The Dimensionality of Immigrant Adaptation in Britain: An Analysis across Generational, Ethnic, and Gender Lines

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Background

- Looking into the long-term experiences of migrants and their descendants (adaptation) is a important topic in academic and policy circles
  - Especially given the changes in the origins of migration flows in the past few decades
- One issue is how to qualify those experiences:
  - What do they comprise (i.e. their dimensions)?
  - How do they link together?

Background

- Different theoretical approaches, different assumptions about dimensionality (Bean et al 2012):
  - Assimilation-based perspectives: more uni-dimensional
    - Not necessarily over one generation
  - Segmented assimilation: bi-dimensional (cultural)
  - Multicultural perspectives: multi-dimensional
- Some argue for a trade-off (Maxwell, 2012) between cultural adaptation and political/economic

Aims of paper

- Explore the dimensionality of immigrant adaptation in the British context

- Analytical focus:
  - Whether indicators of adaptation measure one latent factor
  - How individuals of migrant origins fare in the uncovered dimension(s)
    - Simultaneous observation of adaptation as a whole rather than various aspects of it

Data & variables

Data

- Ethnic Minority British Election Study
  - Nationally-representative survey of main ethnic minority groups in Britain; focus on political behaviour, with items measuring other aspects
  - Conducted in 2010
  - Face-to-face and self-completion questionnaires
  - Total sample size: 2,787
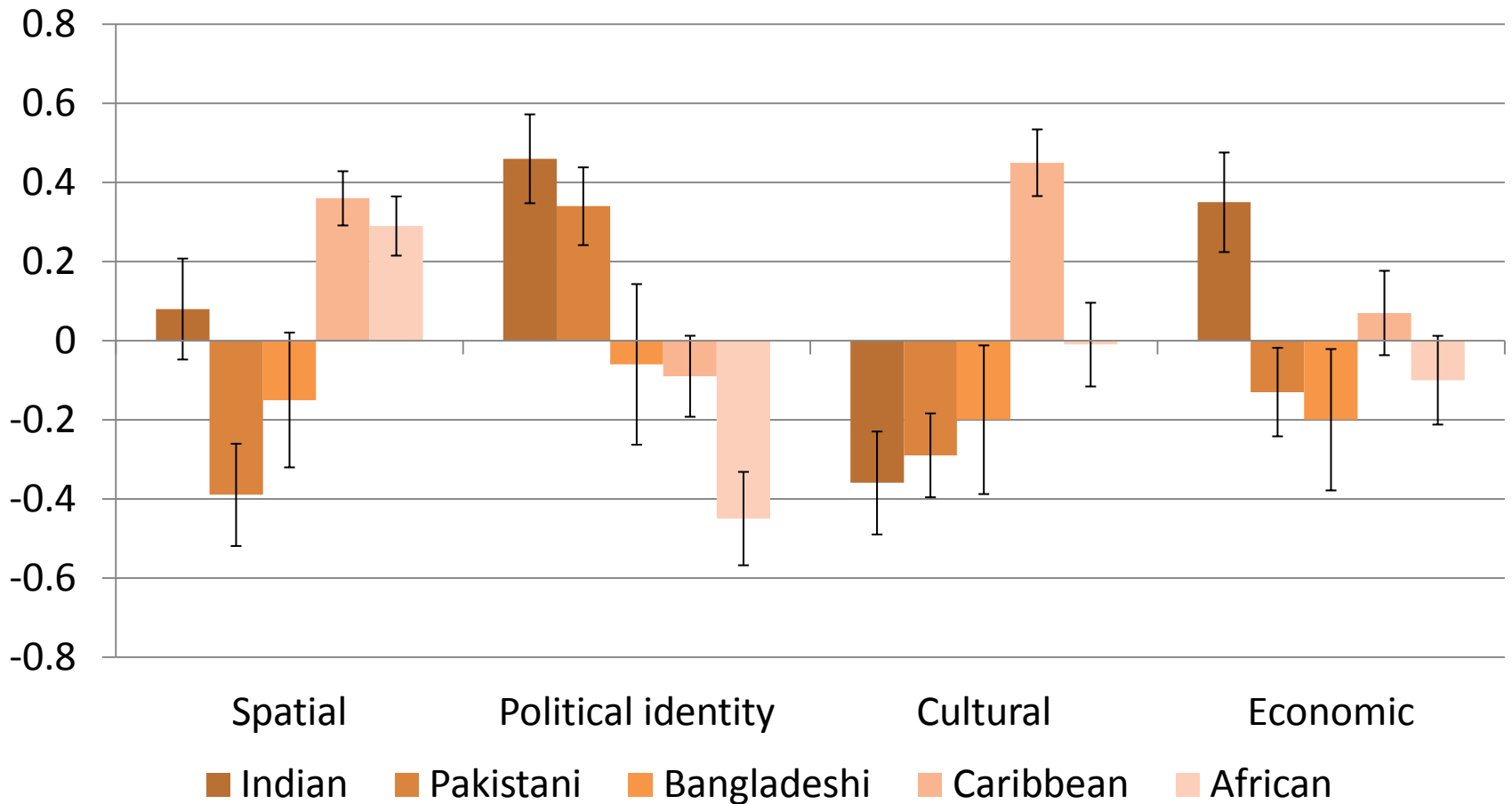 - Analytical sample size: 1,391

Variables

- *Economic* (education, occupation)
- *Political* (engagement, feelings of influence, voting)
- *Spatial* (socio-economic composition, ethnic density & diversity, number of co-ethnics)
- *Cultural* (language, ethnicity of friends and spouse, ethnic identity)
- *Controls* (ethnicity, age, country of birth)

Dimensions of adaptation?

- Factor analysis
    - Ordinal & dichotomous variables: polychoric correlation matrix

- If assume that variables measure 1 latent factor, we get 4 dimensions:
    1. Spatial (most important)
    2. Political identity
    3. Cultural
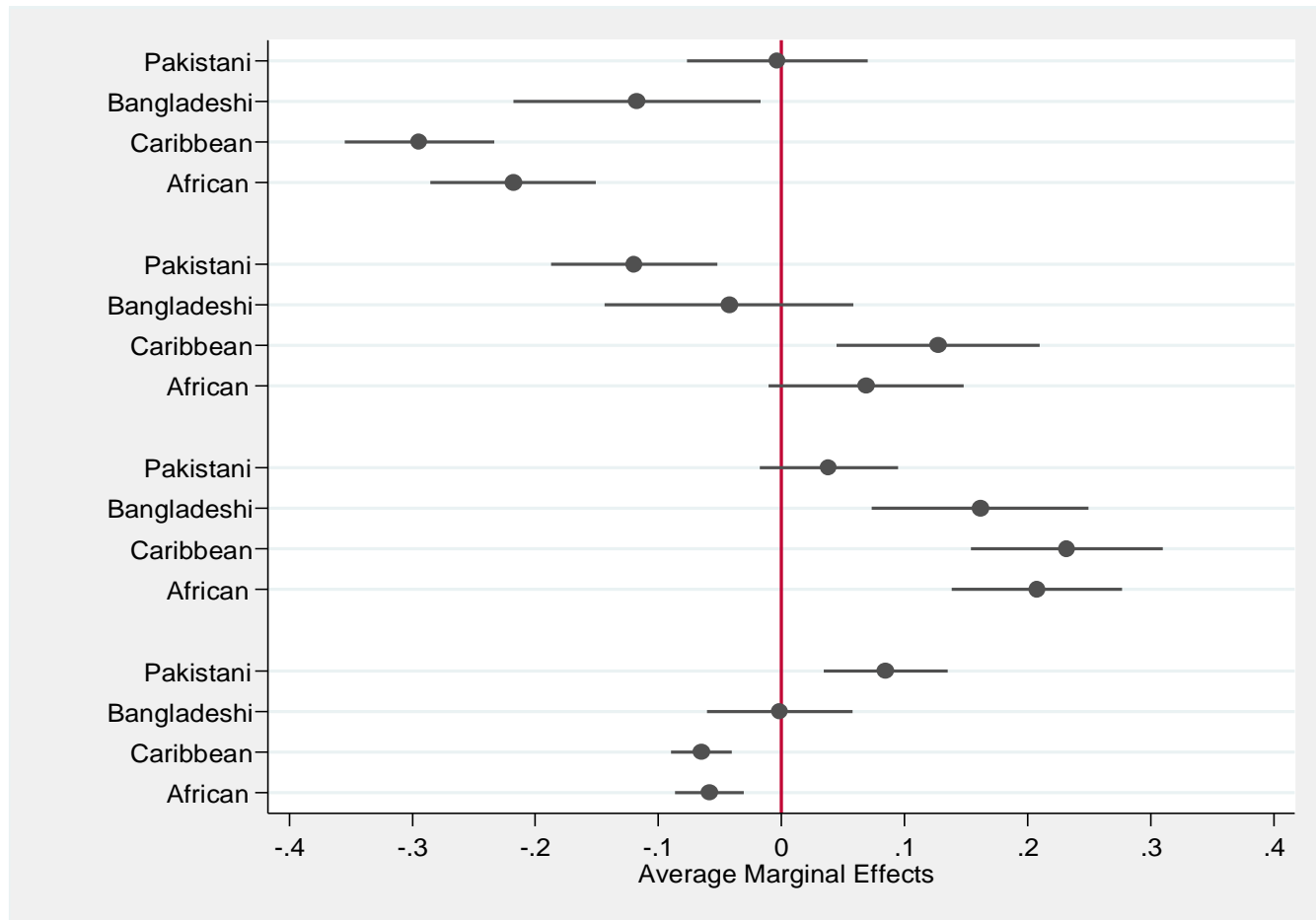   4. Economic

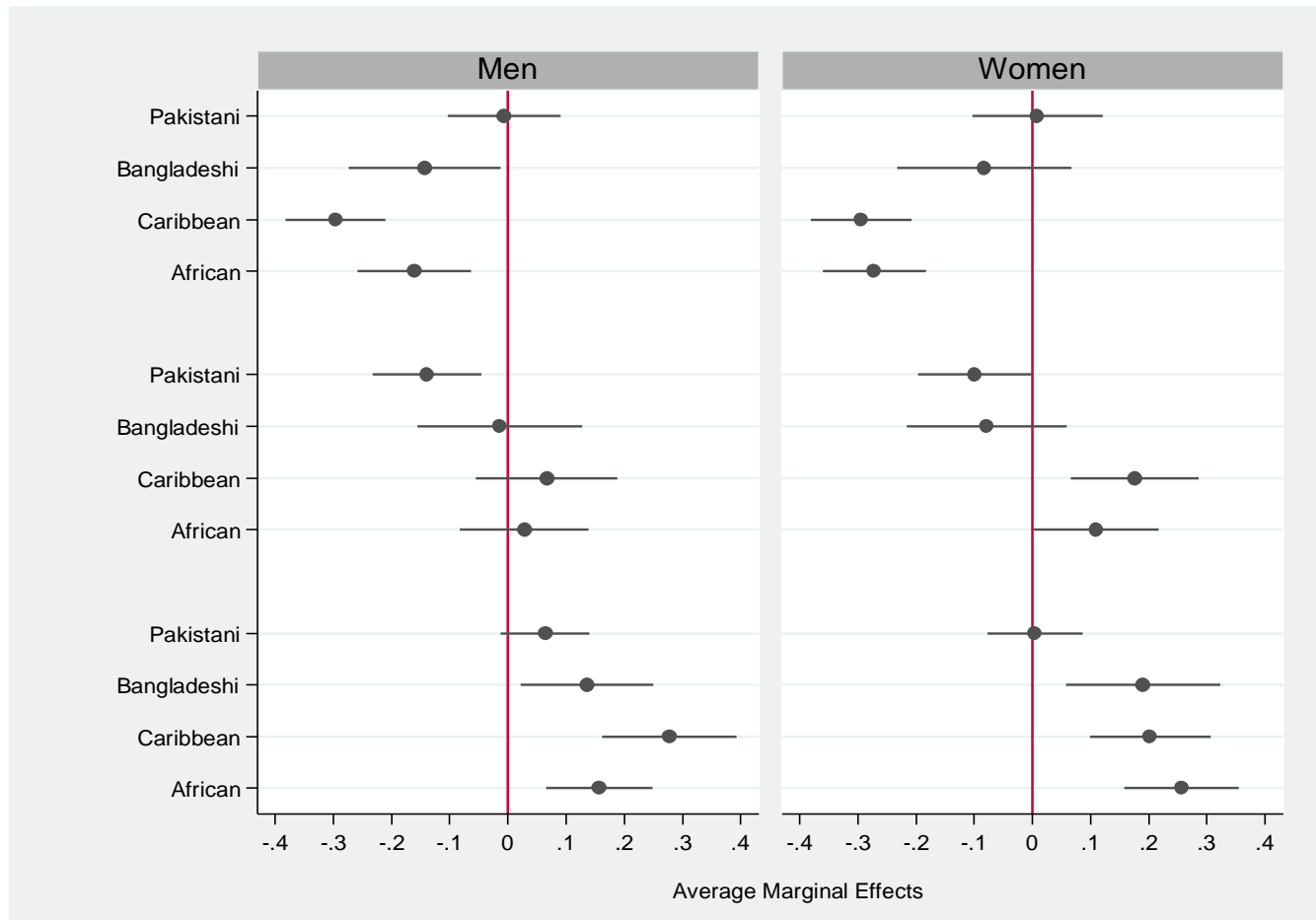# Group differences in factor scores

Clusters of adaptation

- Cluster analysis of generated factor scores for main dimensions (average linkage)

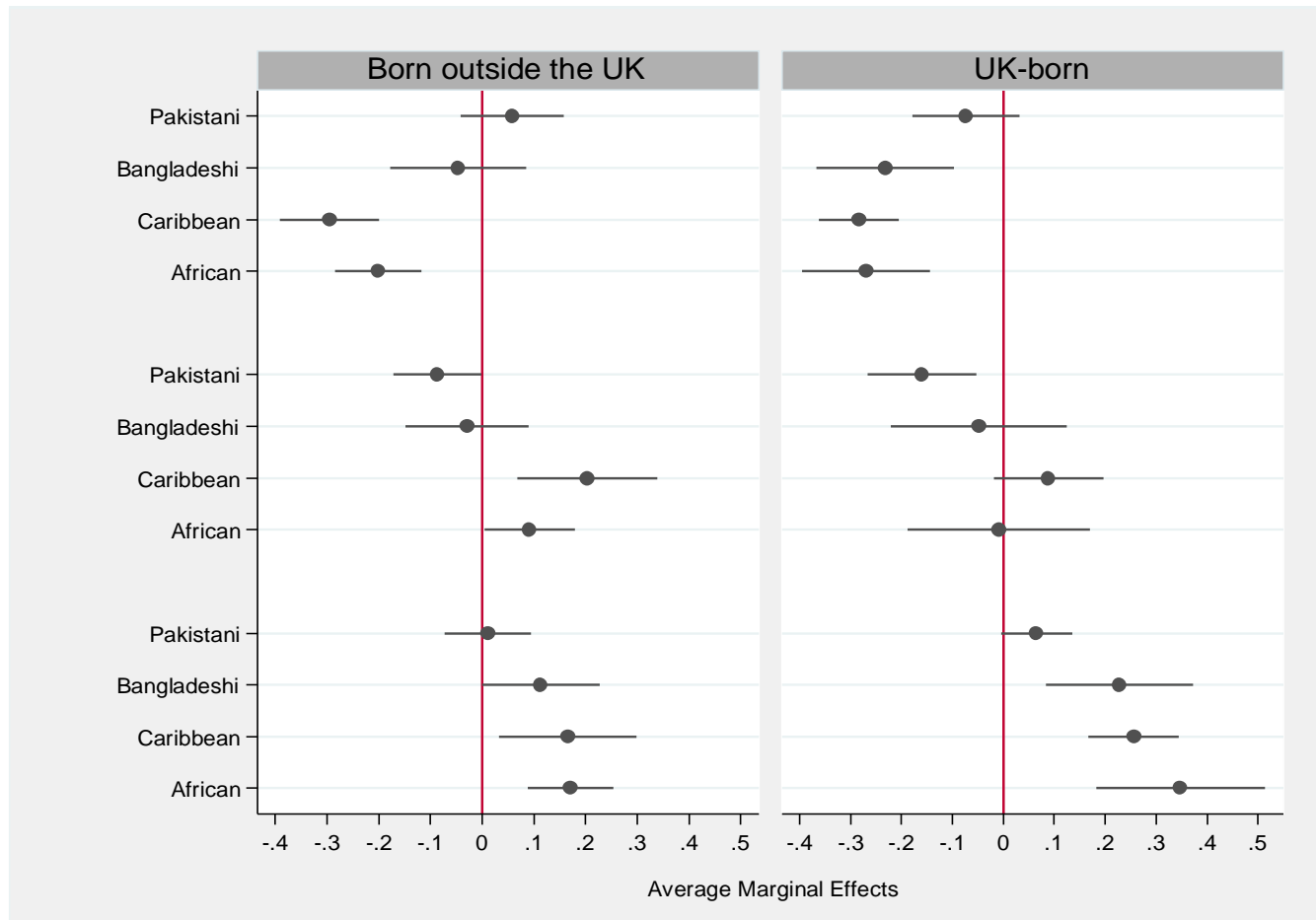|	Factors of adaptation (mean score)			
	Spatial	Political identity	Cultural	Economic
(1) Lack of political and economic adaptation (384)	-0.06	-1.11	-0.04	-0.52
(2) Overall adaptation (492)	0.49	0.48	0.56	0.98
(3) Low cultural adaptation (325)	0.09	0.56	-1.07	0.30
(4) Spatial segregation and political adaptation (85)	-2.30	0.91	-0.11	0.41

Ethnic effects

Gender effects

Generational effects

Preliminary conclusions

- Results appear to suggest that the adaptation of individuals with a migration background appears to be more of a multi-dimensional nature

- When looking at the different groupings of adapted individuals that arise, they incorporate various dimensions

- Group differences appear to fit existing (i.e. separate) knowledge

- Important to bear in mind that most individuals are in the 'overall adaptation' group

Questions? Comments?
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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION