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Summary of the searchlight research on immigration

1 **The report** argues that the growth of far right parties is simply a symptom of a deeper growth of identity politics. In particular, the politics of immigration have morphed into a politics of culture, identity and nation.

2 The report identifies six “tribes” (listed at annex A). Social class is not irrelevant but has lost much of its importance in determining voting behaviour. At the same time the politics of identity has risen alongside traditional left - right, and class based political identities.

3 About 24% of the population are either “confident multi-culturalists” or “main stream liberals”. Another 23% feel either active enmity or latent hostility towards immigrants. The middle ground comprises the “culturally concerned” (24%) who have concerns about the impact of immigration on national identity and the “identity ambivalent” (28%) who are concerned about the impact of immigration on their economic opportunities and on their communities. They are the largest single segment of those who identify with Labour. They comprise of 37% of Labour voters but only 17% of Conservatives. The largest segment of Conservatives (42%) are the culturally concerned.

4 The report claims that immigration has become a driver of voting patterns. “52% of the voters Labour lost since 2005-2009 (sic) see immigration as one of the three or four most important issues facing the country today, compared with 34% of those Labour kept”. Furthermore, 45% of lost Labour voters consider that the Labour party most wants to help “immigrants and non-white Britons”. Only 15% of those who stayed loyal to Labour felt the same way.

5 The report states that the survey did not support the assertion that there is a “progressive” majority. It suggests that there is a solid anti-progressive block of 47%, a solid progressive cohort of 24% and a group of 28% which is ambivalent.

6 Meanwhile, the data shows that attitudes to immigration have hardened with a ratio of 60:40 thinking that it has been a bad thing for the country. This includes 67% of the two middle groups – the “identity ambivalent” and the “cultural integrationists”.

7 The report also shows concern about an increasing tension between different groups living in Britain. 71% believed this to be the case while 29% thought that different ethnic groups in this country get on well.

8 The report found widespread pessimism with 82% considering life in Britain to be worse than ten years ago. Those on the right were most likely to associate the concepts of “soft touch” and “weak” with Britain today.

9 It was particularly striking that 43% of Asians (63% of whites and 17% of blacks) consider that, on the whole, immigration into Britain has been a bad thing for the country.

10 As regards policy, 39% of Asians thought that immigration should either be stopped or stopped until the economy improves. The equivalent figures were 34% for whites and 21% for blacks. Economic factors seem to have been a major element in this.

11 As regards Muslims, just over half of respondents believed that Muslims “create problems in the UK”. In a series of questions about their community, 59% of respondents described their community as peaceful and friendly but 49% did not think that new immigrants wanted to integrate. Only 43% wanted to get to know their neighbours better.

12 28% considered that the arrival of immigrants had changed their local community for the worse while only 12% thought that it had changed their community for the better.

13 Perhaps the most surprising result was the response to the following question:

A new party is going to be set up which says it wants to defend the English, create an English Parliament, control immigration, challenge Islamic extremism, restrict the building of mosques and make it compulsory for all public buildings to fly the St George’s flag or the Union Jack.

21% said that they would definitely support such a party and 27% that they would consider supporting it. 15% would probably not and 27% would definitely not. 10% did not know.

7 March, 2011

ANNEX A

The New ‘Tribes’ of British Identity Politics

Confident Multiculturals (eight per cent of the population)

Most likely to be graduates or post graduates, these people are predominantly professionals and managers. They are more prevalent in London and the South East, and among people who identify with Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green. Outgoing, social and happy with their lives, they are confident about their own, as well as their country’s future, and think Britain has benefitted from immigration.

Mainstream Liberals (16%)

These people are optimistic, self-motivated and for the most part educated to at least degree level. They see immigration as a net benefit to the country, and usually differ from Confident Multiculturals only in their level of enthusiasm about it.

Identity Ambivalents (28%)

These people are less financially secure and less optimistic about the future. They are more likely to be working class, to live in social housing and to view immigration through the prism of its economic impact on their opportunities and the social impact on their communities. Muslims and other BME (Black Minority Ethnic) groups are more prevalent here as are the largest single segment of those who identify with Labour.

Culturally Concerned (24%)

Generally older and more prosperous than other groups, many are (or have been) professionals and managers. They are more likely to view immigration as a cultural issue with concerns about the impact of immigration on national identity and about immigrants’ willingness to integrate. This group forms the largest segment of those identifying with the Conservative Party.

Latent Hostiles (10%)

More likely to be older, not university-educated, and more than likely working class. They view their own

future with uncertainty and Britain's future with pessimism. For them, immigration has undermined British culture, public services and their own economic prospects. They would support political forces that stood-up for their identity and way of life, but are less confrontational than those in Active Enmity.

Active Enmity (13%)

Drawing more support from the unskilled and the unemployed, these people are the most disengaged from traditional political processes and the most hostile to immigrants and what they think immigration represents. Opposed to all ethnicities or religions other than their own, many believe that violence is acceptable if it is a consequence of standing up for what is 'right'²

ANNEX B

On the whole, immigration into Britain has been a good thing for the country OR On the whole, immigration into Britain has been a bad thing for the country

	Asian	White	Black*
Good Thing	57%	38%	83%
Bad Thing	43%	63%	17%

However, when actual approaches to immigration are detailed, there is broad agreement.

Preferred policy on immigration

	Asian	White	Black*
Stop all immigration	10%	19%	4%
Stop all immigration until the economy improves	29%	15%	17%
Only allow in skilled immigrants who will help the economy	33%	40%	30%
Only allow in skilled and unskilled immigrants who will help the economy	25%	22%	39%
Allow all types of immigration	4%	4%	10%

The above table suggests that 39% of Asians and 34% of whites are in a hard anti-immigration camp. Fifty-eight per cent (58%) of Asians and 62% of Whites seem pragmatic towards immigration. Four per cent (4%) of each are 'open borders' advocates.