

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

### Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy in United Kingdom

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**Abstract.** Although recent research found substantial variation in the strength of anti-immigrant opinions across new and old countries of immigration, most studies determined that the public increasingly supports restrictive immigration policies. This paper explores several sources of attitudes toward immigrants in United Kingdom and attempts to simultaneously test some of the most important theoretical explanations of public attitudes toward immigration issues when the family immigration history is taken into account. Results are based on a quantitative analysis of data from the European Social Survey (Round 4/2008). Even if when compared to persons from families with at least one foreign-born member natives express the strongest opposition to flexible migration policies and are more likely to have negative views regarding the immigrants' role in the British society, opinions vary significantly among groups differentiated by political preferences, socioeconomic attributes, and demographic characteristics. While for native Britons findings support the economic self-interest theory, education and social attachment (i.e., interpersonal and institutional trust) appear to be the strongest predictors of positive attitudes toward immigrants and opposition to restrictive immigration policies.

**Keywords:** *anti-immigration attitudes, immigrants, immigration policy, United Kingdom*

#### Introduction

As Mayda (2006, 528) noted, in many countries, immigration has recently become a central theme in political discussions focusing on international integration. In order to better understand country-level immigration-policy decisions and to anticipate future policy developments, public attitudes toward immigration-related issues should be known because they are a key input in policy outcomes and their viability.

During the past two decades, many studies on public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies in Europe and the United States consistently showed that immigrant populations are frequently facing suspicion, prejudice, and xenophobia in their host countries. Research also documented an increased public support for restrictive immigration policies (see Brader, Valentino, and Jardina 2009, DiGiusto and Jolly 2008, Fetzer 2011, Quillian 1995, Schildkraut 2011). As Crawley (2005) observed, United Kingdom is one of the 'receiving' countries in Europe, which apparently shares this general uneasiness of being a country of immigration.

Based on recent data, in June 2010, the foreign-born population represented 11.4% of the UK total population and non-British nationals made up 7.2% of the UK population (Mulley 2011, 2). The foreign-born population in United Kingdom increased significantly from 2,342,000 in 2000 to 3,824,000 in 2007. If in 2000, foreign-born persons represented approximately 4% of total population, in 2007, foreigners represented 6.5% of the total population and about 7.2% of the labor force in the country. However, the 1990-2007 average net migration per 1,000 people was only 0.7, a figure lower than that registered for the same time period in selected thirteen OECD countries (i.e., Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United States). The Western European countries that averaged the highest 1990-2007 net migration rate are Luxemburg (9.8), Spain (7.0), and Switzerland (4.3) (U. S. Census Bureau 2011, 839).

Although the foreign-born population is not particularly large in United Kingdom, and even if, as Crawley (2005) noted, attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy vary by region and groups in society, ad hoc polls and longitudinal surveys conducted in the last ten years have provided evidence of increasing public opposition to immigration. In fact, Lowles and Painter (2011), the authors of a recent research study focusing on issues of English identity, faith and race concluded that there is not a progressive majority in the British society and that there is a deep resentment to immigration, as well as skepticism towards multiculturalism. The research findings, based on a survey carried out on a large probability sample (N= 5,054), showed that approximately 63% of whites, 43% of Asians, and 17% of black Britons consider that immigration was a bad thing for the country. The study also found that 39% of Asians, 34% of whites and 21% of blacks believed immigration should be halted either permanently or at least until the UK's

economy was back on track. In addition, almost half (48%) of the respondents were open to supporting a new far-right party as long as it avoided fascist tendencies and did not condone violence. Furthermore, even if 52% of study participants agreed that "Muslims create problems in the UK," over two-thirds of people believe that 'English nationalist extremists' and 'Muslim extremists' are equally appalling. Approximately 60% of respondents considered that positive approaches (e.g., community organizing, education, and using community leaders) were the best way to defeat local extremist tendencies. In sum, although anti-immigration feelings are pervasive in the contemporary British society, political violence is opposed by the large majority of the residents (Lowles and Painter 2011).

The present secondary analysis intends to identify the individual-level indicators most likely to predict support for restrictive immigration policies and also tries to determine which factors significantly influence the public perception of the immigrants' role in the British society. The majority of studies that examined the effect of individual predictors on attitudes toward immigrants/immigration focused exclusively on the natives' perceptions or did not take into account the immigration history of the respondent's family.

This analysis contributes to the literature by examining predictors of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies expressed not only by natives but also by foreign-born individuals and persons who grew up in immigrant families. Alternative theoretical explanations of the public reactions to immigrant issues (e.g., economic theory, cultural marginality theory, contact theory, and human capital theory) as well as the effects on attitudes of political preferences, societal attachment (i.e., interpersonal and institutional trust), and religiosity are also explored in multivariate analyses conducted on a representative sample of UK residents.

### **Brief review of theoretical explanations of public attitudes toward immigration**

Fetzer (2000) contended that there are three major theoretical explanations (i.e., cultural marginality, economic self-interest, and contact with immigrants) of public attitudes toward immigrants. In general, marginality theory states that marginalized groups tend to empathize with other oppressed people, persons who perceive themselves as being outside the 'mainstream', or other victims of prejudice (Fetzer 2000). In a version of the *cultural marginality theory*,

(see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993), “cultural affinity” is considered one of the most important determinants of immigration-related public attitudes. In this respect, “cultural and ethnic ties to immigrants promote pro-immigrant attitudes and support for a more open immigration policy (Fetzer 2000, 3).” In addition, Haubert and Fussell (2006) found that one’s exposure to other cultures (i.e., living abroad) was positively associated with favorable views of immigrants. The authors argued that living abroad contributes to a more cosmopolitan worldview, diminishing the importance of negative stereotypes about foreigners. In addition, (see Alvarado 2009), persons who lived in foreign countries tend to observe more often commonalities among individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds than people familiar only with their native land. In a recent analysis of factors influencing pro-immigrant feelings in United States, Alvarado (2009) found that Americans who speak relatively well one foreign language are more likely to have positive perceptions of immigrants. It is possible that persons who learn a foreign language do that because they are interested to learn more about other cultures and do not share ethnocentric views, as those generally expressed by persons who take a ‘parochial’ stance on public issue (see Bean 1995), immigration policy included.

Empirical studies showed that when perceived as a cultural threat (see Espenshade and Hempste 1996) or as a potential threat to the natives’ language (see Chandler and Tsai 2001), immigrants are more likely to attract negative public sentiments. Using 2008 pre-election data, Brader, Valentino, and Jardina (2009) contended that, at least in the United States, ethnocentrism and not material interests continue to dominate explanations of public attitudes regarding immigration policies. In a study that explored the causes of public opposition to immigration and support for anti-immigrant political movements in three industrialized Western countries (United States, France and Germany) and evaluated the effects of cultural marginality, economic self-interest, and contact with immigrants, Fetzer (2000) contended that although the data analysis partly confirmed each of these three theoretical explanations, being a cultural outsider influenced immigration-related attitudes more than economics or contact did. The present analysis will explore the validity of the cultural marginality thesis comparing groups differentiated by the place of birth (i.e., UK or abroad) of the respondent and respondent’s parents. In addition, ethnic minority status will be used to test this theory.

Some proponents of an alternative theoretical perspective – *economic self-interest* - doubted cultural explanations of attitudes toward immigrants (see Harwood 1983, 1986) and argued that economic concerns appear to be the main reason for an increased opposition to both legal and illegal immigrants. Simon (1987) and Simon and Alexander (1993) noted that immigrants are perceived as a greater threat by lower-class people, who fear that immigrants, especially illegal ones, would lower the rates of pay, would negatively influence one's opportunities for mobility, and would create more competition for housing, schools, and social services. According to this view, opposition to immigration is mainly caused by economic deprivation and fear of further economic decline.

Economic interpretations of public attitudes toward immigrants are found in many scholarly works and several of these studies provide empirical support for the economic self-interest theoretical perspective. In a recent examination of structural correlates of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies in the United States, Sobczak (2010) asserted that economic disadvantage at the community level indirectly influences unfavorable views of immigrants because precarious economic conditions generate high levels of intergroup occupational competition, leading to negative reactions toward foreigners. In addition, Haubert and Fussell (2006) have noticed that the perceived threat from immigrants in the labor market is context specific, being more pronounced in areas where there are large immigrant communities.

Based on their analysis of 1983-1990 data from the British Social Attitudes Survey, Dustmann and Preston (2007) pointed out that even if economic determinants did matter when attitudes toward immigrants have been examined racial prejudice appeared to be an important factor in preference formation in Great Britain. Overall, findings showed that welfare concerns had a stronger impact on attitudes to further immigration than labor market concerns did. In addition, the authors found strong evidence that racial or cultural prejudice was associated with support for restrictive immigration policies regarding potential immigration from countries with ethnically different (non-Caucasian) populations. Using recent survey data from United Kingdom, Lowles and Painter (2011) identified a clear correlation between economic pessimism and negative attitudes towards immigration. The authors noted that the more skeptical people were about their own economic situation and their prospects for the future, the more hostile their attitudes were to new and old immigrants.

In a study of public attitudes toward immigrants in United States, France, and Germany, Joel Fetzer also acknowledged that beliefs that immigrants threaten natives' or one's own job strongly increase opposition to immigration. However, the author noted that this sense of economic threat appears to be much reduced among persons who have at least secondary school education (Fetzer 2000). O'Rourke and Sinnott (2006), the authors of a cross-country study that investigated the determinants of individual attitudes toward immigration concluded that anti-immigration opinions are not a function of economic interests alone; rather, they also reflect nationalist sentiment among respondents. Findings also showed that the high-skilled are less opposed to immigration than the low-skilled, the effect being greater in richer countries than in poorer countries. Several studies (e.g., Brenner and Fertig 2006; Daniels and von der Ruhr 2005; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Mayda 2006; Rustenbach 2010) that examined predictors of anti-immigrant attitudes in Europe and United States in the past decade consistently found support for the human capital theory that suggests that anti-immigrant attitudes significantly decrease with education and one's level of skills. The present analysis will also examine the economic self-interest and human capital theoretical perspectives using as predictors of attitudes toward immigration issues the respondent's perceived economic hardship and the educational level of the respondent and respondent's parents.

*Contact theory* is the third major theoretical explanation used by scholars to explain variations in public attitudes toward immigrants (see Fetzer 2000, 4). Although there are several variants of the contact theory, Gordon Allport's (1954) thesis remains in the literature an important departure point. Allport contended that positive effects of intergroup contact occur if four key conditions are satisfied: equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom (Pettygrew 1998, 66). In addition to these four conditions, Pettygrew (1998) noted that for optimal group interaction the contact situation must have 'friendship potential'. While according to Allport's contact theory, increased contact with immigrants would decrease anti-immigrant sentiments, other authors (see Girard, Charbit, and Lamy 1974) contended that personal contact with immigrants actually causes xenophobia. In order to explain the strong public support for the anti-immigrant Front National party in areas of France with large foreign-born populations, Perrineau (1985) concluded that 'casual' and not 'personal' (i.e., intimate relationships, friendships) contacts with

foreigners might generate hostile feelings toward immigrants (Fetzer 2000). A less optimistic alternative contact theory was also formulated by Forbes (1997). The author stated that even if immigrant-native interaction might partially contribute to a reduction in cultural differences, it could also generate ethnocentric attitudes and increased efforts to preserve intergroup differences, which in the end might favor anti-immigrant attitudes (DiGiusto and Jolly 2008, 1-3). Acknowledging that both individual differences and societal norms shape intergroup contact effects, Pettygrew (1998, 80) noted that “the deeply prejudiced both avoid intergroup contact and resist positive effects from it.”

According to Quillian (1995), the economic situation is a mediator between intergroup contact and the potential for conflict. The author observed that foreigners might be perceived as a threat if the number of immigrants would increase because natives might believe they have to compete for cultural hegemony and scarce resources. Therefore, anti-immigrant sentiments are more likely to become stronger in periods of economic hardship (Quillian 1995). However, a recent test of the contact theory that examined the effect of the immigrant population size on attitudes toward foreigners in Europe did not find support for the thesis that anticipated a positive relationship between the number of immigrants at national and regional levels and anti-immigration attitudes (Rustenbach 2010). And a recent analysis of attitudes toward immigrants in France found a significant negative relationship between the share of foreign population in a large geographic area (department) and anti-immigrant sentiments. Based on these research findings it appears that an increase in immigrant population was more likely to decrease xenophobia and racial antipathies, suggesting, as the study authors concluded, that “it might be some room for optimism in the intergroup dynamic literature (DiGiusto and Jolly 2008, 16).”

Despite the fact that after 2004, migrants from Central and Eastern Europe moved more widely across the country, most of the United Kingdom’s recent history migrants have been concentrated in urban areas (see Chapell, Latore, Rutter, and Shah 2009, 4). In 2009, for instance, over a third of all foreign-born migrants (2.6 million people) were living in London where they represent 34% of the total population (Rienzo 2011). Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that residents of larger cities have been more frequently in contact (at least casual) with immigrants than persons living in smaller towns or rural areas in UK. Urban residency is considered in this analysis a proxy indicator for contact with immigrants and it will be used to test the contact theory.

In addition to tests meant to explore the validity and the explanatory power of cultural, economic, contact, and human capital theories, researchers also examined the effect on attitudes toward immigrants of societal attachment, political behavior, and religiosity. In general, findings suggest that persons who have a higher level of interpersonal trust are more likely to have positive opinions about immigrants, while individuals who sympathize with right-wing politics are more likely to support anti-immigration policies (see DiGiusto and Jolly 2008; Rustenbach 2010). Recent studies that investigated the impact of religious affiliation on immigration-policy preferences in United States, found that more religious respondents exhibited more positive attitudes towards immigrants, regardless of the religious denomination they belonged to (Daniels and Von der Ruhr 2005; Smith 2006). The present analysis will also explore the relationship between social attachment (interpersonal and institutional trust) and attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. One's political orientation (i.e., support for Conservative party vs. support for other political party) will be used to observe the effect of political preferences on issues regarding immigration in United Kingdom. The Conservatives' approach<sup>1</sup> to immigration stresses the need to control immigration levels by introducing a cap on immigration and reducing the number of non-EU immigrants who plan to work and live in United Kingdom. According to the Conservatives' manifesto, by 2015 net migration will be reduced from the current level of 242,000 to "tens of thousands" immigrants per year. The Conservative Party, the largest political party in UK, is a centre-right political party that adheres to the philosophies of conservatism and British unionism. Currently, the Conservative Party governs in the first post-war coalition with the Liberal Democrats. David Cameron is the Conservative Party leader and the country's Prime Minister. In 2008, when the survey data used in this analysis were collected, the Labour Party was the governing body and the Conservatives were the opposition party.

Additionally, the analysis will examine the relationships religiosity – attitudes toward immigrants and will use gender and age as control variables. Regarding gender variations in attitudes, research found women to be more opposed to immigration than do men. Although not all studies found a consistent inter-country effect of age on people's reaction toward immigrants and

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<sup>1</sup>The immigration policies supported by the Conservative Party can be found at: [http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where\\_we\\_stand/Immigration.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Immigration.aspx)

immigration policies (see Brenner and Fertig 2006), in general, age tends to be negatively associated with support for immigration (see Berzosa and Valentova 2010; Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong. 1997; DiGiusto and Jolly 2008; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). Recent survey data also showed that young people in UK are more hopeful about the future and more open to living in an ethnically diverse society (Lowles and Painter 2011).

### **Data, Methods, and Hypotheses**

The present analysis uses the European Social Survey data collected in 2008 on a probability sample (N= 2352) representative for the population age fifteen and older in United Kingdom (ESS Round 4 2008, 2011). The main objective of the analysis is to identify a set of personal-level indicators most likely to influence variations in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies.

Data have been analyzed using ordinary least square regression. Attitudes toward immigrants/immigration policies have been measured using two separate composite indicators that serve as dependent variables in the estimated statistical models. The first dependent variable measures the respondent's support for restrictive immigration policies and has been computed through factor analysis conducted on three variables. Respondents have been asked to indicate how many foreign individuals of the same ethnic group as the majority (1), of different ethnicity as the majority (2), and how many people from poorer countries outside Europe (3) should be allowed to immigrate to United Kingdom. Individual responses varied from 1 (many immigrants should be allowed) to 4 (no immigrants should be allowed). The standardized reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha for this index is .892. When factor analysis (PCA) was conducted, only one factor was extracted (Eigenvalue = 2.472; variance explained = 82.41%). Factor loadings varied from .895 to .933. The continuous composite index has a normal distribution (e.g., Skewness = .147; Kurtosis = -.363). The second dependent variable measures the perceived role of immigrants in society. Respondents have been asked to assess on a scale that takes values from zero to ten the immigrants' contribution to the country's economy (1), to the country's cultural life (2), and to the country's general well-being (3). Higher scores indicate positive perceptions of immigrants' role. When reliability analysis for the three indicators was conducted a Cronbach's Alpha equal to .892 was obtained. Only one factor with Eigenvalues higher than

one was obtained when the index was computed through factor analysis (Eigenvalue = 2.470; variance explained = 82.34). This dependent variable has a normal distribution as well (e.g., Skewness = -.029; Kurtosis = -.529).

Following are briefly presented the selected individual-level predictors of variation in attitudes toward immigrants. *Interpersonal trust* is a composite variable based on three indicators that measure the respondent's opinion about people's levels of trustworthiness (1), fairness (2), and helpfulness (3). The reliability coefficient Alpha for this measure is .755. One component was extracted when factor analysis was used as a data reduction method (Eigenvalue = 2.017; variance explained = 67.23%). Higher values of the factor scores indicate a higher level of interpersonal trust. *Institutional trust* is a composite measure as well, formed based on three indicators that measure the respondent's level of trust in the country's parliament (1), the country's legal system (2), and the national police (3). The reliability coefficient Alpha for the index is .747. The index has been constructed through factor analysis and one component was extracted (Eigenvalue = 1.996; variance explained = 66.53%). Higher values for factor scores indicate a higher level of institutional trust. *Economic hardship* – the question used to measure economic hardship asked respondents to indicate the likelihood of not having “enough money for household necessities in the next 12 months.” This ordinal level indicator takes values from 1 (not at all likely) to 4 (very likely). *Religiosity* – one's self-assessed degree of religiosity takes values from zero (not at all religious) to 10 (very religious). *Political orientation (Conservative)* – this dummy variable was coded 1 for respondents who acknowledged closeness to the Conservative Party and zero otherwise. *Ethnic minority* – a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who belong to an ethnic minority group and zero otherwise. *Gender* – a dummy variable coded 1 for males and zero for females. *Age* – a continuous variable that takes values from 15 to 96. *Education* – respondent's highest level of education takes values from zero (no qualifications) to 5 (advanced graduate degree). *Parents' education* – is an additive measure that combined the parents' highest level of education; it takes values from zero (both parents have no qualifications) to 10 (both parents have advanced graduate degrees). *Residency* – this dummy variable is coded 1 for residents of large urban areas and outskirts of large cities and zero otherwise. *Place of birth* – this variable is coded zero if neither the respondent or his/her parents were born in UK, 1 if the respondent was born in UK but has foreign-born parents, 2 if the respondent and one of his/her parents

were born in UK, and 3 if the respondent and his/her parents were all born in United Kingdom. A set of three dummy variables were created based on this classification, natives being the reference group (i.e., UK-born respondent and both parents).

It is hypothesized that education, religiosity, interpersonal and institutional trust, ethnic minority status, and residency in larger urban areas will be associated with positive perceptions of immigrants and a diminished support for anti-immigration policies. It is expected that support for anti-immigration policies and negative perceptions of immigrants' role in society will increase with age and perceived economic hardship. It is anticipated that native Britons will acknowledge a higher support for restrictive immigration policies and will be less appreciative of the immigrants' contribution to the well-being of the society and to the economic and cultural life in UK when compared to persons from immigrant families.

## **Results**

Table 1 presents the distribution of responses for the indicators included in the composite index that measured attitudes toward immigration policies and the mean values for responses at questions included in the index that measured recognition of the value of immigrants to the economy, culture, and quality of life in UK. Results are presented separately for four groups that differ in terms of family immigration background. Preliminary analyses (see Table 1) show that the family background and immigration history influence at some degree the public perception of the immigrants' contribution to the British society and also have an impact on one's opinions about immigration policies.

For instance, it can be noticed that the largest proportion of people who consider that no immigrants should be allowed to enter the country are found within the group of UK-born respondents whose parents are natives as well. If 5% of those born abroad think that no immigrants of the same ethnicity/race as the majority should be allowed in the country, about 10% of the natives share this opinion. In addition, about 16% of the natives think that no foreigners belonging to minority ethnic groups should be accepted as immigrants in UK and almost one in five natives (19.2%) considered that no immigrants from poorer countries should be allowed to permanently settle in UK. Overall, the majority of native respondents want fewer immigrants, while the majority of respondents from immigrant families are more likely to favor an 'open-door' policy, arguing that 'some' or 'many' immigrants should be allowed into United Kingdom.

**Table 1: Frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations for attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies (N = 2352)**

	How many immigrants of the same race/ethnic group as the majority should be allowed?				Is immigration bad (0) or good (10) for the economy?	
	Many	Some	A few	None	Mean	SD
1. Foreign-born respondent & parents	19.4%	48.9%	26.7%	5.0%	6.10	2.42
2. UK-born respondent & foreign-born parents	15.1%	56.2%	26.0%	2.7%	5.35	2.47
3. UK-born respondent & one parent	19.8%	42.0%	29.0%	9.3%	5.08	2.58
4. UK-born respondent & both parents	7.9%	52.5%	29.8%	9.8%	4.36	2.36
	How many immigrants of different race/ethnic group as the majority should be allowed?				Is the country's cultural life undermined (0) or enriched (10) by immigrants?	
	Many	Some	A few	None	Mean	SD
1. Foreign-born respondent & parents	16.5%	44.5%	33.0%	6.0%	6.44	2.37
2. UK-born respondent & foreign-born parents	12.3%	54.8%	30.1%	2.7%	6.04	2.38
3. UK-born respondent & one parent	14.2%	43.8%	30.2%	11.7%	5.43	2.69
4. UK-born respondent & both parents	5.9%	43.2%	35.0%	16.0%	4.58	2.58
	How many immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe should be allowed?				Immigrants make country a worse (0) or a better place (10) to live?	
	Many	Some	A few	None	Mean	SD
1. Foreign-born respondent & parents	16.8%	47.3%	25.0%	10.9%	6.48	2.40
2. UK-born respondent & foreign-born parents	9.6%	56.2%	27.4%	6.8%	5.24	2.31
3. UK-born respondent & one parent	12.3%	46.9%	25.9%	14.8%	4.85	2.47
4. UK-born respondent & both parents	6.0%	37.6%	37.2%	19.2%	4.24	2.41

It can also be observed that, on average, the positive perception of the immigrants' role in the society gradually and constantly decreases with an increase in the number of UK-born family members (i.e., respondent and parents). When only the respondent's and his/her parents' place of birth are considered, data show

that on a scale from zero (negative perception) to ten (positive perception), ratings of the immigrants role in society vary from 4.36 to 6.10 (perception of immigrants' contribution to the country's economy), from 4.58 to 6.44 (perception of immigrants' contribution to the cultural life), and from 4.24 to 6.48 (perception of immigrants' contribution to the society's well-being). Lowest ratings are expressed by natives and highest ratings are given by foreign-born residents. UK-born respondents with one foreign-born parent and one UK-born parent had the second lowest ratings and UK-born respondents with both parents born abroad had the second highest ratings.

**Table 2: Frequencies and descriptive statistics for study variables**

	Total sample (N = 2352)		Natives (N = 1921)		Non-Natives (N = 431)	
	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD
Support for anti-immigration policies	.000	1.00	.067	.98	-.310	1.02
Positive views of immigrants' role in society	.000	1.00	-.107	.97	.483	.99
Interpersonal trust	.000	1.00	.019	.98	-.087	1.08
Institutional trust	.000	1.00	-.043	.97	.196	1.09
Economic hardship	2.13	.94	2.12	.94	2.16	.96
Religiosity	4.05	3.01	3.84	2.93	4.95	3.16
Political orientation (Conservative Party)	17.09%		18.53%		10.67%	
Respondent's education	2.08	1.63	2.05	1.61	2.25	1.71
Parents' education	4.18	2.79	4.09	2.72	4.59	3.05
Ethnic minority	6.9%		1.46%		31.09%	
Residency (large urban area)	31.34%		29.10%		41.30%	
Gender (Male)	45.58%		45.18%		47.33%	
Age	49.14	18.53	50.29	18.48	44.00	17.92
<u>Place of birth</u>						
Respondent & parents born outside UK	8.16%					
Respondent born UK, foreign-born parents	3.18%					
Respondent & only one parent born in UK	6.98%					
Respondent & both parents born in UK	81.68%					

Due to relatively small sample sizes for subsamples that represent families with at least one foreign-born person, in multivariate analyses the effect of

individual-level indicators on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies were examined separately only for two subgroups. One subsample includes natives (N = 1921) and the second subsample (N = 431) of first-generation immigrants, includes persons who are immigrants or are UK-born but have at least one immigrant parent. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution or descriptive statistics for the variables used in multivariate statistical analyses.

Based on the results<sup>2</sup> presented in table 3 it can be observed that respondent's education has the largest contribution (Beta =  $-.194$ ;  $p < .001$ ) to the explanatory power (R square =  $.184$ ) of the model that analyzes data for the entire sample. With an increase in one's level of education there is a significant decrease in support for anti-immigration policies. Restrictive immigration policies are also less likely to be supported by persons who have higher levels of interpersonal trust (Beta =  $-.168$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and institutional trust (Beta =  $-.128$ ;  $p < .001$ ), by persons who are more religious (Beta =  $-.068$ ;  $p < .01$ ), by individuals whose parents are better educated (Beta =  $-.060$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and by people who live in larger cities and suburban areas surrounding them (Beta =  $-.048$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Men appeared to be significantly less supportive of restrictive immigration policies (Beta =  $-.053$ ;  $p < .01$ ) than women, when controlling for the other variables in the model. Compared to natives, foreign-born residents (Beta =  $-.061$ ;  $p < .01$ ) were also significantly less likely to support anti-immigration policies. Individuals born in UK from foreign-born parents do not appear to have significantly different attitudes regarding immigration policies when compared to native Britons.

While in the overall sample financial distress does not appear to impact significantly opinions about future immigration levels, a person's age and one's political orientation are important predictors of negative attitudes toward immigrants. With an increase in one's age there is a significant support for anti-immigration policies (Beta =  $.129$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Persons who express closeness to the Conservative Party are more likely to support restrictive immigration policies (Beta =  $.066$ ;  $p < .01$ ) than those who have a different political orientation.

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<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid multicollinearity, the variable 'ethnic minority' has not been used in analyses for the overall sample. This variable is highly correlated ( $r = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with the dummy variable that compares the attitudes of first generation immigrants to the attitudes expressed by the reference group.

**Table 3: OLS Estimates for Support for Anti-Immigration Policies**

	Total sample (N = 2352)		Natives (N = 1921)		Non-Natives (N = 431)	
	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta
Interpersonal trust	-.174*** (.025)	-.168	-.181*** (.028)	-.173	-.175** (.056)	-.181
Institutional trust	-.129*** (.024)	-.128	-.124*** (.027)	-.121	-.135** (.052)	-.144
Economic hardship	.044 (.025)	.040	.071** (.028)	.065	-.087 (.062)	-.077
Religiosity	-.023** (.008)	-.068	-.025** (.009)	-.073	-.006 (.018)	-.020
Political orientation (Conservative Party)	.175** (.058)	.066	.179** (.061)	.071	.298 (.189)	.083
Respondent's education	-.118*** (.015)	-.194	-.121*** (.016)	-.200	-.102** (.035)	-.165
Parents' education	-.022** (.009)	-.060	-.016 (.010)	-.045	-.048* (.020)	-.140
Ethnic minority			-.028 (.214)	-.003	-.083 (.123)	-.037
Residency (large urban area)	-.105* (.047)	-.048	-.076 (.052)	-.035	-.202 (.111)	-.095
Gender (Male)	-.106** (.044)	-.053	-.116* (.048)	-.058	-.042 (.108)	-.020
Age	.007*** (.001)	.129	.007*** (.002)	.134	.009** (.003)	.148
Respondent & parents born outside UK	-.225** (.083)	-.061				
Respondent born UK, foreign-born parents	-.225 (.124)	-.039				
Respondent & one parent born in UK	-.165* (.080)	-.041				
Constant	.082 (.121)		.005 (.136)		.100 (.258)	
Adjusted R Square	.184		.171		.159	

\*\*\*p ≤ .001; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*p ≤ .05.

Two additional models explored attitudes toward immigration policies for two separate subsamples; one subsample (N = 1921) includes only respondents born in UK whose parents were also born in UK and the other subsample (N = 431) includes respondents who were themselves and their parents born abroad or were UK-born but had at least one parent born abroad. Although inter-group differences in means for attitudes toward immigration policies do exist (see Table 2), in both subsamples, similar effects are recorded for several variables included in the estimated models. For

instance, in both subsamples respondent's education, one's level of interpersonal trust, and one's level of institutional trust are negatively related to support for anti-immigration policies, while age is positively and significantly related to support for restrictive immigration policies not only for the majoritarian group (Beta = .134;  $p < .001$ ), but for non-natives as well (Beta = .148;  $p < .01$ ).

While native Britons who acknowledge a higher degree of religiosity tend to oppose restrictive immigration policies (Beta =  $-.073$ ;  $p < .01$ ), UK-born persons who anticipate economic hardship are more likely to support anti-immigration policies (Beta = .065;  $p < .01$ ). Similar attitudes are shared by natives (Beta = .071;  $p < .01$ ) who feel closer to the Conservative Party.

Although the direction of the effect is the same in both subsamples, gender has a significant effect on attitudes regarding immigration levels only in the majoritarian sample. Native males are more opposed to restrictive immigration policies than native women (Beta =  $-.058$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Parents' education appears to significantly influence attitudes toward immigration policies only in the subsample that includes non-natives (Beta =  $-.140$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

Even if in both subsamples respondents belonging to ethnic minority groups and persons who live in large cities tend to oppose restrictive immigration policies, when controlling for the other variables in the model, these effects are not large enough to be significant. The selected variables included in the presented statistical models explain about the same amount of variance (i.e., approximately 17% for the majoritarian subsample and 16% for the subsample with at least one foreign-born person in the respondent's family) in attitudes regarding restrictive immigration policies.

Further analyses tried to identify the variables more likely to predict citizens' positive perceptions of the immigrants' role in the British society. Approximately 31% of the variation in public opinion is explained by the model for the total sample presented in table 4. Similar to previous findings, respondents who expressed higher levels of interpersonal (Beta = .216;  $p < .001$ ) and institutional trust (Beta = .228;  $p < .001$ ) were more appreciative of the immigrants' contribution to the economy, culture, and general well-being of the society.

**Table 4: OLS Estimates for Positive Views of Immigrants' Role in Society**

	Total sample (N = 2352)		Natives (N = 1921)		Non-Natives (N = 431)	
	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta
Interpersonal trust	.223*** (.023)	.216	.231*** (.026)	.224	.229*** (.052)	.243
Institutional trust	.229*** (.022)	.228	.244*** (.025)	.243	.191*** (.049)	.209
Economic hardship	-.055* (.023)	-.050	-.078** (.025)	-.065	.005 (.058)	.004
Religiosity	.018** (.007)	.054	.015* (.008)	.047	.021 (.017)	.065
Conservative Party supporter	-.211*** (.054)	-.079	-.222*** (.056)	-.089	-.159 (.177)	-.045
Respondent's education	.115*** (.014)	.189	.121*** (.015)	.203	.083* (.033)	.138
Parents' education	.029*** (.008)	.082	.034*** (.009)	.096	.016* (.019)	.048
Ethnic minority			-.005 (.195)	-.001	.425*** (.115)	.196
Residency (large urban area)	.156*** (.043)	.072	.126** (.047)	.059	.235* (.104)	.114
Gender (Male)	.145*** (.040)	.072	.138** (.044)	.071	.128 (.101)	.063
Age	-.003* (.001)	-.052	-.003* (.001)	-.061	.000 (.003)	.007
Respondent & parents born outside UK	.622*** (.076)	.171				
Respondent born UK, foreign-born parents	.386*** (.113)	.068				
Respondent & one parent born in UK	.166* (.079)	.042				
Constant	-.316** (.111)		-.256* (.124)		-.167 (.243)	
Adjusted R Square	.308		.290		.212	

\*\*\*p ≤ .001; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*p ≤ .05.

The respondent's education and the respondent's parents' educational level are both significantly and positively related to the dependent variable. Men, persons who are more religious, and residents of larger urban areas have more positive views of immigrants' role in society than, respectively, women, less religious individuals, and people who live in rural or smaller urban areas. Foreign-born individuals and native persons with one or both parents born abroad have a

significantly more positive perception of immigrants and their role in society than native Britons. However, individuals who experience financial difficulties, persons who sympathize with the Conservative Party and older respondents tend to share a less positive view of the immigrants' contribution to the British society.

For natives and non-natives as well, interpersonal trust, institutional trust, and residency in large cities are significantly and positively related to positive perceptions of immigration. While UK-born ethnic minorities do not differ significantly in their opinions about immigrants' role in society when compared to non-minority natives, persons belonging to ethnic minority groups in the foreign-born subsample tend to have a much more positive opinion of the immigrants' contribution to the British society than non-minority respondents from immigrant families. However, it should be noted that the relatively small representation of UK-born ethnic minorities could have impacted the results pertaining to natives' opinions. If in the majoritarian subsample respondents belonging to an ethnic minority group represent only 1.5%, in the foreign-born subsample ethnic minorities represent 31% of subsample size.

Political orientation, gender, and age influence significantly the opinions expressed by native respondents only. While native men tend to perceive immigrants in more positive terms than native women do, older UK-born individuals, those who anticipate economic hardship and sympathizers of the Conservative Party are less likely to acknowledge the immigrants' positive contribution to the economic and cultural life of the British society than people who are younger, better-off economically, and those who feel closer to other political parties, respectively.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

By simultaneously testing alternative theoretical explanations, this paper examined several individual-level factors most likely to influence attitudes toward immigration policies and immigrants in general, expressed by native Britons and also by persons who are first and second generation immigrants in United Kingdom. Results show that anti-immigrant attitudes and support for restrictive immigration policies are highly correlated in UK. Persons who indirectly express reservations toward multiculturalism (i.e., have a negative view of the immigrants' contribution to the economy, culture, and well-being of the British society) are

more likely to favor anti-immigration policies (e.g., for natives:  $r = .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ; for non-natives:  $r = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similar to findings from prior studies (see Dustmann and Preston 2007), a large segment of the UK population favors restrictive immigration policies, especially when potential immigrants are ethnic/racial minorities and the sending country is a poor non-European state. Approximately 51% of native Britons believe that no immigrants or only a few immigrants who belong to ethnic/racial minority groups from poor countries should be allowed in UK. Similar attitudes are expressed by the majority of natives (56.4%) regarding potential immigration from poor countries outside Europe. Support for anti-immigration policies is also expressed by more than one third of those who are first and second generation immigrants. While only noneconomic characteristics appear to significantly influence immigration-related attitudes expressed by non-natives, the natives' perception of immigrants and their reaction to immigration policies is shaped by personal economic circumstances, in addition to socio-demographic and cultural factors.

As anticipated, and in support of the cultural marginality thesis (see Fetzer 2000), when compared to natives, persons from immigrant families are significantly less likely to favor anti-immigration policies and are significantly more likely to perceive in positive terms the immigrants' contribution to society. It appears that being foreign-born and/or having foreign-born parents were the defining characteristics of a group, whose identity, despite individual differences in socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic background, might be a result of shared similar life experiences in the new adoptive country. Results are similar to findings by Espenshade and Calhoun (1993), who determined that 'cultural affinity' (i.e., being a racial/ethnic minority and foreign-born) influenced attitudes toward illegal immigrants in US. However, it should be noted that in United Kingdom the impact of immigrant family status on attitudinal change is less important than one's societal attachment and education. Consistent with previous research (Rustenbach 2010), persons who display a high level of interpersonal trust are more likely to oppose restrictive immigration policies and tend to believe that immigration enriched the country's culture and strengthened the economy. Similar attitudes are expressed by persons who have high levels of confidence in the country's legal system, parliament, and national police. In the overall sample, when controlling for immigration status, respondent's education and institutional trust are the strongest predictors of variations in immigration-related attitudes.

Although this study finds partial support for the economic self-interest perspective, results suggest that non-economic factors have a stronger impact on attitudes toward immigration expressed by natives and persons from immigrant families as well. While economically vulnerable native citizens are significantly more likely to support anti-immigration policies and tend to have a negative view of immigrants, economic factors do not appear to significantly impact the immigration-related attitudes expressed by non-native persons. Consistent with prior research (Brenner and Fertig 2006; Daniels and von der Ruhr 2005; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Fetzer 2000; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Mayda 2006; Rustenbach 2010), it appears that the human capital theoretical perspective offers a better explanation of attitudinal change regarding immigration issues. As hypothesized, with an increase in one's level of education and in the educational level of the respondent's parents there is a significant decrease in support for restrictive immigration policies and an increase in positive perceptions of immigrants. Educational level is one of the strongest predictors of attitudes toward immigration for both subsamples (natives and non-natives). Even if the parents' education has a weaker effect on attitudes than respondent's education does, the variable significantly predicts positive perceptions of immigrants' contribution to the British society for both subsamples. As Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007, 437) observed, the effect of education/skills on immigration attitudes differs from the conventional arguments about labor-market competition. Education actually transforms the values held by individuals, encouraging them to have more tolerant and cosmopolitan views of the world and be more open to multiculturalism.

Although only a proxy measure was used to test the competing contact hypotheses, results appear to validate Allport's (1954) thesis, according to which increased contact with immigrants would decrease one's xenophobic and ethnocentric attitudes. Results are consistent with findings obtained by DiGiusto and Jolly (2008), who identified in France a significant negative relationship between the share of foreign population in a large geographic area and anti-immigrant sentiments. In particular, results suggest that native Britons living in large urban areas, where most immigrants reside in UK, are less supportive of restrictive immigration policies and are significantly more likely to acknowledge the immigrants' positive contribution to the economic and cultural life of the British society than natives who live in rural areas or smaller cities. Recent research (see Blinder 2011) based on Citizenship Survey 2008-2009 also found that when

compared to residents of other regions, white UK-born Londoners and other residents of London, where migrants are most heavily concentrated, are less likely to favor sharp reductions in migration to the UK.

As hypothesized and similar to results presented in prior research studies (DiGiusto and Jolly 2008; Rustenbach 2010) that examined the effect of political preferences (i.e., left-versus-right political inclination) on attitude formation, native Britons who are Conservative Party supporters are more likely to favor anti-immigration policies and are more likely to consider that immigrants had a negative impact on the country's culture, economy, and general well-being. Consistent with research conducted in United States (see Daniels and Von der Ruhr 2005; Smith 2006) and as hypothesized, the self-assessed level of religiosity appears to influence attitudes toward immigrants, independent of one's religious denomination. More religious natives are less likely to support restrictive immigration policies and tend to think that the immigrants' contribution to society is beneficial. Similar to studies conducted in other countries (Berzosa and Valentova 2010; Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong, 1997; DiGiusto and Jolly 2008; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007), gender and age impact immigration-related public attitudes in United Kingdom as well. With an increase in one's age there is an increase in support for anti-immigration policies. Interestingly, older persons in both subsamples (natives and non-natives) share similar views regarding immigration policies and immigrants in general. Gender differences in attitudes are observed only for native Britons. When compared to women, men are significantly more likely to support 'open-door' immigration policies and appear to be more appreciative of multiculturalism.

To summarize, this analysis found support for all the main theories that explain attitudinal variation in the public's opinion about immigration-related issues in United Kingdom. It should be noted, however, that this is a secondary analysis limited by the existent data, which did not include potentially important indicators. For instance, respondents were not asked to justify or explain their opinions regarding immigration-related issues and there is no way of knowing the rationale behind their attitudes toward immigrants or immigration policies. Although the 2008 European Social Survey does not include questions regarding one's direct experience/contact with immigrants, other recent surveys conducted in United Kingdom (see Blinder 2011) found that only a small number of British citizens claimed that their own neighborhood is having problems due to

immigrants. And approximately 85% of the respondents participating in the 2008-2009 Citizen Survey declared that people of diverse backgrounds get along well in their particular local area. Blinder (2011, 8) contended that the Britons' relatively strong support for restrictive immigration policies is in fact an expression of a general concern regarding United Kingdom as a whole, rather than a logic consequence of a direct negative personal experience with foreign-born individuals in one's own community.

This study showed that two subjective and highly correlated factors, interpersonal trust and confidence in important institutions (e.g., the country's Parliament, the legal system, and the police), are among the strongest predictors of variations in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. Consequently, it could be assumed that the natives' diminished support for multiculturalism in UK is partially a reflection of a low level of institutional trust. Although public beliefs regarding important institutions are shaped by the media, political elites, and one's direct experiences with the police or the legal system, for instance, as Rothstein (2005) contended, the government's ability to be fair and impartial is a major trust-creating factor at both interpersonal and institutional level. Even if the present analysis could not establish causal relationships, results appear to support the contention (see Rothstein and Stolle's 2003) that one's level of interpersonal trust is significantly influenced by the individual's trust in policy-implementing societal institutions. In the overall sample there is a significant positive relationship ( $r = .387$ ;  $p < .001$ ) between interpersonal trust and institutional trust. The relationship is stronger for the subsample of native Britons ( $r = .414$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than it is for the subsample of persons who are first or second generation immigrants ( $r = .312$ ;  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that trust in institutions, particularly in those that provide public services (e.g., the justice system), translates at the personal level in the trust citizens express toward each other, influencing their perception of foreigners as well.

As this research and other studies suggest (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Mayda 2006) non-economic factors affect public attitudes toward immigration in United Kingdom more than economic variables do. Different from conventional arguments about labor-market competition, people with higher education levels are more likely to oppose restrictive immigration policies and tend to favor multiculturalism. Although the current British government plans to implement restrictive immigration policies in the near future, the country has already a

noteworthy foreign-born population, whose integration in society could be negatively affected if at the government level the benefits and consequences of multiculturalism are not properly explained to the public and beliefs that foster animosity toward foreigners are not discouraged. In addition, the natives' and non-natives' confidence in major institutions, an important indicator of the political health of the society as a whole, risks to be eroded if immigration and immigrants will continue to be presented by government officials as problematic. The 2011 riots in urban areas of England characterized by a higher proportion of households with no workers, higher levels of child poverty, higher youth unemployment rates, and lower levels of educational attainment than the corresponding national average figures (see Ben-Galim and Gottfried 2011) suggest that government policies focusing on reducing economic inequality by creating viable educational and employment opportunities for people living in deprived communities might have more long-term positive effects on the country's general well-being, the citizens' perception of immigrants, and the public's level of institutional trust than restrictive immigration policies alone could achieve.

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