Ethnic segregation and collective political action in urban England

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Abstract

A number of studies in the field of political geography have focused on the ethnic profile of the locality to examine its effect on political participation. Mainly focused on voter turnout and framed in the “hyper-segregated” urban America, the research on the impact of the spatial distribution of ethnic groups barely studied its effects on alternative forms of political action in Britain. This paper claims that together with the economic features, the characteristics of the local distribution of ethnic minorities can account for individuals’ degree of collective political engagement. Considering the three main ethnic groups in England (white, Black and Asian), I test competing theories of segregation effects. I take into account the predictions elaborated by the “Ethnic community model”, the “Racial threat models” and the mechanisms of inter-personal trust to explain the scope of cooperative actions. For the empirical analysis, I pooled two rounds of the Citizenship Survey conducted in England in 2005 and 2007 and run overall and separate logistic models to assess the impact of the local authorities’ dissimilarity index. I found that concentration of co-ethnic does not affect the Asian’s and Black’s propensities to participate in collective political activities. However, evidence suggests that environments with higher segregation of Asian population depress whites’ collective political activism. This research seeks to contribute to the current discussion on the causes and consequences of the spatial patterns of residence of ethnic populations in urban England.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Within the urban studies, the segregation of ethnic minorities in Britain has been subject of heated debate on conceptual and measurement matters but most importantly, regarding the scope of this social phenomenon. It was suggested that Britain was starting to suffer from a ghettoisation of urban localities, a process comparable to the situation that exists in many segregated American cities such as Chicago (Phillips 2005).[1] These statements were severely challenged by the socio-geography literature which claimed that such a high degree of segregation is not supported by the statistical evidence in Britain (Peach 1996, Peach 2009); in words of Simpson (2007), anxieties of other people’s race or origin “are better seen as ghettos of the minds rather than ghettos of realities”(pp.423).

The effects of the patterns of residence of ethnic minorities are currently under public and scholarly debate. After the riots in the northern cities of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001, it emerged a vivid interest to assess the causes and consequences of the spatial distribution of ethnic groups across the boundaries of the localities. In the area of political studies it remains under-explored the political consequences of the local distribution of ethnic groups in Britain. Even though it is not my intention to delve into the discussion on the level of segregation currently displayed in Britain, it is worth noting that the patterns of spatial distribution vary widely among ethnic groups and across local authorities (Peach 1996, Peach 1998). Does this variability have specific political consequences to both majority and ethnic minority groups?

In this paper, I shall focus on the individuals’ political participation in collective actions. I take into account the features of the contexts because they are crucial to understand geographically specific social interaction and because they can be strong basis for the construction of collective identity - requirement for any collective action (Miller 2000). In particular, I investigate if the varying degree of clustering of ethnic minorities in the locality can contribute to explain individuals’ collective political engagement assuming that there may be varying degrees of co-ethnic identification, trust and inter-group conflict in the aggregation of preferences. Therefore, the aim of this paper is twofold. On the one side, I will grasp on the degree of ethnic minorities’ political involvement taking into account the local segregation of individuals with similar ethnic backgrounds. On the other side, I attempt to determine empirically whether local minorities’ segregation can be a significant predictor of
majority’s’ propensities to political action.

Since the seminal work of V.O. Key (Key 1949), we know that it necessary to inspect the racial composition of the contexts in order to understand why people behave differently in politics. Consistent with this line of research, a number of studies have focused on the ethnic profile of the locality with the intention of examining its effects on mainstream political participation (Uhlaner, Cain et al. 1989, Schlichting, Tuckel et al. 1998, Hill and Leighley 1999, Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008). However, the empirical investigation of the impacts of the local ethnic profile on non-electoral participation is currently on a preliminary stage. The available literature in British contexts gives little clues to understand, for instance, the political behavior of Asian and blacks living among other co-ethnics.

The analysis that follows draws mainly on the premise that, taking into account for economic factors, ethnic features of the localities impact differently on people with different ethnic backgrounds. The availability of a robust micro data set matched with aggregate data from English local authorities allows me to begin to explore a topic - the linkages between local ethnic make-up and the individuals’ engagement in non-electoral participation - hardly covered in the literature (Pattie, Seyd et al. 2004).

II. THEORIES ON SEGREGATION EFFECTS

Segregation of ethnic minorities: positive effects

Taking into account previous studies which pointed out that consciousness and identity is created in place (Giddens 1984, Agnew 1989, Kirby 1989) I will start by explaining how segregation can affect the collective political engagement of ethnic minorities.

The “ethnic community model” assumes that minority groups tend to face common problems and have interests that are specific and distinct from those of the majority of the population. The will to express these interests or preferences by individuals belonging to the same minority ethnic group often drives them to the development of political activities of some sort. According to this approach, when a large number of individuals with the similar ethnic background live and share the experiences that are generated in the same geographical space the chances of political involvement among the group’s members rise.

Recent research in Britain found that South Asians following the Muslim and Hindu
faiths tend to have a higher propensity of voter turnout and voting registration when living among co-ethnics (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008, Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008). Another investigation showed that there is not a significant association between ethnic density and civic engagement (Stafford, Bécares et al. 2010).

However, I would argue that the effects of the size of the minority ethnic group on political participation would be neglectable if the minority is intermingled with the majority white population. Consequently, it is the geographical distribution of ethnic minorities within the locality what deserves further examination. The ethnic community effects can be stronger if the ethnic group are spatially separated from the rest of the local population. In sum, it is the spatial gathering of individuals from the same ethnic group in a given locality what easier the communication among individuals with similar interests, needs and preferences. This contact facilitates what the traditional literature called “group consciousness”, this is, the awareness of the group’s relative position in the larger society and, at the same time, the commitment of its member to further actions to promote the group’s interests (Miller, Gurin et al. 1981).

Minority groups living in segregated places will create and reproduce the feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic community. Even if they belong to an ethnic group but they do not live in the enclave, they can notice anyway the local segregation between own’s group and the majority. Moreover, spatial concentration can contribute largely to the creation of their own organizations and leaders who in turn can evoke the ethnic identity for the mobilization of the local ethnic minority residents (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, Uslaner 2011).

Segregation of ethnic groups can visualize the commonalities of its members and enhance the in-group view that the status quo places them in a disadvantageous position in relation to the rest of the population. Ultimately, the resulting in-group solidarity will likely generate the organization of some political action. In brief, in-group cohesion or connectedness of ethnic communities found in contexts of high residential segregation can potentially promote political engagement.

In addition, rational models highlight the powerful force of identity and the benefits derived from participation. According to the notion of relational goods proposed by Uhlmaner (1989) and Gui (1987), activities such as joining a group of volunteers or participating in a political discussion are intangible outputs which people involved enjoy per se. The model of
relational goods developed by Uhlaner suggests that “the identity of individual participants with the group is strengthened through the action; the relational portion of the benefit refers not to power and influence but to the actor’s share of the enhanced identity” (pp. 257). Therefore, the identity and the interaction with members of the in-group constitute an incentive to political action. Moreover, according to Leighley (2001), the interpersonal identification and interaction among members of a group can provide information which leads to a reduction of the costs of participation.

Despite empirical investigation is not extensive, recent findings suggests that this approach holds for specific forms of political action such as voter turnout. For instance, Schlichting et. al. (1998) found evidence to support this approach when they studied the effects of hyper-segregation of two American cities on voter turnout. With certain caution about the generalization of their case-study findings to other contexts, authors concluded that ethnic communities exerts a mobilisation effects which leads to higher levels of turnout.

Interestingly, residential sorting by ethnicity may not only have implications for the behavior of ethnic minority groups. The size and segregation of these groups can also motivate white majority to participate. It is reasonable to think though, that the consciousness of being relative disadvantaged because of ethnic reasons is not the factor that stimulates political action in the case of the white majority. Therefore, an alternative approach should be considered.

In a deep and critical review of the literature on racial threat mechanisms and political mobilization (Key 1949 to name some, Blumer 1958, Blalock 1967) Enos (2011) provides a psychology-based approach to explain the link between threat and political action taking into account a spatial dimension. Enos distinguishes two types of racial threats: the “material” and the “psychological”. The material explanation of threats assumes that individuals react rationally to an out-group which is challenging their social, economic or political position. The mechanism assumes that if the size of the out-group increases, the resource competition raises, leading individuals to political action. This is particularly understandable in those localities where tensions may arise as consequence of gaps in resources in housing, education and employment provision. In the local context, the material threat is palpable among whites since they have the belief that ethnic minorities “were using resources – housing, education, health care – which rightly belonged to white people.” (CRE 1998)

However, Enos observes some limitations in this approach and explores the Social Identity
Theory to ground his own understanding of the relationship between threat and political action. Building on this literature, he indicates that individuals can behave in a non-rational way (since the threat can be “real” or just “perceived”) when sacrificing their own individual benefit for the sake of their own group’s utility. Since individuals conflate individual and group utility, he argues, group identity is a powerful influence on political behavior. In line with this premise, Enos argues that “larger groups are more salient and more salient groups stimulate political participation” (pp.8). The salience of a group is a key element which leads to an increasing stereotypization of the out-group and differentiation of policy preferences that foster political engagement among in-group members.

But it is not only about the size of the out-group. The spatial separation of ethnic groups is another factor which contributes to explain the salience of the out-group. Enos (2010) suggests that the study of threat effects should also take into account the way that groups are related spatially. In relation to this, he states that “the greater salience of the more concentrated groups is because the more concentrated out-group is more distinct and, therefore, more salient than a group that that is spatially integrated with other groups”. For instance, he has recently found through a natural experiment in Chicago a decrease of white voter turnout rates after the removal of highly concentrated African American neighbors as a result of a project of reconstruction of public housing. In sum, Enos proposes that concentration delineates the spatial impact on political behavior.

The implications for the white majority living in more ethnically segregated environments would be greater participation in collective action to protect the social values and norms they consider as traditional. For instance, places with increasing larger Asian enclaves may constitute potential targets for mobilizing groups such as the English Defence League which have been promoting in several occasions protests about planning issues over the construction of local mosques.

**Segregation of ethnic minorities: negative effects**

A contrasting account of political (dis)engagement among population in segregated contexts considers the concepts of trust and expectancies over other ethnic minority’s members. When a group organizes a political activity it will try to get as many people to support the cause and join it to succeed. If the different groups of people that make up the locality do not
know each other because they live apart, the chance of interaction and contact is minimal and therefore the level of interpersonal trust decreases. Uslaner (2008) found that nations with a significant level of ethnic segregation are less trusting because of the lower chances of inter-group interaction. More recently, he reports that in the UK residential segregation constitutes the root of the low trust (Uslaner 2011).

Specifically, trust between people is central to explain the development of collective activities since it reduces the participation costs. It diminishes the uncertainty on others’ values, attitudes and behavior. Dennis Chong (1991) explains that engagement is a function of the amount of people individuals expect will get involved. So, if you start or join a protest, you will do so because you expect to find a good amount of people in your local area that shares the similar values and interests and that are willing to get engaged. As Uslaner (2002) explains, “when others share our basic premises, we face fewer risks when we seek agreement on collective action problems” (pp. 18).

The ethnic separation damages the chances of breeding a local collective consciousness required to breed collective actions to address local issues. White majority and ethnic minorities living in segregated contexts may encounter difficulties to find this common base to start a collective political enterprise. In segregated contexts, there are deeper perceptions of social, religious or cultural differences between ethnic groups. Geographical ethnic segregation may exacerbate the social distance between groups which can reduce the interpersonal trust required to develop cooperative political actions. For instance, Asian minority segregation can represent the type of separation which can harm the most the chances of the development of a joint venture: separate cultures, language and religious beliefs discourage successful collective actions. In brief, for local residents to live in segregated context may imply a decrease in the amount of interpersonal trust and consequently a reduction of the expectation to gather a significant sum of participants in political activities likelihood of success in political action.

In the case of the ethnic minorities, the effect of segregation can be even stronger because in-group interactions may dampen the contact with the broader society. Interactions among individual from the same ethnic group may provide valuable social networks which facilitate family organisation, economic enterprises, etc. Indeed, some point out the negative consequences of a potential dispersal of these residents since it would remove the vital social solidarity (Rex 1981). Living in such context can reduce the chances of political contest
since family and close social networks can compensate the lack of welfare state interventions in these areas (Ireland 2008). The social networks created in places with high concentration of specific minorities will promote a separate flow of information, generally more focused on the native or ancestors' countries rather than the country of residence. Tam Cho (1999) highlighted the consequences of the differentiated informational flow and social networks of the minorities indicating that they “may not derive the same sort of satisfaction from affirming allegiance to the political system or have the same sense of responsibility for preserving the democratic process” (pp. 1144).

In fact, segregation will likely lead to a gathering of a significant proportion of people who do not have a good level of fluency in English (Anwar 2010) and population with modest information about local politics and how the democratic institutions work. Local networks suffering from this lack of abilities and information may tend to reduce the likelihood of political discussion and political action.

The works of Huckfeldt and his associates have been repeatedly demonstrating the importance of social networks for providing political cues which can derive in political action (Huckfeldt 1986, Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, Huckfeldt 2001). It can be argued that in segregated contexts, social networks’ exchange of politically-relevant information is not frequent and therefore individuals are neither motivated to hold political conversation nor stimulated to translate it into political action (McClurg 2003).

If political information or knowledge does not circulate among co-ethnics, individuals have less resources and motivation to engage in local politics. In sum, residential ethnic segregation could be associated to lower rates of political engagement as concentration is frequently related to a lack of contact with the broad society. Segregation could prevent minorities from a political learning (when minorities are newcomers) and acquisition of participatory norms.

**Accounting for the socio-economic conditions of the locality**

The socio-economic characteristics of the context play a major role for determining the political behavior of local residents. An extensive body of contextual effects research argues that people are placed in social environments which affect their exposure to certain political information and condition the social interactions among individuals (Carmines and Huck-
feldt 1996). It has been argued that a number of political activities involve specific resources (money, skills, time) to be carried out. These resources are not evenly distributed across the different segments of the population; rather they are usually found among affluent people. At the same time, Huckfeldt (1979) suggested that engagement in politics can be learned and stimulated. For that reason, he concludes that “higher status contexts populated by more politically activated individuals can encourage participation” (pp.581). Those residents living in high-status localities will tend to feel the pressure to participate and will enjoy more opportunities to get involved. Therefore, we can expect that the richer the locality, the more it prevails participatory norms among its residents and the greater the chances to engage in some political activity.

In every local area, there is a specific set of values and norms which tend to be followed by its residents. Norms are “expectations about action – one’s own action, that of others, or both- which express what action is right or what action is wrong” (Coleman 1987). In affluent areas people are influenced by the participatory norms; conversely, the theory indicates that in localities suffering from high levels of poverty, civic norms prescribing social cooperation do not prevail among local residents. Empirical investigations found evidence to support this contextual theory.

In order to avoid the risk of conflating the effects of local deprivation and ethnic segregation effects, I will take into account for both in the models. If we departure the analysis considering the complex nature of the spatial distribution of ethnic minorities across the territory, it must be acknowledged that the level of affluence of the locality where the individual is situated should be also considered. The introduction of this compositional effect makes it possible to assess the independent effects of the residential patterns of ethnic minorities. Thus, despite socio-economic features explain some variance in participation, ethnic characteristics also condition participation.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to assess the different theories on the impact of contextual effects on political participation of individuals, I pooled two rounds of the Citizenship Survey conducted in 2005 and 2007. This repeated cross-sectional survey has an outstanding core sample size in each round (9,691 and 9,336 respectively) and a boost sample of ethnic minority respon-
dents (4,390 and 4,759 respectively). In this research, in addition to the white majority, I will focus on the political behavior of the largest minority ethnic groups in Britain: the Asians (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and other Asian respondents) and blacks (Caribbean, African or other black backgrounds).

The individual data was merged with aggregate data corresponding to the local authorities where the respondent resides. While the territorial units in question, namely the local authorities, cannot be equated with smaller geographical units such as the neighborhoods (traditionally used in the contextual effect literature), I argue that they are the most convenient micro-units for the purpose of this research. The reason is that the present research's aim is to examine individuals' action to influence the public policy making process, including the local political institutions, the LAs. In Britain, the local politics constitute a significant dimension of democracy as G. Parry et al. claim: "where a governmental agency is involved in the matter, it is local rather national government which very often carries the responsibility" (Parry, Moyser et al. 1992).

An additional advantage of the Citizenship Survey is that it contains a wide set of questions on political engagement which served to create the dependent variable: activities to influence institutions collectively. Respondents reported if they developed the following political activities during the last 12 months: to attend a public meeting/rally, to take part in a public demonstration or protest, to sign a petition, to attend a public meeting (about local services) and, to get involved in a group to discuss local services. With this information a created a dummy variable with the category 1 if the individual developed at least one of the activities above listed and 0 coded as no participation. The grouping of these actions of citizen cooperation was done following previous research using the same data (John, Fieldhouse et al. 2011). Unfortunately, the questionnaire does not provide information regarding the nature, target or purpose of the political actions developed.

The key aggregate variable is the segregation of ethnic minority groups. The segregation measure was estimated using the dataset of population by ethnic groups (Census 2001) available at the Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA). The formula I applied to obtain the segregation scores was the traditional index of segregation (Duncan and Duncan, 1955). It measures the distribution of a particular population group in a geographical space. It varies between zero and one, values corresponding respectively to an exactly equal distribution and a maximum segregation distribution. The value of this index can also be
interpreted as the proportion of the minority group that would have to change residence to obtain an equal distribution (Jakubs 1981, Massey and Denton 1988). The formula for the index of dissimilarity, \( D \), is given by the following,

\[
D = 0.5 \sum \left[ \left( \frac{x_{ij}}{X_l} \right) - \left( \frac{k_{ij}}{K_l} \right) \right]
\]

where \( x_{ij} \) is the size of the ethnic group in the LSOA \( j \) within local authority \( l \), \( X_l \) represents the size of the ethnic group in the local authority \( l \); \( k_{ij} \) stands for the size of the population from all other ethnic groups combined in LSOA \( j \) within local authority \( l \), and \( K_l \) corresponds to the size of the population from all other ethnic groups combined in the local authority \( l \). Literature from geographical studies explains that there is potential bias in the values of the index of dissimilarity when the size of the ethnic group in the geographical unit is small (Voas and Williamson 2000). Since the main purpose of this research is to explore the segregation effects, I will focus the analysis in those localities where Asian and black minorities represent a significant proportion of the population. Therefore, I only retained the scores of the localities which pass the threshold of 1,000 individuals from the ethnic group considered (Asian and Black groups). Even though the 1,000 group population cutoff may be considered arbitrary, it was also applied by some other research in geography studies framed in English localities (Peach 1996, Peach 1998). Notwithstanding that the two ethnic categories are rather crude (they are encompassing large number of diverse nations and migration pattern), the grouping enable the calculation of segregation scores at local level.

Alongside the key independent variable, I placed a group of control variables at individual and local level. Level-one controls include: gender (female as reference category), a dummy variable for foreign birth, age and age squared, marital status (coded "1" if married, "0" otherwise), a dummy for those whose highest qualification is a degree (coded "1"), a housing tenure dummy (home owner coded as “1”), length of time living in the neighborhood (seven bands of years of residence), religion practice (coded as “1” when actively practicing the religion), and finally, an occupationally-based measure derived from the National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) displayed as a set of dummies including: a. Higher and lower management; b. Intermediate occupations; c. Semi-routine and routine occupations (the omitted variable corresponds to those who never worked/long-term unemployed/student). In the whole sample model, I included two ethnicity dummies for Asian and Black respondents (whites are the reference group), measured as a self-reported
variable.

The covariates at aggregate level include the log-transformation of total population of the locality (Mid-2005 estimated resident population released by the Office for National Statistics), the 1991 to 2004 population change (in percentage) derived from ONS Mid Year Population Estimates, the local authority average index of multiple deprivation 2004 (IMD) and a measure of diversity of socio-economic conditions within the local authority which consists on the standard deviation of the index of multiple deprivation score from each of the sub-units which conforms the locality (LSOAs) (Greasley and John 2011).[4]

It will be fair to point out the limitation of the present investigation related to selection effects. The residential self-selection of individuals might constitute a matter of concern in this research because white people who tend to refuse to contact minority groups will prefer to live in locations homogeneously white. Similarly, ethnic groups tend to move to localities where they can keep customs and avoid threats and discrimination. While I will not deny that this factor deserves attention, literature on its impacts indicates that it might not necessarily imply a major concern. On the one hand, it can be argued that the economic positions of households are the main driving factors when deciding residential locations. As van Ham and Manley (2012) explain, “a key determinant of choice in the residential housing market is finance” (pp. 4). This may entail that in-group ethnic preferences are less important than economic at the time to select a residential location. Depending on their financial resources, households are in better or worst position to exercise choice.[5] Simpson (2007) showed with Census data that white population is not moving from highly non-white areas. On the other hand, it was also suggested that surroundings where residents with ethnic minority backgrounds live are associated with undesired features such as deprivation, low-quality services, unemployment and crime. For that reason, the ‘racial proxy hypothesis’ proposes that the white majority prefers to avoid locations with higher amount of ethnic minority groups not necessarily because they have racial animosity against them but because these local areas are often deprived.

Housing segregation of ethnic groups is a complex process widely discussed in urban studies. There is an extensive literature on both “choice” and “constrain” sorting. According to Phillips (1998), segregation is not only derived by economic constraints but also “cultural factors, which serve to anchor minority ethnic group members in the (often deprived) ethnic territory, may intervene” (pp. 1691). The “choice” theories of segregation support the view
that people can select specific neighborhoods to settle their households not only based on a range of affordable houses but also on the basis of other elements such as the ties with co-ethnics or relatives established in the area previously (Dahya 1974, Winstanley, David et al. 2002). On the other side, constrain theorists sustain that it cannot be disregarded the fact that the roots of alleged ‘self-segregation’ are found in the level of poverty rather on a real choice (Hickman and Robinson 2006, Pawson and Watkins 2007, Hedman, van Ham et al. 2011). Moreover, due to the still existing discriminatory estate practices, members of ethnic minorities face restricted housing choices (Phillips 1998, Harrison and Phillips 2003). The residential sorting of an ethnic group might not certainly entail positive or negative racial attitudes towards whites or other ethnic groups but just simply historical patterns of labour immigration, economic opportunities and housing conditions.

However, I must acknowledge that when studying the impact of the residential sorting I cannot overcome the fact that “the overall measure makes no distinction between voluntary and enforced segregation” (Simpson 2004). Since I developed a cross-sectional research design I cannot derive definitive conclusion about the link between contextual measures and participation rates. I will try to partially reduce the selection effects through the introduction of variables to control for individual background features. Since this strategy may not fully neutralize the selection effects, further longitudinal studies will bring more insight to the unique contribution of segregation to explain individuals’ political action.

IV. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

I start the empirical tests of the competing hypothesis on ethnic segregation effects by analyzing some simple descriptive statistics. The joint frequency distribution of cases based on ethnicity and the dependent variable, collective engagement, shows that the group of the Asian respondents has the lowest percentage of participation (16.6%), followed by the Black minority (20.4%) and White majority (30%). This ethnic gap in the level of political engagement is in line with the findings of previous research in Britain (Saggar 2000, Anwar 2001, ElectoralCommission 2002, Fahmy 2005). In a further exploration of the data, I present in figure 1 the whole sample’s rates of engagement in collective political activities taking into account five bands of the index of Asian and Black segregation. The graph does not show a striking variation in the degree of political engagement when we move from the lowest to the
highest Asian and Black segregation scores. Along the first bands of the Black segregation line, it can be noted a minimal variation in the degree of political action (around 21%) and only in the most segregated places, the collective engagement of the sample population increases up to 27%. On the other hand, the line of the Asian segregation presents a slightly steeper downward trend in the collective participation rates of all respondents when the degree of segregation increases (from 28% to approximately 20%).

If the data is disaggregated, we find that for the three ethnic groups considered, there is a general downward trend as the degree of segregation increases. For blacks, as we move from the least Black segregated places to the most segregated, the participation rates decrease from 23% to 19%. Similarly, for Asians, whose rate goes from 23% to 17% as we move along the Asian segregation scale, it is difficult to outline a conclusion regarding the link between ethnic minorities’ segregation and collective political actions. Finally, in the case of the whites’ group, a mixed conclusion can be drawn. While the extent of their political participation seems to be unaffected when the size of local Blacks segregation increases (there is a variation of approximately 3%), a larger local Asian segregation is consistently dropping the frequency of collective engagement among white individuals. As a group, whites’ participation levels decreases by roughly 13% as local Asians segregation gets higher.

For studying in detail the relationship between segregation effects, I will move from cross-
Figure 2: Rates of collective political engagement by index of segregation of Asians and Blacks (three ethnic groups)

Tabulations to regression analysis. Due to the binary nature of the dependent variable, a series of logistic models were performed taking the cluster structured of the data into account when calculating the standard errors. It is relevant to recall that the coefficients in the model show the change in the log odds of participating in any political activity versus the non-participation as a result of a one-unit increase in the independent variable. The simplest models presented in Table 1 display the coefficients of the two key independent variables in first column and the interaction effects in the second column.

The null model suggests that the effects of segregation of Asians and Blacks on political engagement are both significant but they have opposite signs. While the concentration of blacks in the locality raises the likelihood of individuals’ collective involvement, Asians segregation depresses it. This initial exploration gives some support for both arguments of the positive and negative effects of ethnic segregation. However, this model does not permit to uncover the relationship between segregation and each specific ethnic group. Therefore,
Table I: Logistic regressions of collective political action for all respondents (without controls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective political action</th>
<th>Null</th>
<th>Null with interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-1.08***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.27*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of blacks</td>
<td>1.45***</td>
<td>0.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of Asians</td>
<td>-0.98***</td>
<td>-1.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of black*black</td>
<td>-0.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of Asian*Asian</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.21***</td>
<td>-0.86***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 13,062 13,053

Robust standard errors in parentheses, with clustering by local authority
* p<0.05  ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

The second column displays coefficient of the model with interactions between ethnicity of the respondent and the segregation of the two ethnic minority groups considered.

The coefficients indicate that being member of any of the two minority ethnic groups has statistically significant negative effects on political engagement. The model without covariates also points out that the main effects for Black and Asian segregation on the reference category (i.e. for whites) are positive and negative respectively. Interestingly, the interactions terms seem to be suggesting that only residential segregation of Blacks has some effects on the same ethnic group: Black residents living in local areas with elevated Black segregation have less chances of collective engagement than white residents. Living in places where co-ethnics are more segregated does not necessarily have implications to all ethnic groups’ probabilities of participation.

As previously stated, this research is mainly interested in examining the effects of segregation on political participation but the relationship might be conditioned by some other factors, especially by the degree of affluence or deprivation of the locality. For that reason, table 2 displays the coefficients of the key independent variables controlling for additional
Table II: Logistic regressions of collective political action for all respondents (with controls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective political action</th>
<th>Main effects</th>
<th>Interaction effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.87***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of blacks</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.392)</td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of Asians</td>
<td>-0.587*</td>
<td>-0.86***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.246)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of black*black</td>
<td>-0.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of segregation of Asian*Asian</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.730***</td>
<td>-2.80***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.435)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 12,356 12,356

Robust standard errors in parentheses, with clustering by local authority
* p<0.05  ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

covariates at individual and local levels.

For collective participation, the measure of Asian segregation is still significant and keeps the negative sign. In this case, therefore, the relationship between the dependent variable and the index of segregation of Asians cannot be attributed to other individual or contextual factors traditionally considered in the literature of political behavior. The overall model also indicates that the variable corresponding to the segregation of Blacks maintains the positive sign but fails to reach conventional standards of statistical significance.

Once interactions are included, the main effects for Asian segregation (related to the reference category, ‘white’) show a statistically significant negative coefficient; Black segregation main effects preserve the positive sign but show no statistical significance. In addition, estimates in the second column demonstrate that even after controlling for a bunch of other variables those who have Asian backgrounds have significantly lower probabilities on engaging in some collective political activities than whites. This is not the case for Black respondents. Finally, the estimates of the interactions term are displaying little variation in terms of signs and statistical significance from the null models. Member of the Black minor-
Table III: Logistic regressions of collective action for three ethnic groups (with controls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective political action</th>
<th>Asian respondents</th>
<th>Black respondents</th>
<th>White respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index of Black segregation in LA</td>
<td>-0.60 (0.46)</td>
<td>0.31 (0.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Asian segregation in LA</td>
<td>0.18 (0.46)</td>
<td>-0.93*** (0.29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.86*** (0.85)</td>
<td>-2.95** (1.04)</td>
<td>-2.71*** (0.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,369</td>
<td>2,910</td>
<td>5,077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses, with clustering by local authority
* p < 0.05  ** p < 0.01  *** p < 0.001

It is living in places with higher levels of co-ethnic segregation are less engaged in collective political action than whites.

In the last step, I performed the analysis dividing the sample into three ethnic groups (white, Black and Asian). When modeling separately Whites’, Asians’ and Blacks’ political behavior, I intend to take a distance from the traditional strategy which assumes that majority and minorities share exactly the same determinants of participation. Moreover, I attempt to avoid the supposition that the behavior of Asians generalizes to that of other British minorities such as the Black population. For that purpose, I will also allow parameter estimates to vary across the ethnic groups considered in order to assess the varying rates of collective political engagement.

As it can be seen from the first and second column of table 3, the coefficients for the Asian and Black groups show that local co-ethnic segregation does not play any role; this entails that any segregation effects appears when separate models are fitted. In few words, minorities’ involvement in collective types of actions is not determined by the degree of local clustering neither for Asian nor for Black individuals. However, for the white sub-sample, once again I found that elevated levels of local Asian clustering seem to be depressing the likelihood of political collective action. On the contrary, Black residential segregation within the boundaries of the local authority has not statistically significant consequences on whites’ collective action. To illustrate the effect, I calculated the whites’ predicted probabilities of
engaging in some collective political activity. The predicted effects are taken by holding all independent variables at their mean and allowing the index of Asian segregation to vary over its full range found in the data. Moving from the lowest local Asian segregation, where white respondents have an almost 0.24 probability of participation, to localities with the highest Asian segregation implies a reduction of approximately 10 percent, holding all other factors constant.

The covariates of the last conditional models deserve some analysis. Looking at the individual level only, I found that there is certain consistency of the coefficients of three independent variables across all models and ethnic groups. For all three groups, those who are foreign born show a significant and negative likelihood of becoming engaged in some political action. These findings related to the political behavior of non-native population are in line with some previous research (Shaw, de la Garza et al. 2000, Blais, Gidengil et al. 2004, Just and Anderson 2012). The community attachment or residential stability, captured in this research as the respondent’s length of residence in the neighborhood, also shows a statistically significant and positive coefficient. Therefore, it confirms previous investigation suggesting that the longer individuals reside in a locality, the more they are aware and informed about locality’s political process and the higher the chances of engagement (Budge and Urwin 1966, Larcinese 2007). Similarly, as an extensive research on political participation has been demonstrating, coefficient show that more educated individuals have greater propensities to participate (Parry, Moyser et al. 1992, Nie, Junn et al. 1996).

Data confirms partially the traditional socio-economic model of participation which indicates that the higher the socio-economic position of the individual, the more likely he or she is to engage in some political activity (Wolinger and Rosenstone 1980, Verba and Nie 1987, Leighley and Nagler 1992). For whites, having semi-routine and routine occupations means lower levels of engagement and, for ethnic minorities, occupying upper categories of the structure of socio-economic positions represent larger probabilities of political involvement. Finally, the data supports only in part the findings of the literature on religion mobilization (Sobolewska, Heath et al. 2012, Brady, Verba et al. 1995, Beyerk and Chaves 2003) since the frequency of religion practice is relevant for the activism of white respondents only.

A wide proportion of the literature which studies the impact of socio-economic contexts has been demonstrating that civic and political involvement is generally more intense in wealthier environments. In general, these settings are composed by individuals with high-
incomes and prolonged educational backgrounds (Huckfeldt 1979). Data in this research does not confirm this prediction for none of the models. In fact, none of the aggregate level controls presents any statistical significance.

V. DISCUSSION

In this research I initially assumed that, as some previous studies have indicated, there are contexts where the organization of collective activities are easier than some others (Agnew 1989, Cho, Gimpel et al. 2006). I tried to assess the effect of segregation as one the most relevant factor for conflict and identity-forming processes. However, I could not find any strong evidence to claim that ethnic segregation is a key driving force for collective political action in England. In short, for none of the ethnic groups considered, the ethnic segregation leads to an increase in conflictual or cooperative political actions. It is interesting to note that segregation in any case engender more political action, even more if we take into account, for instance that “British local authorities manage a significant share of local housing, providing concrete stakes that could fuel local inter-group disputes.”(Hopkins 2011, pp.503)

Much of the public discourse tends to reproduce the idea that segregation of Asians merely isolates them from the main institutions of British society, generating alienation or indifference to what is happening in their immediate environment. According to these arguments, the strengthening of their ethnic or religious identities in contexts of concentration constrains their chances to carry out collective political activities with the rest of society. The results obtained in this research do not go in that direction. Living in a context of segregation does not lead Asian to participate less in political activities that require cooperation from other citizens.

At the same time, media often links the political mobilization of the Asian group (especially in areas with high concentration of Muslims) with activities which exclusively aimed at achieving greater recognition of religious rights or protection of their ethnic identity (for instance, demands to provision of religious instruction in local schools, petitions to follow religion and dietary practices in local public spaces, or petition to broadcast calls to prayer from a mosque). The argument would indicate that the collective mobilization of Asians is intense in places with high concentration of co-ethnics because local leaders or cultural and religious communities are strong enough to influence local political institutions. This
expectation of greater collective involvement in localities with greater segregation of Asians is not supported by the data used here.

Regarding the blacks, segregation of co-ethnics is not nurturing more collective political actions. As Statham (1999) explains, there may be inequalities in terms of “class” within the Black communities, whose political claims and demands are vanished when the potential leaders are co-opted. He claims that “the relative absence of grass-roots and community-type 'black' organisations, suggests that the incorporation of upwardly mobile African-Caribbeans may be to the disadvantage of the majority of African-Caribbeans.” (pp. 621). Moreover, the integration policies of British institutions aim to grant rights to address experiences of racial discrimination through individual rather than collective mechanism such as courts or industrial tribunals. In relation to the political behavior of the ethnic majority, I found that the effects of segregation of Black and Asian people in the local area are not the same. The level of commitment in collective political activities among individuals belonging to the white majority remains unaffected by contexts of greater segregation of blacks. The expectation of finding more collective participation to protect the values, norms and interests of the white majority in contexts of a large concentration of Black population is not backed up by this data. In brief, the segregation of Black residents does not raise a perceived threat, which in turn generates more political participation. The results can be explained partly by the perception among white individuals of greater cultural integration of Afro-Caribbean: they mostly speak English, have a high rate of intermarriage and are mainly Catholics. Neither seems to be confirmed the hypothesis that the concentration of blacks depressed white individuals’ chances to get involved in collective political activities as consequence of a reduction of the interpersonal trust.

On the other side, the concentration of Asian population in the locality does not imply a political reaction by white residents of the locality. Thus, we cannot confirm the hypothesis of political mobilization motivated by conflicting preferences or threats to the majority’s values. However, data seems to suggest quite the opposite. The geographical concentration of Asians within the boundaries of the local authority tends to depress the collective participation of individuals identified as white. In the models, I consistently found that whites are less likely to get involved in actions which require cooperation among residents. Thus, the hypothesis that segregation intensifies the perception of social distance between residents of a locality, thereby reducing the likelihood of collective activities appears to find support in the results.
obtained in the empirical analysis.

An explanation of these results may be that whites notice that the encapsulation of those who conform the Asian group is a spatial representation of the socio-cultural differences which inhibit a joint successful enterprise. As past research indicated, “cultural differences prevent whites from engaging in the sorts of social interactions with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis” (Bowyer 2009). Therefore, white individuals may be interpreting the Asian bubbles as a disconnection from the broad society or as a rejection to get fully integrated politically; this consequently may be dropping majority’s perception of the existence of a common ground for political action. Thus, living among culturally and linguistically distinct South Asians not only can discourages contact with them but also the perception that the local area has a share fate which may deserve a collective project. Current public discussion on the existence of ghettos stimulate even more the “general perceptions not only of spatial distance being correlated with social distance, but also of enclaves of difference” (Johnston, Forrest et al. 2002).

VI. CONCLUSION

Since the lack of data was a shortcoming for a long time, scholars had fewer chances to explore the relationship between local contexts and individual political non-electoral participation. To date, no other study has tested the effects of refine dimensions of the local ethnic profile on collective forms of political participation. Using Citizenship Survey data matched with aggregate data from English localities, I found that the ethnic minorities’ residential distribution within the local area does not constitute a significant determinant of collective political action among the ethnic minorities. In few words, there are neither positive nor negative segregation effects.

Whites’ living in districts with large ethnic minority segregation may perceive that they pose a risk to their status and the traditional English norms and ways of life, but this hostility may not be enough to engender more political collective actions. On the contrary, there appear to be some ethnic minority segregation negative effects within the group of whites. When examining the evenness with which population from minority and majority groups are distributed across the geographic units that make up the local authority, I found that only the segregation of Asian population is a significant predictor of collective political
participation. Therefore, it can be rejected at least two initial expectations: on the one hand, majority’s political involvement does not increase as consequence of a perception of threat; on the other hand, Asian and Black segregation affects does not affect equally. As previous research found, whites react very differently to the concentration of each of the largest English ethnic minority groups. (Bowyer 2009)

The segregation of Black origin individuals does not entail any consequences at the level of political action among white individuals. The high social distance, or even the growing Islamophobia among the whites, may constitute the roots of the reduced inter-personal social trust which inhibit collective actions.

I conclude by outlining a couple of future avenues of research. First, it is required an alternative research design to address the possible self-selection effects which are commonly found in contextual research. In my study, the cross-sectional design may hinder more complex dynamics which can be uniquely isolated if we use panel data. Second, further research should delve on the possibilities of assessing the impact of other measures of spatial patterning of ethnic distribution (i.e. index of isolation), placing individuals in smaller geographical scale (for instance at Middle Layer Super Output Areas) and using more detailed ethnic categories (Pakistani, Caribbean, etc.). The Candle report, prepared in the aftermath of the summer’s race riots in 2001, indicated that “separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives” (Cantle 2001). Underlying the overall discussion on the current social issues in Britain it usually appears the emergence of ethnic ghettos. It is generally assumed that segregation have a pernicious consequences on the degree on ethnic minorities’ political and social engagement. The paper intended to give some more arguments to the discussion on the consequences of segregation on political participation proposing that, as previous research on electoral studies have found, “segregation is clearly not the problem it is perceived to be”(Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008). If any, it concerns exclusively to the white majority’s political action.
References


[2] Due to reasons of confidentiality many surveys avoid giving openly information of the location of the respondents. However, under a special license, the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) provided me the LAs’ codes identifiers current as at April 2009. On 1 April 2009, there was a reorganisation of local government that created nine new unitary authorities (UAs) which are aggregates of existing local authorities. Since the geographical identifiers given by NatCen do not match to the data at aggregate level collected before that year, it was not possible to include in the final dataset the respondents living in old local authorities.

[3] In this paper, I refer to concentration and segregation interchangeably because by definition, segregation implies spatial concentration.

[4] The Index of Multiple Deprivation is an official statistical measure of deprivation for small areas in England which combines a number of indicators (income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime).

[5] In fact, Simpson (2007) showed with Census data that white population is not moving from highly non-white areas.