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Constructions of 'the Polish' in Northern England: Findings From a Qualitative Interview Study

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Abstract

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 gave rise to moral panics concerning the likelihood of mass migration from the new eastern European member states to established member states in the west. A great deal of social and political science research has examined the ongoing impact of the enlargement, but there remains a gap in the literature regarding the ways in which members of 'receiving' populations reacted to these changes. The present paper reports findings from a qualitative interview study of 14-16 year-olds conducted in northern England. It focuses on how migrants from one particular country – Poland – were constructed by participants. Drawing on previous analyses of immigration and racist discourse, the study points to some ways in which Polish migrants and migration were constructed, and how complaints against 'the Polish' were formulated. The analysis focusses on four key issues: employment and the economy; language and culture; threat and intimidation; and physical stereotyping. It is suggested that constructions of 'the Polish' draw on the tropes of both 'old' and 'new' racism, and that attention to the use of deixical ingroup referents ('us', 'we', 'our') in contrast to the explicit labelling of the outgroup ('the Polish') can be understood in terms of the requirement to present complaints concerning migrant groups via appeals to assumed universal standards of behaviour and civility.

Keywords: citizenship, discourse analysis, immigration, Polish migration, prejudice, racism, rhetorical psychology

In their classic text on citizenship and identity, Isin and Wood (1999) defined citizenship as '*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political, social) that define an individual's membership in a polity' (p. 4, italics in original). In short, citizenship can be understood as 'competent membership in a polity' (p. 4). In previous work I have argued for an approach to citizenship informed by discursive and rhetorical psychologies (e.g. Gibson, 2011; Gibson & Hamilton, 2011), and have suggested that such an approach is well suited to analysing how social actors themselves construct the practices, rights and duties associated with citizenship. In the present paper I want to extend these analyses by focussing on one particular right conferred by citizenship of the member states of the European Union (EU): the entitlement to freedom of movement within

the EU. Although – as with many other 'freedoms' – this right has often been far from straightforward to exercise (Carrera, 2005), the principle had become sufficiently well-established by the early 2000s to ensure that it would be extended to citizens of new EU member states – albeit usually with additional restrictions. In the wake of the EU's enlargement in 2004, in which Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU, a great deal of social scientific work has been concerned with mapping the resulting flow of people, and the associated economic impacts (e.g. Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009; Pijpers, 2006; Pollard, Latorre, & Sriskandarajah, 2008; Wadsworth, 2010). One important set of findings from this work concerns the arrival of migrants from Poland in the United Kingdom (UK), with the numbers of Poland-born residents of the UK increasing more – both proportionately and in terms of absolute numbers – than any of the other ten highest countries of origin for non-UK-born residents over the period between 2001 and 2011 (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014). In response to these demographic trends another body of work has emerged examining the experiences of these migrants (e.g. Akhurst et al., 2014; Botterill, 2014; Galasińska, 2010; Ryan, 2010; see also the contributions to Burrell, 2009). However, little work to date has explored the extant population's constructions of Polish migrants. This lacuna is particularly notable given the extensive tradition of research exploring the construction of migrants and ethnic minorities in the social and political psychology literature (e.g. Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Condor, 2006; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; Goodman, 2010, 2014; Goodman & Rowe, 2014; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The aim of the present analysis is therefore to bring to bear an analytic perspective informed by discursive and rhetorical psychology on constructions of the Polish 'other' in the UK, using data collected in the wake of the 2004 EU enlargement.

Without wishing to underplay the diverse nature of the literature produced over the last decade concerning the UK context following the EU enlargement, it is notable that the extensive focus on migrant experiences has not been accompanied by a concomitant focus on how the UK population have responded to the new arrivals from Eastern Europe. For example, in Burrell's (2010) review of the literature, work on majority discourse is conspicuous by its absence. One reason for this may well be epistemological. The qualitative approaches adopted by many scholars in this field have involved a largely experiential focus, exploring the nature and meaning of migration experiences for migrants themselves. Verbal reports collected, for example, through semi-structured interviews are thus treated as providing more-or-less accurate accounts of actual experiences. Such assumptions concerning the links between interview discourse and experience are perhaps ill-suited to dealing with the complexities of majority accounts, particularly when they feature what might be construed as prejudiced discourse. An approach which respects and implicitly validates such sentiments is highly problematic, and echoes concerns raised some time ago by Billig (1977) that some of the then-novel approaches being introduced into social psychology were inappropriate for an analysis of racism given their inclination towards 'sympathetic understanding' (p. 426) of research participants' perspectives. So, whilst there is a wealth of survey data indicating that immigration is an issue of some concern to the extant population (e.g. Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014; Ford & Heath, 2014), little work has explored majority constructions of Eastern European migrants and migration.

Moreover, the further expansion of the EU with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 has led to more recent media-fuelled moral panics concerning a supposed 'influx' of migrants from these countries when restrictions on their rights to work in the UK were relaxed from 1st January 2014. Whilst the media's representation of this process awaits a fuller analysis, a brief scan through a small selection of headlines from sections of the UK press in the two months up to and including 1st January 2014 is instructive:

'Cheeky beggars: Romanians' crime vow on bus to UK', *The Sun*, 31st December 2013

'Migrants are given free access to our G[eneral] P[ractioner]s', *The Daily Telegraph*, 30th December 2013

'Immigration: The backlash', *Daily Mail*, 28th November 2013

'Migrants set to flood in', *Daily Express*, 11th December 2013

'Roma migrant invasion will start UK riots', *Daily Star*, 13th November 2013

The potential negative consequences of Bulgarian and Romanian migration appear to have been a persistent theme in the period of time immediately prior to the relaxation of the restrictions. Similarly, the continued rise in popularity of the anti-EU, anti-immigration United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) – which received the largest share of the vote (27.49%) in the UK's European elections in May 2014 (BBC, 2014) – stands as a further indication of the contemporary milieu surrounding migration issues in the UK. At this juncture, it is therefore instructive to look back at reactions to the 2004 accessions, which was also characterised by heightened media attention to immigration issues (KhosraviNik, Kryżanowski, & Wodak, 2012). To this end, the present analysis explores interview data collected for a previous project during 2006-2007, a time when it had become clear that Polish migration to the UK had increased following the 2004 EU expansion, but when the changes were not yet sufficiently well-embedded to be seen as an accepted part of the social fabric. The analysis focuses on data from one specific town in the north of England, which featured extensive complaints concerning 'the Polish'.

The Research Context

The data for the present analysis are drawn from a wider project examining adolescents' constructions of citizenship and related concepts in several towns in the north of England. One of the focal points of this project was on participants' tacit understandings of polity membership, national identity and issues surrounding immigration (see Gibson & Hamilton, 2011; and see Gibson, 2011, in press, and Gibson & Hamilton, 2013, for other analyses arising from this project). The specific rationale for sampling adolescents was that this age group in 2006-2007 were the first to have undergone compulsory Citizenship Education from the age of 11 following its introduction by the New Labour Government in 2002. In the course of undertaking the study, it became apparent that in one town in particular, participants seemed more readily than elsewhere to problematize immigration from Poland. As a result, the present analysis explores only data from this particular town – here pseudonymized as Salterthwaite – as a form of localized case study.[i] Salterthwaite is a small market town which had a total population of around 20,000 at the time of data collection. The town is part of a larger district with a population of around 75,000-80,000 people. There were conflicting reports concerning the number of people in the local area who had arrived from Poland since the 2004 accession, but one local authority estimate put it at around 1000 people in the district as a whole by 2008. Salterthwaite and the wider district are ethnically very homogeneous, with over 99% of the population being classified as white.

The aims of the present analysis are to address the questions of how a sample of young people in Salterthwaite constructed 'the Polish', and how they formulated complaints about Polish migrants/migration.

Method

Participants and Interviews

The data for the present analysis were drawn from a series of interviews conducted in a school in Salterthwaite during 2006-2007. The school is one of three state schools in the local area catering for 11-16 year-olds. A total of 39 pupils (23 females, 16 males) aged between 14 years, 10 months and 16 years, 6 months (M = 15 years, 8 months) took part in 12 group interviews. Eighteen pupils were in school year 10 (which caters for 14-15 year olds) and 21 were in year 11 (which caters for 15-16 years olds). The pupils were interviewed in groups of three and four. All pupils selected 'white – British' when asked to describe their ethnicity using a standard tick-box monitoring form adapted from the instrument used in the 2001 UK census. The mean interview length was 40 minutes, 38 seconds (range = 20 mins 45 secs – 54 mins 24 secs). The interviews took a semi-structured form, with a series of main questions being presented on cards for the students to read out and discuss amongst themselves. The interviewer improvised follow-up questions and prompts as appropriate. The main questions covered topics such as social inequality, un/employment, military service, European integration, immigration, environmental issues and political participation. These topics were selected through a process of piloting in an attempt to generate talk around citizenship in relation to a relatively diverse array of issues. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using a simplified form of Jeffersonian transcription notation (see Appendix).

Analytic Procedure

Data analysis was informed by discursive and rhetorical approaches to social psychology (Billig, 1991, 1996; Potter, 2012; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Initial gross coding of the data involved selecting all stretches of talk that involved discussion of Polish migrants or migration. In total, these issues were discussed in eight of the interviews (67%; by way of comparison, in interviews conducted in a larger town nearby, 27% [4 out of 15] of interviews featured discussion of Polish migrants/migration). The participants' invocations of 'the Polish' were undoubtedly occasioned by the topics featured in the interview schedule, but importantly the actual mentioning of 'the Polish' came in each case from participants rather than the interviewer.

The data featuring discussion of 'the Polish' were then analysed with a view to identifying the ways in which 'the Polish' were constructed, and the rhetorical strategies used to problematize them and argue for the withholding of rights or their exclusion from participating in certain activities. Once identified, the tools of discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992) in particular were used to explore the details of how these arguments unfolded in the course of discussion. As well as paying attention to the talk of participants, the contributions of the researcher were treated as central to the way in which the interactions unfolded. In this respect, our analysis followed Wetherell's (2003) argument that although '[t]he interview is a highly specific social production, … it also draws on routine and highly consensual (cultural/normative) resources that carry beyond the immediate local context, connecting local talk with discursive history' (p. 13). Techniques such as constant comparison and deviant case analysis (Silverman, 2006) were used to ensure that the analysis accounted for all instances of talk about 'the Polish'.

Analysis

'The Polish' were problematized in four main ways in the present data. First, they were identified as the cause of economic problems in the UK and/or local economy. Second, they were constructed as wilfully disrupting the mundane social order through everyday incivilities, frequently based around language. Third, they were treated as a potential sexual threat, and fourth, they were characterised as having physical features that marked their difference. Although these different ways of problematizing 'the Polish' sometimes co-occurred, it is worth considering them in turn, before finally exploring an example of how several of them were drawn on in combination to mark 'the Polish' as unacceptably different from the local population.

Economy and Employment

Given the frequent media-fuelled panics about the impact of immigration on employment and the wider economy (KhosraviNik et al., 2012; Pijpers, 2006), it is perhaps unsurprising that participants mobilised these issues in constructing 'the Polish' as a 'problem'. For example, in Extract 1, Adam, Simon and Richard are discussing the relative merits of different reasons for 'coming over' to the UK:

Extract 1

'the Polish are a big problem'

1	Si:	Yeah, but then you've also got to think some
2		people, some of the people who are coming over
3		are from like war victims and stuff like that.
4	Adam:	Yeah, like Kosovans, they, a lot of Kosovans in
5		London.
6	Si:	They're, they're coming over for a good reason.
7		They're coming over for, what is it, refuge or
8		whatever.
9	Adam:	Yeah there used to be a, yeah, there was a big
10		war there, there's still, still under control.
11	Si:	But then you get people who are just coming over
12		to scrounge off your economy
13	I:	Right.
14	Si:	[And that's just like]=
15	Rich:	[Like the Polish.]
16	Si:	=not on.
17	Rich:	No it really isn't on.
18	Adam:	We're not racist, it's just the Polish are a big
19		problem.

Adam and Simon initially cite Kosovan refugees as an example of a group who have a canonical 'good reason' for 'coming over' (ll. 6-7) – i.e. they are escaping from war. Simon goes on to work up a contrast with another unspecified group of 'people who are just coming over to scrounge off your economy' (ll. 11-12). Such contrasts between deserving and undeserving cases are a common finding in research on citizenship and related issues – for example between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum seekers (Lynn & Lea, 2003; van Dijk, 1997) or between disabled and 'lazy' welfare claimants (Gibson, 2009, 2011). Amongst other things, the use of contrasts allows

participants to orient to norms of fairness and tolerance, thereby managing the impression that they might be prejudiced or otherwise unsympathetic to those in need, whilst still enabling the mobilization of exclusionary arguments.

Richard then interjects to provide an example of a group who fit Simon's description of 'people who scrounge off your economy' – namely, 'the Polish' (l. 15). Simon glosses this 'scrounging' as 'not on' (l. 16), before Richard upgrades this on line 17 ('it *really* isn't on'). At this point, Adam explicitly orients to the possibility that the identification of a specific group as 'scrounging' may be heard as indicative of racism and produces a disclaimer (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975; van Dijk, 1992) on behalf of himself and his friends. His subsequent restatement of the 'big problem' of 'the Polish' serves to enhance the apparent objectivity of the 'problem' – even though we're not racist, and not inclined to see problems where they don't exist, we can't deny that 'the Polish are a big problem' (ll. 18-19). This spontaneous orientation to the possibility that these arguments may be received as being racist is striking insofar as the group being criticised – 'the Polish' – is ostensibly a *national* category. The conflation of nation and 'race' is a longstanding feature of much research on racist discourse, and is particularly notable in work that has explored discursive deracialisation (e.g. Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Reeves, 1983). However, whereas previous research often highlights the de-emphasising of explicitly 'racial' categories in favour of those of nation, in this instance Adam's denial of racism flags the treatment of an apparently national category in terms of 'race'.

Similar economic arguments concerning 'the Polish' were made in other interviews. However, it was not always the case that such arguments were accompanied by such overt inoculations against racism, xenophobia and/or nationalism. Extract 2 begins with the interviewer asking Clare, Katy and Mark about possible requirements for unemployed people to do charity/community work:

Extract 2

'They're robbing all our jobs'

1	I:	Yeah OK. Erm (1) if people are looking for jobs
2		if people are unemployed erm, do you think they
3		sh- we were talking a little bit earlier about doing
4		work for charity and helping your community
5		d'you think people should have to do some of that?
6	Clare:	Yeah.
7	I:	If they- if they're not working?
8	Katy:	Yeah.
9	Mark:	Yeah.
10	Katy:	Yeah. At least help out, with other people if
11		they're not gonna, work.
12	Mark:	Yeah. And like all t'Polish coming over here
13		robbing all our jobs.
14	Katy:	((laughs))
15	I:	Really?
16	Mark:	They do though don't they like?
17	Katy:	Yeah.
18	Mark:	Cos like builders like yeah, like say like if someone
19		over here's charging like, four grand or summat
20		for an extension then Polish do exactly t'same job
21		and charge like a grand and a half. and they still
22		think they're rich.

23	I:	Yeah?
24	Mark:	They're robbing all our jobs.
25	I:	So is unemployment a bit of a problem [in this
26		area]?
27	Clare:	[Yeah]
28	Katy:	Yeah.
29	Mark:	Yeah. Cos all t'doers have moved in ha'n't they.
30		(1)
31	Mark:	Gyppos.

In response to the initial hypothetical discussion about what – if anything – should be required of unemployed people, on lines 12-13 Mark invokes 'all t'Polish'[ii] as 'coming over here robbing all our jobs' (ll. 12-13). This positions the employment of Polish people as criminally illegitimate, and echoes well-worn associations between immigration and criminality (see e.g. Capdevila & Callaghan, 2008; Figgou, Sapountzis, Bozatzis, Gardikiotis, & Pantazis, 2011). The unacceptability of this state of affairs is also worked up through the use of the extreme case formulation (ECF) 'all' (Pomerantz, 1986), which constructs the situation as particularly acute – it is not simply that the Polish are 'robbing' *some* of 'our jobs', but *all* of them. It is also notable at this point that the deixical referents 'here' and 'our' are used without a clear indication of where 'here' is, or who 'we' are. Instead, the key defining feature of these referents is that 'we' are clearly not Polish, and the Polish clearly do not belong 'here'.

This leads to laughter from Katy on line 14, something which arguably can be heard as an orientation to a breach of liberal injunctions to tolerance (Billig, 2002, 2005; Condor, 2006; Gibson, in press; see also Gibson & Hamilton, 2011) insofar as it displays recognition of the breaking of a taboo. The interviewer's follow up question on line 15 ('Really?') functions as a request for a further account from Mark, and he proceeds to illustrate his claim by citing the example of the building trade. This short narrative of Polish builders undercutting the prices of the extant population is also notable for the way in which it avoids specifying who the native population are. Those who are priced out of the market are referred to simply as 'someone over here'. Evidently, this excludes Polish people, despite the fact that they have come 'over here' (l. 12). Instead, it is simply taken for granted that there is a readily recognisable population who were 'here' before 'the Polish' arrived, and who have a legitimate claim to priority in the employment market. When dealing with such deixical referents, it is often the case that analysts – often following Billig (1995) – have tended to simply read them as banal *national* referents (Condor, 2000). However, on this occasion it is notable that the interviewer orients to these referents in primarily local terms – the question on lines 25-26 refers to unemployment 'in this area'. Note also how this subtly moves the focus of the 'problem' from 'the Polish' to 'unemployment', and as such can be seen as an attempt by the interviewer to re-frame Mark's definition of the problem. After Clare and Katy offer token agreements, Mark re-states and upgrades the group-based nature of the 'problem', this time by using pejorative terms ('doers' and 'Gyppos').[iii] The use of 'Gyppo' here is particularly notable insofar as it links 'the Polish' with the negative stereotypes associated with another minority group (see Goodman & Rowe, 2014; Rowe & Goodman, 2014). Thus, while outgroups are clearly identified and formulated as a matter for complaint, the nature of the ingroup is left largely implicit and taken for granted.

Language, Culture and Incivility

Linguistic matters were raised in many interviews, and were typically linked with other issues concerning cultural niceties and norms of everyday civility. In Extract 3, the participants have been discussing the issue of whether immigrants should be 'tested to see how British they are' in response to one of the question-cards used to stimulate

discussion.[iv] After some discussion about exactly what 'British' meant in this context, the participants decided that it was not a requirement for acceptance into the UK, before Emma suggested that the more important issue was whether immigrants would 'abide by our rules'. This is then illustrated with an example based around Polish people's use of their native language:

Extract 3

'It's all right in their own homes'

1	Em:	['s a bit like,] I'd (0.5) we've got like quite a lot
2		of Polish in our school now=
3	I:	Mm
4	Em:	=and they've been told that they're not allowed to=
5	Fi:	[Speak Polish]
6	Em:	=[go around speaking] Polish cos it's really
7		intimidating.
8	I:	Right
9	Fi:	[And it's ((inaudible))]
10	Jim:	[Yeah cos you don't know what they're saying]
11	Em:	[It-, cos I walked by a group of Polish lads] and
12		came up and talked to me (0.5) like looked at me,
13		and just started saying all this Polish and laughed,
14		and I said to a teacher that I found it really
15		intimidating cos they could've been saying anything.
16	I:	[Mm]
17	Jim:	[Mm]
18	Em:	And, they've told them now that (0.5) if they're
19		found speaking Polish they get a, after school
20		detention because=
21	I:	Mm
22	Em:	=it's not fair on,=
23	Jim:	[Yeah]
24	Em:	=the [rest of the pupils here, yeah]
25	Fi:	[It's all right in their own homes and that]

The 'intimidating' nature of Polish 'lads' speaking Polish is cited as a warrant for a ban on the speaking of the Polish language at school. This is predicated on the incomprehension of the English-speaking majority (l. 10: 'you don't know what they're saying'), but this is not seen as accountable in itself. This is further exemplified by Emma through the narration of a specific episode in which this intimidation is worked up in a number of ways. First, Emma juxtaposes herself as a lone individual being approached by 'a group of Polish lads'. The gendered element of the construction here is left largely implicit, though the use of 'lads' carries elements of enhanced masculine threat (compare, for example, the possible alternatives 'boys' or 'children'). Second, Emma attributes agency solely to the 'Polish lads' – her actions prior to being approached are glossed as simply 'walk[ing] by', contributing to the impression that she was passively minding her own business. The 'Polish lads', by contrast, are the ones who 'came up and talked to me' (l. 12). Furthermore, they 'looked at me' – implying an intrusive and unwanted singling out for attention. So, whereas Emma simply 'walked by', the 'Polish lads' *came up*, *talked to me* and *looked at me* (and note the rhetorically effective three-part structure here; Jefferson, 1990). Third, the use of *just* in the phrase 'just started saying all this Polish and laughed' (l. 13) serves to construct the behaviour of the 'Polish lads'

as without reason or explanation – they simply started behaving in this way despite the fact that Emma herself had done nothing to invite this behaviour (see Lee, 1987, on the uses of *just*).

The behaviour of the 'Polish lads' is thus constructed as unreasonable and deliberately intimidating, and Emma goes on to say that this led to a ban on speaking Polish at the school after she reported this incident to a teacher. This is followed by a gist formulation that such behaviour is 'not fair on, the rest of the pupils here' (ll. 22-24). As in Extract 2, there is no explicit naming of the ingroup here – 'the rest of the pupils' are not marked as specifically 'English', 'British' or 'native'. They are thus united simply by virtue of not being Polish. Such strategies are rhetorically interesting as they allow for complaints against 'the Polish' to be formulated without the mobilization of an explicitly intergroup framework – the outgroup is clearly named and constructed as 'the problem', but the ingroup remains largely obscured. This is a useful device for anticipating claims concerning prejudice or ingroup favouritism as it allows for complaints to be objectified – essentially, they are not a product of any particular group identity, but can be constructed as the sorts of universally recognisable complaints that might be formulated by anyone, regardless of group membership. Thus, while the clearly unreasonable behaviour of 'the Polish' is rhetorically tied to their identity as Polish, 'our' complaints regarding 'their' behaviour are divorced from any particular group identity and instead follow from implicitly universal norms of reasonable conduct.

Notably, this is followed by a qualification from Fiona that use of the Polish language is 'all right in their own homes' (l. 25). This draws on a contrast between a majority public culture, and an essentially private immigrant culture (see Gibson & Hamilton, 2011, for further analysis of this using the wider dataset from this project), and allows Fiona to gloss the position being advocated as one that does not seek an outright ban on the use of Polish. This is reminiscent of assimilationist and liberal individualist positions, which – in Modood's (2014) memorable phrase – 'do not so much seek a lower status for minorities, but their gradual dissolution and the confinement of 'difference' to private spaces and weekends' (p. 6). This serves to attempt to recover a reasonable liberal tolerance for the speakers – it is not that they wish to ban the speaking of Polish altogether, but rather that they wish to limit its use where it might be seen as an unreasonable imposition on the majority. So, once again, 'we' are reasonable and, indeed, inclined to tolerance, but the unreasonableness of 'the Polish' means that a ban is necessary. Or, more succinctly, they brought it on themselves.

Sexual Threat

The construction of 'the Polish' as intimidating was apparent in more extreme ways elsewhere in the data, when participants constructed them as a potential sexual threat. For example, in Extract 4, Shaz and Amy invoke a fear of rape as part of a series of complaints about 'the Polish':

Extract 4

'They could rape you'

1	Shaz:	[And if you're walking home on your own-]
2		sometimes I'm walking home on my own and the
3		Polish are behind me saying all this stuff in their
4		language and it makes you wonder what they're
5		saying.
6	Amy:	They could rape you=
7	Shaz:	[They go blah blah blah blah blah blah blah]
8	Amy:	=[for all you know.]

9	Shaz:	Exactly, you don't know whether they're saying
10		'oh, we'll rape her next week.' You don't know
11		do you?

Again, the use of 'their language' is invoked as Shaz and Amy jointly work up a description of 'the Polish' as a potential threat. However, in this extract the nature of the potential threat is specified as being of a sexual nature. As in Extract 3, Shaz works up a contrast between the lone individual innocently 'walking home' and the unknown, unintelligible presence of a collective ('the Polish'). The contrast, initially formulated using the generic 'you' (l. 1), is subsequently reformulated as a first person account of several occasions (l. 2: 'sometimes I'm walking') on which she has encountered 'the Polish' during her walk home. The sense of menace is heightened as 'the Polish' are not merely present, but 'are behind me' (l. 3). Note that when Shaz glosses her reaction to 'the Polish' speaking in their native language, the first person is replaced again with the generic you (l. 4: 'it makes *you* wonder'). The simple act of 'the Polish saying all this stuff' is therefore enough to lead any reasonable observer to 'wonder what they're saying' (ll. 4-5). Together, Shaz and Amy work up a description of general ignorance of what might be being said in order to flag the possibility that they may be 'saying 'oh, we'll rape her next week'' (ll. 9-10).

In Extract 5, a specific example of Polish deviant sexuality is offered, before being followed by more mundane complaints concerning Polish everyday incivilities:

Extract 5

'they're right noisey as well'

1	Jen:	Like, loads live down my street and a thirteen year
2		old boy got raped down my street, outside like,
3		down an alley, and it were Polish lad.
4	I:	Yeah
5	Jen:	It were a boy
6	I:	Yeah.
7	Jen:	Who did that. And they're right noisey as well, at
8		like, four o'clock in the morning they're all
9		shouting and everything in the street and it's so
10		annoying, but they don't get done for it.

As part of a series of complaints about Polish people, Jen provides a brief account of the rape of a boy committed by a 'Polish lad' (ll. 1-7). The repetition of 'down my street' (ll. 1-2) functions as a claim to have privileged insider knowledge about the events relayed by virtue of geographical proximity (Pomerantz, 1984). As van Dijk (1993) notes, such stories suggest 'that the events told about are a reliable source of knowledge, because they represent a lived, personal experience. At the same time, it is suggested that the (negative) conclusion is not ethnically biased but supported by the facts' (p. 126; see also Verkuyten, 1998; and on the role of specific examples in fact construction more generally, see Potter, 1996). Moreover, Jen emphasises that 'it were a boy … who did that' (ll. 5-7), flagging the incident as particularly unacceptable by virtue of the fact that not only was it a rape, but it was a male-on-male rape. This orientation to heteronormativity further serves to characterise 'the Polish' as deviant and threatening.

Jen subsequently goes on to relay a further complaint concerning infractions against norms of civility (ll. 7-10). The Polish are glossed as 'right noisey', which is substantiated with reference to an apparent propensity for creating a commotion during the night. Jen employs ECFs to work up the behaviour as particularly unacceptable – she already referred to 'loads' of Polish people living on her street on line 1, and here she suggests that it is not only a minority of these people who are making a noise in the early hours of the morning, but that 'they're *all*' doing it (l. 8). Nor is their behaviour limited to making a noise, but is glossed as 'shouting and *everything*' (l. 9). Again, the reference to the location of this behaviour (l. 8: 'in the street') not only constructs 'the Polish' as contravening norms of civil behaviour, but it also draws on the same image of their illegitimate and unreasonably inconsiderate use of public space as we saw in Extract 3. Finally, her claim that 'they don't get done for it' (line 10) constructs 'the Polish' as being the recipients of unfairly privileged treatment from the authorities insofar as 'they' are not sanctioned for breaching the norms of civility.

The Fish & Chips Test: From the Mundane to the Grotesque

The invocation of sexual threat is reminiscent of familiar tropes concerning the racial other as the embodiment of a wild, uncontrollable sexuality (e.g. Fanon, 1967/1952). Other features of this crude racist discourse include the construction of the other as a physical grotesque. One need only think of the way in which physical stereotypes of Jewish people were propagated in Nazi Germany (e.g. Herf, 2006) to be reminded of the role of the grotesque in the dehumanization of out-groups. Despite the tendency amongst social psychologists to associate such crude stereotypes with 'old-fashioned' racism, and to assume that liberal strictures against racism have led to a reduction in their use in contemporary western states (see Leach, 2005, for a critique), in two interviews in the present study such physical stereotyping was used. As an example, consider the following extract, which begins with Clara reading out one of the question card prompts:

Extract 6

'With their big noses and their red clothes…'

1	Clara:	((reading card)) Some people have suggested that
2		people who move to this country should- oo!
3		((laughs)) should test to see how British they are.
4		Do you think that is a good idea?
5	Shaz:	Why do people need to be tested to see how British
6		they are?
7	Clara:	Well the Polish come in, ask for tomato sauce you
8		can't understand a word they're saying.
9		[((laughter))]
10	?	[((inaudible))]
11	Shaz:	Well yeah but, we know that they're from a
12		different country because they don't speak our
13		language and they've got that foreign tone in their
14		voice.
15	Amy:	You can tell by the look of them.
16	Shaz:	But yeah if you're British, you don't sound foreign
17		at all, so why do they need to be tested? What's it
18		got to prove? That you're British?
19	Clara:	So you can go into a shop and ask for fish and chips=
20		[((laughter))]
21	Clara:	[without talking in this] clicking tongues language.

22		[With their big noses and their red clothes]
23	Chris:	[I have nothing against], other people, at all, nothing
24		against.
25	Shaz:	The only thing I've got against the Polish coming
26		here is the fact that they're taking over most of our
27		jobs.
28	Amy:	Yeah.
29	Shaz:	People are getting made redundant because the
30		Polish are ((inaudible))

In this extract, we see the invocation of a number of issues discussed above, including employment, language and everyday social competence/civility. Clara invokes 'the Polish' on line 7 in response to Shaz's scepticism concerning the merits of a Britishness test. In doing so, we again see the incomprehensibility of 'the Polish' worked up, this time in the mundane setting of asking for 'tomato sauce', which provokes laughter from Clara's peers. Shaz expands on the theme of language by suggesting that self-evident linguistic criteria (including 'foreign tone of voice') can be used to determine that 'they're from a different country' (ll. 11-12), before Amy invokes physiognomic criteria, namely that 'You can tell by the look of them' (l. 15). Shaz returns to the issue of language, asserting a link between being British and not 'sound[ing] foreign' in order to dismiss the idea of a Britishness test (ll. 16-17), before Clara replies that such a test would enable the successful candidate to be able to 'go into a shop and ask for fish and chips' (l. 19). This invocation of fish and chips – a popular takeaway food in the UK which is often cited as being typically English (Condor, 1996) provokes further laughter amongst the interviewees (l. 20), and Clara continues by invoking further linguistic features of 'the Polish' (l. 21: 'talking in this clicking tongues language'), before moving on to physical characteristics and dress (l. 22: 'With their big noses and their red clothes').

There is much to unpack in Clara's description of 'the Polish'. She constructs 'the Polish' as unable to participate in routine social encounters by virtue of their inability to speak English. It is thus not the case that she is explicitly making language an essential component of British identity in principle – she is not, for example, arguing straightforwardly that the English language is somehow central to what it means to be British. Instead, she articulates this as a practical criterion related to the ability to participate in everyday interactions. Clara then draws on tropes reminiscent of stereotypical representations of other groups. The phrase 'clicking tongues language' evokes pejorative descriptions of various African languages, and is swiftly followed by the mention of 'big noses', a familiar feature of anti-Semitic stereotypes. This elision between 'the Polish', Jews and black Africans points to the possibility that for Clara's purposes, 'the Polish' are insufficiently 'other' in their own right, and thus have to be constructed in terms of the recognisable tropes of racist bigotry (see also the use of 'Gyppos' in Extract 2 above). The subsequent reference to 'their red clothes', whilst not referring to physical characteristics, nevertheless further serves to construct 'the Polish' as *visible*. This is noteworthy insofar as it pertains to the distinction made in countries with a majority white population between visible ethnic minorities and white (i.e. non-visible) minorities (e.g. Bird, 2005; Chongatera, 2013; Hickman, Morgan, Walter, & Bradley, 2005). Given the predominantly white population of Poland and the UK, Polish migrants to the UK would typically fall into the 'non-visible' category, but representations such as Clara's point to the extent to which visibility can be considered to be a rhetorical accomplishment rather than a straightforward analytic category. We can thus conceive of Clara's working up of 'the Polish' as marked by clothing preference and physical features as an exercise in *constructing visibility*.

In response to this, Clara's fellow interviewees seek to rhetorically distance themselves from her description. Chris uses ECFs to distance himself completely from the general tone of the discussion, saying that he has '*nothing* against, other people, *at all*' (ll. 23-24), before Shaz moves to limit her own objections to the arena of employment (ll. 25-30), with the familiar complaint that 'the Polish' are illegitimately taking something which belongs to *us* – 'our jobs'. Without explicitly challenging Clara, Shaz thus distances herself from Clara's overt stereotyping of 'the Polish', before returning to a more practical criterion that objects to the presence of 'the Polish' not on any overtly racial, ethnic or national grounds, but simply on the practical criterion that *they* take *our* jobs. As we saw in earlier extracts, however, the ingroup is left vague as the deixical referent 'our' is not specified. Shaz may implicitly distance herself from the overt articulation of criteria based on physical characteristics, but she does not take issue with the idea that 'they' are a readily identifiable group, nor that 'they' have limited entitlement to claim employment.

Discussion

The present analysis has explored the ways in which a sample of young people constructed Polish migrants in a town in northern England. The overwhelming tone of these constructions was negative, with complaints formulated around the effects of Polish migration on the local employment market, the inability of Polish people to engage in everyday interactions, and the potential for Polish people to constitute an overt threat. Whilst these features were typically formulated in ways that attempted to make them appear reasonable and justified, more 'old-fashioned' stereotyping based on physical characteristics, sexual threat and heteronormativity was also noted in the data.

One of the notable findings of this analysis is the presence of recognisable themes of both what are frequently described as 'new' and 'old-fashioned' racism. Whereas 'old-fashioned' racism draws on crude notions of biological inferiority, 'new' racism instead involves appeals to liberal principles such as rationality, equality and freedom (see Leach, 2005, for a useful summary and critique of this distinction). For much of the time, speakers in the present dataset work to ensure that the complaints cannot simply be dismissed as a result of ignorance or irrationality – precisely the opposite; they are formulated in terms which mark them as the product of knowledge and experience of living in close proximity to the other. This allows 'the Polish' to be constructed as having demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to abide by 'our' norms of civilised behaviour; except that these norms are not readily identified as 'ours' in the sense that they are associated with any clearly defined ingroup. Instead, the ingroup is left unspecified, something which allows the majority to minimise its own specificity and peculiarity. The norms of behaviour are thus left as free-standing universal codes of everyday civility, divorced from any particular social identity. Complaints against 'the Polish' are thus not framed as the product of particular social identities – and thus of a feature of those who formulate the complaints – but rather they are externalised as arising from the unreasonable behaviour of 'the Polish' themselves. In this respect, the findings of the present analysis chime with a long tradition of discursive research on exclusionary talk which has shown how those arguing that some group or other should be denied certain rights, or a certain status, do so through appealing to reason (e.g. Figgou & Condor, 2006; Goodman, 2014) as speakers orient to the opprobrium associated with prejudice (Billig, 1988).

However, there are unmistakeable tropes of old-fashioned racism contained within some of these accounts. The use of racist category labels (Extract 2), invocations of sexual threat (Extracts 4 and 5) and physical stereotyping (Extract 6) are clear signs of culturally sedimented racist themes typically understood to have become unsayable over the last 60 years or so (Condor et al., 2006). Clearly, the aims of this study are not concerned with mapping the frequency or prevalence of different types of racism or racist discourses, so the identification of these tropes

should not be taken as evidence of anything beyond their occurrence in the present data. However, given that recent work has suggested that the distinction between 'old-fashioned' and 'new' racism may have been overplayed (Condor, 2006; Condor & Figgou, 2012; Leach, 2005; Pehrson & Leach, 2012), what is notable here is that we can identify ways of talking about Polish migrants that seem to draw concurrently on the tropes of both forms of prejudiced discourse. Thus, rather than being used in isolation – let alone being distinguishable as clearly identifiable individual difference variables – we can see that the themes of 'old' and 'new' prejudice are available side-by-side for speakers to draw upon and re-construct as the occasion demands. Indeed, in this context the distinction between old and new makes little sense – as Leach (2005) has argued, there is actually no *a priori* reason to define exclusion grounded in biological difference as 'old' and exclusion grounded in apparently liberal principles as 'new'. Thus rather than conceiving of one form of racism as in decline, with the other in the ascendancy, we may be better advised to follow Augoustinos's (2009, p. 45) injunction 'to recognize the multifaceted, contradictory, and ambivalent nature of contemporary racism, and to theorize the coexistence of "multiple racisms"' (p. 45).

One of the central findings from the present analysis concerns the removal of explicit references to the ingroup. Banal deixical referents (*our*, *we*, *us*) abound, as do explicit mention of the relevant outgroup – 'the Polish' – but the ingroup is the identity which dare not speak its name. If we were to use the participants' labelling of the outgroup category as 'Polish' as a warrant to gloss their deixical referents as indexing the ingroups *English*, *British* or perhaps *Anglo-British*, then it might be suggested that the present data provides an example of a powerful majority taking its own identity for granted whilst treating an outgroup as strange, unwelcome and potentially threatening. This is reminiscent of Condor's (1996) discussion of her findings concerning the seeming reluctance of the Anglo-British to explicitly claim a national identity. Condor considers the possibility that the disappearance of English national identity may be a function of the 'dominance' of the English within the UK, before problematizing this on the basis that it takes for granted that there is one objectively correct way of defining the situation. In contrast, it might be that the young people interviewed for the present study were using the deixical referents to refer primarily to local identities. Thus, references to 'the Polish coming over here [and] robbing all our jobs' could be read as 'the Polish coming *to Salterthwaite* [and] robbing all *the locals'* jobs'. In this context, it might be argued that participants may in fact conceive of themselves as relatively power*less* in comparison to 'the Polish', or in comparison to other, unspecified, localities within the UK with greater levels of cultural capital and employment opportunities.

However, to attempt to make these sorts of inferences would be to miss the point. The way in which the intergroup comparisons are formulated allows the speakers to identify 'the Polish' as the problem without drawing attention to their own identity – whether that be local, national or some other kind of identity. The complaints against 'the Polish' are thus *objectified* – they are associated with 'the Polish' themselves. In contrast, the omission of explicit appeals to ingroup identity ensures that the complaints are not positioned as arising from a particular social identity, but can instead stand as the sorts of complaints that would be recognised as justified by any reasonable person.

The observation that participants often orient their complaints against 'the Polish' to norms of rationality can be seen in the extent to which their complaints are predicated on knowledge of, and personal experience of, 'the Polish'. Conversely, however, on occasion participants could work up their own *ignorance* as a warrant for their complaints. This was particularly notable on those occasions where language was invoked. Thus, when speaking in their native language, 'the Polish' *could've been saying anything* (Extract 3), and *it makes you wonder what they're saying … You don't know do you?* (Extract 4). Personal experience could therefore be invoked not to claim knowledge, but to use a lack of knowledge to construct a sufficient and reasonable uncertainty (see also Gibson,

2014, on this kind of discursive 'knowledge work' in a rather different context). What is striking, of course, is that this lack of knowledge is not oriented to as accountable by participants. This trades on a commonsense assumption that it is perfectly natural to expect to understand the overheard conversations of others when going about one's daily business in one's home town and/or country. This bridging assumption allows for the inference that one candidate explanation for the use of a language that will not be understood by locals is because of nefarious intent. In other words, an understandable ignorance is used as a warrant for assuming the worst.

The gendered nature of some of the constructions – with complaints being formulated specifically against Polish *lads* (Extracts 3 and 5) and invoking sexual violence (Extracts 4 and 5) – provides a further indication of the way in which power relations could be constructed by the use of alternative (i.e. non-national) frames of reference. We can see the subtle use of gender identity here as a means of constructing power relations in such a way that the speakers were able to position themselves as threatened by, and thereby justifiably wary of, the outgroup. As with the assumptions around language discussed above, gender again functions as a bridging inference – the reasonable caution that a woman might be expected to exercise in relation to the possibility of male sexual violence is used to warrant the link between being Polish and being particularly likely to pose a threat.

Understood in terms of Isin and Wood's (1999) definition of citizenship as 'competent membership of a polity' (p. 4), it can be suggested that the participants are constructing 'the Polish' as failing to fulfil the duties associated with citizenship, and thus as not competent to qualify as legitimate members of the polity. Indeed, the construction of blatant contraventions of taken-for-granted norms of decency and civility allows speakers to position themselves not as unreasonably denying the *rights* of 'the Polish', but as instead objecting to their failure to meet their *responsibilities*.

In conclusion, it is evidently the case that discursive and rhetorical analyses of the construction of Eastern European migrants in the UK are at an early stage, and the present analysis should thus be seen as merely a preliminary step towards a fuller exploration of these issues. Nevertheless, in identifying the ways in which the recognisable tropes of racist and anti-immigrant discourse are drawn on in constructing 'the Polish', and in working up Polish migration as a complainable matter, the present analysis draws attention to some aspects of anti-Polish discourse that would be worthy of further attention. Specifically, the finding that complaints and exclusionary arguments are grounded in comparisons between identities other than straightforwardly 'national' identities further highlights the extent to which analysts should not assume that exclusion will necessarily be based upon national identities. Similarly, the combining of the tropes of 'old' and 'new' racism is suggestive of the complexities of anti-Polish discourse. With the continued expansion of the EU being accompanied by an incessant media campaign against migrants from the newer members of the EU, and the potential political shift signalled by the rise of UKIP, the time is right for sustained attention to the issue of how Eastern European migrants are constructed in the UK.

Notes

i) The decision to pseudonymize the town was taken as using its real name would potentially make it easy for the school from which participants were recruited to be identified.

ii) The contraction of 'the' to 't' is a feature of many local dialects in this part of England. It would typically be spoken as an additional sound at the end of the word preceding the noun to which it refers – so in this instance, for example, it should be read as 'allt Polish'.

iii) It is notable that, whilst 'Gyppo' is a widely understood pejorative slang term for 'Gypsy', the term 'doer' (pronounced 'doo-er') appears to have been a much more localised term referring specifically to Polish people. Despite coming across it on several occasions in the present project, it is not something that I have encountered elsewhere, and nor have I been able to discover any information about its origins.

iv) The question in full was, 'Some people have suggested that people who move to this country should take a test to see how British they are. Do you think that this is a good idea?' This was used in response to a then-current media debate around the 'Life in the UK' test (see https://www.gov.uk/life-in-the-uk-test; and see Gray & Griffin, 2014, for a critical analysis), which was glossed in some media outlets as a Britishness test, although this was rejected by the government at the time (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4391710.stm).

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Appendix: Transcription Notation

[yeah]	Square brackets indicates overlapping talk
((inaudible))	Double parentheses encloses a transcriber's gloss or comment
(5)	Numerals in single parentheses indicate a timed pause in seconds
,	A comma marks a short pause of less than 0.5 seconds
bu-	A dash indicates a curtailment of the preceding word or sound
=	An equals sign marks latching talk in which one turn follows immediately from a preceding one.