Citizenship, Religion, Gender and the Politics of Belonging: A Case Study of White, Middle-Class Christian Men in the East Midlands, United Kingdom.

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Abstract

Religion, and in particular Christianity, is losing ground in the UK as fewer people identify as Christian and more people report having no religion. Although religion remains influential in politics, education and welfare, the role and legitimacy of religion in the public sphere is highly contested. This context of religious and cultural change provides the background for a case study of white, middle class, Christian men in the East Midlands and how they understand and experience citizenship in everyday life. The article examines how religious faith and citizenship are linked, and whether religion provides resources or barriers to citizenship. The

article argues that the interviewed men draw on both status and practice based understandings of citizenship, and on both instrumental and expressive forms of masculinity, depending on context. Notably, some of the men invoke a defensive discourse in reference to alleged threats posed to Christianity by secular forces and by Islam. The findings have larger implications for the politics of belonging in the UK and Western Europe.

Key words

Citizenship; Religion; Christianity; Gender; Belonging; Masculinity

Main text

The role of religion is highly debated within contemporary Western democracies, with stakeholders engaging in conflicts about the status and legitimacy of organised religion in the public sphere and about the role and meaning of religious belief in people's everyday lives. In the United Kingdom (UK), this debate is taking place within a context characterised by steady religious decline, with a notable reduction in the number of people who identify as Christian and a concomitant increase in the number who identify as having no religion (ONS 2012). These changes have led sociologist Linda Woodhead (2016, 245) to declare 'no religion' as 'the new cultural norm' in Britain. At the same time, religion, and in particular Christianity, continues to be invoked as a cultural descriptor in British life, such as when Prime Minister Theresa May underscored in her April 2017 'Easter message' that "we should be confident about the role that Christianity has to play in the lives of people in our country" (May 2017). Moreover, religion, and in particular Christianity, is still influential in the public sphere in Britain (e.g., in politics, education and

welfare), although its role is increasingly challenged by secular and other non-religious stakeholders. This context of religious and cultural change is likely to influence how religious citizens understand and practice citizenship in everyday life, and whether and how their experience their faith as conducive to societal inclusion and belonging, or exclusion and marginalisation. An emerging literature addresses the relationship between citizenship and religion (e.g., Beaman 2013; Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero 2006; Hudson 2003; Weithman 2002; Rosenblum 2000), but we know very little about how religious individuals actually view and experience their citizenship. Contemporary scholarship that addresses this tends to focus on a 'generic', genderless citizen (e.g. Hudson 2003) or on women citizens (Nyhagen and Halsaa 2016; Nyhagen 2015). There are no in-depth studies of how contemporary men of religious faith in Europe understand and experience citizenship in everyday life. This case study of white, middle-class, heterosexual Christian men in the East Midlands region of the UK addresses the identified research gap by examining how the interviewed men understand and experience citizenship in everyday life.

Theoretical and historical feminist studies of citizenship suggest a binary between a narrow 'masculine' or 'instrumental' conceptualisation of citizenship as formal status involving rights and duties, and a broader 'feminine' and 'expressive' conceptualisation of citizenship as lived practice. The differences between these two understandings can be articulated as the 'status approach' versus the 'practice approach' to citizenship (Oldfield 1990, as cited in Lister 2003, 15). Feminist theorists foreground the notion of citizenship as lived practice, and insist that identities, emotions, belonging, participation and care are central aspects of lived citizenship along with rights and responsibilities (Lister et al. 2007, 168). That

feminist scholarship on citizenship typically focuses on women is understandable, due to the many instances where women have (had) fewer rights than men and experience gender-specific barriers to accessing and using citizenship rights (Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky 2006; Friedman 2005). Extant scholarship with an explicit focus on men and citizenship includes historical inquiries into male privilege and differences between men as citizens (Levine-Clark 2015; Dudink, Hagemann and Clark 2012; Beaven 2009), as well as contemporary studies of men and various citizenship dimensions, such as work (Kilkey, Perrons and Plomien 2013), or sexuality (Muchoki 2016). As mentioned, religious men are largely absent from contemporary scholarship on citizenship, and this article addresses the gap via a case study of comparatively privileged white, middle-class, heterosexual Christian men in the East Midlands region of the UK, focusing on whether and how their understandings and practices of citizenship are informed by religious faith, and if they, as Christian men, experience any barriers to citizenship or privileges. Moreover, the article discusses whether (and when) their views and practices either support and sustain, or challenge, the gendered binary between instrumental and expressive conceptualisations of citizenship. The findings have implications for how we understand the gendering of citizenship, social constructions of men and masculinities, religious dimensions of citizenship, and the politics of belonging.

Citizenship, Gender and Religion

Feminist scholars (e.g. Kabeer 2005; Lister 2003) have demonstrated that citizenship is gendered, and have suggested that citizenship should be studied from the bottom up, or as 'lived practice'. They have also forwarded critiques of republican and liberal conceptualizations of the citizen that are rooted in instrumental or

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functional understandings of 'man' as rational, independent, impartial and acting in the public sphere (Lister 2003, 70-71; see also Friedman 2005). In this 'masculine' or male-oriented model of citizenship, emotions, dependence, subjectivity and family matters are associated with women, nature and the private sphere, and relegated outside the realm of citizenship (Lister 2003). Feminist scholars have contested the public-private distinction underpinning the 'masculine model', demanding full inclusion of women as citizens and claiming that domestic and intimate concerns are political. As mentioned, a significant contribution of feminist theorizations of citizenship lies in moving beyond rights, status and duties as the primary concern for citizenship demands, and in highlighting identities, participation, belonging, and care as central aspects of lived citizenship (Lister 2003).

Recent scholarship has also proposed the notion of 'religious citizenship' as useful to debates about the rights of religious citizens and groups (Hudson 2003; Permoser and Rosenberger 2009). Rights-based approaches have, however, been critiqued for paying insufficient attention to inequalities pertaining to gender and to inequalities between majority and minority religions, and for overlooking lived citizenship practice (Nyhagen 2015). In a comparative study of Christian and Muslim women in Norway, Spain and the UK, Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016) found that a majority of the participants saw their faith as strongly linked to their lived citizenship, with their religion providing guidance on how to be a good citizen. The same study also found that Christian women emphasized continued barriers to equal citizenship within their own religious communities, while Muslim women experienced barriers to equal citizenship due to discrimination and Islamophobia within the larger society. No extant studies foreground contemporary European religious men's views on citizenship as a main concern, but research by Hoover and Coats (2015, 179-180) on

Evangelical and non-Evangelical Protestant men in the United States has suggested that their participants were 'thinking in a private and inward direction' which discouraged 'active citizenship and civic engagement'.

While the notion of citizenship may invoke an understanding of the citizen as a 'masculine man' within the public sphere (Lister 2003), religious faith is often more associated with women, femininity and the private sphere (Reilly 2011; Werner 2011). Religion tends to be linked with irrationality, emotion, bias, and 'false consciousness' rather than with rationality, reason, impartiality and a liberated mind (Beattie 2004). At the same time, religious authorities and institutions are often characterized by unequal gender relations and by patriarchal forms of masculinity (e.g., the notion of 'male headship'). Lay religious men thus find themselves situated within a complex and often contradictory framing of religion as both feminine and 'soft', and masculine and 'hard'.

Debates about masculinity are also relevant to studies of religion and citizenship. A growing literature is emerging on religious men and masculinities, including historical studies of Christianity and masculinity in Northern Europe (Werner 2011), and historical (Delap and Morgan 2013) and contemporary (Gill 2014; Aune 2010; Archer 2001) studies of men and masculinities within different religious traditions in Britain. In her study of early to mid-twentieth century middle-class Anglican men in England, Delap (2013, 137) found that 'the majority [of Anglican men's groups] were invested in reconciling masculinity with qualities of love, compassion and service, which often led to reciprocity with femininities'. Yet, the type of masculinity that dominated among them emphasized the heterosexual family, the male breadwinner, and 'brotherly love' (ibid.). Similarly, in her study of contemporary Anglican women priests and male clergy spouses, Page (2010) found

the presence of a traditional form of masculinity that underscored men's roles as breadwinners and providers.

In the United States, studies have mainly been conducted on Christian evangelicals such as the Promise Keepers movement that emerged in the 1990s (Avishai 2016; Burke and Moff Hudec 2015; Avishai, Afshan and Rinaldo 2015). Scholars have found that both Promise Keepers leaders and adherents supported a range of different gender ideologies, ranging from conservative-traditional to progressive-egalitarian (Heath 2003; see also Gallagher and Wood 2005). Especially relevant here is a case study by Bartkowski (2000) which showed that participants in the Promise Keepers movement inhabited two very different notions of 'godly masculinity'. The first, 'instrumentalist masculinity', was based on a gendered understanding of 'aggression, strength, and rationality' as masculine qualities, and of 'responsiveness, sensitivity, and emotionalism' as feminine qualities (Bartkowski 2000, 35). The second, 'expressive masculinity', embodied qualities typically understood to be 'feminine' (e.g., compassion for others; emotional ties) but framed these as universal qualities that men need to embrace (Bartkowski 2000, 37). An 'instrumentalist masculinity', with its focus on rationality as a masculine trait, has a clear affinity with 'masculine' understandings of citizenship as formal status, rights and duties within the public sphere. An 'expressive masculinity', on the other hand, with its emphasis on interpersonal relations and care for others, resonates more with 'feminine' and women-friendly understandings of citizenship as lived practice encompassing both the private and public spheres.

Research Context and Methods

This case study is part of an overall project that seeks to understand how Christian men negotiate their own role within the nexus of religion, citizenship and gender. The article discusses how lay Christian men understand and experience citizenship, if and how they make connections between citizenship and their faith, and whether they experience opportunities or barriers to citizenship stemming from their faith. The project is geographically located in the East Midlands region of the UK, and is based on interviews with white, middle-class, heterosexual men who self-identify as Christian and who regularly attend religious services in the Anglican Church (The Church of England). As such, they are relatively privileged when compared to groups of men that are marginalised due either to their (non-white) race and ethnicity, (working) class (or unemployed) status, (non-hetero) sexuality or adherence to a minority religion in the UK, or to a combination of these factors.

The Anglican Church is the main Christian church in England and Wales and one of two official religions in the UK (the other is the Presbyterian Church of Scotland). Christianity is the dominant religion in the UK, with significant variations in denominational belonging across the four nations that constitute the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; see Weller 2008). The Church of England enjoys parliamentary privilege in that twenty-six Anglican bishops have seats in the Upper House of the UK Parliament (the House of Lords); a privilege not extended to other Christian denominations or other religions. The government does not fund the regular running and maintenance of Anglican churches, but it funds several thousands faith schools, most of which are Anglican or Catholic. Attendance in the Anglican Church has long been in decline, with a 10-15% fall over the last decade (2005-2015). In 2015, just short of one million people attended weekly worship services in the Anglican Church (Church of England 2016). A picture of decreasing attendance also

characterizes the Catholic Church in England and Wales, but this contrasts with a growth in Pentecostal churches (Brierley 2014). Overall, the proportion of the population in England and Wales who identify as Christian fell from 72% in the 2001 Census to 59% in the 2011 Census (ONS 2012), and the proportion of people reporting 'no religion' is steadily growing (Park et al. 2013, 5; Woodhead 2016). The religious landscape is, however, also becoming increasingly plural, with 5% of the population identifying as Muslim in 2011 (ONS 2012).

All of the twenty-one men who participated in this case study were (or had been, in the case of one participant) churchgoers, by regularly attending church services. Eighteen were currently active in Anglican churches in a middle-class suburban area of the East Midlands (in addition, one had recently changed his church-affiliation from Anglican to Pentecostal; one had recently moved from an Anglican church to an independent evangelical church that 'feels very Anglican'; and one had previously been active in Baptist and Pentecostal churches). Several participants reported that they occasionally also attend services at independent charismatic and evangelical churches, with their main place of worship being an Anglican congregation. A majority of the participants (sixteen) were raised as Anglican. A few were raised in other Protestant churches (Lutheran; Methodist; Baptist) or as Catholic, and had moved to Anglican churches as adults. All are actively involved in their congregation beyond worship, and have taken on volunteer roles such as membership of the parish church council or church committees, participation in the church leadership team or in church rotas (e.g., cleaning; lawn-mowing, welcoming team), involvement in the church band and/or the church choir, and youth work. Some also attend their churches' men's group meetings. Moreover, about half of the men are engaged in volunteer work outside the church (e.g., charity work). They all vote in

political elections. All but two participants identify as either British or English (one identifies as Swedish and one as Irish). All are heterosexual, and all are, or have been, married. Their ages range from thirty-five to seventy-three, with fifty-three years of age as the sample average. All either were or had been in work, with eight having retired. Their occupations include teacher, solicitor, accountant, author, engineer, doctor, and business owner. Many had gone to university. The men were recruited via snowball sampling, where initial participants from local churches were asked to suggest further participants. The interviews, conducted in the period November 2015-July 2016 using a semi-structured interview guide, were recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically. Participants' real names have been substituted with pseudonyms followed by their age.

Findings

The first findings section discusses the interviewed men's understandings of citizenship and of what it means to be a good citizen, while the second considers whether they perceive any connection between their religious faith and their citizenship practice. The third findings section examines the men's experiences of discrimination or advantage due to their faith.

Understandings of Citizenship and What it Means to be a Good Citizen

The interviewed men were asked what they would think about when the researcher said the word 'citizenship', what 'citizenship' meant to them, and what, in their view, characterises a 'good citizen'. Most of the participants immediately delved into talking about what they associate with the word 'citizenship'. However, three of the men initially stated that they do not find the concept particularly useful and/or do

not think in terms of citizenship. Nevertheless, this minority of initially hesitant men went on to offer in-depth views on what citizenship entails and what constitutes a good citizen, with Theodore (34) eventually suggesting that 'the concept connects all the time'.

Overall, the participants' answers covered a range of characteristics including legal aspects, nationality, participation, belonging, and caring for others, thus indicating a multidimensional understanding that encompasses both status- and practice-based approaches to citizenship. However, status and legal aspects were not prominent, with only a handful of interviewees mentioning 'loyalty to the state', respect for the law or 'rules and regulations', electoral voting, having a passport, their nationality, or the nation's flag, as related to citizenship. Notably, those who mentioned status and legal aspects did so as part of invoking a broader comprehension of citizenship that also included participation in society and helping others.

The dominant conceptualisations of 'citizenship' among the participants involved feelings of belonging, participation, caring for and helping others. Relational and localised aspects of citizenship were thus at the centre for most of the participants. Many emphasized that belonging to a place and a community is a central aspect of their understanding of citizenship. For example, Oliver (45) stated that 'citizenship for me is belonging' and Adrian (60) said 'belonging; citizenship is belonging'. Leo (60) saw citizenship as 'feeling at home' in society, suggesting that one should be proud of and protective over one's 'home' and that people's shared feelings of home and values make them feel safe and secure. Belonging was thus connected to emotional ties to a particular place and people within it. The places referred to were most often the local community, the neighbourhood, or the church, with some participants also forwarding more complex perspectives on belonging as

simultaneously related to a country, a local community and a church. However, most participants highlighted their citizenship practice within local community contexts as the most meaningful.

Participating in and directly contributing to society, as well as caring for, respecting and tolerating others, were central to the interviewed men's understanding of citizenship. For example, Joseph (65) said 'I think citizenship is trying to live a good life and getting on with your neighbours, getting on with everybody…' and that 'it is living your life with everyone around you and accepting differences'. Austin (64) suggested that participation and being involved goes beyond formal politics and includes 'volunteering or just being a good neighbour, just checking up on your elderly neighbour or saying good morning to someone in the street. That to me is all part of citizenship, it's nothing specific. But I just think it's engaging in your community and in the wider nation as appropriate'. Jack (48) emphasized that citizenship has both practical and emotional aspects, where the practical side involves working for social justice and caring for the environment, and the emotional side is about feeling connected to the world, in particular to the Christian world and to the local community, and caring for and loving others. Interviewees thus saw helping and supporting others around them as important to their sense of citizenship. Less than a handful mentioned the nation or the wider world as contexts for their citizenship practice or belonging. Among this minority, Jack (48) saw himself as a 'co-citizen' with other citizens of the world, and noted the importance of a global perspective on citizenship whilst also being part of the local community.

Without being prompted, several of the interviewed men specified belonging to and participating in a church community as central to their understanding of citizenship, thus suggesting a link between their faith practice and their citizenship

practice. For example, Jonathan (48) saw 'doing something for others' as central to citizenship and stated that 'citizenship is also a sense of belonging, of belonging to the church community'. He described his own involvement in the wider community as an 'outbound' aspect of citizenship, while an 'inbound' aspect was his faith: 'instantly, I've got a source, I can pray about it'. Theodore (35), who also emphasized citizenship as 'doing something' rather than 'just being', said that he primarily associates citizenship with what is going on within his church and his faith community, and described himself as an engaged citizen via the church. Oliver (45) stated that, 'to be a citizen, you need to behave, to belong, and to believe'. For him, citizenship had to do with making a contribution, feeling a sense of belonging via ties to others, and his Christian faith. Daniel (38) immediately stated that 'the engine of that [citizenship] might be my faith'. A couple of men also associated citizenship with 'the kingdom of God' or 'heaven'. Links between religious faith and practice and citizenship is explored further below.

The wider context of the participants' views encompasses the UK government's multidimensional conceptualisation of citizenship as involving status, rights, duties, loyalty, belonging and active participation (see Kiwan 2008). The UK government has also used the term 'active citizenship' to signal the importance of voluntary work and community participation (Lister 2003; Yuval Davis 1997) and it has emphasized 'loyalty, shared values and responsibilities' as central to the successful integration of migrants (McGhee 2009, 41). However, among the twenty-one participants in this case study, less than a handful referred to government policies about citizenship and the promotion of 'British values' and those who did, expressed critical comments. Ethan (51), for example, said that the UK government defines citizenship as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance', but in his

view the government has not sufficiently articulated the importance of Protestant culture to being British. He also argued that the government is mistaken in promoting tolerance as a *value* rather than as 'an outcome of living with respect and love and care'. Daniel (38) gave a critical view of the British government's 'citizenship test', which, according to him, negatively ties citizenship to a 'check' to see if you are a valuable member of society. He also questioned the notion of 'British values' and stated that he does not think there are any values that are particularly British. Similarly, Ryan (69) noted that the word 'citizenship' suggests an 'us versus them' thinking that he cannot endorse, and emphasised that British culture has always been 'mixed'. Ryan was also critical of the notion of 'common values' and asked what and whose values those would be. For him, it is important to be 'accepting of strangers' and 'caring for people who come across your doorstep' such as migrants.

When asked what constitutes a good citizen, formal status and legal aspects again featured only among a handful of participants who mentioned 'abiding by the law', 'adhering to rules and regulations', 'loyalty to the state', 'serving in public office' and voting in political elections. Instead, relational aspects of citizenship were the main focus. These included playing a part in society or 'being involved', caring for others, 'sharing and caring', being kind and loving and showing compassion, respect and understanding. Words such as being open, friendly, honest, helpful, non-judgmental and sharing were invoked by Owen (47), while (Ryan, 69) mentioned being respectful and open to interaction with other people, overcoming or setting aside differences, listening, empathising and sharing. Oliver (45) used relational words such as contributing, forgiving, being emphatic, understanding and helping, while Julian (48) suggested that 'society needs much more than people who are making the economy turn. There's a whole caring aspect to it as well and caring for

people, social cohesion'. Julian continued: 'No one is independent; we're all part of an interdependent network […]. It's not just neighbours, it's building social networks, contributing to social networks, how you treat people at work, your attitudes, a whole range of things […]. It comes out of your underlying values'. Emotional and ethical aspects of caring were thus emphasized as part of a relational understanding of what being a good citizen entails.

Notably, one interviewee (Austin, 64) suggested a distinction between the 'outward face' of citizenship practice that people can see, and the 'inward face' that they cannot see, where the latter links to the private sphere and how people treat their family members or domestic pets. For him, good citizenship is not only about one's actions in the public sphere, but also about one's behaviour in the home. Austin referred to citizenship as 'a state of mind', noting that one can be a good citizen by 'being good at home', without being active in society or volunteering. Although a minority view within the sample, it does open up for the possibility that everyone, regardless of age, disability, health and other characteristics that may negatively affect one's ability to actively participate in society, can nonetheless act as good citizens.

Only a couple of the participants made unsolicited links between faith and being a good citizen, with Oliver (45) stating that good citizens have in common 'strong Christian values, loving people, being good to your fellow man, being interested in them rather than self-centred' and Theodore (35) suggesting that being a good citizen is 'working towards Christian values […]. It is quite easy in Christian terms and you know, again it is very simple if you define it first with love. Love neighbours, love enemy, start with love'. Links between religious faith and practice and lived citizenship are discussed in the next section.

Connections and Disconnections between Religion, Faith and Citizenship

As shown above, a few of the participants made connections between their religious faith and citizenship without being prompted. However, all were also explicitly asked whether it makes sense to connect citizenship and religion, and if they perceive any links between faith and being a good citizen. A majority stated a clear affinity between their Christian faith and being a good citizen. As noted, some interviewees talked about themselves as citizens of their church communities, or of 'the Kingdom of God'. Others invoked Jesus as a good citizen role model. Moreover, Christianity was seen as representing values such as 'talking and listening, sharing and caring' and imperatives about treating other people well, such as helping your neighbour and caring for others. For example, Samuel (40) stated that Christianity and citizenship are linked via Christians showing their love and helping people out, and that 'Jesus teaches you' how to behave. Other interviewees made similar links between scripture and citizenship, such as Jonathan (48), who stated that 'the Bible teaches us ways of being good citizens' and Theodore (35) who referred to 'love, non-vengeance and tolerance' as Biblical values that underpin good citizenship. Jack (48) underlined that Jesus 'dealt with the poorest and weakest in society' and foregrounded Jesus as a role model and teacher about how to be a good citizen. Jack sees his faith as crucial to his own everyday life as a citizen: 'Christianity for me is an absolute template for how we should be citizens, it tells me a lot about where my focus should be, about what I should do, what I should do with my money, what I should do with my time, how I should treat people in trouble, how I should treat people who don't have what I have…'.

The participants thus clearly linked their faith to their citizenship practice, viewing Christianity as directly informing how they behave and act as a citizen.

Moreover, several of the interviewed men stated that their Christian faith makes them a better citizen than they would have been without their faith. The participants' opinions differed on whether being a Christian makes you a better citizen than people of other faiths and none. Most thought that any person can be a good citizen regardless of their faith (or no faith), thus suggesting the absence of an exclusive relationship between Christianity and good citizenship. A handful of the men specifically mentioned people of other faiths and none as having the potential to be equally good citizens as Christians. For example, Nicholas (73) suggested that, although he sees his faith as determining what he does, one does not have to be a Christian to be a good citizen; one can also adhere to another religion or to secularism and be a good citizen: 'it's really your sort of aspect on life and the way you treat and regard other people'. Jack (48) emphasized that all religions have a positive social message about the importance of community, family, structures, laws, order and peace, while Theodore (35) said that atheists, Christians and Muslims can all be good citizens. Tom (67) stated that Christians 'don't have a monopoly on being good' and that atheists, agnostics, humanists and people of other religions can also be good citizens. Yet, Tom also observed that 'if you live the Christian life you are very likely to be a very good citizen'. Similarly, Gavin (60) noted that 'it helps you' to be a good citizen if you are a Christian, but 'you're not a good citizen because you're a Christian. It's about how you express and live your Christian faith'. A similar distinction between institutionalised forms of Christianity as 'religion' and how they as individuals live their religion as personal 'faith' was made by most of the participants. Noting that people of no religious faith also can 'do great things', Gavin nonetheless emphasized that having a religion would give you 'a better chance of doing that… if you draw upon a consistent set of values which come from the Bible

and which are based around others rather than me, and based around prayer, and knowing that you can't do things entirely on your own, you have to do them with God's help. Then if you draw upon that then you're more likely to help those others around you'. Gavin and some other interviewees too, suggested that being a Christian offers a clear purpose and a motivation to act as a good citizen, and makes it likely that you are a good citizen. For example, Daniel (38) stated that Christianity 'adds fuel to what drives you to be a good citizen', and Ryan (69) suggested that while humanists and Christians share the notion of what constitutes 'a good person', what distinguishes Christians is that they 'have a sense of purpose'. Similarly, Ian (60) noted that Christians have a moral imperative to go beyond self-interest and think of the greater good and moral values, while humanists, in his view, do not have the same impulsion or drive to be good citizens. There was thus a general sense among the participants that Christianity itself offers a clear foundation for good citizenship, with some also indicating that Christian believers have more of an imperative to be good citizens than have other people. A few also explicitly claimed that Christianity constituted the *best* foundation for good citizenship, with Joseph (65) stating that 'a Christian way of life' [is] 'better for civilization', Ethan (51) claiming that 'the best citizens are Christians', and Adrian (60) suggesting that 'if you are truly a Christian and love God, you are probably one of the best citizens'. Although these participants modified their statements by also saying that one can be a good citizen without being a Christian, or that 'not all Christians are good', they initially invoked an 'us' versus 'them' frame which portrays Christians as potentially better citizens than people of other faiths and none.

Religion as a Resource or Barrier to Equal Citizenship

The interviewed men were asked if they, as Christians, felt included or excluded in society, and whether they had experienced any barriers and limitations, or advantages and privileges, related to their citizenship. Most participants stated that they generally felt included in society and had not personally experienced any direct discrimination as adult Christians. A couple of the men mentioned experiences of anti-religious sentiments from peers during their youth. However, there was a clear sense among some of the participants that their faith is being critiqued or even ridiculed by others. While a few proudly wore their Christian faith on their sleeve at work, others felt uneasy about mentioning their faith in non-Christian contexts. Some men noted that it would be unacceptable to bring faith into their professional lives, while one mentioned being teased for his faith while at sports events, and one expressed worries about being ridiculed for going to church. A further participant, (Owen, 47) said that, as a scientist, he had also faced stereotypes about the alleged impossibility of being 'a serious scientist and a man of faith'. Some of the men thus seem to have both their masculinity and faith questioned by broader framings of religion as a feminine endeavour.

Rather than recounting any concrete personal experiences of disadvantage or exclusion, the main concerns expressed by many of the men related to Christianity's overall status and legitimacy within British society. There was a clear sense among several interviewees that 'Christianity is under pressure' (Joseph, 65) due to what was perceived as secular forces. Participants suggested that the UK is losing its Christian culture, that society is 'slowly drifting away' from Christianity (Julian, 48), that Christianity is being pushed to the slide-lines and getting 'weaker and weaker' and that 'laws are weighted against Christianity' (Adrian, 60). Austin (64) suggested that Christianity is being undermined by a secular 'overzealous PC brigade' intent on

erasing Christian symbols from the public sphere. A small handful of participants also expressed fear that Christians would be discriminated against or even persecuted. For example, Gavin (60), who had 'never felt excluded', nonetheless reported perceiving a 'small but persistent raising of barriers to Christians' in British society and starting to feel that Christians are 'at risk of being persecuted'. Similarly, Tom (67) said that while he personally has not experienced any persecution as a Christian, he believes that Christians will *become* persecuted in the UK. Some of the interviewed men thus engaged in a 'politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2006) which situated Christians at risk from secular forces that potentially can undermine their own personal well-being as well as the current (and still relatively privileged) position of Christianity within British society. Alternative viewpoints that question the 'at risk' framing of Christianity were also expressed by some. For example, without being prompted, Nicholas (73) said he does not worry about secularism, and Ryan (69) stated that 'Christians are not persecuted' in the UK.

In the context of talking about advantage and disadvantage, five of the twenty-one interviewees made direct comparisons between Christianity and Islam. They expressed a sense that Christianity, as the majority religion, is 'an easy target' or 'fair game' (Samuel, 40) to critique. In contrast, they suggested that it is politically unacceptable to critique Islam, as it is a minority religion, and that Islam is even viewed with fear. The implication was that someone who critiques Islam would be stigmatised, while someone who critiques Christianity would not. 'There is no equality of equality', commented Jack (48), who also stated that 'they think you're more kooky if you're a Christian than if you're a Muslim'. Similarly, Adrian (60) suggested that Islam is a powerful minority while Christianity is a weak majority in the UK. One interviewee mentioned Islamic terrorists as a threat to 'the British way of

life' (Tom, 67). The framing of Christianity as more vulnerable to critique than Islam is notable in at least two ways: it comes from a relative position of privilege, with Christianity having close and exclusive ties to the British state, and it is uttered within an overall societal context of increasing religious discrimination and hatred against Islam and Muslims (Sheridan 2006).

When asked whether they had experienced any privilege due to their faith, a majority of the participants said that they personally have no advantage from being Christian. They also denied, either explicitly or indirectly, that Christianity is privileged in the UK, with none referring to the privileged status of Christianity in Britain (e.g., the presence of bishops in the House of Lords, the Queen as head of Church and State, public holidays related to the Christian calendar). A handful of the men mentioned opportunities for skills learning from various church roles, a sense of community from churchgoing, and perceptions of Christians as trustworthy, as advantageous. One participant (Gavin, 60) noted, on the other hand, that there are advantages to society from having people of faith, as most faiths would agree on how to build a community and relate to others. Another man (Ethan, 51) reflected that any advantage he has would not be associated with Christianity, but with him being a white, middle-class, English-speaking male. A similar reflection came forth from Leo (60), who at one point during the interview referred to himself as a 'white, Anglo-Saxon, male Christian'. A further participant also reflected on personal privilege without being prompted by saying that he lives in a nice house and has a secure job, but again the perceived privilege was not linked to Christianity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the above findings, I want to argue that the interviewed Christian men draw on both expressive (practice based) and instrumentalist (status based) approaches to citizenship, *depending on the context*: when talking about themselves as citizens, a practice based approach dominates, but when speaking about their own position in and treatment by the overall society, a status based approach, linked with a 'politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2006), becomes more prominent. The men also draw on both instrumentalist and expressive notions of masculinity, depending on context, thus showing that individual men can embody what are often seen as contradictory expressions of 'godly masculinity' (Bartkowski 2000).

The participants forwarded a multidimensional conceptualisation of citizenship, where a 'lived practice' approach, emphasizing belonging, participation, and caring for others, took centre stage in their narratives about citizenship, being a good citizen, and connections between their faith and citizenship. When asked what citizenship means to them, and what a good citizen is, the interviewees highlighted relational-emotional connections with other people, including caring for and helping others, being kind and loving, showing compassion, respect and understanding, and being involved in the local community. The men's foregrounding of a 'lived practice' approach to citizenship thus challenges the gendered binary conceptualisation of citizenship as *either* 'masculine' and instrumental' *or* 'feminine' and 'expressive' by suggesting a more complex, multi-faceted understanding where belonging, participation and care are central aspects of these men's Christian-based masculinity. Their conception and practice resonate with feminist scholars' theorizing of citizenship as not only involving status, rights and duties, but also belonging, participation, and caring for others (Lister 2003; Yuval-Davis 1999).

These findings also echo those of Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016, 215) who found that Christian and Muslim women in Europe emphasize participation and belonging as well as an ethic of love and care, tolerance and respect as central to citizenship. That contemporary religious men and women may articulate similar understandings and experiences of what citizenship is and what characterises a good citizen, suggests that conceptualisations and practices of citizenship are not always gendered, despite persisting inequalities in women's and men's access to and use of citizenship rights and opportunities. The findings of this study suggest that the interviewed white, middle-class heterosexual, Christian men move beyond a narrow, 'masculine' or instrumental conceptualisation of citizenship and instead embody a broader understanding that emphasizes participation, belonging and care as vital aspects of citizenship practice. The 'lived practice' approach to citizenship underscores aspects that are often aligned with femininity rather than with masculinity, such as emotional and interpersonal ties and love and care for other people. For the interviewed Anglican men, these aspects are part and parcel of their religious identities and also of their masculine identities, in similar ways to what Delap (2013) found in her study of middle-class Anglican men in mid-twentieth century England. The interviewees do not regard the displaying of emotions, love and care as 'feminine' or as posing a threat to their masculinity; instead they seem to treat these 'expressive' qualities as universal for what it means to be a good Christian and for what it means to be a good (male) citizen too. They thus embody aspects of an 'emotionally expressive masculinity' similar to what Bartkowski (2000) found among some of the adherents of the U.S. based Promise Keeper movement. The findings thus contribute to a '[destabilisation of] received categories of gender' (Leonard and Tronto 2007, 44) by posing a challenge to overly gendered narratives about what women and men value

and how they think and behave as 'citizens'. The findings challenge not only the idea that men and women think differently about citizenship, but also the suggestion by feminists that 'good citizenship and masculinity may even be contradictory ideals' (Leonard and Tronto 2007, 33).

The findings also subvert the public-private distinction in that the interviewed men highlight 'localized' forms of citizenship practice as most fundamental to their understandings of citizenship and of a 'good citizen'. This includes participation in their local communities and especially in Christian congregations, caring for people in their neighbourhoods and local communities, and the emotional ties they feel in terms of belonging to a place and to other people who inhabit that place. The suggestion by one interviewee, that being good to family members and pets is part of being a good citizen, poses an explicit challenge to the public-private distinction by supporting the feminist notion that 'the private' is political. Moreover, in comparison with Hoover and Coats' (2015, 179-180) study which found Protestant men in the United States to be inward-looking in ways that discouraged 'active citizenship and civic engagement', the interviewed Anglican men in the UK are public spirited and outward-looking citizens who orient themselves towards others.

The interviewed men emphasized that their citizenship practice is linked with their religious identity, and expressed a close affinity between being a good citizen and their Christian faith. Conveying the notion that religion is at its heart 'communicative and public' rather than simply private (Woodhead 2013, 96), the participants viewed their Christian faith as directly informing how they behave as citizens, with the Bible providing specific guidelines. Many of the interviewees also saw their faith as enabling them to be 'better citizens,' with most of them also stating that *any* person can be a good citizen, regardless of their faith. There was also an

acknowledgment that not all who call themselves Christians are necessarily good citizens; you are only a good Christian citizen if you live in accordance with Biblical guidelines. Several participants also emphasised that Christianity gives them a sense of purpose and motivation for acting as a good citizen, implying that, as a Christian, you are more likely to be a good citizen in comparison with others who are not Christian.

That the interviewed men's views on and experiences of citizenship are strongly informed by religious values, ethics and morals has implications for how we conceptualise equal citizenship for all people, regardless of whether they profess to any religious belief or not. In this regard, rights-based approaches to religious citizenship (e.g. Hudson 2003) are too narrow (Nyhagen 2015): while they address issues such as freedom of belief and the right to collective worship, they do not consider the importance of belonging, participation, and care. The demonstrated link between citizenship and religion also lends support to the view that religiously informed political convictions are legitimate in democratic deliberation (Habermas 2006).

When asked about perceived and experienced disadvantages and privileges resulting from their faith, many of the participants invoked a more instrumental (status) approach to citizenship, rather than an expressive (practice) approach by emphasizing threats to the continued dominant status of Christianity and Christians in multicultural Britain. Among the participants there was a general feeling of inclusion in society, and there were no direct personal experiences of discrimination on the ground of religion. However, some of the men felt that it would be illegitimate to raise their faith within the context of their employment, which may suggest a barrier to equal citizenship. Moreover, many of the men expressed a sense of sadness and

indignation related to their observation that Christianity is being critiqued and at times ridiculed in society at large. There was a clear concern with Christianity becoming increasingly marginalised in the UK due to secular forces gaining importance. Among some of the interviewees there was also a fear that Christians are at risk of becoming persecuted, thus indicating fears about marginalisation and disadvantage. Such views suggest the potential emergence of barriers to equal citizenship for Christians who in other ways enjoy constitutional and other forms of privilege due to membership of the majority religion in the UK. These views, which suggest an increasing politicisation of Christian belonging, are rooted in a status-based approach to citizenship where potential threats to the status and legitimacy of Christianity are seen as undermining the rights of Christians as bearers of the culturally dominant faith in Britain. Relations with secular people are described as posing potential threats and risks including barriers, discrimination and persecution. Thus, when talking about their citizenship within local (Christian) communities, the interviewed men invoked a practice-based understanding of citizenship that resonated with an expressive form of masculinity, but when referring to their citizenship within the larger, secular UK society, they imparted a status-based approach to citizenship that had more in common with an instrumental form of masculinity. In contrast, the latter kind of discourse was generally absent in Nyhagen and Halsaa's (2016) study of religious women, thus suggesting possible gender differences related to the construction of an 'us' versus 'them' binary between Christians and non-Christians. The notion that Christianity needs 'protection' was also expressed by the handful of men who thought that Christianity and Islam are treated differently by the wider UK society. These participants perceived it as easier to target or criticise Christianity than Islam due to Christianity's majority status and Islam's minority status. The finding that some

Christians view their religious citizenship as threatened by either secularism and/or Islam as a minority faith suggests a 'masculine', territorially defensive and competitive-based understanding that draws on a status approach to citizenship that politicises ideas and feelings about belonging. It may also indicate a lack of recognition of the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by Muslim citizens in the UK (Weller 2006). As discussed above, none of the Christian men in this study had experienced any personal advantage from their faith, and none made any reference to the privileged status of Christianity in comparison with other faiths in Britain. The scant reflection of religious privilege echoes findings reported by Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016, 141), who in their study of religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK found that 'only a few Christian interviewees reflected in some ways on privileges attached to Christianity as the dominant and privileged religion in their country'.

In conclusion, this article does not question that citizenship is in many ways gendered, in that European women and men, across different axes of power and differentiation including gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity, disability and age, may experience inequalities in terms of their access to, use, and practicing of their citizenship. It does, however, question whether women and men necessarily understand their own citizenship practice in different or similar ways. One main finding is that the interviewed Christian men emphasise belonging, participation, love and care as central to their lived citizenship. The extent to which this understanding may be linked with a privileged citizen status, such as holding a British and/or a European passport and being part of a majority religion endorsed by the state, needs to be investigated further.

Another main finding is that the interviewed Christian men draw on both status and practice based approaches to citizenship, and embody both instrumentalist and expressive forms of masculinity, *depending on context*. As such, these findings challenge more binary understandings of masculinity, such as that proposed by Bartkowski (2000) in his study of the U.S. based Promise Keepers movement, where men were found to inhabit *either* an instrumentalist *or* an expressive form of 'godly masculinity'. In reference to their citizenship within local (Christian) communities in the East Midlands of the UK, the interviewed Anglican men talk about citizenship as lived practice and emphasize belonging, participation, love and care towards others, thus displaying an expressive form of masculinity. With regard to their citizenship within the overall UK society, however, the men suggest that the status and rights of Christian citizens, and the status and legitimacy of Christianity as the majority religion, are being challenged and also marginalised by secular forces. Some of the men also perceived Christianity as being threatened by the alleged protection and status of Islam as a minority faith within the broader society, thus displaying a territorially defensive and competitive-oriented positioning of themselves in relation to non-Christians. These findings suggest that ideas and emotions about belonging might become increasingly politicised as Christianity is competing with 'no religion' (Woodhead 2016).

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