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Religion as Social Capital in Britain
Its Nature and Contribution to Integration

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Abstract: Previous studies have found that religious participation is an important source of identity-bridging social capital, as it can serve as a rubric for effective inter-ethnic contacts which narrow those culturally defined gaps between “us” and “them” in a multicultural society. Using the Citizenship Survey data, this study aims to investigate the long-neglected role of religious involvement as an incubator of identity-bridging social capital in Britain. The analysis is based on a logistic regression model which predicts the probabilities of having white British close friends for non-white believers in different British faith communities, conditioning on forms of religious involvement, religiosity and other sociocultural factors.

Keywords: Religious Involvement, Social Capital, Integration, Britain

Introduction

Religion may create boundaries between “us” and “them” in a multicultural society. In Western Europe, this narrative has come into vogue in the politics of migration with the emergence of “Islamophobia,” the increasing visibility of far-right politicians who appear hostile to immigrants, and shocking events such as the murder of Lee Rigby and recent shootings in France. Much of the focus has been on the dark side of religion in integration, whereas how religious engagement could contribute positively to a multicultural society has received little attention. For many ethnic minorities, religious groups and organisations are among the very few institutions that are easily accessed and trusted: co-religionists who share similar norms and values are keen to help each other regardless of different cultural backgrounds; and entering a place of worship does not require the same experiences, language skills, or even social status as joining many other types of civic organisation. Religious involvement also provides the foundation for wider civic and economic participation, because participation in formal services and para-church activities effectively generates opportunities for participants to establish contacts with other people both within and beyond their faith communities. Importantly, existing research suggest that the combination of social networks, shared norms and altruism can often be translated into the notion of social capital, which serves as a valuable asset to improving social cohesion and individuals’ socioeconomic outcomes (Putnam 2000, 19; Field 2008, 14). Hence, religion as a primary source of social capital presents significant social implications to ethnic minorities in the discourse of integration.

The important linkage between religious social capital and integration has rarely been explored in quantitative research in Britain. In addition to data limitations, another reason for this is perhaps that this country has become more secular in the past 30 years. Although David Cameron called the UK “a Christian country,” Britain has clearly become de-Christianised in numbers according to the UK Census data in 2001 and 2011. Some researchers have also asserted that a trajectory of intergenerational decline in religiosity was evident among religions in Britain (Crockett and Voas 2006). However, that the sharp decline in numbers has shaped the social consequences of religious involvement lacks empirical evidence. How much religion may contribute to the connectedness between ethnically defined “us” and “them” remain unanswered in a British context.

To address the long-neglected role of religion as a type of identity-bridging social capital in British society, the article attempts to classify different patterns of religious involvement and to explore their sociocultural characteristics using pooled 2007-2011 Citizenship Survey data. Then,
multivariate logistic analysis is conducted to answer two specific research questions: “how different forms of religious involvement affect close friendships between British ethnic minorities and white British?” and “how such effects vary across different faith communities?”

**Religion as Social Capital**

Notwithstanding various modern-day conceptualisations of social capital, the heart of this concept has always rested on the argument that our relationship with one another has salient social consequences. One of the most prominent studies of social capital was presented in Robert Putnam’s well-known book *Bowling Alone*. Adopting a neo-Tocquevillian argument, Putnam (2009, 19) defines social capital as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” According to him, the generation of social capital is underpinned by engagement in civic associations including voluntary organisations, sports clubs and trade unions. As these associations encourage contacts between members from various sociocultural backgrounds and articulate mutual goals, civic participation fosters both structural elements (i.e. networks of friends, neighbours, and colleagues) and cultural elements in social capital (i.e. trust, reciprocity, and altruism) (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 181).

In turn, existing research shows that a rich stock of social capital is often associated with positive social consequences for both individuals and society, from benefits in health and economic prosperity to effective crime prevention and better community service (Putnam 2000; Li et al. 2003; Lim and Putnam 2010). Importantly, Putnam classified two different types of social capital in terms of the nature of networks. *Bonding social capital* highlighted homogeneity and exclusive identities such as gender or race, while *Bridging social capital* brought together people across heterogeneous social boundaries (Field 2008, 36; Putnam 2007, 143).

Religious involvement is arguably one of the most prominent sources of social capital. First, it serves as an incubator for institutionalised norms and values of reciprocity (Cnaan et al. 2003, 23). Religious ideals potentially promote shared “virtues” such as equality, trust, caring, and altruism that unite co-religionists in faith communities. Through bible study groups, after-service coffee, Diwali celebrations or Eid parties, individuals in the faith community become beneficiaries of these virtues as they are connected with one another, exchanging resources and unpaid help. Second, religious participation serves as an incubator for formal and informal social networks that are central to the concept of social capital. Apart from communal worship and religious teaching, religious institutions also support a wide range of social activities beyond place of worship. For example, many believe that there is an “unequivocal relationship” between church attendance and volunteering and services in the wider community (Campbell and Yonish 2000, 88; see also Wuthnow 1998; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Consequently, religious involvement allows individuals to connect with co-religionists as well as other people in society. On the one hand, it produces bonding religious social capital underpinned by strong bonds between co-religionists with similar backgrounds. On the other hand, religiously motivated participation also connects people who are not like each other in terms of religious affiliation and other sociocultural characteristics.

**Religious Social Capital and the Idea of Identity Bridging**

While bonding social capital strengthens internal solidarity in a faith community, it is bridging religious social capital that points to the value of cultural and socioeconomic integration. Bridging social capital contributes to integration primarily because the nature of bridging requires drawing together diversities and transcending sociocultural differences. Within a religious organisation, the bridging function of social ties connects co-religionists regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and nationality. Meanwhile, it also creates a path to civic participation beyond church for members in a religious organisation. Scholars have argued that religious organisations were at the forefront of overcoming divisiveness and insularity, caring for the
disadvantaged, and fostering civic and political participation (Coleman 2003; Wuthnow 2003; Sobolewska et al. 2015). These findings consequently connect religious involvement with the notion of integration, suggesting that bridging religious social capital is a catalyst for interethnic group contacts and socioeconomic outcomes.

Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow (2002) elaborated on the bridging nature of religious social capital by distinguishing two prominent roles in bringing together people from different sociocultural backgrounds, namely status-bridging and identity-bridging. Status-bridging social capital refers specifically to “networks that span vertical arrangements of power, influence, wealth, and prestige integration” (Wuthnow 2002, 670). Previous research findings consistently show that religious organisations nowadays are more likely to provide civic and political resources through learning civic skills, inter-organisational networks, and service in the wider community (Verba et al. 1995; Putnam 2002; Ammerman 2003; Sobolewska et al. 2015). In contrast, the identity-bridging nature of social capital can serve as “a rubric for the kinds of networks that span such culturally defined differences as race, ethnicity, sexual preference, and national origin integration” (Wuthnow 2002, 670). In a multicultural society, native-minority differences rooted in cultural differences tend to form perceived boundaries separating “us” and “them” (Alba 2005, 30). Compared to social networking in other places (e.g. political organisations), social networking in faith communities more frequently celebrates norms of understanding and mutual respect between different cultures. Religiously motivated social participation thus creates rich grounds for ethnically inclusive communications and relationships. In the well-known contact hypothesis, Gordon Allport (1954) wrote that inter-group contacts may enhance trust and reduce prejudice between the majority group and other minority groups. Identity-bridging may, therefore, be essential to the integration discourse as it presents a way for promoting diversity on the basis of effective inter-group contacts.

Despite these merits, outcomes of identity-bridging through religious involvement may vary upon group size and perceptions of particular religions (Diehl et al. 2009). The proportion of Christians remains large in both the US (73%) and the UK (59%). Since many ethnic minorities belong to non-Christian communities, their opportunity for interethic contact with the white majority is rather limited compared to their Christian counterparts. Previous studies on friendship formation in Britain show that non-white minorities are very likely to form “pan-ethnic” friendships based on similar ethnic/religious backgrounds (Muttarak 2013). The relative large number of Christians thus facilitates non-white Christians in social networking as they have a higher chance of meeting both pan-ethnic and white majority co-religionists. Then, the cultural clash between “our” Judaeo-Christian heritage and growing religious diversity often presents hindrance to integration (Alba 2005, 30). British Muslims, for instance, are found accused of prioritising their religious loyalties over their British identity and belonging (Field 2007). Importantly, prejudice against certain minority religions and lack of social approval tend to generate “reactive” forms of identity formation (Diehl et al 2009, 283). Reactive religiosity binds people from the same disadvantaged religious minority group, which is underpinned by strong in-group loyalty. Unfortunately, such religious acculturation processes would very likely be associated with more segregation and downward assimilation as members in these communities have very limited chance to establish ties with “outsiders.” Conversely, Christian identity in Britain appears positively associated with having friends from other and especially white ethnic backgrounds (Muttarak 2013). A recent study also suggests that around a quarter of the British population think it is important to be Christian to be truly British (Storm 2011). Therefore, perhaps one should not be surprised to see that ethnic minorities who are actively engaged with Christian activities are more likely than their non-Christian counterparts to have better outcomes in terms of integration.
Measuring Religious Involvement as Identity Bridging Social Capital

The conceptualization of religious social capital is anchored in the literatures discussed above. Therefore, religious social capital in this study is defined as social networks available to individuals through their involvement in religious community participation. Furthermore, the attention devoted to the role of religious involvement in spanning diversity in social networks motivates the incorporation of the concept of identity-bridging social capital. As noted earlier, the idea of identity-bridging social capital is mirrored in social networks in which culturally defined boundaries such as race and ethnicity are blurred. To gauge the theoretical mechanism linking religion to identity-bridging social capital, analyses in this paper take a closer examination of ethnicity as a specific dimension in identity bridging. Accordingly, the aim of the paper is to validate the measure of religious involvement and examine how this construct affects British ethnic minorities’ close friendship with white British.

Two empirical issues concerning the measurement for religious social capital need a word of explanation. The first issue is related to the location of religious involvement. Existing research often uses church attendance as the key measure. However, using this measure leads to a selective bias that ignores the extensive influence of religious participation beyond place of worship. In fact, religious volunteering and services are often initiated from independently incorporated religious organisations and para-church groups supported by local congregations (Coleman 2003, 39). These organisations and groups are able to organise training and educational programmes as well as a wide range of communal activities such as the Alpha Course and the Christian Muslim Forum. Arguably, a faith community as mechanism for bridging social capital tends to be weak if it has little connection with other civic associations. After all, not all congregations define themselves as having a civic, public mission (Roozen et al. 1984).

The second issue relates to the patterns of religious involvement. Apparently, there is a private-communal dichotomy within the concept of religious involvement (McAndrew and Voas 2014). Congregational participation and involvement in religious and para-church organisations discussed earlier are legitimate examples of communal practice which is a primary source of religious social capital. Conversely but not surprisingly, private religious practice (e.g. praying and having quiet times) does not generate social capital as it presents no social connectedness. Even an atheist who for some reason has a more regular congregational life is much more likely to volunteer in religious or community activities than the most fervent believer who prays alone (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 472–473). Moreover, some long-neglected variations in types of communal practice have rarely been explored. In Bowling Alone, Putnam (2000, 93–94) distinguishes two types of people in the public life: Machers follow well-organised institutional arrangements, make things happen in the community and sometimes hold a leadership position; by contrast, schmoozers like investing time in private conversations and activities in more informal environments. Although the two types of involvement do overlap, they are largely distinct in terms of the nature of participation (Putnam 2000, 93–115). The idea of machers and schmoozers again challenges church attendance as a measure for religious involvement and bridging. Life in a faith community indeed varies, from leading study groups to giving people lifts after a meeting, and from participating in caring and outreach programmes to treating the congregation merely as a spiritual shelter. While such variations are likely to result in different social consequences, they have hitherto been hardly studied.

Data and Methods

This study uses pooled 2007–08, 2008–09 Citizenship Survey (CS) data. It is constructed on the basis of four datasets, each of which has a sample of approximately 15,000 adults in England and Wales including an ethnic minority booster sample of around 5,000. Owing to the booster
sample, the pooled CS data (N=29,012) has a relatively large proportion of ethnic minorities of 44.6%. The CS data is a unique data source for sociological study of religion in Britain as it contains a wide range of questions concerning religious practice, religious volunteering and influence of religion on public life. A sample weight provided by the CS is applied throughout the analysis in this paper.

The dependent variable used in the analysis is close friendship with white British. One CS question asks respondents to specify the ethnic backgrounds of their close friends, namely those who “you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help.” In order to assess whether religious involvement contributes to strengthening such majority-minority bridging ties, a binary outcome variable is created, dichotomized at having no close friends or having no white British close friends vs. having white British close friends.

The analysis in this paper includes three steps. At the outset, a variable indicative of different forms of religious involvement is constructed. As social capital is based on participation rather than private practice, a participation-centred strategy is used to measure religious involvement forms, which also takes into the level of subjective religiosity. Then, a series of logistic regression models are used to estimate the effects of different religious involvement forms on ethnically-defined identity bridging social capital and assess how such effects vary across different religious groups. In addition to religious affiliation, other independent variables used for the analysis are gender, education, marriage, immigrant generation, and extent of ethnic mixing at place of worship. Finally, predicted probabilities are calculated to exhibit how different types of religious involvement are associated with the stock of identity-bridging social capital among ethnic minority believers in Britain.

A Participation-centred Strategy for Measuring Religious Involvement

Assessment of religious involvement covers three domains, epitomizing variations of locations and patterns in religious participation and the level of subjective religiosity. At the outset, the measure for religious participation purposefully maps onto activities both within and beyond place of worship. The CS data does not include a variable indicative of church attendance. Nevertheless, it inquires whether respondents were involved in volunteering at formal religious communities, organizations or groups in the last 12 months. Among all respondents, 21.2% answered yes to this question. Compared to the traditional “church attendance” variable, religious volunteering may provide an extensive picture of religious participation. The types and the nature of religious involvement are summarized in Table 1.

The CS data is unique in asking those respondents who have confirmed their religious community participation to select how they were involved from a list of 12 types of voluntary activities. The second step classifies four types of religious community participation in line with the concept of maching and schmoozing. The first row in Table 1 displays six items for maching. “Representing,” “campaigning,” and “leading the group/being a member of a committee” are indicative of leadership roles in a religious organisation, while “raising or handling money/taking part in sponsored events,” “organising or helping to run an activity or event,” and “secretarial, admin or clerical work” represent either formal obligations or engagement with formal events. The second row in the table consists of six items for schmoozing, which mainly consist of interactions in more informal or private circumstances. Notably, the two types of participation overlap to a large extent. Individuals who have participated as both machers and schmoozers are called “all-rounders.” Some participants in the sample did not specify the types of activities they were involved in. They are thus labelled as “joiners.”

The final step highlights the distinction in religious conviction among the non-participants. With the use of Item Response Theory (IRT) analysis, an index for individual religiosity is calculated on the basis of five manifest indicators. The first indicator is religious affiliation. Then, a dummy variable is created on the basis of a CS question asking whether the respondent
consider himself/herself to be actively practising his/her religion. Two indicators are selected as measures for perceptions on the impact of religion. Respondents were asked whether religion “affects who their friends are” and “where they live.” For both questions, a 4-point Likert response option is used, including “strongly disagree,” “tend to disagree,” “tend to agree,” and “strongly agree.” The last indicator of individual religiosity is the perceived degree of religious salience. Respondents were asked: “How important is religion to the sense of who you are?” Response items include “not at all important,” “not very important,” “quite important,” and “very important.” In order to identify those believers who were more spiritually attached to their faith, scores retained from the IRT analysis are collapsed into four quartiles. Non-participants who are in the top quartile are called “spiritual” since they display higher individual religiosity despite non-engagement in religious community participation. The remaining non-participants who have lower individual religiosity are called “inactive.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of participants</th>
<th>Nature of participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Machers**           | - Organizing or helping to run an activity or event  
                        - Secretarial, admin or clerical work  
                        - Representing  
                        - Campaigning  
                        - Leading the group/member of a committee |
| **Schmoozers**        | - Giving advice, information, or counselling  
                        - Visiting people  
                        - Befriending or mentoring people  
                        - Providing transport/driving  
                        - Practical help (e.g. helping out at school, shopping)  
                        - Any other practical help |
| **All-rounders**      | - Involved in both maching and schmoozing |
| **Joiners**           | - Involved in other activities |
| **Spiritual**         | - Not involved in religious community participation  
                        - High personal religiosity |
| **Inactive**          | - Not involved in religious community participation  
                        - Low personal religiosity |

Table 2 displays the six religious involvement forms for non-white people in the CS data after three steps of data construction. The inactives represent the majority of the sample (60.3%). The proportion of observant non-whites who were not active in religious community participation is also relatively large (15.5%). While most participants are all-rounders (9.2%), “pure” machers (4.4%) and “pure” schmoozers (4.6%) represent only a small proportion of the sample.
Table 2: Forms of Religious Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-rounders</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machers</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmoozers</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>3,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>6,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>12,949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Citizenship Surveys 2007–08, 2008–09

Religious Affiliation and Majority-Minority Connectedness

As noted earlier, close friendship with the white majority is a key determinant of the level of identity-bridging and integration for non-white British ethnic minorities. Figure 1 presents majority-minority friendship patterns, reporting the distributive difference between different religious affiliations. Controlling for religious affiliation reveals a marked distinction in the probability of having white British close friends across ethnic minority religious groups. Religious affiliation is classified into four main categories in this study, including “Christian,” “Muslim,” “Other,” and “No religion.” Nearly half of the ethnic minority non-believers have white close friends whereas the proportion is lower among believers. Meanwhile, the proportion of Muslims having white British as close friends is significantly lower than Christians.

![Figure 1: Probability of Having White British Close Friends by Religious Affiliation](source)

Table 3 shows the probability of reporting having white British as close friends by sociodemographic factors. To aid interpretation, significance tests of the difference of percentage points between each category and the reference group in each independent variable are also presented. The patterns show marked within-group differences in all categories, as males, individuals with better educational attainment, married people, second generation immigrants, and individuals who are mixed with people from other ethnic origins on a weekly basis are more likely than their counterparts in the same category to assent to having white British close friends.
Table 3: Probability of Having White British Close Friends by Sociodemographic Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (ref)</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications (ref)</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td>51.1***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualifications</td>
<td>40.1***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried (ref)</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>34.8***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigrant generation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation/born abroad (ref)</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation/born in UK</td>
<td>41.5***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic mixing at place of worship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often or no mixing (ref)</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>45.3***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Source: Citizenship Surveys 2007–08, 2008–09

Multivariate analysis

In order to see what effects different forms of religious involvement have on identity bridging, a binary logistic regression model comprising two subsets is used to estimate the probability of having white British close friends. Model 1 control for a number of demographic variables including age, gender, education, marriage, and immigrant generation. Besides these sociodemographic variables, Model 2 simultaneously controls for a dummy variable indicative of the frequency of ethnic mixing at place of worship. The dummy variable thus allows the model to take the effect of structural opportunities in interethnic contacting into consideration. To highlight how the effects of religious involvement vary across different faith communities, the model is controlled to estimate the outcomes for Christians, Muslims, and Other believers separately.

Table 4 reports the results of the logistic regression model displayed in average marginal effects. Overall, inclusion of ethnic mixing does not prompt notable changes in Model 2 relative to Model 1 in each subset. It is abundantly clear that being a spiritual non-participant inhibits a non-white person’s connectedness with white British. Moreover, Table 4 again shows persistent and significant differences between the Christians, Muslims and other believers. Non-white Christian machers, schmoozers, and all-rounders are more likely than other individuals to have white close friends. Muslims, however, are in general less likely to report having white British friends if they are involved in religious community participation, although such gap is not statistically significant. Conditioning mixing at place of worship, the inactives in the Other religious group display a gap of 8.3% to machers as well was a gap of 8.8% to all-rounders at the significance level of 0.05. It is thus evident that religious community participation is a powerful
incubator for identity-bridging social capital for non-white Christians and Other believers, especially in the form of maching.

Moving down to the other independent variables, a comparison between the patterns on friendship as revealed by sociodemographic factors is also of interest here. Compared to the results in Table 3, statistics in Table 4 show that the significance level of most sociodemographic variables somehow declines with the inclusion of religious involvement forms. While, for Muslims, being female is negatively associated with having white British close friends, a positive association is found for Other believers. It is worth noting education presents a robust impact on the dependent variable in all six models in the analysis. In particular, people with high level of educational attainment are significantly more likely than those who have no qualifications to bond with having white British close friends. Moreover, marriage presents a positive association with having white British close friends for Christians, whereas an opposite effect is displayed in Table 4 for Other believers. Interestingly, second generation Christians and Other believers are more likely than their first generation counterparts to bond with white British whereas these coefficients in the Muslim subset appear negative though insignificant. The point to note is that with exception for education, all other significant sociodemographic factors found in the analysis displayed distinctly different effects across the three religious affiliations. Explaining its causes is beyond the main objective of this paper; yet such intractability deserves scrutiny in the future.

Table 4: Logistic Regression of Having White British Close Friends (Average Marginal Effects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th></th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other religion</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-rounders</td>
<td>0.115***</td>
<td>0.120***</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.088*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machers</td>
<td>0.081*</td>
<td>0.102**</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-0.060</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.083*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmoozers</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.078*</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>-0.084**</td>
<td>-0.079**</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>-0.060*</td>
<td>-0.061*</td>
<td>-0.100***</td>
<td>-0.095***</td>
<td>-0.140***</td>
<td>-0.143***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.037*</td>
<td>-0.044**</td>
<td>0.065**</td>
<td>0.065**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>0.066**</td>
<td>0.067**</td>
<td>0.170***</td>
<td>0.168***</td>
<td>0.148***</td>
<td>0.149***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualification</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.123***</td>
<td>0.122***</td>
<td>0.100**</td>
<td>0.099**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.046*</td>
<td>0.044*</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.161</td>
<td>-0.038*</td>
<td>-0.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>0.182***</td>
<td>0.175***</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.130***</td>
<td>0.129***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly mixing</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4,327</td>
<td>4,327</td>
<td>3,848</td>
<td>3,848</td>
<td>2,922</td>
<td>2,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
Note: reference group is inactive, male, no qualifications, unmarried, first generation, and less often or no ethnic mixing at place of worship
Source: Citizenship Surveys 2007–08, 2008–09

The key interest for the multivariate analysis is to explore how religious involvement shapes the majority-minority close friendship patterns observed in the descriptive analysis (Figure 1). Figure 2 presents predicted probabilities of having white British close friends by religious involvement types and religious affiliation after conditioning other contextual factors (age, gender, education, marriage, immigration generation, and ethnic mixing at place of worship). Due to the fact that very few non-believing respondents in the CS were involved in religious
volunteering, an overall predicted probability was calculated for all individuals who did not report having religious affiliation in the sample using the same contextual variables excepting ethnic mixing.

While descriptive analysis shows that non-whites having no religion have in general a higher chance of having white British close friends than non-white believers (Figure 1), Figure 2 illustrates that different religious involvement forms and religious affiliation have bewildering effects on such outcomes. Overall, non-believers still appear more closely connected to white British than most believers. Nevertheless, maching and schmoozing tend to significantly enhance the probability of having white British close friends for non-white Christians and Other believers. The combination of maching and schmoozing also presents a synergy that improves the predicted probabilities. For Christians and Other believers, maching tend to provide a richer stock of identity-bridging social capital than schmoozing. Conversely, other types of religious involvement are associated with poorer majority-minority befriending. In particular, the spiritual group displays the lowest probability of having white British as close friends in all three religious groups. This echoes past findings indicating that private practice may reduce chance of forming interethnic ties because it hinders individuals from effective inter-group contact (Smith 2007).

Noticeably, Muslims appear as an anomaly in the analysis. The predicted probabilities for Muslims having close relationship with white British are disproportionally lower than other respondents. Furthermore, the gap between Muslims and other believers even widens among those who are involved in religious community participation, suggesting that religious community participation is probably not a source of identity-bridging social capital for ethnic minority Muslims in Britain.

In sum, results in Figure 2 reveal that religious community participation in general presents a positive association with majority-minority connectedness in Britain. However, its effects also depend largely on religious affiliation. While maching and schmoozing is likely to generate majority-minority close friendships for Christians, they do not appear to ameliorate the connectedness between Muslims and white British.

![Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Having White British Close Friends](image)

Note: Results based on Model 2 in Table 4. Control variables are age, gender, education, marriage, immigrant generation, and ethnic mixing at place of worship.

Source: Citizenship Surveys 2007–08, 2008–09
Discussion

The main finding in this study shows some consistency with previous studies on religious social capital in America: for all non-white believers excepting Muslims, religious community participation can serve as a catalyst for bridging with the white majority. In particular, all-rounders who are engaged in both formal and informal religious activities show much greater likelihood to establish close social ties with white British. In contrast, individuals in the spiritual non-participants group presents the lowest chance of having white British friends, which echoes the observation that a deeply religious person who is not actively engaged in religious community life does not display the same level of neighbourliness as those who do (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Interestingly, compared with schmoozing, maching appears as a more powerful generator of identity-bridging social capital. One possible explanation is that machers tend to be better educated and to have a higher social status (Putnam 2000, 94). Compared with schmoozing, participation in formal activities such as representing and leading groups more frequently requires certain skills, language proficiency, leadership and management ability, as well as social networks. Previous studies in both America and Britain have indicated that machers, who often acquire higher social status, are significantly more likely to have a wider range of weak ties and to become friends with people from the same level of social hierarchy (Wuthnow 2002; Muttarak 2013). In the UK, statistics show that white British present a much higher propensity of belonging to higher social classes (Li et al. 2003). Consequently, it is relatively easier for non-white machers in a faith community than their peers to make friends with white British, as being active engagement with the wider community profoundly increases their chance of forming interethnic ties with high status people.

Another important finding is that the effect of religious community participation also is strongly associated with religious affiliation. In particular, the identity-bridging gap between ethnic minority Christians and Muslims is abundantly clear. On the one hand, non-white Christians appear to have observable merits in obtaining identity-bridging social capital through religious community participation, which is mirrored from higher propensity of having white British close friends among non-white Christians. This result is not unexpected. After all, as it is easier for people within the same faith community to become close friends, the Christian community is by all means the most powerful mechanism for ethnic minority-white British contacts owing to the relatively large size of white British people in the community. To be sure, the difference between ethnic minority Christians and Muslims might not be as distinct as shown in this study if close friendship with white British is not used as the outcome variable. For many British Muslims, cross-group friendships are likely to be pan-ethnic (Muttarak 2013, 95). For instance, Pakistani Muslims are more likely to choose co-religionists from the same region (i.e. Indians and Bangladeshis) rather than white British or ethnic minorities from other cultural backgrounds as close friends. Moreover, the differentials between Christians and other believers in the analysis are also related to the nature of Christian community participation in the UK. Compared with other faith communities, Christian churches and para-church organizations are relatively more active in articulating public missions. Healthcare provision, for example, has been arguably underpinned by the formal bodies and para-church organizations of the Church of England and other Christian ministries (Davie 2015, 213). Importantly, the social linkage between congregations and the wider community tends to further both cultural and socioeconomic integration, as it allows ethnic minority believers to have culturally heterogeneous social networks beyond their own ethnic or religious communities.

On the other hand, Muslim machers and schmoozers are not succeeding in breaking through the barrier in bonding with the white majority. To explain this marked difference between Christians and Muslims, the first point worth noting is the high rate of Muslim endogamy in British society. In Britain, residential segregation coupled with distinctive ethnic and religious landscapes have been seen by some as signifier of marked cultural differences and a “parallel
life” (cf. Phillips, 2004). Central to this claim is that some British Muslims, especially those of South Asian origins, fail to integrate by withdrawing from contacting with wider British society. Much supporting evidence for this assertion may be drawn from both qualitative studies and government reports (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Amin, 2003). For Muslims, non-religious social and wider civic engagement are perhaps a more effectively generator of ethnic identity-bridging social capital than the religious community participation, which also explains why the inactives in this group are more likely to have white British friends. The phenomenon of reactive religiosity in Muslim communities in Western Europe should not be ignored in the foregoing discussion of the relatively higher propensity of self-segregation among British Muslims. Some believe that the emerging “Islamophobia” narrative in public life after 911 serves as catalyst that reinforces British Muslims’ commitment to their religious community, which inevitably hinders their contacts with the white majority who represent a Judeo-Christian heritage (Voas and Fleischmann, 2012, 539). In the meantime, minority ethnic Muslims in Britain have been found persistently disadvantaged in terms of labour market outcomes, as they are more likely than other people to be unemployed and economically inactive (Heath and Martin, 2010). Arguably, the inherent socio-economic disadvantages and the lack of social approval tend to strengthen reactive religiosity on both individual and aggregated levels and further self-segregation within British Muslim societies. The last point to note is a large number of British Muslims were war victims and asylum seekers (think of the Middle East and Somalia). As they did not intentionally “select” the British life, there has been “widespread questioning about whether these Muslims can be and are willing to be integrated into European society and its political values” (Modood 2003, 101). The immediate cultural shock and all other factors as discussed above may simply lead to the self-labelling of “us” and “them”—hence erodes the willingness to contact with other people and prompts self-segregation.

Conclusion

This paper aims to investigate the role of religion as identity-bridging social capital in British society. Using a participation-centred classification of religious involvement, it specifically looks at how different types of religious involvement shape close friendships between non-whites and white British, and how such effects vary across Christians, Muslims, and other believers.

The analysis shows that once other sociocultural factors are accounted for, it is plausible that religious community participation may in general serve as a generator for close friendships between British ethnic minorities and white British. In particular, the combination of maching and schmoozing often presents synergies which reinforce such association. These results suggest that religious participation may foster identity-bridging social capital in Britain as it does in America, although this also varies by forms of participation and across different faith communities. On the contrary, the combination of non-participation in religious community participation and high level of personal religiosity tends to sabotage identity bridging.

As far as group differences are concerned, active religious community participation appears as a type of identity-bridging religious social capital for ethnic minority Christians in Britain, whereas it is probably a counter-force against majority-Muslim contacts under the current context. On the one hand, Christians tend to have higher probability of having white British close friends than other believers. On the other hand, there is some evidence for ‘Muslim disadvantages’, as Muslims appear rather unsuccessful in breaking through the ethnic boundary with white British via religious participation.

Finally, it is worth noting that this study has several limitations. Firstly, as the measure for religious community participation in this study covers activities in both congregations and other types of religious organizations, the exact social locations where maching and schmoozing take place remain unclear. The point to note is that congregations, religious NGOs, and para-church organizations are all distinctive incubators for social capital, as each of them has different
institutional arrangements and purposes (Campbell, 2003). Secondly, it is emphasized earlier that propensity of having interethnic friendships depends greatly on the ethnic and religious formation in the local area. Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to add these factors in the logistic regression models considering the current sample size. However, it is plausible that they may present pronounced effects on the outcomes of identity bridging. Lastly, the analysis in this paper does not control for denominational differences. Disparities among different Christian denominations in terms of the social consequences of religious participation have been well-documented in America (Wuthnow, 2003; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Whether similar differences exist among Catholics, Anglicans, and other protestant communities (mainly Methodist and Baptist) need further investigation.

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