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Table of Contents

Articles

Bogdan Mihai Radu	Religious organizations and the social capital of the youth in post-communist countries	7
Daniela Angi	Tolerance, conservatism and religiosity - a research note on Poland and Romania	18
Andreea Vornicu	One church, different roles, different missions. Case study on the Romanian Diaspora living in Spain	34
Anatolie Cosciug	Research notes on social capital formation in religious organizations among Polish young migrants in the UK	44

articles

'WE DON'T DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW ARRIVALS'. RESEARCH NOTES ON SOCIAL CAPITAL FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AMONG POLISH YOUNG MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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Abstract

It is estimated that more than half a million Poles moved to the UK after 2004 Poland's adherence at the EU in a relatively short period of time in comparison with other migrant groups. The Polish migrants in the UK have been initially portrayed in a number of studies as young, single and transient while in the last period they were seen as settling in the British society and bringing their families to live with them (White 2016). The massive arrivals had significant impacts on many parts of the British society, but especially it transformed the Catholic Parishes in the UK (Trzebiatowska 2010). As increasing numbers of Poles settled in the UK, they started to search for masses in their native language and many Polish Catholic Churches emerged in the UK (Gill 2010). Even if there is significant research on migration of Poles to the UK in English, Polish and other languages, there is little research on the Polish migrants' religious experiences (Gallagher and Trzebiatowska 2017). This is surprising since Poles are known as being religious and the importance of Catholic Church in the lives of Polish migrants living in other destination countries was already covered (Gallagher 2014b)(Gallagher and Trzebiatowska 2017).

Introduction

This paper¹⁰ focuses on one crucial aspect of the Polish migrants' religious experiences in the UK, namely the social capital formation in religious organizations. Religion as social capital has been for long used as a key concept to understand migration of Polish to the UK, with a extensive body of literature on its role in various migration stages (White 2016). However, far less attention was given to younger age-groups Polish migrants. Typically, the young Polish migrants in the UK were absent in the

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academic debates on religion as social capital in migration settings. This is a surprising situation considering the plethora of religious associations and activities across the UK in which many Polish young migrants are involved, the increasing literature on social capital where youth are seen as creating their own social capital within religious organizations, and the tendency of Polish parents to encourage their children to spend time with other Polish peers.

This paper draws from an ongoing research project at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, aiming to compare the formation of social capital among Polish and Romanian youth. It draws from a fieldwork organized in 2016 and 2017 when I conducted participant observations and semi-structured interviews with 12 priests, leaders of religious associations, and young Polish migrants living in the UK.

The paper begins by reviewing the literature on social capital formation and religion as social capital. I then present a summary of the existent research on religion as social capital in the migration context, with a special focus on migrant youth's own social capital formation within religious associations before moving to discuss the main findings of the paper.

Theorizing social capital formation by youth migrants in religious settings

Social capital is one of the most debated concepts in the social sciences. The effects of social capital in facilitating economic development, lowering the costs of economic transactions or fostering democratic development are well documented in many areas of social sciences. Despite its large usage, there is still an ongoing debate on how to define and measure it (Zhou 2014). Among the most well known definitions of social capital, Coleman (1990) sees social capital as a set of moral resources, Putnam (2000) as the resources generated from human interaction while (Portes 2000; Portes and DeWind 2007) as '(1) a source of social control, (2) a source of family-mediated benefits, and (3) a source of resources mediated by nonfamily networks'. Conceptually, a significant distinction in the literature on social capital regards the level of analysis. Adler and Kwon (2009) argue that definitions of social capital fall into two categories: those that focus on the individual level (social relations people develop by social interaction, see for instance (De Carolis and Saporito 2006); (Furseth 2008b; Portes 2000;

Portes and DeWind 2007)(Tzanakis 2013) and those concerned with the organization level (patterns of interaction and the norms and values promoted and practiced within an organization, see Putnam 1993, Coleman 1988). However, the two levels of analysis are not mutually exclusive, with much of the recent literature arguing that are rather inter-linked.

For the purposes of this paper where the social capital formation among youth Polish migrants in the UK is researched, I adopt Adler and Kwon's definition of social capital: "social capital is a resource for individual and collective actors created by configuration and content of the network of their more or less durable social relations" (2009, 93). The same authors claim that social capital, like any type of capital, possesses some unique features, such as its need for maintenance (social relations need to be carefully maintained, otherwise they are eroded), its lack of depreciation (in fact, social capital grows by using it) and its location (not with the actor but between actors, in the social relations) (Adler and Kwon, 2009, 94-95).

Research on social capital generated by religious involvement is mostly grounded in the American context, with much of it exploring the positive effects of religious participation on social capital (Furseth 2008a). The ability of religion-driven bonds to contribute to the creation of social capital is underlined, among others by Levitt and Hejtmanek (2009) and Putnam (2000). However, social capital produced in the context of religious participation is constrained by structural factors reflecting the internal political culture of each church (Wood 1999), therefore not all religious institutions are equally effective in cultivating social capital. The place of religion within society, the relationship between church and state and the importance of the social mission assumed by each religious organization are all intervening factors in predicting religious sources of social capital creation (Furseth 2008b).

Some authors also note that the size of the congregation and the type of relationships developed within (horizontal vs. vertical) are important in the process of creating social capital (Smidt 2003, Foley and Hoge 2007). For example, religious organizations structured around a system of horizontal authority mechanism seem to be better equipped at generating social capital than their vertical counterparts (Coleman 2003, Putnam 2007). Additionally, not all members of a religious community will increase their social capital equally, by participating. Research shows that those placed at a higher socio-economic level will indeed gain more social capital (Foley and Hoge 2007). In the same lines, ethnically homogeneous congregations

were observed as real hubs for enforceable trust which can lead to entrepreneurial development (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 2001).

When referring to the nature of social capital developed within religious organizations, one of the most important distinctions is that between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the internal or in-group social ties, the so called 'strong ties', while the bridging social capital is usually understood as the out-of-the-group or external social ties, the so called 'weak ties' (Katila and Wahlbeck 2012). In other words, it is important to assess whether the norms and values internalized in the process of religious participation have applicability outside of that particular community, thus influencing society in general, or whether bonding takes precedence over bridging, and religious participation creates a tightly knit community that reinforces specific identities without creating any spill-over effect (Paxton 2002). However, it is also worth discussing what means internal (bonding) or external (bridging) social ties. (Ryan et al. 2008b) makes a clear point here by arguing that is not only the ethnicity that matters when differentiating between weak and strong ties. They argue, for instance, that in some cases 'unlike in important ways'¹¹ should go beyond the existent assumptions and consider also determinants as gender or class.

In sum, it is important to acknowledge that social capital created within religious organizations is greatly influenced by the broader social, economic, political and cultural contexts. In addition, its construction is also affected by the type of relations established within the organizations themselves and the nature of values learnt and internalized in the process of religious participation.

In the migration context, religion as social capital denotes the available resources that can be obtained by migrants from being involved in a religious organization or religious activities (Gallagher 2014a). The intricate relation between social capital and religion in the migration context gained prominence in the 50s and 60s debates on migrants' integration in the American context. The main idea was that religion can be a vehicle for inclusion in various structures, which further leads to adaptation to the mainstream society (Zhou, Bankston and Kim 2002, Gordon 1961). Along these lines, Orsi (1996) explains how religious communities provided

¹¹ As used in the work of Putnam (2000)

migrants with a space and the necessary resources to make sense of their migration experience and help redefine their identities in the host country. In a different setting, Min (1992) exemplifies the case of rotating credit unions in the Korean Catholic Church to foster entrepreneurial activities.

However, it was Putnam (2000: 66) phrase 'faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital' and other similar assertions in the academic literature¹² that revitalized the debate on social capital creation for migrants in the religious settings. In a study on Chinese immigrants in New York, Guest (2003) showed that church-going migrants can obtain easier housing, employment opportunities and food due to the ties developed within the religious community they were attending. Besides providing support to find employment, religious organizations can also help during hard times characterized by unemployment or during the transition to employment (Foley and Hoge 2007). Some authors argue that social capital cultivated within religious communities in destination countries is instrumental in integration, facilitating access to information and social networks to newcomers who do not speak the language of their new country (Hirschman 2004) (Foner and Alba 2008). (Gallagher 2014a) argues that religious congregations act as spaces for the creation of networks that allow generation of information, guidance and a sense of belonging, identity and support.

However, not the entire literature on religion as social capital positively describes it. (McGrath and Murray 2009) research on Brazilian immigrants shows that participation in ethnic religious services doesn't provide bridges to the outside groups, while Passarelli (2010) argues that going to mainstream / non-migrant churches is more likely to lead to the acquisition of bridging social capital in comparison to attending tightly-knit migrant religious churches. In similar lines, Foley and Hoge (2007) observes that socio-economic characteristics and status of the members of a certain religious association is important for the types of resources available within that group.

Religion as social capital has been for long used as a key concept to understand migration of Polish to the UK, with a extensive body of literature on its role in various migration stages (White 2016). (Ryan et al.

¹² For instance, Levitt and Hejtmanek (2009:92) argue that for migrants "connections forged by faith are by far the most powerful generators of social capital".

2008a) observes that many Poles attend Polish Catholic churches looking for and obtaining information, social support and religious guidance. The networks developed by Polish migrants in these religious settings were found by (White and Ryan 2008) to be used rather used in an instrumental way with little intention to create deeper connections. (Gill 2010) argues that in many cases the Polish Catholic Church rather provides more social services than religious ones especially for the low skilled Poles living in the UK and this situation leads to an exodus of the higher skilled Poles from the Church activities. Similar findings were observed by (Gill and Bialski 2011) who argues that Polish migrants from lower socio-economic groups tend to rely more on weak associational ties comparing with their co-ethnics in higher socio-economic groups.

However, far less attention was given to younger age-groups Polish migrants which is an under-developed research area. Typically, the young Polish migrants in the UK were absent in the academic debates on religion as social capital in migration settings. This is a surprising situation for a number of reasons. First, as (Ryan et al. 2008a) explains, there is a plethora of religious associations and activities across the UK in which many Polish young migrants are involved, such as Polish Saturday Schools, Scouts associations, various discussion groups / clubs within established Polish Community Centers or the Polish Catholic Parishes. Some of these associations became so successful that young people had to stay on the floor due to unavailability of places (White and Ryan 2008). Second, in the literature on social capital and youth, there is an increasing tendency to give to the young people agency as recent research has shown that migrant youth were observed to create and maintain their own social capital (Weller 2010). Youth's own social capital was highlighted in several studies as especially significant for migrant youth as it was found to shape their identity and sense of belonging in the majority culture (Moskal 2014). Nevertheless, (Ebstein King and Furrow 2008) observes that religious youth share higher levels of social capital and argues that through religious involvement young people have access to intergenerational relationships which are seen in the literature as rich sources of social capital. Third, in several studies was highlighted that Polish migrants living in the UK (especially the ones from lower socio-economic groups) tend not to expand their networks beyond the local Polish community (Ryan et al. 2008b). However, similar observations were made in other studies where Polish parents living in the UK were seen to encourage their children to spend time with other Polish peers in Polish associations such as Polish Saturday

School and Polish Catholic Church organizations (PUSTUŁKA 2014)(Sales et al. 2008). In this context, to ask how social capital is created among young Polish migrants living in the UK becomes essential to better understand Polish migration to the UK.

Method

This paper draws from a research project at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The main aim of this ongoing research project is to compare the formation of social capital among Polish and Romanian youth. Departing from the existent research on the social capital formation among young people in post-socialist countries, this project expends its focus on Polish and Romanian youth living in other countries than their origin ones. In this sense, it allows not only a comparison of two different groups of youth living in two different countries but the same group of youth living in different countries. For the Romanian case was chosen Spain as a comparison group while for the Polish it was chosen UK. The main reasons behind this decision was that in both cases there was living one of the biggest groups of Polish / Romanians.

The project works with a mixed-methods research approach. In the quantitative side, existent databases resulted from local or international surveys are used to explore the main determinants if social capital formation among youth in post-socialist countries. In the qualitative side, we were involved in fieldwork in various communities in four countries: Romania, Poland, Spain, and the UK. During the fieldwork in these four countries we were interested in the religious organizations in a very broad sense were youth are actively involved.

The current paper draws from participant observations and semi-structured interviews with 12 priests, leaders of associations, and young Polish migrants living in the UK. The qualitative interviews and participant observations were gathered in 2016 and 2017. The fieldwork was conducted in 3 localities and 4 Polish Parishes and the religious associations working around these communities. The 3 localities included in the study were relatively closely located. In the interviews and participant observations, I asked about the background of that respective religious association (short history, membership, attendance, leadership, aims, values, activities, etc.), the activities (if any) dedicated to the young people, the day-by-day life as a Polish migrant in the UK (questions about socio-demographic background, experiences of discrimination, Brexit,

future plans, etc.), the type of networks developed by youth within the religious associations and beyond them, the type of resources created within these networks, the collaboration with other (non)religious or (non)polish organizations, trust level, identity, etc. All the interviews were conducted in English and for about half of the interview proposals I was refused especially due to the lack of sufficient English language skills. The entrance points in the field were particularly difficult. This happened especially due to the lack of accurate or updated information in English about the Polish Parishes, the relatively lack of English skills among Polish migrants living in the UK, or the lack of Polish-Romanian migrants' interactions.

Polish migrants' youth social capital formation within religious associations

It is estimated that more than half a million Poles moved to the UK after 2004 Poland's adherence at the EU in a relatively short period of time in comparison with other migrant groups. The Polish migrants in the UK have been initially portrayed in a number of studies as young, single and transient while in the last period they were seen as settling in the British society and bringing their families to live with them (White 2016). The massive arrivals had significant impacts on many parts of the British society, but especially it transformed the Catholic Parishes in the UK (Trzebiatowska 2010). As increasing numbers of Poles settled in the UK, they started to search for masses in their native language and many Polish Catholic Churches emerged in the UK (Gill 2010). However, Polish Catholic Churches existed in the UK long before 2004. As father Pawel explains, Polish migration to Britain and the establishment of Polish Catholic Mission and of several Polish Catholic Churches in the UK dates back to 1940s when they played an important role for the anti-communist fight especially by supporting the 'Polish government-in-exile'. However, it was after April 2004 when Poland became part of EU when the number of Polish Catholic Churches increase to over 150 and spread all over the UK. Besides the religious activities – such as baptizing or Communion – the Polish Catholic Church became an important source for social services and various forms of support for many Polish migrants. What is especially interesting in this case is that a significant part of the non-religious services provided by the Polish Parishes are focused on young Polish migrants and their development. In this way, besides the Polish Catholic practices where youth are specifically involved – such as serving during masses - the Polish

youth can attend a number of other activities and organizations structured around the Polish Catholic Church.

'Youth are probably the biggest group among the church attenders so most of our activities are dedicated to the youth {...} We run the Polish School {...} the youth can attend our clubs to discuss important topics for their development {...} last Sunday over 60 youth had part of their first Communion which was a beautiful ceremony followed by a small party {...} many of our youth are also involved in the Polish Scouts which is a very strong organization and works very close with the Church {...}'.

In all the Polish Parishes I have been visiting during the fieldwork I encountered 3 types of religious associations in which Polish young migrants were constantly involved. Polish Saturday Schools is one of them and the first to be mentioned in the interviews when asked about youth-specific activities or associations within the Catholic community. The role of the Polish Saturday Schools (or as it is named in the interviews - Polish Schools) is to be a complementary education where pupils can attend Polish language classes, Polish history and geography, Catholic religious' education, and so on. The pupils, both boys and girls, are all Polish or of Polish origins and sometimes from mixt Polish families. The teachers in charge with the classes are as well Polish or of Polish origins and besides them there is limited interaction with adults as part of the program. Oftentimes the classes take place in the churches but sometimes (due to increasing number of pupils attending) in other buildings rented by the local community. Contrary to what other researchers observed in their studies (White 2016), in the case of Polish Schools I encountered Polish migrant youth coming from both 'post-war and 'post-2004 arrived migration families. However, the interactions between youth and adults in this setting is rather limited to the teachers and almost no interactions exist with other Polish associations outside their community, other immigrant associations or British ones.

'For a very long long time¹³ we had a Polish School attached to this particular church {...} The community gathered around this church was not interested only in religious aspects but also on identity, language and culture so they decided to establish this school {...} The priest back than was the first teacher {...} but the school grew so we had to move some of the classes in another building while some classes were still held in the restaurant area you passed by {...} But the school kept

¹³ The exact number of years was taken out of the transcriptions for anonymity reasons.

growing so we had unfortunately to move it totally in a different building {...} There are currently around 300 children who go on Saturdays {...} The classes are thought in Polish {...}'

A second category of religious associations structured around the Polish Catholic Church is constituted by the various clubs organized within the congregation. The role of these clubs is to discuss and debate various topics of interest for youth, such as contraception, drug or alcohol abuse, social media addiction, moral values, family life, marriage preparation, and so on. These clubs are usually organized by a Polish adult person weekly and sometimes more often. It is quite common to invite speakers (usually adults but sometimes youth as well) from outside the (religious) community, such as from other migrant groups living in the UK, British, and so on to talk about various youth issues. It is also common for the clubs' members to organize or participate in international or local gatherings, conferences, marches or various religious and non-religious celebrations in the UK, Poland, or other countries (e.g. World Youth Day, sport competitions, etc.). Czeslaw, one of the organizers of the youth clubs, is also in charge with the organization of the World Youth Day which celebrates the Catholic youth:

'{...} For us is very important to make connections for young people {...} this church is involved in a very big project which is happening every year in {name of the city} which will bring a lot of children from all over the Polish communities in the UK {...} there will be sport contests, art and craft events, theatre, competitions {...} we will organise coaches to these events {...} it started 13 years ago with 300 people but last year there were more than 5000'

The third type of religious organization observed is the Polish Scouts. As Marta, one of the Polish Scouts' youth leaders explains, Polish Scouts are an independent Scouts Association which operates in the UK but it is separated by the British Scouts Association. It is part of the Polish Scouting Association International Council (Naczelnictwo) which is present in several countries, such as France, the UK, Canada, etc. There are no common activities between the Polish Scouts in the UK and the British Scouts but the Polish Scouts in the UK have common activities with the Polish Scouts in Poland or with the associations in the countries where Polish Scouts are present. Usually there are separate activities for boys and girls, each group has actually their meetings and events even though sometimes some activities are held together. This is the smallest group in terms of members comparing with the other two types of associations and

most of the members are also involved in both Polish Schools and the clubs. Even though not explicitly assumed, the membership in the Polish Scouts is reserved to the Polish youth able to speak Polish.

'{...} you have seen them {two boys from the Polish Scouts} nicely dressed at the entrance of the church with the donation box {...} our Scouts, the Polish Scouts, we don't associate with the English scouts, we are different, we are separate {...} last year it was the international meeting of the Polish Scouts in Canada where some of our association members were invited {...}'

The three types of religious associations - Polish Schools, Polish Scouts and the clubs - provide a broad range of activities that foster social networks among the Polish migrant youth who participate. Within these religious association, most of the activities are held among peers and there is little interaction with non-Poles or the Polish migrants who don't attend the Catholic Church. There is limited interaction with adults and when interactions exist, they are taking place rather in a hierarchical setting and on very specific topics. However, it can be observed that even though there are only Polish youth involved in these associations, they came from different socio-economic backgrounds, different age groups, and distinct migration trajectories - such as 'post-war' and 'post-2004' arriving migrants.

Table 1: size, type of social network formed within religious associations and the available types of resources

	Size of networks	Type of networks	Resources
Polish Saturday School	Extensive	Bonding	Informational
Polish Scouts	Medium	Bonding	Companionship
	Limited	Bridging (age)	Socializing
Discussion Clubs	Extensive	Bonding	Emotional Instrumental
	Limited	Bridging (age and ethnicity)	Socializing

It is only the case of the Discussion Clubs that foster bonding social networks among peers (people who are like them in some significant ways - in this case age and ethnicity) but also bridging social networks with people who are unlike them in some important ways (age and ethnicity)

but the size of the networks is rather limited in the case of bridging social ties. In the case of Polish Scouts, most of the social networks are mainly created among youth who are similar and the size of the networks is medium while there are also limited bridging social ties based on age. At the Polish Saturday School, the size of the network is extensive while the diversity of the social ties is quiet reduced. As in the example of Marek below, one of the youth attending the discussions clubs:

'Even in the day-to-day activities of the club, together with colleagues from mixt backgrounds or from Polish backgrounds, I don't feel alone, I don't feel isolated, it is very important to belong, it is one of the most important question on my mind {...} where do I belong, who am I, do I have a choice, do I make a choice to be only British against my family, or do I make a choice to be both? {...}'

In general, the literature on social capital assumes five types of resources that are available within the social networks created via religious associations. For instance, (Gallagher 2014a) argues that religious congregations act as spaces for the creation of networks that allow generation of information, guidance and a sense of belonging, identity and support. (Ryan et al. 2008a) also distinguish five types of resources which can be found within social networks in the case of Polish migrants living in the UK: emotional, informational, and instrumental (practical) support, to which they add also companionship, and socializing. In this research, rather the types of resources exemplified in the second research were identified. The availability of these resources was, however, differentiated. While the bridging social ties created as part of the Polish Scouts and the Discussion Clubs provided socializing activities and people to socialize with, the bonding ties created within the Polish Saturday school were used for information, the ones from the Polish Scouts for companionship, and the ones from Discussion Clubs for emotional and instrumental support.

'{...} With the help of clubs, we try to provide to these children, to these teenagers... so they can be brought up in.... you know, in respecting God and our motherland... it is about patriotism but it is also about being a real gentleman as real Poles are {...}'

Conclusions

Responding at the call of (Ryan et al. 2008b) to avoid using a generalized notion of social capital but rather to differentiate between the various types and levels of resources available within social networks, this study

suggests that an important part of activities held by the Polish Parishes in the UK are focused on and dedicated to the youth. The religious associations created around the religious communities - the Polish Saturday School, the Polish Scouts and the Discussion Clubs - provide a broad range of activities where youth can be involved and where the young people can create social ties. However, despite providing relatively extensive social ties, the types of social networks created within the religious associations are mostly bonding, between young people coming from similar age groups, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Just in the case of Polish Scouts and in the case of Discussion Clubs, limited bridging ties could be identified between, for instance, the Polish youth and Polish adults.

Contrasting the work of (Gill and Bialski 2011; White 2016), this research doesn't see a separation of the 'old' and 'new' arrivals or of the Polish migrants from lower and higher social groups when forming social networks. Young Polish migrants from all these categories closely work together in the activities of the religious associations. However, what seems to be important when talking about bridging or bonding social ties is the age. The study also identifies five types of resources that young Polish migrants living in the UK can find within their own social ties formed in the religious organizations. It is interesting to note that the bridging social capital is mostly used for socializing purposes, the bonding social ties provides various forms of support, from information to instrumental or emotional.

However, the result of this study should be used with caution. Especially due to its qualitative research design, the results cannot be generalized to the whole study population. The research also took place around the 'Brexit' referendum and the public debates it was surrounded so this might significantly affect the respondents' answers. Nevertheless, there were a number of xenophobic incidents happening in the same period and some of them oriented against the Polish community living in the UK which may also had an impact on the type of answers and behaviors were publicly made available. Another significant limitation comes from the relatively limited number of localities and religious communities taken into the study and their relative geographical proximity. Further research on the social capital formation among migrant youth in religious settings should also consider the other religious organizations (non-Catholic) attended by Polish migrants while research in Polish language could also overcome some barriers.

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