa; West Indies; and South Asia. Eastern Europe and Hong Kong were only asked about in the 1994 and 1996 surveys, while Africa was included in 1996 only.

The great value of these questions is that they represent a rare effort to disaggregate British attitudes to immigration by region of origin. The data provide us with a

unique opportunity to examine how the British public view different migrant groups, and test whether the patterns of racial and ethnic preference observed in past policy debates also obtain among the broader public. As these are large-scale survey data collected over several years, they also enable us to examine variation across subgroups, over time and between cohorts. The data do suffer from some limitations, however. The regions asked about are variable in size—from Hong Kong with a population of fewer than ten million, to South Asia—which encompasses a billion people. The categories are rather crude, often composed of a large number of distinct nations and, in the case of 'South Asia', encompassing three large nations with distinct streams of migration to Britain. Migration levels from these regions are also not equal. Although a confounding effect of migration levels on attitudes is therefore possible, it is unlikely to be large: I find no correlation between group migration levels and opposition levels, and previous research has shown widespread public ignorance about migration levels (Saggar and Dreen 2001).

Authoritarian values are measured using a five-item scale developed and validated by Evans and colleagues in the 1980s (Evans *et al.* 1996). None of the items in this scale refers to immigration or identity. Ethnocentrism is measured using an additive scale constructed from two measures of opposition to social contact with ethnic minorities: opposition to working for a black or Asian boss, and opposition to a relative marrying someone black or Asian.[4] Both these scales are standardised, with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Diversity is measured using dummies for the ethnicity of the respondent. Birth cohort, measured using the decade a respondent was born in, is also included as a control to test whether cohort differences in attitudes exist after controlling for these three generationally structured factors. Education is measured using the highest qualifications achieved. Controls are also included for gender and for the year the survey was conducted.

I also test the impact of competition for economic resources, frequently offered as an explanation for hostility to migrants (Bobo 1983; Esses *et al.* 2002). Three different factors are controlled for: economic position, economic insecurity and competition for resources. Economic position is measured using the five-category Goldthorpe-Heath class schema (Heath *et al.* 1985). If economic threat generates opposition to immigration we should expect to see more hostility among the social classes the most exposed to immigrant competition: the unskilled working class and the petty bourgeoisie. A control is also included for unemployment, as the unemployed may also be more sensitive to immigrant competition. Subjective economic insecurity is measured by asking how well respondents are managing on their current income. Those who say they find their current circumstances 'difficult' or 'very difficult' are considered to be economically insecure. Competition for government resources is controlled for using residence in government housing and receipt of social welfare benefits.

Analysis

Levels of Opposition to Different Immigrant Groups

Table 1 shows levels of British opposition to immigration from the seven different regions. There is clear evidence of an 'ethnic hierarchy' in public preferences, with large differences in attitudes to immigration as we move from the less-opposed regions on the left of the table to more-opposed regions on the right. Race is clearly a central factor driving preferences—all the non-white immigrant groups are more opposed than the white groups—and significant differences also exist within racial categories. The history of preference shown by elites towards the Old Commonwealth is also reflected in public attitudes: immigrants from Australia and New Zealand are the least opposed of all migrant groups. Decades of free movement to and from Western Europe also seem to be reflected in public attitudes: migrants from this region are the next-least opposed. By contrast, the more controversial public reception of Eastern European migrants is revealed in data from the 1990s: migrants from this region are the most opposed of all white migrant groups.

Britons also distinguish between non-white groups. Immigrants from Hong Kong are the least opposed, followed by those from Africa and the West Indies, with migrants from South Asia the most opposed. There are several possible explanations for this pattern of preference. One is that the preferences reflect the relative prosperity of the regions, with poorer regions attracting higher opposition—this would explain the relative openness towards immigration from wealthy Hong Kong. Culture may also play a role: English is the main language in the Caribbean and is widely spoken in Hong Kong, but is not widely spoken outside the elite in South Asia. Population size may also play a role—Hong Kong and the Caribbean islands have far fewer people than South Asia, and respondents may therefore be less worried about immigration from these regions spiralling out of control. Finally, actual migration flows from South Asia were much higher than from the other regions during this period, which may increase hostility to this migrant group in particular. While it is not possible to tease apart these factors adequately with these data, it is clear that there are robust differences in how immigrant groups are regarded within both the white and the

Table 1. Opposition to immigration from seven different regions

Survey Year	Australia	W. Europe	E. Europe	Hong Kong	Africa	West Indies	South Asia
1983	28.1	45.2				68.7	72.1
1984	35.8	50.6				71.0	75.1
1986	34.5	46.6				65.3	68.5
1989	32.7	41.6				63.2	68.5
1994	30.7	41.1	48.8	53.1		55.7	61.5
1996	30.0	40.5	47.7	44.7	50.8	51.0	54.6
Change	*+1.9*	*−4.7*	*−1.1*	*−8.4*	*	*−17.7*	*−17.5*

Source: British Social Attitudes (BSA): 1983–96.

Table 2. Cohort structure of opposition to immigration

Cohort	Australia	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Hong Kong	Africa	West Indies	South Asia	*Mean all groups*	*Discrimination**
Pre-1920	25	47	65	65	68	70	76	*59*	*13.6*
1920s	28	49	57	58	62	66	71	*57*	*9.4*
1930s	35	50	59	61	60	63	66	*56*	*8.0*
1940s	39	47	56	54	58	59	62	*54*	*5.9*
1950s	30	38	43	44	48	48	51	*43*	*5.3*
1960s	30	36	41	41	45	47	54	*42*	*5.7*
1970s	22	26	29	34	34	37	45	*32*	*5.9*
Pre-1950	*33*	*48*	*58*	*59*	*61*	*63*	*67*	*56*	*9.0*
Post-1950	*28*	*35*	*39*	*41*	*44*	*45*	*51*	*40*	*5.6*
Difference	*−5*	*−13*	*−19*	*−18*	*−17*	*−18*	*−16*	*−16*	*−3.4*

Source: BSA 1994 and 1996, except Africa: 1996 only.
*Defined as variance in opposition to different groups.

non-white racial categories. This calls into question the wisdom of persistently basing analysis and policy on views of immigrants as an undifferentiated mass.

The 'ethnic hierarchy' in preferences between migrant groups remains consistent in each survey year, with only one change in the relative position of a group in the whole series, when Hong Kong immigrants overtake those from Eastern Europe in 1996. While the rank order of groups remains consistent, the gap in attitudes declines over time. For example, the difference between opposition to Australian migrants and opposition to Indian migrants falls from 44 percentage points in 1983 to 25 points in 1996, while the difference between Western Europeans and West Indians falls from 23 points in 1983 to 11 points in 1996.

Generational Change in Attitudes to Immigrants

Have attitudes towards immigrant groups changed as British society has changed? Table 2 looks at how attitudes towards immigration from the different regions are structured by birth cohort. The ethnic hierarchy identified in the previous table holds across all cohorts. Respondents who grew up in the ethnically homogeneous Britain of the 1930s and 1940s and in the rapidly diversifying Britain of the 1970s agree on their relative preferences between immigrants from these seven regions. In Britain, as in America, the position of different minority groups in the eyes of the majority remains remarkably consistent between generations.

While the order of preferences between groups remains the same, opposition to migration from all regions is lower among younger cohorts, with a particularly sharp difference in attitudes among those born after 1950, who grew up after mass migration to Britain had commenced. A large majority of respondents born before 1950 oppose immigration from every non-white region and from Eastern Europe. The average level of opposition to immigration stands at 56 per cent for this group. By contrast, average opposition among those born after 1950 is 40 per cent, and only South Asian migration is opposed by a majority. Cohort differences in attitudes are larger for groups lower down the ethnic hierarchy, resulting in lower discrimination between groups among the young. As predicted, both overall opposition to immigration and discrimination between immigrant groups are lower among the young, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Multivariate Analysis

The cross-tabulation analyses have revealed evidence of large differences in opposition to the various immigrant groups, with preferences forming a consistent 'ethnic hierarchy'. Table 3 shows the results of logistic regression analysis testing the influence of education, ethnic diversity, values and economic factors on attitudes to each immigrant group. The generationally varying factors—education, diversity and values—have a significant effect in all seven models.[5] Higher education, less authoritarian and ethnocentric values, and belonging to an ethnic minority

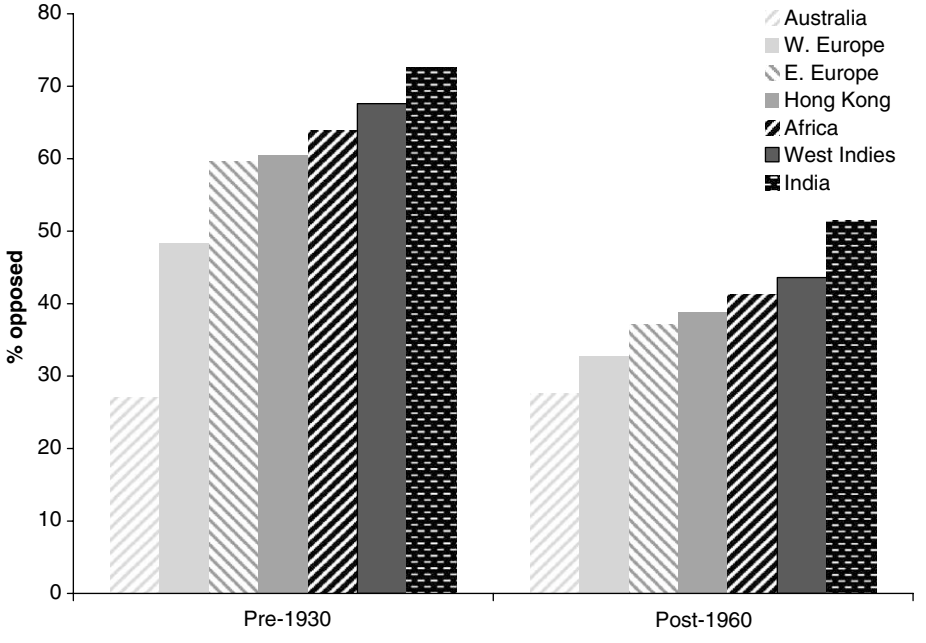

Figure 1. Opposition to immigration among older and younger cohorts
Source: BSA 1994 and 1996, except Africa: 1996 only.

encourage more open attitudes to all immigrant groups, even after controlling for potentially confounding factors. These variables generally have a larger impact on opposition to non-white than white groups, and on opposition to less-liked than more-liked groups within racial categories, suggesting they also encourage more-equal treatment of different immigrants. Significant cohort effects remain in several models, with the youngest cohort, born in the 1970s, expressing significantly less opposition to most migrant groups even after controlling for these factors.

The economic controls have virtually no effect on attitudes to white groups, though they have some impact on attitudes to non-white migrants. Those in working-class jobs are more likely to oppose immigration from South Asia and the West Indies, but not the equally or more numerous migrants from Australia and Europe, who presumably can also compete effectively for jobs. If perceptions of economic competition are driving opposition to migration, they therefore do not seem very closely related to actual patterns of competition. Economic deprivation, however measured, does not seem to encourage more-hostile attitudes to immigrants from any region. In fact, those who live in government housing are significantly *less* opposed to four of the five most-opposed immigrant groups. One possible explanation is social contact: poorer migrants tend to concentrate in or near the deprived areas where most social housing is located, so native Britons living in such areas may be more likely to have positive social contact with these migrant groups (McLaren 2003).

Table 3. Logistic regression models of opposition to immigration from seven regions

	Australia	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Hong Kong	Africa	West Indies	South Asia
Constant	**−1.10*****	**−0.49****	0.03	0.01	−0.20	0.10	0.32
Cohort (reference: pre-1920s)							
1920s	0.14	0.06	**−0.41***	−0.20	−0.01	0.07	0.04
1930s	**0.53*****	0.20	−0.33	−0.06	−0.31	−0.13	−0.13
1940s	**0.78*****	**0.25***	−0.12	−0.07	−0.13	−0.05	−0.03
1950s	**0.58*****	0.12	**−0.40***	−0.22	−0.11	−0.19	−0.11
1960s	**0.50*****	0.08	**−0.38***	−0.26	−0.14	−0.19	0.07
1970s	0.10	**−0.36***	**−0.96*****	**−0.56***	−0.58	**−0.52****	−0.23
Ethnicity (reference: white)							
Non-white (black, Asian and other)	−0.30	**−0.50*****	**−0.54*****	**−0.60****	**−0.88***	**−1.06*****	**−1.06*****
Education (ref: No qualifications)							
Degree	**−0.23***	**−0.48*****	**−0.43*****	**−0.38****	**−0.30***	**−0.34****	**−0.44*****
A-level	−0.05	**−0.27***	−0.03	−0.12	−0.21	−0.16	−0.16
O-level	−0.07	−0.11	−0.11	−0.09	0.06	0.03	0.06
Values							
Authoritarian	**0.28*****	**0.41*****	**0.54*****	**0.52*****	**0.51*****	**0.54*****	**0.58*****
Ethnocentrism	**0.08****	**0.19*****	**0.43*****	**0.54*****	**0.71*****	**0.59*****	**0.71*****
Controls							
Economic conflict and threat							
Class (reference: Salariat)							
Routine non-manual	0.09	0.16	0.19	**0.24***	0.19	**0.27****	**0.23***
Petty bourgeoisie	0.20	0.15	0.31	0.27	**0.72****	0.22	0.21
Manual foremen/supervisors	0.01	0.09	0.12	**0.35***	0.29	0.23	0.25
Working class	0.04	0.15	0.06	0.13	0.27	0.15	**0.21***
Resources							
Rents house from local government	−0.07	−0.08	**−0.37****	−0.20	**−0.58*****	**−0.25***	**−0.23****
Unemployed	0.08	−0.05	−0.10	−0.04	0.25	−0.08	−0.10
Receiving government benefits	−0.09	0.03	−0.01	−0.07	−0.04	−0.03	−0.11
Difficult economic situation (self-rated)	−0.12	−0.06	*	−0.02	−0.06	−0.09	−0.03

Table 3 (*Continued*)

	Australia	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Hong Kong	Africa	West Indies	South Asia
Gender: Male	0.005	0.08	0.13	0.04	0.04	**0.18****	**0.22****
Pseudo R square	0.029	0.063	0.120	0.133	0.153	0.158	0.175
N	5,916	5,904	3,504	3,516	1,816	5,913	5,929

Source: BSA 1983–96 (Australia, W.Europe, W. Indes, S. Asia); 1994 + 1996 (E. Europe + Hong Kong); 1996 (Africa), white respondents only. Robust standard errors applied. Controls also included for survey year. Bold figures denote significant effects: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Which factors are the most important in driving the large generational differences in immigration attitudes? To answer this question, I compared the effects of generational differences in each of the variables on predicted opposition. This is done by changing the values of each variable from those which hold among the oldest generation—those born before the 1920s—to the values prevalent among the youngest generation—those born in the 1970s—and examine the impact on predicted levels of opposition to each immigrant group.[6] I focus on the four regions with the most data: Australian/New Zealand, Western Europe, the West Indies, and South Asia.

As Figure 2 shows, the major driver of generational differences in opposition to all immigrant groups and of discrimination between migrant groups is authoritarian and ethnocentric values. A shift in the scores on the authoritarian value-scale from the average for the 1920s cohort to the average for the 1970s cohort results in a 6-percentage-point fall in opposition to Australian immigration, an 8-point fall in opposition to Western European migrants, and 11-point falls in opposition to West Indian and South Asian migration. Shifting ethnocentrism scores in a similar fashion barely changes opposition to Australian migration, and reduces opposition to West European migration by 3.5 points, and to migration from the two non-white regions by 11 and 12 points. The more-liberal and less-ethnocentric values of young Britons are strongly reflected in their views about immigration. They accord greater respect to the rights of individuals from across the world to settle in Britain if they choose, and treat immigrants from different regions more equally, even if they are from cultures very different to Britain. The other generational changes to British society—

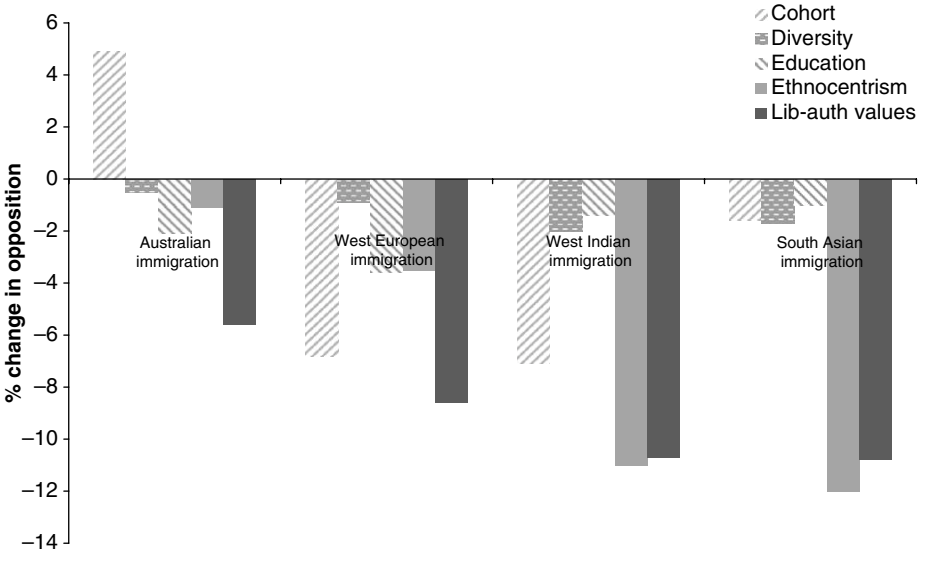

Figure 2. Effects of diversity, education and value change on opposition to immigration
Source: BSA 1983–96. All other variables set at their sample means.

rising education and growing diversity—have similar but less-marked effects. Shifting ethnic diversity from the values prevalent among the oldest to the values holding in the youngest cohort reduces opposition to white immigration by about 1 percentage point, and to non-white immigration by about 2 points. The rise in educational qualification levels between oldest and youngest cohorts produces a 4-point drop in opposition to European migration and a 2-point drop in opposition to the other regions.

Discussion

The evidence from this analysis suggests that the current standard practice of treating immigrants as a single mass is mistaken and likely to produce misleading results. Disaggregating attitudes to different migrant groups reveals large variations in opposition to different groups. British immigration attitudes are racialised: white immigrant groups are consistently preferred to non-white immigrant groups, usually by large margins. Britons also discriminate between migrant groups within each racial category, resulting in an 'ethnic hierarchy' of immigrant groups which is consistent across time and between generations. The overall pattern of preferences within this hierarchy may be the result of several factors, and needs to be investigated further. I find suggestive evidence that migrants from regions with stronger economic, cultural and political links to Britain are generally preferred to regions without such links.

The analysis has confirmed the centrality of race in driving British attitudes to immigrant groups, a point repeatedly made in historical analyses of British migration. Discrimination against non-white immigrants thus continues well into what Hampshire has described as the 'renegotiation' period of British immigration history, when the first efforts were being made to promote a more multicultural sense of British identity (Hampshire 2005: 18). It is hard to justify continuing to ask only about 'immigrants' in light of this wide and persistent racial divide. We have no way of knowing whether respondents are thinking of white or non-white immigrants when they answer, yet this will be very consequential for the answers they give. This is particularly relevant at a time when both white and non-white immigration are at record levels, and immigration policy is once again at the heart of political debate. Analyses of opposition to 'immigration' are of little value when the public regards specific immigrant groups so differently.

The results here also show, however, that discrimination is not simply a matter of black and white. Respondents also discriminate between different immigrant groups within each racial category, consistently favouring migrants from regions with stronger cultural and political links to Britain. This finding underscores the importance of moving beyond race in research on immigrants and ethnic minorities, towards a more multidimensional understanding of how attitudes to ethnic groups form, and what factors influence them. For example, the British public seems more accepting of immigration from regions which have in turn

received many British emigrants, such as Australia and Western Europe, raising the intriguing possibility that immigration attitudes may have a reciprocal element to them.

While the order of preference between immigrant groups is consistent, the level of discrimination against less-favoured groups is not. As has been found in research on ethnic hierarchies in America, young Britons discriminate less between immigrant groups. Value change between the generations plays a central role in this shift: younger respondents are much less authoritarian and ethnocentric than their parents and grandparents. These results demonstrate how the slow process of intergenerational value change can have powerful policy implications. Younger Britons, growing up in a more globally mobile and ethnically diverse society, have much lower allegiance to values which prize authority, homogeneity and allegiance to the national group. As a result, they are more supportive of immigration, and less concerned about the origins of immigrants. These large generational differences suggest that there may be a slow, long-run rise in the public acceptability of immigration in Britain, as more liberal, racially tolerant generations replace ageing authoritarian and ethnocentric cohorts.[7]

The period under examination here was, however, one when immigration to Britain was unusually low and stable, and debates over migration were less politically salient than in the years before or since. The pattern of attitudes and the ranking of migrant groups may change when immigration rises, especially if migration from a particular region is persistently very high, such as the recent case with migration from Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the consistent hierarchy in attitudes suggests that we can expect a given number of migrants arriving from a low-rated region to produce a stronger public reaction than the same number from a high-rated region, an expectation borne out by experience since 1996. In the last decade, asylum-related migration, primarily from lower-rated African and Middle Eastern countries, has attracted strong hostile reactions and a restrictionist policy response at levels of 50,000 per annum, while migration from Western Europe has continued unopposed at twice this level and migration from Eastern Europe has only generated serious controversy when running at over four times this level. The recent resurgence of the far-right in Britain has focused its hostile campaigns on lower-rated ethnic groups, targeting non-white asylum-seekers and Muslims from South Asia, the lowest-rated region in this analysis (Goodwin 2011).

The results here also fit with an emerging body of work on migration in Europe which has argued for the centrality of cultural difference in understanding attitudes towards immigrants (Sides and Citrin 2007). Future research needs to shift the academic and policy focus away from barren discussion of the supposed economic costs or benefits of migration, as economic concerns are not the principle drivers of public opinion on immigration. Instead, greater attention should be paid to building more-carefully disaggregated measures of public immigration attitudes, understanding why certain markers of cultural or racial

difference stigmatise some immigrant groups as undesirable, and identifying ways to reduce discriminatory hostility towards such migrants.

Notes

[1] Around 100,000 Britons emigrated annually to the EU throughout the 1990s and 2000s, with France and Spain accepting the majority.

[2] The British Social Attitudes surveys are fielded to a stratified random sample of the British population. Sample sizes are between 1,750 and 3,500. Response rates range between 60 and 70 per cent. Further technical details can be found in Jowell *et al.* (1995).

[3] Ranging from 2 per cent for Asian immigration to 11 per cent for Australian immigration. An ordered logistic regression analysis using all three response categores produced very similar results to those presented.

[4] Ethnocentrism questions were not asked to non-white respondents, so it is not possible to control for ethnocentrism and ethnic diversity at the same time. The reported diversity coefficients were therefore generated in separate models which excluded ethnocentrism.

[5] Calculated using the Clarify programme (Tomz *et al.* 2001).

[6] For education, the change is from the levels of the pre-1920s generation to the levels of the most-highly educated cohort (1950s). The levels of education in subsequent cohorts are artificially depressed, as many respondents were still in education when interviewed. We make the conservative assumption that the youngest cohort would end up at least as educated as its predecessors.

[7] Tilley (2005) finds evidence that the decline in authoritarian values decelerates among cohorts who came of of age in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the differences in support for authoritarian values between older and younger generations indicate that an aggregate shift towards lower authoritarianism is still likely to continue for decades, as the most authoritarian older cohorts gradually die off.

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