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Secular and religious volunteering among immigrants and natives in Denmark

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Abstract

In the last decades, Western societies have witnessed large scale migration from the Global South. This large-scale migration has brought about important challenges in securing the social, civic, and political integration of non-Western immigrants into Western societies. The previous research suggests that participation in volunteering within civil society can serve as a ‘stepping stone’ towards integration for immigrants. However, the previous research has shown marked gaps in the propensity to participate in volunteering between immigrants and natives, but little work has been done to identify the mechanisms that explain these gaps. In this study, I use high-quality survey data that are linked with data from administrative registers, to which I apply logistic regression based on the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) method to conduct mediation analysis. The mediation analysis shows that non-Western immigrants are significantly less likely to participate in secular volunteering compared to natives; however, over half of this gap is explained by an indirect effect via socio-economic status, self-rated health, generalized trust, informal social networks, and the intergenerational transmission of volunteering. Moreover, the mediation analysis suggests that non-Western immigrants are more likely to participate in religious volunteering; however, this gap is completely explained by a strong indirect effect via religiosity.

Keywords: Participation gaps, volunteering, non-Western immigrants, integration, KHB

Introduction

In the last decades, Western societies have witnessed a rapid and large-scale migration of immigrants from the Global South, which has brought about important challenges of securing the social, civic and political integration of these new citizens into Western societies (Röder and Mühlau, 2011). The previous research suggests that participation in volunteering within civil society can act as a ‘stepping stone’ towards integration for immigrants who seek to establish themselves in their host societies (Handy and Greenspan, 2009). This is because the immigrants who participate in volunteering may improve their human capital and enhance their social networks, which in turn can improve their chances in the formal labor market and aid their civic, social and political integration into the host society (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Handy and Mook, 2011; Weng and Lee, 2015).

However, the previous comparative studies of European countries and single country studies have identified gaps in the propensity to volunteer between immigrants and natives, with natives being more likely to volunteer compared to immigrants (Eimhjellen and Seggaard, 2010; Svedberg, von Essen and Jegermalm, 2010; Aleksynska, 2011; Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Voicu and Șerban, 2012; Fridberg and Qvist, 2014; Qvist, 2014). An important exception appears to be that immigrants are more likely to participate

in religious volunteering compared to natives; at least studies have found this to be the case in the Netherlands and Canada (Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Wang and Handy, 2014).

Despite the recent buildup of a body of evidence that shows gaps in participation in volunteering between immigrants and natives, few of the previous studies have attempted to identify the mechanisms that *explain* the gaps. An exception is a study by Carabain & Bekkers (2011) that uses mediation analysis to show that gaps in the propensity to participate in secular and religious volunteering between immigrants and natives in the Netherlands can be partially explained by variations in individual resources (labor market position, education, income), religiosity, and solicitation (the likelihood of being asked to volunteer). In general, their results suggest that natives are more likely to participate in secular volunteering, which is explained by natives having more individual resources, while immigrants are more likely to participate in religious volunteering, which is explained by immigrants having higher levels of religiosity. Another exception is a study by Wang & Handy (2014) who use separate logistic regression models for immigrants and natives and find that immigrants who have more informal social networks, higher educational attainment, and attend religious services more often are more likely to participate in both secular and religious volunteering. Moreover, they find that social trust is not associated with immigrants' decisions to participate, but it is for natives.

In this paper, I build on these recent efforts to identify the mechanisms that explain the gaps in the propensity to participate in secular and religious volunteering between immigrants and natives. More specifically, I use high-quality survey data that are linked with data from administrative registers from Denmark to investigate whether and to what extent differences in socio-economic status (SES), informal social networks, generalized social trust, self-rated health, the intergenerational transmission of volunteering, and religiosity can explain the gaps in secular and religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark. I extend the previous research in two important ways.

First, I investigate the relative importance of the different mechanisms because the relative importance of the different mechanisms has not been previously examined in a systematic way. For instance, we know from the previous research that both SES and informal social networks are important mechanisms that explain the differences in the propensity to participate in secular and religious volunteering between immigrants and natives (Carabain and Bekkers, 2011); however, we do not know their relative importance.

Second, the previous research has used separate logistic regression models or conducted mediation analysis with logistic regression models without recognizing that non-linear models such as logistic regression models are not directly comparable across models due to scaling bias (Mood, 2010). To circumvent problems with scaling bias, I use logistic

regression models based on the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) method, which avoids mixing the confounding effects and scaling bias (Karlson and Holm, 2011; Karlson, Holm and Breen, 2012). Because the KHB method allows for the comparison of non-linear models across models, it can be used as a tool for mediation analysis with non-linear models (Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013). This property of the KHB method allows me to decompose the total effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering into a direct and indirect effect via socio-economic status (SES), informal social networks, generalized social trust, self-rated health, and the intergenerational transmission of volunteering. Next, I decompose the total effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in religious volunteering into a direct and indirect effect via religiosity.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Volunteering is defined as unpaid organized work that is freely undertaken and performed for formal organizations, usually within voluntary associations, but also in public and corporate organizational settings. I distinguish between two types of volunteering.

Religious volunteering refers to voluntary activities that are performed for religious

institutions such as churches, mosques, synagogues, temples or other religious organizations. It also includes volunteering for religiously based organizations such as the Salvation Army. *Secular volunteering* refers to all other types of non-religious volunteering such as coaching in sports clubs, providing homeless shelters, and campaigning.

The gaps in secular and religious volunteering between immigrants and natives

As noted in the introduction, the gaps in propensity to volunteer between immigrants and natives, with natives being more likely to volunteer, are well-documented in numerous European countries (Eimhjellen and Seggaard, 2010; Svedberg, von Essen and Jegermalm, 2010; Aleksynska, 2011; Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Voicu and Șerban, 2012; Fridberg and Qvist, 2014; Qvist, 2014). The gaps seem to narrow with the length of residency; however, they remain significant across the life course (Aleksynska, 2011; Voicu and Șerban, 2012).

The previous descriptive evidence from Denmark shows that 21 % of non-Western immigrants participate in some type of volunteering compared to 35 % among natives (Qvist, 2014). The descriptive evidence from the other Scandinavian countries mirrors the Danish patterns. Using data from Sweden, Svedberg & Jegermalm (2010) find that 32.6 %

of first-generation immigrants volunteer compared to 42.2 % of second-generation immigrants, and 47.1 % of native Swedes. Using data from Norway, Eimhjellen & Seegaard (2010) find that 36 % of non-Western immigrants volunteer compared to 49 % of native Norwegians.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of distinguishing between secular and religious volunteering when comparing the propensity to volunteer between immigrants and natives (Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Wang and Handy, 2014). Thus, Carabain & Bekkers (2011) use data from the Netherlands to show that native Dutch are more likely to volunteer for secular causes; however, immigrants are more likely to volunteer for religious causes. This result has not been replicated using Danish data; however, I expect to find a similar pattern. Therefore, my first two hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: Non-Western immigrants are less likely to participate in secular volunteering compared to natives

H₂: Non-Western immigrants are more likely to participate in religious volunteering compared to natives

Different types of volunteering – different explanations

The previous research provides different explanations for secular and religious volunteering (Wilson and Janoski, 1995; Becker and Dhingra, 2001; Uslander, 2002). Secular volunteering is expectedly explained by resource theories of volunteering that suggest that participation in volunteering is explained by a surplus of social and economic resources (Wilson and Musick, 1997a; Musick and Wilson, 2008). Because non-Western immigrants in Denmark are a disadvantaged social group in terms of social and economic resources compared to natives, it is reasonable to assume that differences in social and economic resources partially explain the gap in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives.

Religious volunteering is strongly connected with norms and values, especially religious values. Not surprisingly, participation in religious volunteering has been found to be associated with church attendance, religious involvement and religiosity (Uslander, 2002). Because non-Western immigrants in Denmark are generally more religious compared to natives (Andersen and Luchau, 2011), this might partially explain why they are more likely to participate in religious volunteering compared to natives.

It is clear that religious volunteering is associated not only with religious values but also with social and economic resources. Some of the previous research even suggests that the main mechanism that drives the association between church attendance and religious

involvement is found in the informal social networks that are generated from participation in these religious social settings (Becker and Dhingra, 2001). However, given that non-Western immigrants are on average *less* privileged in terms of economic and social resources compared to natives (see table 1), this evidently cannot explain whether they are *more* likely to participate in religious volunteering as I expect.

Following this overarching idea, I discuss below why and how different indicators of economic and social resources (SES, self-rated health, informal social networks, generalized trust, and the intergenerational transmission of volunteering) can each be expected to partially explain the gap in the propensity to participate in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives. Next, I discuss why and how differences in levels of religiosity can be expected to partially explain the difference in the propensity to participate in religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives.

Explaining the gap in secular volunteering

SES. Volunteering is consistently found to be more common among people of higher socioeconomic status (SES) (Musick and Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Many reasons have been suggested as to why SES could drive volunteering. First, education and experience

from paid work provide people with the resources or civic skills that qualify them for volunteer work such as reading and writing skills that make them more comfortable with meetings and typical organizational work (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Wilson and Musick, 1997b). Second, education is likely to induce norms and values that support volunteering (Son and Wilson, 2012). Third, education, job status, and high earnings send a signal of ability that increases the chances of being asked or recruited for volunteering (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

Not surprisingly, most studies that focus on volunteering by immigrants mirror the positive effects of SES on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; Sundeen, Garcia and Raskoff, 2009; Carabain and Bekkers, 2011; Lee and Moon, 2011; Sinha, Greenspan and Handy, 2011; Wang and Handy, 2014). On these grounds, I expect inequality in SES to partially explain the gap in participation in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives because non-Western immigrants in Denmark are on average less educated and more loosely connected to the labor market compared to natives (Hussain, 2003). Accordingly, my third hypothesis is as follows:

H₃: The gap in propensity to participate in secular volunteering is partially explained by differences in SES

Health. Another individual resource that has been found to be associated with volunteering is health (Wilson and Musick, 1997a). Clearly, poor health can be a substantial barrier that can render volunteering bothersome or even impossible. Moreover, many people engage in volunteering after retirement (Hank and Stuck, 2008; Frederiksen and Qvist, 2015); however, health has been found to play a decisive role in whether volunteering is taken up after retirement (Erlinghagen, 2010).

In Denmark, non-Western immigrants on average have poorer health compared to natives measured both in terms of self-rated health and mortality (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2006). I thus expect health to partially explain the gap in propensity to participate in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives. Accordingly, my fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H₄: The gap in propensity to participate in secular volunteering is partially explained by health differences

Informal social networks. A valuable resource to the individual is informal social networks because important resources can be accessed or mobilized through ties in such networks (Lin, 2001). Informal social networks hence provide valuable resources and information, which may improve opportunities to volunteer (Wilson and Musick, 1998; Musick and Wilson, 2008) and increase the likelihood of being asked to volunteer, which is itself one of the most important predictors of volunteering (Wilson, 2012). Moreover, it is empirically well supported that volunteers are often recruited through family, friends, neighbors or colleagues who already volunteer (Dekker and Halman, 2003).

Distinctions can be made between the different dimensions of informal social networks. In particular, two important dimensions are the frequency of contact with ties and the quality of resources to which the ties give access (Marsden and Campbell, 1984). Frequency of contact is important because the amount of time that people spend with family and friends is known to be associated with volunteering (Wilson and Musick, 1998; Dekker and Halman, 2003) because the amount of time that people spend with family and friends increases the chances of being recruited.

However, the utility of informal social networks is not solely a question of quantity but also of the quality of resources to which the social network provides access (Marsden and Campbell, 1984). Accordingly, it is important to take into account not only how much

time people spend with family and friends but also with whom they spend it. In particular, knowing people in privileged social positions has been found to be important (Lin, 2001).

Given that many non-Western immigrants suffer a social capital deficit (Behtoui, 2007), which constrains their ability to gain important resources from their networks, we should expect differences in the strength and quality of informal social networks to explain some of the gap in the propensity to participate in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives. Accordingly, my fifth hypothesis is as follows:

H₅: The gap in propensity to participate in secular volunteering is partially explained by differences in the strength and quality of informal social networks

Generalized social trust. Social trust enables people to feel comfortable around other people, which can be an important prerequisite in terms of participation in volunteering. A large body of evidence supports that social trust and volunteering are positively associated (Putnam, 2000; Brown and Ferris, 2007); however, the magnitude and direction of the association remain heavily debated (Van Ingen and Bekkers, 2015).

The research shows that the non-Western immigrants in Denmark have lower levels of generalized social trust compared to the natives (Dinesen, 2012). Moreover,

some of the previous research suggests that generalized social trust is not positively associated with participation in secular volunteering among immigrants, which may be attributed to their socially and economically disadvantaged position in society (Wang and Handy, 2014). Because generalized social trust enables participation in volunteering, differences in levels of generalized trust can be expected to partially explain the gap in participation in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives. Accordingly, my sixth hypothesis is as follows:

H₆: The gap in propensity to participate in secular volunteering is partially explained by differences in levels of generalized trust

The intergenerational transmission of volunteering. The associational culture that is found in Western countries is often unfamiliar to non-Western immigrant families when they arrive in their host countries (Voicu, 2014). This can be a substantial barrier to volunteering because the practice of volunteering is known to be intergenerationally transmitted within families through direct and indirect mechanisms. The direct mechanism refers to children who mimic their parents' volunteer behavior due to value internalization or to obtain their

parents' approval (Bekkers, 2007), while the indirect mechanisms include the transmission of social status, educational attainment or religiosity, which may also promote volunteering (Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Mustillo, Wilson and Lynch, 2004; Bekkers, 2007).

Because the qualitative evidence suggests that many non-Western immigrant families in Denmark are not familiar with the associational culture that is found in Western countries (Christensen, 2008), I expect a lack of the intergenerational transmission of volunteering to explain some of the gap in the propensity to participate in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrant and natives. Thus, my seventh hypothesis is as follows:

H7: The gap in the propensity to participate in secular volunteering is partially explained by differences in the intergenerational transmission of volunteering

Explaining the Gap in Religious Volunteering

Religiosity. A factor that is often found to be linked with participation in volunteering is religiosity (Wilson and Janoski, 1995; Musick, Wilson and Bynum, 2000; Lam, 2006).

People who find religion to be important in life are found to be more likely to volunteer (Becker and Dhingra, 2001). This can be explained by normative theory, which argues that

religiosity supports values that foster volunteer behavior (Son and Wilson, 2012). Another argument for the positive influence of religiosity would be that people form social ties through religious activities (Lam, 2002). Therefore, given that the non-Western immigrants in Denmark are on average more religious compared to the natives (Andersen and Luchau, 2011), I expect religiosity to partially explain the gap in the propensity to participate in religious volunteering. Accordingly, my eighth hypothesis is as follows:

H₈: The difference in the propensity to participate in religious volunteering is partially explained by differences in religiosity

Data, measures, and analytical strategy

Data

For the analysis, I use comprehensive survey data that were collected in 2012 combined with administrative register data from Denmark. In Denmark, all of the residents are required to hold a unique personal identification number in the Danish Civil Registration

System, which makes it possible to merge information from surveys with highly reliable information from administrative registers at the individual level.

Following Statistics Denmark, non-Western immigrants are defined as persons who were born abroad to parents who are not Danish citizens or born in Denmark. Western countries include all of the EU-countries plus Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, The Vatican, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. The Civil Registration System made it possible to randomly select 2200 first-generation non-Western immigrants, aged 16 to 86, who have lived in Denmark for the past five years for telephone interviews with personal follow-up for those who could not be contacted by telephone (Fridberg and Henriksen, 2014). The latter sample restriction of only non-Western immigrants who have lived in Denmark for the past five years ensures that guest workers who only live temporarily in the country with no interest in volunteering are excluded from the sample, which makes comparison between non-Western immigrants and natives more feasible. Out of the 2200 non-Western immigrants who were randomly selected for a telephone interview; 960 chose to participate (response rate 44 %). The response rate is not ideal; however, it reflects that non-Western immigrants are more difficult to reach with surveys compared to native Danes (Deding, Fridberg and Jakobsen, 2008). Moreover, it should be noted that language proficiency is to some extent implicitly

controlled in the analysis because all of the respondents speak Danish at a level at which they could complete the interview in Danish.

In addition to the sample of non-Western immigrants, the survey contains a sample of the general population, aged 16 to 86. This sample contains 2809 participants (response rate 67 %) (Fridberg and Henriksen, 2014). In this sample, which is representative of the Danish population, I identified an additional 97 non-Western immigrants who lived in Denmark for at least five years. Therefore, the total sample of non-Western immigrants is 1057. After pooling the data and excluding respondents with missing values on the variables that I use in the analyses, I end up with a total analysis sample of 3541 respondents including 883 non-Western immigrants and 2658 natives.

Measures

Dependent variables. In the analysis, I use two binary dependent variables: participation in secular volunteering and participation in religious volunteering. I do not include information about time use for volunteering but exclusively focus on explaining the gaps in participation because the previous research suggests that participation and time use is explained by different mechanisms (Forbes and Zampelli, 2011; Qvist, 2015).

In the survey, the respondent was prompted about their participation within the previous year in 14 different areas of volunteering¹. *Religious volunteering* is an indicator that is equal to 1 if the respondent reports to have volunteered within the area of religion within the past year, and 0 otherwise. *Secular volunteering* is an indicator variable that is equal to 1 if the respondent reports to have volunteered within the past year within at least one of the non-religious areas and 0 otherwise².

Independent variable. Information on ethnicity (being a non-Western immigrant or a native) is based on information from administrative registers. The three most frequent countries of origin in the sample of non-Western immigrants are Turkey (13.4 %), Iraq (9.9 %), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (9.1 %) (the distribution of countries of origin in the sample is presented in table A1 in the online appendix).

Mediators. I measure SES with three indicators: educational level, income decile, and occupational prestige measured with the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS) (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996, 2010). Educational level follows the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and is based on information from administrative registers. It is measured as highest completed education of six levels from primary school to doctoral qualifications. Income decile is based on information from administrative registers about personal income, where it is calculated from annual tax

returns. I use income in deciles because relative income is assumed to be more important than absolute income to determine SES. Finally, I include the SIOPS³ to capture the subjective dimensions of SES that are related to some occupations being deemed to be more prestigious than others. The SIOPS scale has recently been adapted to the sub-major groups in the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) from 2008 (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2010), which I have followed to create a SIOPS scale using administrative register data (a SIOPS score of 15 was assigned to respondents who were out of the labor force). All three measures were standardized before creating the SES variable as an additive scale.

Self-rated health is an ordinal scaled measure based on the question ‘How is your health in general?’ With answers that range among 5 categories from ‘very bad’ to ‘very good.’ Ideally, the self-rated health measure that I include as a proxy for health should be supplemented with more objective measures. Nevertheless, self-rated health is consistently found to be a strong predictor of objective health measures such as mortality (Idler and Benyamini, 1997).

I measure informal social networks with a scale that contains both the frequency of contact and tie quality to capture both of the dimensions of informal social networks (Marsden and Campbell, 1984, 2012). Frequency of contact is measured by asking the

respondent about the frequency of contact with each of the following groups: ‘family and relatives,’ ‘neighbors and others in the local community,’ ‘friends and acquaintances outside of the local community,’ ‘former colleagues, present colleagues,’ and ‘others’ with answer categories that range from ‘no contact’ to ‘every day.’ Tie quality is measured by asking the respondent whether there is someone in her family or social circle that 1) ‘would be able to help you to find a job if necessary?’ 2) ‘would be able to lend you a large amount of money if you need it; for example (20,000 kr. [2,687 Euro per 18/11-2016])?’ and 3) ‘are in an executive position in the business world, in public administration, or in political life?’ I have created an additive index for tie quality by assigning 1 to each positive answer. Finally, I standardize the two measures for frequency of contact and tie quality to construct a scale for social networks.

I measure generalized trust by the traditional question ‘In general, do you think that most people can be trusted, or you can’t be too careful in dealing with people’ with answers that range on a scale from 0 to 10⁴, which is the same question that is used in large cross-national surveys, for instance, the World Value Survey (see Inglehart, Basanez and Moreno, 2004).

I measure the intergenerational transmission of volunteering with the following question: ‘If you think about your upbringing, would you say there has been a tradition for

volunteering in your family?’ with answers that range among four categories from ‘not at all’ to ‘yes, to a great extent.’

Religiosity is measured using the following question from the survey: ‘How important is religion in your life?’ with answers that range among four categories from ‘not important at all’ to ‘very important.’

Controls. In addition to the proposed mediating variables, I include a set of covariates. I include a measure for informal helping, which captures the number of hours that the respondent reports to have spent on informal helping activities within the previous year⁵. I control for informal helping because it is sometimes argued that immigrants typically prefer to engage in informal helping activities rather than in formal volunteer work (Carson, 1999). Other scholars argue that cultural barriers combined with a strong sense of collective identity that is reinforced by a minority position lead first generation immigrants to help their own group rather than engaging in wider participation (Uslaner and Conley, 2003; Lee and Moon, 2011). Typically, studies that control for informal helping include only an indicator variable; however, given that the argument is that time spent on informal helping substitutes formal volunteering among immigrants, it seems to be considerably more adequate to control for the hours that are spent on informal helping activities.

I control for children in the household measured in four categories: ‘no children,’ ‘pre-school children,’ ‘school-children,’ and ‘both types of children.’ I include length of residence in the local community measured in years because people with a strong sense of community attachment are found to be more likely to volunteer. Finally, I include gender and age. I include age squared because the propensity to volunteer is found to peak in the middle of the life-cycle (Van Ingen, 2008).

Table 1 provides descriptive summary statistics of the variables.

[TABLE 1]

Analytical Strategy

I use binary logistic regression models based on the KHB method to decompose the effect of being a non-Western immigrant into total, direct, and indirect effects (Karlson and Holm, 2011; Karlson, Holm and Breen, 2012; Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013). The KHB method extends the decomposition properties of linear models to non-linear models by ensuring that crude and adjusted coefficients are measured on the same scale, thereby allowing for the separation of confounding from scaling bias. The properties of the KHB method allow me to compare the crude uncontrolled estimates of the effect of being a non-Western immigrant on secular and religious volunteering (the total effects) with adjusted estimates

of the effects (the direct effects). The indirect effect (the part of the effects that is mediated or ‘explained’) is then equal to the difference between the total effect and the direct effect. To apply the KHB method I have used the ‘khh’ command with Stata 14 software (Kohler, Karlson and Holm, 2011). I use robust standard errors in all models to correct for heteroskedasticity due to the oversampling procedure.

Results

Descriptive findings on the gaps between non-Western immigrants and natives

The descriptive statistics in table 1 show that there are marked differences in terms of secular volunteering between the non-Western immigrants and the natives. On a descriptive level, approximately 19 % of the non-Western immigrants participate in secular volunteering compared to 34 % among the natives, which is a highly significant difference ($p < 0.001$). Surprisingly, however, on a descriptive level, the non-Western immigrants are not significantly more likely to volunteer for religious causes. Approximately 3 % of the non-Western immigrants report participation in religious volunteering compared to 2 % of the native population. However, these results should be interpreted in light of the fact that a very small share of the population in Denmark participates in religious volunteering

compared to other countries such as the Netherlands or the US where approximately 11 % and 37 % of the population participate in religious volunteering (Hodgkinson, 2003).

The descriptive statistics in table 1 show that the non-Western immigrants score significantly lower on SES, self-rated health, informal social networks, generalized social trust, intergenerational transmission, and community attachment. However, the non-Western immigrants are more religious and more likely to have children in the household, and they are on average significantly younger compared to the natives. Finally, we see that the non-Western immigrants spend no more time on informal helping compared to the natives; if anything, the descriptive statistics suggest the opposite.

Explaining the gaps in secular and religious volunteering

In table 2, the results of the decomposition of the effect of being a non-Western immigrant on secular and religious volunteering into total, direct, and indirect effects via the various mediators are presented. First, we learn that the total effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering is negative and highly significant, which supports hypothesis 1. The average marginal effect indicates that the non-Western immigrants are approximately 17 percentage points less likely to participate in

secular volunteering compared to the natives conditional on the length of residency, time spent on informal helping, religiosity, children in the household, gender, and age.

Moreover, we learn that the total effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in religious volunteering is positive and marginally significant at the 10 %-level, conditional on the factors that are included in the model, which thus supports hypothesis 2. The marginal effect indicates that the non-Western immigrants are approximately 1.3 percentage-points more likely to participate in religious volunteering, conditional on all of the included controls.

[TABLE 2]

The next step is to evaluate whether and to what extent the proposed mediators can explain the effects of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in secular and religious volunteering. First, we decompose the effect of being a Non-Western immigrant on secular volunteering. From the decomposition, we learn that approximately 52 % of the total effect is explained by indirect effects via SES, self-rated health, informal social networks, generalized social trust, and intergenerational transmission. We see that all of the indirect effects are significant, which thus supports hypotheses 3 through 7 (ordinary logistic regression models, as well as separate models for the non-Western immigrants and

natives predicting secular volunteering, are available in the online appendix; see tables A3 and A4⁶). In the language of counterfactuals, this result suggests that the gap in secular volunteering between the non-Western immigrants and the natives in Denmark would be less than half the size had the non-Western immigrants been equally privileged in terms of their social and economic resources.

With regard to the relative importance of the different mediators, we learn that strength and quality of informal social networks are the strongest mediators, which explains approximately 20 % of the total effect of being a non-Western immigrant on secular volunteering. The second-most important mediators ordered by their relative importance are as follows: SES (which explains approximately 13 %), intergenerational transmission of volunteering (which explains approximately 9.5 %), and self-rated health and generalized trust, each of which explain approximately 4.7 %. If we review the AMEs, we find that the remainder direct effect when the indirect effects are conditioned out is -0.086, which means that the non-Western immigrants are “only” approximately 8.6 percentage points less likely to engage in secular volunteering conditional on informal social networks, SES, self-rated health, intergenerational transmission, and the other control variables.

Next, we decompose the effect on religious volunteering. The decomposition of the total effect indicates that the positive total effect is completely mediated (or explained) by a

positive indirect effect via religiosity, which is almost three times stronger in magnitude than the total effect and highly significant ($p < 0.001$), which thus supports hypothesis 8 (ordinary logistic regression models, as well as separate models for the non-Western immigrants and natives, predicting religious volunteering are available in the online appendix; see tables A5 and A6)⁷. In fact, given that the indirect effect via religiosity is conditioned out, the results suggest a significant negative direct AME of being a non-Western immigrant of approximately 2.3 % points ($p < 0.001$). In the language of counterfactuals, this result suggests that the non-Western immigrants in Denmark would actually be less likely to participate in religious volunteering compared to natives had they not, on average, been significantly more religious.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this paper, I set out to examine the gaps in the propensity to participate in secular and religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark. Using high-quality survey data linked with data from administrative registers, I show that the non-Western immigrants are significantly less likely to participate in secular volunteering compared to the natives; however, over half of this gap (approximately 52 %)

is explained by variations in SES, self-rated health, informal social networks, generalized trust and the intergenerational transmission of volunteering. This result suggests that the gap in secular volunteering between the non-Western immigrants and the natives in Denmark would be less than half the size had the non-Western immigrants been equally privileged in terms of social and economic resources.

The results suggest that the difference in the quality and strength of informal social network ties is the strongest mediator of the negative effect of being non-Western on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering. Differences in the quality and strength of informal social network ties alone explain approximately a fifth of the gap between the non-Western immigrants and the natives. It is somewhat surprising that the quality and strength of informal social network ties seem to be more important than SES. However, it may not be that surprising given that we know from numerous empirical studies that being asked to volunteer is the most important determinant of being recruited (Wilson, 2012). An implication of the result is that social integration into informal networks is not only to be conceived as a consequence of volunteering, but it is also an important prerequisite in terms of getting involved – especially for immigrants in a new environment. This implies that most immigrants, to some extent, need to be embedded in informal social networks if they are to use volunteering as a stepping stone towards integration.

The previous research has not considered a lack of intergenerational transmission of volunteering as a mediating factor to explain some of the gap in secular volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives. However, I show that the lack of intergenerational transmission explains nearly 10 % of the gap in secular volunteering, which is nearly as much as SES. In this study, only first generation immigrants are included; however, the results may suggest that the gap between immigrants and natives could be passed on to future generations.

The fact that I am able to explain approximately half of the effect of being a non-Western immigrant based on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering implies that the remaining half of the effect is left unexplained by SES, self-rated health, informal social network, generalized trust, and the intergenerational transmission of volunteering. Given that only half of the effect is explained by these important factors, the remaining half of the effect must be attributed to other factors such as discrimination, cultural differences, and/or language barriers. On the grounds of this paper, I can only speculate about the relative importance of these factors because I do not include direct measures, but it would be a highly interesting topic for further research.

In line with the previous research, I show that non-Western immigrants are more likely to participate in religious volunteering, conditional on SES, self-rated health,

informal social networks, community attachment, time spent on informal helping, religiosity, children in the household, gender, and age. This result corroborates with previous experiences from other European countries such as the Netherlands (Carabain and Bekkers, 2011). However, I show that the positive effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in religious volunteering is completely mediated by religiosity. In fact, when the indirect effect via religiosity is conditioned out, the results indicate a significant negative direct effect of being a non-Western immigrant on the propensity to participate in religious volunteering. This result suggests that the non-Western immigrants in Denmark would be less likely to participate in religious volunteering compared to the natives had they not, on average, been significantly more religious. This implies that very few, if any, non-Western immigrants participate in religious volunteering without being religious. This may indicate that volunteering in religious organizations in Denmark to a very little extent function as a venue for social gatherings without religious involvement.

Finally, important limitations of the paper need to be highlighted. First, a natural cause of concern is the comparability of survey measures between non-Western immigrants and natives. The previous research highlights that survey questions about volunteering behavior may be perceived differently by immigrants and natives (Carson, 1999).

Moreover, Carson (1999) suggests that some racial and ethnic groups may be more likely to engage in informal helping activities rather than formal volunteering. However, this view is not supported by the data that I use because the results suggest that the non-Western immigrants do not spend more time on informal helping activities than the natives (see table 1). One may also worry about different perceptions of a question that measures generalized social trust; however, the previous methodological research suggests that it is relatively safe to compare the generalized trust question between immigrants and natives in a Danish context (Dinesen, 2011). Second, the results concerning the gap in religious volunteering between the non-Western immigrants and the natives is only marginally significant at the 10 %-level in the multivariate analysis. The reason that the result is only marginally significant is not only because of a small effect size but also because small shares of the non-Western immigrants and the natives participate in religious volunteering in Denmark (3 % and 2 %, respectively), which makes it difficult to obtain statistically significant results within the available sample size.

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Notes

1. The categorization of areas includes the following: culture, sports, hobbies, education, health, social services, environment, housing and community, unions and work organizations, advice and legal assistance, political parties, international organizations, and other.
2. The survey methodological research shows that an extensive survey module, which prompts about participation in different areas, provides more accurate estimates of volunteering behavior compared to less extensive or single item approaches (Rooney, Steinberg and Schervish, 2004).
3. The SIOPS scale was originally created by harmonizing over 60 national occupational prestige scales (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996)
4. I have replaced 44 individuals who responded ‘don’t know’ to the generalized social trust question with the mean.
5. Although I argue that it is important to control for informal helping, I am aware of the potential endogeneity problems that can be created by introducing this variable. I have estimated the models that are reported in the paper without controlling for informal helping; these models yield almost identical results (see table A2 in the online appendix).

6. Table A3 in the online appendix presents the results from ordinary logistic regression models, which show that all of the proposed mediators have significant positive effects on the propensity to participate in secular volunteering, as is expected. Table A4 in the online appendix presents the results from a separate logistic regression for the non-Western immigrants and the natives, which additionally shows that all of the proposed mediators have positive effects for both the non-Western immigrants and the natives.
7. Table A5 in the online appendix suggests that in addition to religiosity, only tradition for volunteering in the family, gender, children in the household, and age significantly predict religious volunteering. Accordingly, SES, strength and quality of informal social network ties, generalized social trust appear to be unrelated to religious volunteering. Although tradition in the family has a significant positive effect on the propensity to participate in religious volunteering, it does not explain the gap in religious volunteering between the non-Western immigrants and the natives because the non-Western immigrants are unconditionally more likely to participate in religious volunteering but less likely to report that participation in volunteering is a tradition in the family. Moreover, table A6 in the online appendix suggests that self-rated health significantly predicts religious volunteering among

the non-Western immigrants, but given that the non-Western immigrants on average have worse health than the natives, this evidently cannot explain why they are conditionally more likely to participate in religious volunteering compared to the natives.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	Non-Western Immigrants (N = 883)		Natives (N = 2658)		Difference in means
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Secular volunteering	0.19	0.39	0.34	0.47	***
Religious volunteering	0.03	0.16	0.02	0.15	
SES	-0.59	2.16	0.29	2.51	***
Self-rated health	3.83	1.18	4.15	0.96	***
Social network	-0.55	1.67	0.26	1.50	***
Generalized social trust	6.04	2.05	6.98	1.97	***
Tradition in the family	0.72	1.08	0.90	1.12	***
Length of residence	10.67	9.16	18.95	16.19	***
Informal helping hours	5.54	17.73	6.47	17.26	
Religiosity	2.57	1.13	1.78	0.84	***
<i>Children in the household:</i>					
No children	0.52	0.50	0.71	0.46	***
Pre-school children	0.10	0.31	0.07	0.26	***
School children	0.26	0.44	0.17	0.37	***
Both	0.12	0.32	0.05	0.23	***
Female	0.54	0.50	0.53	0.50	
Age	40.19	13.21	47.90	17.42	***

Note: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Decomposition of the effect of being a non-Western immigrant on participation in secular and religious volunteering.

	Secular Volunteering				Religious volunteering		
	Coefficient		AME		Coefficient		AME
Total effect	-0.958	(0.106)***	-0.169	Total effect	0.628	(0.356)*	0.013
Direct effect	-0.462	(0.114)***	-0.086	Direct effect	-1.237	(0.408)***	-0.023
Indirect effect	-0.496	(0.048)***	-0.083	Indirect effect	1.865	(0.193)***	0.037
Via SES	-0.126	(0.029)***	-0.024	Via religiosity	1.865	(0.193)***	0.037
Via self-rated health	-0.045	(0.020)**	-0.009				
Via informal social networks	-0.189	(0.035)***	-0.036				
Via generalized social trust	-0.045	(0.022)**	-0.009				
Via tradition in the family	-0.091	(0.017)***	-0.018				
Summary							
Mediation percentage	51.76			Mediation percentage	297.10		
Via SES	13.14			Via religiosity	297.10		
Via self-rated health	4.72						
Via Informal social networks	19.69						
Via generalized social trust	4.70						
Via tradition in the family	9.50						
Pseudo R ²	0.08			Pseudo R ²	0.36		
Observations	3541			Observations	3541		

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. In addition to the mediators, the models include controls for: Informal helping hours, children in the household, length of residency in the local community, gender, and age (squared). For full and reduced ordinary logistic regression models see tables A3 and A5 in the online appendix.