

The role of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on gender role views: A study of ethnic minorities in the UK

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Abstract

A key issue in migrant integration research and policy debates is whether the spatial concentration of migrants and their children has an effect on their objective and subjective outcomes. This study contributes to this literature by studying the effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on one of the most controversial and culturally embedded subjective outcomes: individuals' gender role views (GRV). The study uses large-scale nationally representative individual-level data covering England and Wales, linked to local area information from the 2011 Census on the concentration of co-ethnics. It focuses on groups that have, on average, relatively strong traditional views on gender roles: Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Africans. Results show a positive relationship between living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods and holding more traditional GRV among Bangladeshis and Indians; however, there is no such effect for Pakistanis and Africans. I do a series of sensitivity tests to explore neighbourhood self-selection; these suggest that the effect for Bangladeshis may be (partially) driven by this phenomenon.

Keywords: Ethnicity; UK; gender role views; neighbourhood effects; neighbourhood ethnic concentration

Introduction

Whether the spatial concentration of migrants and their children (hereafter referred to as 'ethnic minorities') has an effect on their objective and subjective outcomes remains a key issue in migrant integration research and policy debates. In the UK, a considerable number of studies has shown that neighbourhood ethnic concentration plays a role on outcomes such as education and occupation (Clark & Drinkwater, 2002; Zuccotti & Platt, 2017); however, less is known about its role on *subjective* outcomes, such as ethnic minorities' values and feelings (Knies et al., 2016). This line of inquiry is equally important, since it has the potential to provide hints into the role of neighbourhoods in wider processes of cultural adaptation, as well as to feed policy debates on social cohesion and integration (Çilingir, 2020; HM Government, 2018; Uslaner, 2012). The 2001 riots in Asian neighbourhoods, followed by the 2005 London bombings, generated a series of controversies around ethnic groups living "parallel lives" and multiculturalist policies failing (Rattansi, 2011). The idea that ethnic spatial segregation encouraged cultural isolation was crucial in this discourse; and led to the emergence of alternative policy perspectives—interculturalism and community cohesion (Cantle, 2012)²—, which emphasised less the cultural diversity (epitome of multiculturalism)

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² These ideas were then formalized in institutions such as the Community Cohesion Unit (2002) and the Commission for Integration and Cohesion (2006). Also concrete measures were implemented, such as the introduction of the duty to promote community cohesion in schools, which in practise meant that all children educated in state-funded schools would be introduced to 'others', virtually or actually, and would be provided with positive experiences of difference. Community cohesion has since then been part of the UK's policy agenda on integration (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2018, 2019).



and more the need of dialogue between cultures at the local level.³ A better knowledge of how neighbourhoods may affect individuals' beliefs and values is, therefore, fundamental in this debate. This article addresses this concern by exploring the role of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on one of the most controversial and culturally embedded subjective outcomes: individuals' gender role views (GRV).

According to neighbourhood effects theory (see e.g. Galster & Hedman, 2012), neighbourhoods are spaces of socialization and interaction, as well as places of transmission of beliefs and ways of doing and behaving. The place where individuals live can therefore have an impact on various characteristics of such individuals, including their values. In terms of this study, the spatial concentration of individuals who come (or have ancestors) from countries where GRV are more traditional imply the spatial concentration of these views and, hence, the possibility that they are "spread" and/or "reinforced" across members of those neighbourhoods. Guided by this theory, this article explores whether local interactions with more or less traditional others, as proxied by neighbourhood composition of co-ethnics, offer one potential mechanism for explaining ethnic minority groups' GRV. Specifically, I ask: *do ethnic minorities living in areas with a higher share of co-ethnics have, on average, more traditional GRV?* The analysis is based on data from Understanding Society, in combination with aggregated Census data attached to individuals. It focuses on the four ethnic minority groups in the UK with the most traditional GRV: Indian, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Africans.

Findings suggest that for Bangladeshis and for Indians, there is a positive relationship between living in highly concentrated co-ethnic neighbourhoods and having more traditional GRV. However, neighbourhood ethnic concentration does not seem to play a role for Pakistanis or Africans. The results are robust to a series of controls, both at individual and household levels, including measures of social origins. I perform a battery of sensitivity checks to test for self-selection of individuals into neighbourhoods. These suggest that self-selection bias may in part be driving the results for Bangladeshis.

Background: increasing diversity of GRV

GRV, as well as changes in these views over time, have been a matter of great interest to researchers. "Traditional" GRV, as represented, largely, in the male-breadwinner model, have tended to decline over time (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). However, they remain an important part of societies' cultural values and socioeconomic systems (Lewis, 2001). Most importantly, research shows that they can foster the reproduction of gender inequalities (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007; Cunningham, 2008a, 2008b). Traditional GRV may deter women's educational and labour market aspirations and opportunities (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Khoudja & Fleischmann, 2015; Read, 2004). They may also amplify the unequal distribution of unpaid caring and housework activities between men and women (Kan & Laurie, 2016).

In the context of international migration and integration debates, these issues acquire a renewed relevance. Many ethnic minorities currently living in the UK (and elsewhere in Europe) come from—or have parents from—countries with greater gender inequality (World Economic Forum, 2018) and a predominance of traditional beliefs—such as India, Pakistan,

³ However, some authors have argued that 'community cohesion', interculturalism' and multiculturalism' follow similar principles and, hence, are not as contrasting as they claim to be (Bagguley, 2014; Modood & Meer, 2012).



Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana. In these countries, individuals attach a much stronger value to religion, family and the authority of god and fathers; and economic and physical security is emphasized versus self-expression, which leads to intolerance towards diversity and a preference for traditional GRV (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). This implies that a large share of ethnic minorities are (or have been) socialized in and/or exposed to social and family contexts with greater gender inequalities and more traditional GRV, as compared to the majoritarian white British. This also applies to the children of migrants raised in the UK who are born to these traditional families (see also Berry et al., 2002).⁴

In line with processes of cultural integration, ethnic minorities' values and beliefs should tend to adjust over time and over generations (Gordon, 1964). For example, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi individuals raised in the UK (i.e. the children of migrants) have, on average, more liberal gender role views compared to their parents (Röder & Mühlau, 2014). However, research also shows that they still hold more traditional GRV compared to the white British majority (Khoudja & Platt, 2016). A key question for both researchers and policy makers is therefore what factors sustain the retention of more traditional GRV, even in more liberal country-contexts. This article explores one such mechanism: neighbourhood ethnic concentration.

Neighbourhood ethnic concentration: why should it matter for GRV?

Research on GRV show that individual (e.g., age, gender, civil status, economic activity, religion), household (e.g., household composition, partner's economic activity, caring for children) and parental characteristics play a role in developing more or less traditional views on the role of men and women in society (Platt & Polavieja, 2016). These factors are also known to vary across ethnic groups (Hannemann & Kulu, 2015; Kan & Laurie, 2016; Khattab & Hussein, 2018; Lam & Smith, 2009; Voas, 2009). But, why would the area where individuals live affect gender role views? Galster (2012) provides a useful typology for identifying the mechanisms by which the neighbourhood may have an impact on individuals: *social interaction mechanisms* are the most relevant for the purposes of this article. Social interaction mechanisms emerge as a consequence of the social contact among individuals in the neighbourhood; and, as in most neighbourhoods with a high concentration of the same ethnic group, they are encouraged by the presence of local institutions, where these contacts actually occur (e.g., churches, social centres, shops that supply ethnic-specific food or clothes to the community, etc.). Within social interaction mechanisms, Galster defines different types of sub-mechanisms: the 'social networks' mechanism refers to the role of interpersonal exchange of information and resources of various kinds (Bourdieu, 1977), also called 'bonding ties' (Lin, 2001). There is also the 'collective socialization' mechanism, by which as a product of interaction, individuals are encouraged to conform to local social norms or follow certain rules based on role models present in the neighbourhood. Similarly, behaviours, aspirations and attitudes, might also be affected by contact with peers who are neighbours, which Galster refers to as 'social contagion' mechanism.

We could think of all three sub-mechanisms as playing a role in GRV. To the extent that people relate to others with similar cultural values, including their GRV, it is likely that their own views as well as their practices are affected. At the same time, living in highly

⁴ Although traditional GRV and the male breadwinner model still characterizes much of white Britons' family arrangements, this is less compared to the studied ethnic minority groups (Kan & Laurie, 2016).

concentrated areas might also prevent ethnic minorities from being confronted, on a daily basis, with individuals that have other cultural values—including different GRV (Alba & Nee, 2003; Cheong et al., 2007).⁵ In other words, neighbourhood ethnic concentration might play against exposure to more egalitarian views on the role of men and women in a society and in favour of exposure to views that are more similar to those they had or would have had in the country of origin. Following this reasoning, the guiding hypothesis of this study is that ethnic minorities from countries with more traditional views living in neighbourhoods with a higher concentration of co-ethnics will have more traditional views on gender roles than those living in less concentrated neighbourhoods. Against this argument, Peach (2005) maintains that living close to the majoritarian population does not necessarily mean that cultural *embeddedness* will be lower, or that ethnic minorities will interact more with other groups. In his study of ethnic minorities in Britain, the author shows for example that even though the segregation levels of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis vary, their marriage patterns tend to be very similar. Whether the main hypothesis holds or not is, therefore, a relevant empirical question. I explore it in the following pages.

Data and methods

I use data from Wave 2 (2010-2011) of the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) (University of Essex. Institute for Social and Economic Research et al., 2016) and attach local area characteristics (from aggregated Census data) to individual respondents on the basis of their locality of residence. Wave 2 of the UKHLS has a special module on gender roles, which provides my dependent variable and additional key control variables. The UKHLS is characterised by a large sample size of individuals in around 28,000 households plus an ethnic minority oversample designed to deliver around 1000 cases for each of the main UK minority groups (Berthoud et al., 2009). Ethnicity is allocated on the basis of ethnic self-identification, obtained through a question asking to which group individuals consider themselves to belong: Asian or Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and Black or Black British (including African). Aggregated data from the Census refers to 2011 and is measured at the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level, a geographical unit that has an average of 1500 individuals. Since the LSOAs I use only cover England and Wales, I restrict my sample to all those living in England and Wales at the time the Wave 2 survey was conducted.

The dependent variable is **gender role views**, a linear standardized variable that varies between 0 and 1, where 1 is more traditional. This is based on a summary of three statements to which respondents had to say whether they agreed or not (on a 5-point scale): “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works”, “All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job” and “A husband’s job is to earn money; a wife’s job is to look after the home and family”.⁶ A Cronbach Alpha test gives a value of 0.79 for these three items. GRV follows a normal distribution, with a mean of 0.44 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.2.

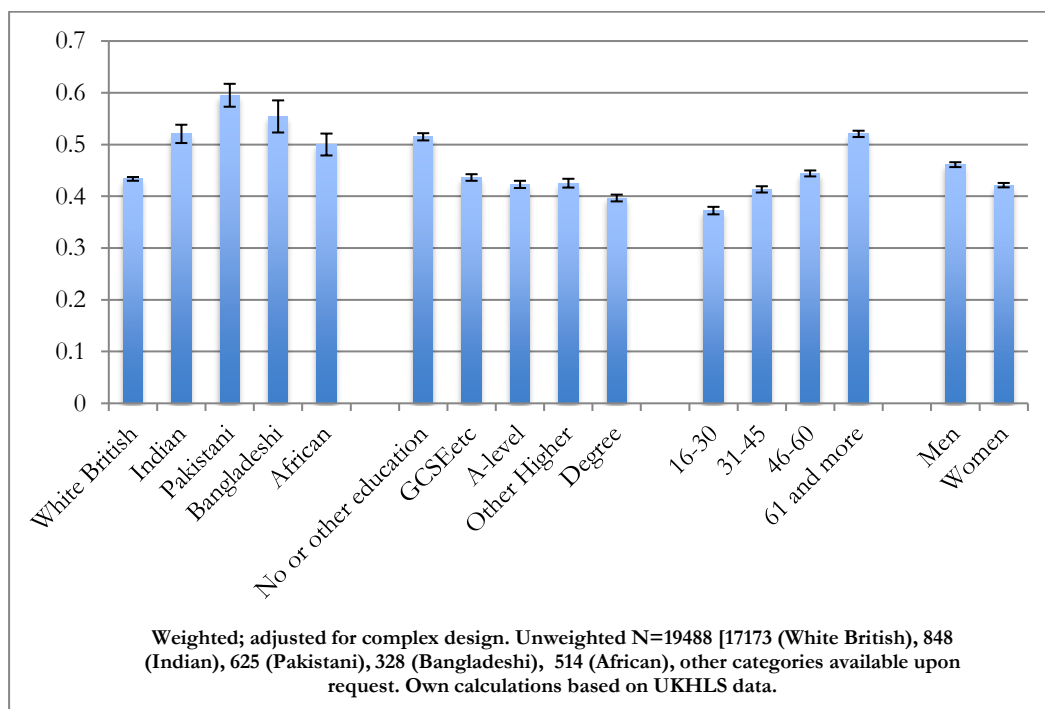
⁵ Although the focus of this article is not on the causes of segregation, but on its impact, it is important to note that segregation in the UK may emerge both in relation to ethnic and socioeconomic preferences and constraints (Carling, 2008; Coulter & Clark, 2018; Phillips, 1998; Schelling, 1969; Zuccotti, 2019). I consider different socioeconomic factors (at the individual and neighbourhood levels) and perform additional robustness checks to better control for such residential self-selection dynamics and, hence, better isolate the effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on GRV.

⁶ Missing cases for each item (i.e. response is “don’t know”) vary between 3 and 5 percent across ethnic groups. Note, however, that the only situation in which an individual does not get a value for gender role views is if he/she has missing information in all three items.



Most cases have values between 0.3 and 0.6. In order to provide a comparative perspective of how traditional-oriented different types of groups can be, Figure 1 shows the mean value of GRV by ethnic group (including white British individuals), education, age group and gender. Indian, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Africans have the most traditional values; Pakistani, in particular, have 0.2 points more in the scale than white British individuals (around 1 SD more), while the other groups have a difference of around 0.1 points. The comparison with age, education and gender categorizations reveals that the observed differences between ethnic groups are considerable: for example, the difference between the most and least educated is 0.1; similarly, the difference between the youngest and the oldest cohort is 0.15, and that between men and women is less than 0.05.

Figure 1. Gender role views, by ethnic group, educational level, age group and gender (means, 95% CI)



The main independent variable is the **neighbourhood ethnic concentration**, which is constructed by linking each individual to the percentage of members of their own ethnic group⁷ (co-ethnic concentration) in the neighbourhood (LSOA). I chose a measure of co-ethnic concentration since, following additional analysis with Waves 2 and 3 of UKHLS (available upon request), this is positively associated with a higher probability of “having co-ethnic friends”, hence indirectly proxying social interactions. Neighbourhood ethnic concentration is expressed as population weighted deciles, where decile 10 refers to the 10% of a certain ethnic minority group who lives in neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of that ethnic minority group. An advantage of this measure is that it allows a better comparison of groups who have different levels of spatial segregation. Pakistanis,

⁷ Ethnicity in the Census is measured with the same question on ethnic self-identification used in UKHLS.

Bangladeshis and, to a lesser extent, Indians are the most segregated ethnic minority groups (Simpson, 2012) in the UK, for which the LSOAs contained in deciles 9 and 10 have on average between 35% and 60% of members of these minority groups; for African, conversely, the values range between 12% and 27%.⁸

Additional control variables include individual, household, social origin and neighbourhood characteristics. Individual and household variables are: age, gender, generation (born abroad and arrived at age 5 or later, i.e. 'first generation', vs. born in the UK or born abroad and arrived before age 5 – i.e. second generation), partnership status (single, co-ethnic partner, partner with other ethnicity, divorced and widowed), number of children in the household, educational level (none and other qualifications, GCSE level or similar, A-level, other higher level and degree), labour market status (employed, unemployed, student and other inactive), caring for someone disabled or ill (yes, no), Muslim religion (vs. other and no religion) and family gender role views (no partner/parents in the household, low traditional views of partner/parents, middle traditional views, and high traditional views; where low, middle and high divide the distribution into three percentiles). Social origin characteristics include (retrospective) parents' characteristics when the individual was 14 years old: parents' educational level (did not go to school or left school with no qualifications, left school with some qualifications, gained further qualifications or certificates and gained a university degree or higher) and parental employment status (workless parents, working father with workless or absent mother, and working mother with or without a working father). Finally, I also control for neighbourhood deprivation, measured at the LSOA level with the Carstairs Index (Norman & Boyle, 2014; Norman et al., 2005). Additional details on the variables and their distributions can be found in Zuccotti (2018).

Model specification

The analyses that follow are based on a linear regression models (OLS) for the four pooled ethnic minority groups under study. I first study whether and how the gross effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on GRV changes (or not) when including the above-mentioned set of variables. Next, I explore more in detail whether the effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on GRV varies across ethnic groups. For this purpose, I add interactions between ethnic group and neighbourhood ethnic concentration, and present graphical representations for ease of interpretation. Data are weighted and I adjust for the complex design of the study (stratification and clustering).

Results

The effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on GRV

Table 1 presents the results of the OLS estimation. Model 1 shows the gross correlation between neighbourhood ethnic concentration and GRV; Model 2 adds three basic characteristics: age, gender and ethnic group; Model 3 adds the remaining control variables; finally, Model 4 adds the interaction terms. Full tables are available upon request.

The effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration on GRV is positive and statistically significant (Model 1). The value indicates that, on average, and 1-point increase in the

⁸ I have also tested a variable that indicates the share of white British individuals in the neighbourhood instead, and results (available upon request) go in the same direction.



neighbourhood scale of share of co-ethnics (from decile 1 to decile 10) increases the GRV by 0.008. This means that the difference between a person living in a decile 1 and one living in decile 10 is of 0.08 points, which is around half a standard deviation. Model 2 shows little difference in terms of the role of neighbourhoods; it also shows that, given equal age, gender, and neighbourhood ethnic concentration, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis hold more traditional views than Indians and Africans. After controlling for all key factors (Model 3), the effect of neighbourhood ethnic concentration reduces, but remains statistically significant. In order to interpret Model 4, which includes interaction terms, I plotted the predicted values in Figure 2.

For Indians and Bangladeshis, living close to co-ethnics is positively related with holding more traditional gender role views (see Figure 2). Those living in the least concentrated neighbourhoods (decile 1) have around 0.5 points in the GRV scale, while those who live in the most concentrated neighbourhoods (decile 10) have almost 0.6 points in the GRV scale. This effect (0.1 points) amounts to around 50% of a standard deviation (0.2) of the GRV scale; and is around as big as the difference observed, for example, between the least and the most educated individuals. Conversely, for Pakistanis and Africans, gender role views do not seem to depend on their neighbourhoods' ethnic concentration.

Table 1. Estimation of gender role views (0=more liberal; 1=more traditional); OLS (b-coefficients with standard errors) with all controls¹

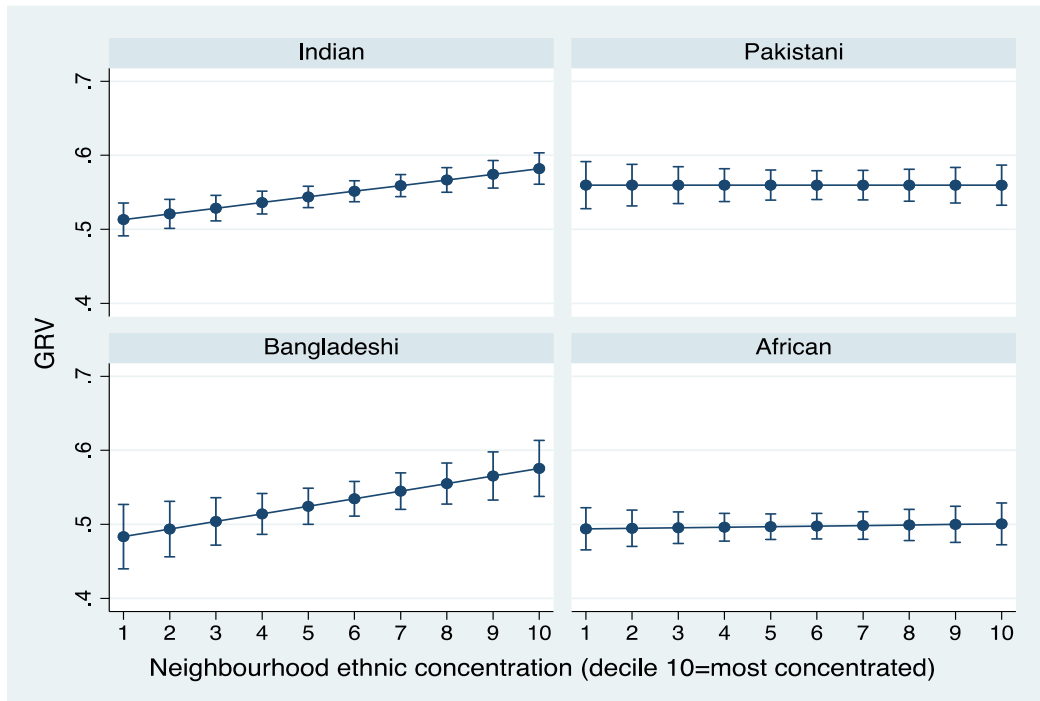
	Model 1	Model 2 ¹	Model 3	Model 4
Neigh. Ethnic Concentration²	0.008 (4.13)***	0.009 (5.00)***	0.005 (2.85)***	0.008 (3.46)***
Ethnic group (ref. Indian)				
Pakistani		0.089 (6.50)***	0.012 (0.75)	0.047 (1.96)*
Bangladeshi		0.052 (2.87)***	-0.018 (1.03)	-0.030 (1.03)
African		-0.010 (0.72)	-0.052 (4.14)***	-0.019 (0.97)
Interactions				
Pakistani*Neigh. Ethnic Conc.				-0.008 (2.12)**
Bangladeshi*Neigh. Ethnic Conc.				0.003 (0.53)
African*Neigh. Ethnic Conc.				-0.007 (1.93)*
Constant	0.502 (46.89)***	0.330 (16.81)***	0.455 (6.48)***	0.444 (6.19)***
R²	0.01	0.10	0.26	0.26

Own calculations based on UKHLS data. Weighted; adjusted for complex design. Unweighted N=2426

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

¹ Model 2 controls for age and gender; Models 3 and 4 additionally include: generation, civil status, number of children, education, labour market status, caring, family gender role views, religions, parental education, parental employment and neighbourhood deprivation.

² Recoded to 0-9.

Figure 2. GRV by neighbourhood ethnic concentration and ethnic group (linear prediction & 90% CI)

Weighted; adjusted for complex design. Unweighted N=2426. Own calculations based on UKHLS data.

Selection and endogeneity

In studies of neighbourhood effects, selection and endogeneity are two fundamental issues that need to be discussed and, if possible, addressed (Bergström & van Ham, 2012; Dietz, 2002; Galster & Hedman, 2013). Selectivity refers to the fact that individuals choose where to live and, in consequence, individual characteristics might affect both this residential decision and the outcome under study. In this case, this would imply that those who are more likely to have more traditional GRV tend to select into areas with more co-ethnics. Endogeneity refers to the fact that the choice of neighbourhood is usually associated with other choices – such as the type of tenure – and these other factors might in turn affect the outcome under study (see Galster et al., 2007).

While controlling for a wide range of variables helps the estimation of neighbourhood effects, there might still be unmeasured variables affecting the relationship between neighbourhood and outcome. I therefore performed two robustness checks (available upon request). First, I used ethnic concentration of the wider area as an *instrument* for the local area (Evans et al., 1992; Galster et al., 2007) (also measured with population-weighted deciles),⁹ an approach that

⁹ Specifically, neighbourhood ethnic concentration and the interaction between this and ethnic group are considered as endogenous variables, while ethnic concentration in the wider area and the interaction between this and ethnic group are considered as instruments.



helps randomizing the allocation of individuals in LSOAs. The wider areas used were Housing Market Areas (HMAs) (Jones et al., 2010). The results of the analysis are robust to the findings presented here; however, there is some evidence of a weak instrumentation for Bangladeshis. The second robustness check used a question about whether individuals declare they prefer to stay in/move out of the current home. Specifically, I explored whether the neighbourhood effect varies according to responses to this variable. This question has been used before in neighbourhood effects research (Knies et al., 2016). The idea is that individuals who declare that they prefer to move are less likely to be self-selected into the neighbourhood; however, we cannot know whether this preference is based on the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood (see Clark and Drinkwater (2002)). The results suggest that neighbourhood effects for Bangladeshis apply only among those who declare a preference to stay in their current home. This might suggest some selection effects for Bangladeshis.

Discussion

Ethnic spatial segregation and, in particular, the causes and consequences of the spatial concentration of ethnic minorities, remains a crucial aspect of UK's research and policy agendas (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2018). The 2001 riots occurred in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Asian groups, followed by the 2005 London bombings, generated debates around the UK "sleepwalking" its way towards segregation, ethnic minorities living "parallel lives" and multiculturalism failing (Casey, 2016; Rattansi, 2011). The idea that ethnic spatial segregation is connected to, and encourages, cultural isolation was crucial in this discourse, and remains open to debate nowadays in the context of 'community cohesion' policies (Cantle, 2012). This article has fed into this debate by examining whether living close to co-ethnics encourages more traditional gender role views among ethnic minorities; in particular, those known for having the most traditional GRV of all ethnic groups. The study—one of the few looking at subjective rather than objective outcomes—suggests that the level of neighbourhood ethnic concentration may play a role in the dissemination of traditional gender role views for some groups (Indians and Bangladeshis), but not for others (Pakistanis and Africans). This has different implications for integration research and policy debates.

First of all, ethnic segregation has the potential of encouraging or fomenting specific cultural values. Our findings show that such an effect is relatively high: Indians and Bangladeshis increase their GRV' score by around half standard deviation when comparing those in the least and most concentrated areas. This is almost equivalent to the difference that a higher degree makes (vs. being low educated).

Second, the absence of a relationship between neighbourhood ethnic concentration and GRV among Pakistanis and Africans suggests that these groups may be less sensitive to the immediate spatial surroundings, and hence more exposed to the origin culture in general. To them, living in predominantly white or predominantly ethnic areas does not seem to make a difference to their views. This may have potentially negative consequences for women, especially Pakistanis, who have on average the most traditional GRV of all groups in the UK.

Third, the study suggests that if some groups are potentially more sensitive to their surroundings (Indians and Bangladeshis), creating opportunities for the spatial dispersion of these groups, may facilitate greater intercultural contact (Cantle, 2012) and, in turn, greater exposure to more egalitarian gender role views. Next to preventing housing discrimination and harassment, helping to improve socioeconomic integration can be a means to this end.

(see e.g. Coulter & Clark, 2018; Zuccotti, 2019), in line with spatial assimilation theory (Massey & Denton, 1985). At the same time, as shown by the Pakistani case in particular, traditional cultural values also have the capacity to endure across varied neighbourhood contexts. This suggests that spatial dispersion alone might not be enough for promoting intercultural contact and specific local and national-level policies should be considered too.

Finally, as for limitations of this work, self-selection effects may have played a part in the observed neighbourhood effects, especially for Bangladeshis. Less traditional and potentially more motivated Bangladeshis (Connor et al., 2004) might prefer less concentrated areas, e.g. as a means towards (or as a consequence of) socioeconomic integration. In fact, research shows that Bangladeshi second generations are improving in terms of education and occupation to a greater extent than other ethnic groups (Zuccotti & Platt, 2021). These mechanisms might also explain the contrasting results observed for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis—two groups who are very similar in many respects, including neighbourhood deprivation, family structure, religion, and female economic activity. More research is needed to explore differences between ethnic groups, as well as the interplay between individual unobserved characteristics and neighbourhood effects in the explanation of different outcomes.

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