Chalk + Talk: The White British Response to ethnic change – UKIP, White Flight or integration

Speaker:
Eric Kaufmann, Professor of Politics, Birkbeck, University of London

Chair:
Nida Broughton, Chief Economist, SMF
The White British Response to ethnic change

UKIP, White Flight or Integration?

Eric Kaufmann, Birkbeck College

e.kaufmann@bbk.ac.uk; twitter: @epkaufm;
web: sneps.net
Key Messages

• Ethnic Change has moved ahead of White British ability to adapt
• Result is salience of immigration issue and rise of BNP, then UKIP
• Demography and culture – speed of the shift – matters: economic, political and media factors much less so
Policy

• Two key policy responses:
  1. Avoid exacerbating speed of local ethnic shifts in areas that have not experienced change
  2. Stress a new narrative of national identity when speaking to the ethnic majority which aims at reassurance and continuity rather than excitement about transformation and change
England: 84% of Britain

English ethnic core: 73% of England

White British: 77% of England

Other White British: Scots, Welsh, Irish, Ulster British
UKIP, London and the White British
White British Response to Ethnic Change

- ‘Fight’ (Voice)
- ‘Flight’ (Exit)
- Join (Accommodation)
Race relations/immigration as an important issue to Britons vs. UK net international migration

Source: Ipsos MORI, 'Attitudes to Immigration' (forthcoming). Issues Index question: “What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?”. Issues Index base: representative sample of c.1,000 British adults age 18+ each month, interviewed face-to-face in home. Home Office statistics based on ‘Year ending’.
Figure 1. Immigrants in the United States, Number and Percent, 1900-2010

Source: Decennial censuses, 1900 to 2000; American Community Survey, 2010.
US: Response to Catholic/Jewish Growth, 1890-1924
Scottish Response to Catholic Growth, 1920s-50s

• 1923: the Church of Scotland's Church and Nation committee issues report entitled *The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality*

• 1952: the Church of Scotland's Church and Nation committee condemns Irish Catholics for displacing the 'native Scots population' from industrial Scotland and derides them as a 'compact community largely of alien origin' (Devine 2008)
BNP Vote in local elections & ethnic shifts in Ward

Source: Plymouth Elections Centre
East European Immigrants (2000s) & 2014 UKIP Vote, by LA

![Graph showing the predicted UKIP vote share in Local Authority (LA) based on the share of recent (2000s) East European immigrants.](chart.png)
Contact Effect: Desire to reduce migration, by class and proportion of minorities in ward, white British only
White Flight?

Rise of 'white flight': British families are 'self-segregating' as more Caucasians abandon urban areas for the countryside

- Trend has gone largely unnoticed because city centres appear diverse
- Well-off whites from diverse areas are moving to outer suburbs in droves
- Researchers say better schools, fresher air and background may be factors

Britons 'self-segregate' as white flight soars

Why have the white British left London?
White British Change and Minority Change, London, 2001-11
George (60s, Gosport): I mean there are places in Leicester and Birmingham. . . and I think it’s [immigration is] just far too much, and locals get pushed out [. . . ] I did have to go up to Birmingham about eighteen months ago . . . and I just ended up in an area [in his car] . . . and it was just at school time, and honestly I felt, well it frightened me. . . it was literally like downtown Karachi. . . and I just thought, no this cannot be, this is not good, because you just felt A) a stranger in your own country and B) I actually felt intimidated. – quoted in Leddy-Owen 2014
So **contact effect** is real, not because of white flight, but...

- Higher local *changes* mean more opposition
- Higher local *levels* mean less opposition
- Higher local levels *less* opposition, but higher metro/Local Authority levels *more* opposition
- **Contact and Habituation** of native white population to the local presence of minorities, even if segregated/foreign-born/Muslim, seems key
Should we push integration?

- **Contact** produces more positive attitudes among majority, **BUT**
  1. ‘Halo’ effect: as zone of contact moves out, zone of threat moves out
  2. Integration does not affect white opinion: Whether minorities UK-born, English-speaking, social housing, employed, residentially integrated, matters little. Mixed, Muslim, Caribbean – sporadic effects
Summary

• Minority *change* associated with more opposition

• Minority *levels* mean less opposition locally, but not in LA or nationally

• Local contact with and habituation to minorities, rather than integration, reduces local opposition

• Assimilation needed to reduce opposition at national level
Policy Options

- Housebuilding: garden cities, self-build, dispersed development
- Refugee and council tenant dispersal should aim at transient areas with some experience of diversity
- Retain White British where possible in diverse areas
- Managed migration, but also realism during a period of native-born ethnic change
A new national identity

- Different message to majority and minorities
- For minorities, OK to talk about ever-rising diversity within an umbrella of Britishness
- For majorities, assimilation, continuity
The White British Response to ethnic change

UKIP, White Flight or Integration?

Eric Kaufmann, Birkbeck College

e.kaufmann@bbk.ac.uk; twitter: @epkaufm;
web: sneps.net