England, Englishness and Brexit

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Abstract

In the 1975 referendum England provided the strongest support for European integration, with a much smaller margin for membership in Scotland and Northern Ireland. By 2015 the rank order of 'national' attitudes to European integration had reversed. Now, England is the UK's most eurosceptic nation and may vote 'Leave', while Scotland seems set to generate a clear margin for 'Remain'. The UK as a whole is a Brexit marginal. To understand the campaign, we need to make sense of the dynamics of public attitudes in each nation. We take an 'archaeological' approach to a limited evidence-base, to trace the development of attitudes to Europe in England since 1975. We find evidence of a link between English nationalism and euroscepticism. Whatever the result in 2016, contrasting outcomes in England and Scotland will exacerbate tensions in the UK's territorial constitution and could lead to the break-up of Britain.

Keywords: England, Englishness, nationalism, euroscepticism, Brexit, referendum

Introduction

Ahead of the forthcoming Remain/Leave EU referendum, the headline above the front page editorial of the 3 February 2016 edition of the *Daily Mail* asked: 'Who will speak for England?' It was an obviously rhetorical question. Britain's most influential newspaper has no doubt that it provides the authentic voice of 'middle England'. As such, the editorial itself went on to assail the 'one-sided, stage-managed charade of scaremongering, spin... and censorship' that was the 'Remain' campaign and demanded that cabinet eurosceptics have the 'courage to speak out' on the choice facing the electorate. The choice was couched as follows:

> Are we to be a self-governing nation, free in this age of mass migration to control our borders, strike trade agreements with whomever we choose and dismiss our rulers and lawmakers if they displease us?

> Or will our liberty, security and prosperity be better assured by submitting to a statist, unelected bureaucracy in Brussels, accepting the will of unaccountable judges and linking our destiny with that of a sclerotic Europe that

tries to achieve the impossible by uniting countries as diverse as Germany and Greece?

Again, questions asked with obviously rhetorical intent.

While the *Daily Mail* editorial provides important insights into some key eurosceptic arguments, this article will focus instead on the framing provided in the headline, and in particular the role of 'England' and English opinion in the referendum. This may appear to be a somewhat quixotic preoccupation. After all, the headline itself is an obvious allusion to the famous parliamentary debate that was to lead the United Kingdom into the Second World War (another characteristic eurosceptic trope). The editorial itself goes on to reassure its readers that 'of course, by "England"... we mean the whole of the United Kingdom'. Yet, strikingly, the headline was not repeated in the paper's Scottish edition published on the same day. Consciously or not, the *Daily Mail*'s editorial team grasped that there is a distinctively English dimension to the debate over the UK's membership of the European Union (EU).

The central contention of this article is that in this, at least, they are correct: England *qua*

England matters. Not simply because, with almost 85 per cent of the UK electorate, England is politically predominant among the state's constituent national territories. There are also national differences in attitudes to the European Union. Differences exist not only between England and at least some of those other territories but also—and emphatically—within England itself, structured around patterns of English national identity. To demonstrate and explore this argument we organise our discussion in two parts. First, we compare attitudes towards the EU between the UK's nations in order to highlight the extent to which attitudes in England are now distinctive. Here we also seek to determine when currently observable differences began to emerge. Second, we ask why England is different.

Before commencing with the discussion, however, three points should be made. The first concerns the potential implications for the future of the UK as a state, beyond its membership of the EU. Our second and third points are related and methodological. Should the UK elect to leave the EU but Scotland vote to remain, Nicola Sturgeon has made it clear that a second Scottish independence referendum might be triggered (see Minto et al., this issue). There is also a possibility that, on a close vote, the UK might be kept in the EU against a small majority to leave in England (of one or two points above 50 per cent).[1] If English euroscepticism is linked to English nationalism, that result could have dramatic consequences.

Second, it is worth pondering why the notion of a distinctive 'English politics' remains startlingly unfamiliar. England has very rarely been treated as a distinct unit for (contemporary) political analysis. In part, at least, this reflects the tendency of political science to succumb to a 'methodological nationalism'[2] —by which we mean the assumption that nations and states share the same boundaries. The assumptions that political identity is essentially formed around nations and that each nation is 'housed' in a state (which it occupies fully) have made it difficult to pay sustained research attention to substate units of analysis, both in the UK and beyond.[3] Politics scholars have produced several substantial studies of

contemporary English nationhood in recent years.[4] Valuable as these studies may be, attempts to take England seriously remain hampered, not least by a comparative paucity of social attitudes data.

Which brings us to our third point. Because the 'nation-state' has been viewed as the 'natural' unit for analysis, public attitudes surveys have routinely been designed to generate data at that level of analysis. In the present context, this means that we simply do not have access to solid, consistent evidence dating back to the start of the UK's membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) which allows us easily to disentangle attitudes to 'Europe' in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. From the mid-1990s, informed by the developments, debates and processes that led up to devolution, a strong evidence-base on public attitudes on some constitutional questions in the non-English parts of the UK has built up, though rarely with a consistent focus on the EU. England has, however, typically been subsumed within British or UK-wide samples rather than being a unit in its own right, with only sporadic exceptions under the banner of the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey. In what follows we have attempted to explore some of the available historical data, but as will become clear, there are distinct limitations as to what is possible given the limitations of past survey evidence.

Since the establishment of the Future of England Surveys (FoES) in 2011, sustained attention has been paid to public attitudes in England on constitutional matters. English attitudes to European integration—and their distinctiveness compared with other UK nations—have been a central theme in these surveys.[5] Other analysis has followed suit: all of which allows for a more detailed exploration of the current differences between England and the other UK nations, as well as—territorially and in terms of national identity—within England itself.

England, the rest of the UK and Brexit

Despite some claims to the contrary,[6] electors in England and Scotland now have very

different views on the UK's membership of the EU. Table 1 presents data from commercial opinion polls fielded between the UK general election on 7 May 2015 and the end of May 2016 that probed attitudes to EU membership. They include results from eleven polls that produced all-England findings, twenty Scottish polls, five from Wales and three from Northern Ireland.

While all the polls reported had sample sizes of 1,000+, they otherwise differ in terms of survey mode and even question wording. (Until the start of September 2015 variants of a Remain/Leave question were asked. It was only subsequently that the polls tended to converge on the Electoral Commission's recommended referendum question: 'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of

Table 1: EU referendum voting intention by UK Nation, May 2015–March 2016

	England		Scotland		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	Remain %	Leave %	Remain %	Leave %	Remain %	Leave %	Remain %	Leave %
2015								
15 May	53	47	61	39				
21 May			68	32				
30 May			72	28				
1 June							78	22
26 June					54	46		
3 July			65	35				
7 July			66	34				
10 Sept			64	36				
16 Sept	48	52						
24 Sept					53	47		
27 Sept			65	35				
30 Sept			72	38				
13 Oct			62	38				
16 Oct							81	19
21 Oct							67	33
1 Nov	54	46						
8 Nov	55	45						
11 Nov	46	54						
15 Nov	52	48						
16 Nov			75	25				
17 Nov	49	51						
4 Dec					49	51		
9 Dec			61	39				
2016								
13 Dec	49	51						
12 Jan			66	34				
14 Jan			64	36				
4 Feb			66	34				
7 Feb			70	30				
11 Feb					45	55		
16 Feb			66	34				
29 Feb	49	51	64	36				
6 Mar	48	52						
7 Mar			59	41				
9 Mar			61	39				
13 Mar	51	49						
17 Mar			65	35				
18 Mar					53	47		
Average	50.4	49.6	65.6	34.4	50.8	49.2	75.3	24.7

the European Union or leave the European Union?'). All of which means that great caution must be exercised in comparing their results. Polling in Wales and, in particular, Northern Ireland, is also less frequent than in Scotland and England, suggesting that even greater caution is in order when pronouncing on public attitudes in these places.

Notwithstanding these important caveats, there is much of interest to note. Most obviously the four UK nations divide into two pairs. England and Wales appear (only) just in favour of remaining, though over half of individual polls in England show 'Leave' majorities (2/5 in Wales). By contrast, Scotland and Northern Ireland are firmly in the 'Remain' camp, with Remain averaging over 65 per cent in the Scottish polls and Northern Ireland (on the basis of particularly patchy data) appearing to be even more committed to the cause.

This territorial pattern looks especially striking when compared with the 1975 referendum on EEC membership (Table 2): the rank order of Yes/Remain has reversed. England in 1975 was more enthusiastic about EEC membership than Scotland is now about the EU. All four parts of the UK show marked changes (final column Table 2—again noting the limitations of the 2015–16 data). England, Wales and Northern Ireland have experienced Damascene conversions; Scotland has shifted substantially. England's is by far the most politically significant of these swings: weighted by its 83.9 per cent population share, the English swing of 18.3 per cent from Yes/Remain to No/Leave equates to a UK-wide swing of 15.4 per cent. The UK-wide Yes vote in 1975 was 67.2 per cent. England now makes the UK as a whole an EU referendum marginal.

Two questions arise. First, at what point did attitudes in England shift in a eurosceptic direction? Second, and relatedly, what is (or has been) the extent of regional attitudinal difference across England? We shall attempt to address both these questions on the basis of the somewhat limited available data.

The result of the 1975 referendum (Figure 1) can act as a baseline. There was relatively little variation around the England-wide outcome of a 68.7 per cent Yes vote across the country's nine standard regions. And, strikingly, all the English regions recorded outcomes that were more positive about EEC membership than Wales (just) and Scotland and Northern Ireland (clearly). Broadly, moving northwards and westward from the south-east of England shifted the balance of attitudes more against the EEC (with London in 1975 something of a less enthusiastic exception).

Given data limitations, working out when attitudes began to change after 1975 is a much more challenging proposition.

Eurobarometer—the EU's own survey—provides the longest time series available on attitudes towards the EU. Particularly valuable here is the key repeated question which asked if the EU is a 'good' or 'bad' thing 'for your country'. Note, however, that sample size limits Eurobarometer's usefulness as a vehicle for cross-national comparison within the UK. The relative sizes of the samples make the data more robust for England than for Northern Ireland (although this sample is boosted above its population share). The Scottish data should be treated with even greater caution: as indicative, not definitive. The sample sizes for Wales are simply too small to be usable. With those caveats in

Table 2: 1975 and now

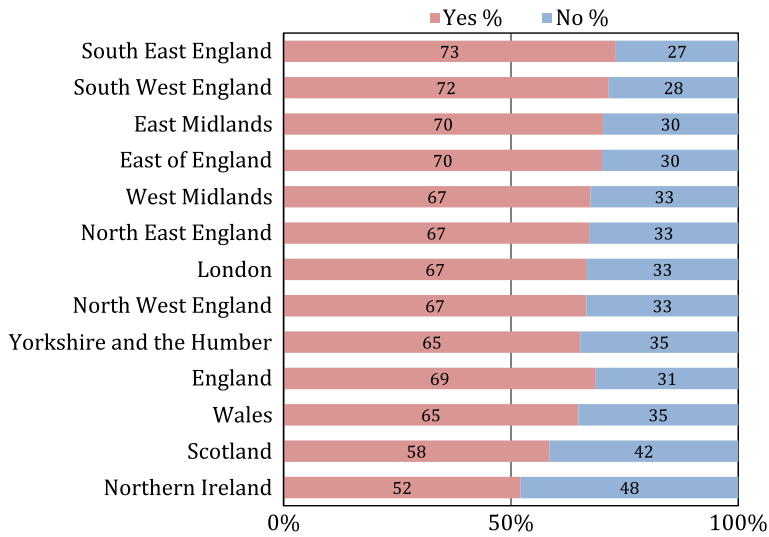|	1975 Referendum		2015–16 Poll Average		Change 1975 – 2015–16
	Yes %	No %	Remain %	Leave %	No minus Leave %
England	68.7	31.3	50.4	49.6	−18.3
Wales	64.8	35.2	50.8	49.2	−14.0
Scotland	58.4	41.6	65.6	34.4	+7.2
Northern Ireland	52.1	47.9	75.3	24.7	+23.2

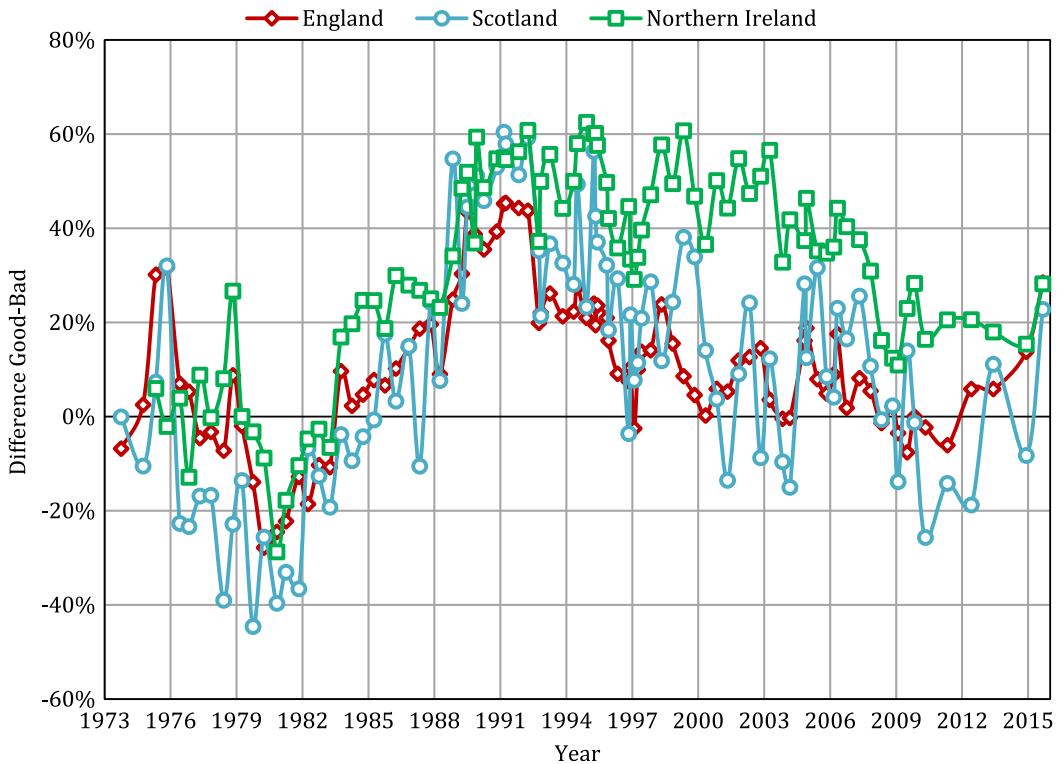Figure 1: Nations and regions in the 1975 referendum

Figure 2: Good thing or bad thing? England, Northern Ireland and Scotland
Source: Eurobarometers

mind, Figure 2 displays results for this question in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

These data suggest that, up until the mid-1980s, the balance of opinion across the UK appears to have seen the EEC as a 'bad

thing'. There is one notable exception—a spike of 'approval' evident in the mid-1970s, probably associated with the 1975 referendum. From a clearly negative balance of views in the early 1980s, until the early 1990s a steadily increasing proportion of the population saw 'Europe' in positive terms. This should perhaps not surprise us given that the 1980s were a decade of dynamism and perceived success for European integration. However, this trend was not maintained after the early 1990s. From this point a declining proportion of the UK population regarded Europe as a 'good thing'; a development that might be reasonably linked to the ejection of sterling from the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System and discontent about the Treaty of Maastricht.

Turning our attention to the distinct national dynamics, during the mid-1970s more respondents in England expressed a positive view of the EEC than was the case in Scotland or particularly Northern Ireland. The pro-European 'spike' apparently associated with the EEC referendum begins earlier and is a little more sustained in England than Scotland, while there is no evidence of such a 'spike' in Northern Ireland. There was a rapid return to an even balance or negative predominance by the late 1970s.

Strikingly, however, from having been most negative at the time of the referendum, attitudes in Northern Ireland quickly emerge as more positive than in England or Scotland. Although attitudes in Northern Ireland show the UK's characteristic pattern of decline between the late 1970s and early 1980s, nevertheless during this period the proportion of people viewing the EU as a 'good thing' in Northern Ireland was generally above that in England. By the mid-1980s, it is clear that a 'reversal' had taken place. Although tending to become more positive in all parts of the UK, at this stage the balance towards a larger number of positive respondents clearly became higher in Northern Ireland than in England. This is likely to have resulted from the consolidation of very high levels of Nationalist support for European integration, with opposition concentrated in the Unionist communities. Thereafter, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, a relatively clear, stable and persistent majority of positive over negative respondents is evident.

The relative patterns in Scotland and England are more difficult to disentangle, not least because of the limitations of the Scottish data. Even given these limitations, the initial evidence from the 1970s well into the 1980s is that a larger proportion of respondents in Scotland than England held a negative view of the EU. Equally, it appears that a 'reversal' also took place in the relative pattern of attitudes in these countries. By the late 1980s large sections of the British left and of the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales switched from opposing to supporting 'Europe'. Mrs. Thatcher was using increasingly robust language to describe her views of the EEC. At this stage the weight of opinion in Scotland seems to have become more positive than that in England. As in England, the Scottish balance between those seeing the EU as 'good' and 'bad' did not sustain the high point of positivity reached in the late 1980s and early 90s. But despite the volatility and limitations in the data, a fair reading of the evidence is that from the late 1980s the balance of opinion became relatively more positive in Scotland than in England. Highlighting the limits of these Scottish data, the most recent time point shows Scotland as less positive about the EU than England, a finding that stands in contrast to evidence from FoES as well as commercial polling on attitudes in Scotland to EU membership.

The BSA Survey provides another important although, again, somewhat limited source of evidence. These data allow us to explore eurosceptic attitudes on both an all-England and English regional basis after 1993. Note than in this case we have defined eurosceptics as those supporting leaving the EU or reducing the powers of the Union (from a question with five options: leave the EU; stay in and try to reduce the EU's power; leave things as they are; stay in and try to increase the EU's power; or a single European state. Also note that to ensure large enough sample sizes the data is organised by four rather than nine regions).

Focusing first on the all-England picture (Table 3), these data suggest a tipping point in the mid-1990s after which eurosceptic views become (almost always) the majority

Table 3: Attitudes to EU membership in England, Wales and Scotland, 2014

| | | Scotland | Wales | England | | | | | |
		%	%	All England %	North %	Midlands %	East %	London %	South %
Membership[1]	Good	43	35	34	32	30	34	41	35
	Bad	27	32	34	34	37	36	28	33
	Neither	17	20	19	21	23	17	17	18
	DK	13	13	13	14	10	13	14	14
Vote[2]	Remain	48	39	37	36	34	37	46	37
	Leave	32	35	40	40	43	43	33	40
	Not vote	2	6	5	6	7	4	3	5
	DK	18	20	17	18	16	17	18	18
Number of respondents		1,014	1,027	3,705	1,061	714	446	468	1,016

[1]Generally speaking do you think that the UK's membership of EU is a good thing or a bad thing or neither?
[2]If there was a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, how would you vote?
Source: Future of England Survey 2014

position. Around the start of the second decade of the new millennium there was a further significant shift in a eurosceptic direction. Turning to regional variation, London generally displays the least eurosceptic attitudes. More generally, if there are regional variations in England, the pattern has reversed from that shown in 1975: levels of euroscepticism in the Midlands and the South are generally above the England-wide average, and London and the North below. Second, however, these variations (with a few exceptions) are generally not great. Finally, where step changes in attitudes are apparent in the mid-1990s and early 2010s, the four English regions move in unison. All of which tends to support previous FoES findings (see below) that point to England—with the partial exception of London—as being relatively homogenous in terms of attitudes to the EU.

Cross-national comparisons are less straightforward on the basis of BSA data. While disaggregating Scottish and English respondents from the BSA Survey leaves us with a sample size amenable to reliable statistical analysis in (and within) England, the number surveyed in Scotland is small and subject to significantly wider margins of error. Data from the BSA's sister, the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS), is more reliable, but only episodically available. The BSA's Welsh sample is (again) too small to be usable and the survey does not extend to Northern Ireland.

Figure 3 presents the available (suitably caveated) evidence on the differences between English and Scottish attitudes towards the EU. On the one hand, the general structure of opinion appears similar in England and Scotland. Both show a spike of euroscepticism in the mid-1990s and a further significant hardening of sceptical opinion around the beginning of the current decade. Equally, a broadly 'eurosceptic' position consistently attracts more support in England than Scotland. The more reliably sized SSA samples show a narrower, but still clear, English–Scottish difference for the same question.

More robust evidence of cross-national differences in attitudes towards the EU within Britain (and inter-regional difference within England) is provided by the 2014 FoES. This survey explored the issue directly on the basis of not only a large sample (3,705 respondent) survey in England, but also parallel contemporaneous surveys conducted in Scotland and Wales (a 1,000+ sample size in both cases).

Table 4 shows that judgements of EU membership as a 'good thing' or 'bad thing' were finely balanced in England, with a narrow preference for 'Leave' over 'Remain'. Opinion varied very little by English region (reported here in terms of a five-way division), excepting London, which was more positive (and closer to Scottish levels) on EU membership. Table 4 also confirms that opinion in Wales on EU membership was

Figure 3: Euroscepticism in England and Scotland
Source: British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS)

quite similar to England, though shading in a positive direction among those giving a view. Scotland was markedly different. The balance of opinion here was clearly positive, with a ratio of about 3:2 judging EU membership as 'good' and intending to vote to remain.

Table 5 reports 'Agree' responses for a wider battery of EU-related questions. These propositions frame the EU/Europe in both positive and negative terms and require Agree/Disagree responses. Again, opinion is broadly similar in Wales and England. On all counts respondents from Scotland were less negative about the EU and European cooperation (although in their majority Scots too thought that the EU made migration too easy and interfered too much through over-regulation).

The breakdown of the data by English region here and in Table 4 is significant. Nothing in these data suggests that England is politically divided by territory—say, North versus South. Only London shows a consistently distinctive pattern. Otherwise the territorial consistency of opinion across England is striking, suggesting a 'nationalised' pattern of public attitudes.

Having established that views in Scotland and England, in particular, are divergent, with England markedly more eurosceptic, we now ask 'why?'

Why is England different? Englishness and Europe

Analysis of the 2011 FoES exposed a striking result. In England attitudes towards the EU were strongly related to feelings of national identity—but, given the rhetoric and symbolism deployed by most though not all (cf. the *Daily Mail* example) eurosceptics, not, perhaps, in the way one might expect. While most eurosceptics focus on the apparent threat to Britain and Britishness posed by 'Brussels', those in England who felt more British than English were actually most positive in their attitudes towards the EU. By contrast, those with a strongly or exclusively English sense of their own national identity were the most (overwhelmingly) hostile. This finding was confirmed by the 2012 survey.[7] Because of its deployment of parallel surveys in Wales and Scotland, the 2014 survey allows us to explore whether or not patterns elsewhere in Britain were similar. That is, do we find that a stronger or exclusive Welsh or Scottish sense of national identity is also associated with less positive attitudes to European integration?

Table 6 shows that the answer is no. The table cross-tabulates responses from England, Wales and Scotland on EU questions (good thing/bad thing and referendum Leave/Remain) with national identity as measured by the Moreno scale (which

Table 4: Wider attitudes to European integration, 2014

	Scotland	Wales	England					
	% Agree	% Agree	All England % Agree	North % Agree	Midlands % Agree	East % Agree	London % Agree	South % Agree
As an island Britain has less reason to belong to the EU than other countries	30	38	39	39	43	43	29	38
Britain has a great deal in common with the cultures and peoples of other EU countries	34	29	30	28	31	27	33	29
Britain's special relationship with the USA makes EU membership less important for it than for other European countries	22	27	31	31	33	34	27	31
British people benefit greatly from being able to live and work in other EU countries	52	40	43	41	41	39	49	44
The EU produces too many regulations interfering with the lives of ordinary people	59	64	66	66	70	70	55	68
The EU helps to promote freedom and democracy across Europe	45	36	39	35	36	39	46	40
The EU has made migration between European countries too easy	59	67	67	69	71	70	57	66
European human rights law helps guarantee the basic freedoms of British citizens	40	34	37	37	35	30	45	36

Source: Future of England Survey 2014

explores nested national identities—'X' here referring respectively to English, Welsh or Scottish identity).

In Wales and Scotland, national identity (British or Scottish/Welsh) does not appear to structure attitudes on EU membership consistently. England is very different. The more strongly or exclusively English their sense of national identity, the more likely respondents were to think EU membership a bad thing and to want to leave the EU. The contrast between England and Scotland in these data is striking. If euroscepticism is associated with English identifiers in England, it tends to be British identifiers who hold this attitude in Scotland. Notably, the last four columns of Table 6 show a clear, broadly linear relationship in England where opposition to EU membership increases (decreases) with English (British) identification. The first column is the exception: in England, British-only identifiers are slightly more eurosceptic than the previous (more British than English) category. This may lend

Table 5: National identity and EU membership

		British only %	More British than X %	Equally British and X %	More X than British %	X only %
UK's membership of the EU a good thing	England	47	52	36	27	15
	Wales	35	35	37	31	35
	Scotland	45	43	43	45	41
UK's membership of the EU a bad thing	England	28	23	31	43	58
	Wales	31	37	32	31	38
	Scotland	38	36	27	22	33
Vote to remain in a referendum	England	52	56	39	29	20
	Wales	45	40	42	34	38
	Scotland	43	51	47	53	47
Vote to leave in a referendum	England	33	27	37	51	63
	Wales	34	44	32	34	38
	Scotland	33	38	38	25	35

Source: Future of England Survey 2014

some support to Ormston's[8] subsequent finding that stronger feelings of both Britishness and Englishness each have an impact on attitudes to EU membership. This may be a new phenomenon: it was not evident for England in the 2011 and 2012 FoES data, and nor was there an equivalent pattern for Scotland and Wales in the 2014 FoES data. Overall, there is clear evidence that those in England who have a strong or exclusively English identity are significantly more likely to think EU membership is a bad thing and to want to leave the EU.

Earlier we noted the absence of strong variation in attitudes to the EU by English region (Tables 4 and 5 above). This relative territorial homogeneity provides one sense of nationalised attitudes towards the EU in England. The association between English (rather—or more—than British) identification

Table 6: Euroscepticism by English region, 1993–2014

	% Choosing 'leave EU' and 'reduce EU's powers'				
	England	North	Midlands	South	London
1993	40	36	36	47	37
1994	39	39	41	41	28
1995	38	37	36	49	32
1996	60	58	61	63	56
1997	48	46	47	53	47
1998	52	46	56	56	47
1999	59	56	60	63	50
2000	58	51	63	62	52
2001	54	52	57	55	50
2002	52	47	57	55	45
2003	49	48	49	52	36
2004	58	54	57	62	58
2005	53	49	54	59	42
2006	53	49	56	56	46
2008	57	56	64	63	36
2012	68	67	68	76	52
2013	66	62	67	70	60
2014	65	61	66	70	59

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

and euroscepticism provides a second, and arguably deeper, sense of *national* attitudes in England towards the EU.

When did English national identity become associated with discontent about European integration? Again, data limitations make this an impossible question to answer with confidence. We do have at least one reliable source of data here: the 2006 British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)—with very large sample sizes in England, Wales and Scotland—allows us to examine the situation a decade ago. It deployed the Moreno scale in all three nations, enabling us to explore the relationship between national identity and attitudes towards the EU in the relatively recent past—at a time when euroscepticism in England had risen above its level in the early 1990s, but before what appears as a sustained rise in these values over the past decade (see Figure 3 and Table 3 above).

In 2006, respondents in England were more likely to think EU membership a bad thing than those in Wales and Scotland (though with very high 'don't know' responses), and were also more likely to opt for the Leave/reduce EU powers options (Table 7). The combined Leave/reduce powers responses are consistent with the BSA time series data for both England and Scotland reported in Figure 2. Interestingly, Wales at this point revealed EU attitudes closer to those of Scotland than, as is now the case, England.

Table 7 also shows that national identity makes a difference. Feeling only English produced the most negative responses in England on the good thing/bad thing question and the biggest proportion of those preferring to leave the EU, and the lowest agreement by some way in Scotland to the EU as a good thing was among those with a Scottish-only identity, with the second lowest among those with a British-only identity. Similarly, Scottish-only and British-only identifiers in Scotland were those most likely

Table 7: Attitudes to EU membership in the British Household Panel Survey 2006

			Total %	British only %	More British than X %	Equally British and X %	More X than British %	X only %
EU membership a good thing, or a bad thing?	Good thing	England	30	38	40	31	27	19
		Wales	36	32	36	37	38	33
		Scotland	37	38	42	43	44	27
	Bad thing	England	27	25	23	22	34	39
		Wales	20	27	25	16	16	20
		Scotland	20	25	28	21	15	23
	Don't know	England	43	38	38	47	39	42
		Wales	45	41	39	46	46	47
		Scotland	42	37	30	37	41	50
UK's long-term policy should be to…	Leave EU	England	18	16	14	13	20	28
		Wales	12	19	18	9	9	13
		Scotland	14	14	12	12	9	18
	Stay in EU, reduce powers	England	37	37	38	35	46	37
		Wales	35	38	30	35	42	30
		Scotland	34	35	48	38	36	27
	Leave things as they are	England	33	31	33	40	25	27
		Wales	38	33	29	37	36	44
		Scotland	36	33	22	33	35	41
	Stay in EU, increase powers	England	10	13	12	10	7	6
		Wales	11	6	18	15	11	9
		Scotland	13	13	14	15	14	11
	Work for a single European state	England	3	3	3	3	2	2
		Wales	3	4	5	4	2	3
		Scotland	4	6	5	3	6	4

Source: British Household Panel Survey 2006

to want to leave the EU, and British-only identifiers in Wales were also the most likely to see EU membership as a bad thing and to want to leave the EU. So although more recent FoES survey data are not particularly supportive of the case, there is evidence here prefiguring recent findings that exclusive identities, whether British or English/Scottish/Welsh, may push towards euroscepticism.[9]

We can be confident that English national identity is now closely associated with eurosceptic sentiment—and this relationship seems also to have been in evidence a decade ago. Given the available evidential base we cannot be certain when this association developed, although we hope that further excavation of the data archives will allow a more extensive genealogy (or archaeology) of the relationship to be reconstructed. Survey data on its own is, however, unlikely to explain why it is that 'Europe' appears to have developed as Englishness's 'other' in a way that does not currently seem to be the case for Scottishness, Welshness or, in England at least, Britishness. For that other tools, and other articles, will be required.

Conclusion

Analysts of public attitudes across Britain or the whole of the UK have identified some important factors and patterns that help to generate predictions about—and eventually to make sense of—the outcome of the UK's referendum on EU membership. The evidence suggests that British voters do not, generally speaking, have a strong sense of cultural affinity with the EU. However, their cultural concerns—including worries about migration into the UK—may be outweighed by a sense of the economic benefits of EU membership (Curtice, this issue). Vasilopoulou (this issue) shows that voters in the referendum will be expressing their views on the EU, rather than using it as an opportunity to reward or punish politicians for other things they have done. There are clear sociodemographic patterns—around age, level of education and affluence—that divide those expressing an intention to vote on the two sides of the referendum. Nevertheless, the evidence is that only a few voters have strong views on the EU, one way or the other. Many electors have yet to make up

their minds and a significant number of those who have expressed a view remain open to change—a situation that places a particular premium on political leadership.

Our analysis indicates that a full understanding of the dynamics of the UK's EU referendum requires analysis at the level of the nations that make up the UK. The balance of 'economic' and 'cultural' motivations may well vary across the different nations of the UK. England is and, in particular, the English are already more eurosceptic than their near neighbours. Not only that, but in a context in which many people have not yet made up their minds, it is at least conceivable that the referendum campaign could become part of a process in which political and broader identities are shaped. 'Remain' campaigners in England appear to struggle to articulate a cultural case for EU membership, which may in turn allow the 'Leave' campaign to dominate the 'cultural' dimension of the debate. If, in doing so, 'Leave' can convince more voters in England that English national identity is inconsistent with membership of the European Union, the campaign may yet further the development of a politicised English national identity, institutionalising a form of politics that cuts across conventional party lines. In this context it is worth recalling that one of the central insights of the vast academic literature on nationalism is that nationalists create nations.[10] To 'speak for England' is, in an important sense, to call England into being. There is far more at stake in the forthcoming referendum than simply the future of the UK's relationship with the European Union; at stake too is the political identity of the UK's largest component territory and, potentially, the viability of the UK as a state.

Notes

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7 Wyn Jones et al.., *England and Its Two Unions.*

8 Ormston, *Disunited Kingdom*, pp. 16–17.

9 Ibid.

10 See the classic exchange between E. Gellner, 'Reply: "Do nations have navels?"', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1996, 366–70, and A. D. Smith 'Opening Statement: Nations and their pasts', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1996, 358–65.