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The religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation in England and
Wales: comparing Christian, Muslim and religiously-unaffiliated adolescent males

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Abstract

This study examines the religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation among young people in England and Wales by investigating religious beliefs and the connection between religion and matters of public concern among a sample of 547 adolescent males between 16 and 18 years of age, distinguishing between three religious groups: Christian, Muslim, and non-affiliated. First, the analysis identified eight themes concerning religious beliefs: the Bible, the Qur'an, Jesus, Muhammad, Jesus and justice, Muhammed and justice, experiencing God, and the theology of religions. Second, the analysis identified six themes concerning the connection between religion and matters of public concern: religion and personal life, religion and public life, religion and the state, social rights, the rights of women and children, and sex and morality. The data highlighted some areas of commonality and some areas of strong divergence between the three groups, demonstrating how the religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation hold salience in some areas rather than others.

Introduction

The religious landscape of England and Wales has undergone rapid and radical change since the early 1950s. On the one hand, church attendance has declined and churches and chapels have been demolished or turned to secular uses (country cottages and innercity warehouses). Some commentators have spoken confidently of *The making of post-Christian Britain* (Gilbert, 1980), and of *The death of Christian Britain* (Brown, 2001). On the other hand, other major world faiths have taken root, especially in some of the major cities. Mosques, Temples, Gurdwaras, and Synagogues witness to these traditions nestling alongside longer-established churches and chapels. Some commentators have spoken confidently of the growth of religious diversity in the UK (see Parsons, 1993, 1994; Wolffe, 1993; Weller, 2008).

Religion is far from being a simple or unidimensional construct. The public face of religious diversity is generally discussed in terms of religious affiliation (Christian, Muslim, Sikh, no religion, and so on) rather than in terms of religious beliefs or religious practice. Religious affiliation is both the most readily available and least understood indicator of religiosity within the social scientific literature. It is readily available because religious affiliation is regarded as an aspect of personal and social identity (like sex, age, and ethnicity), and properly included within public enquiries like the national Census. In this sense, 'religious affiliation' is regarded as belonging to the public and social domain, in marked contrast to 'religious beliefs' and 'religious practices' which are generally regarded as belonging to the private and personal domain, properly protected from public scrutiny. It is poorly understood because both conceptually and empirically religious affiliation seems to function quite differently from the ways in which other indicators of religiosity (like beliefs and practices) function. As a consequence, religious affiliation acts as a relatively poor predictor of other religious indicators.

The debate about the usefulness of religious affiliation as an indicator in social research was brought to particular prominence in England and Wales in the six-year period prior to the 2001 national Census, when the introduction of a religious affiliation question within the Census was seriously debated for the first time (Francis, 2003; Weller, 2004; Sherif, 2011). The major argument against accepting religious affiliation as a useful variable in the Census in England and Wales was based on a failure to understand affiliation as a serious social indicator in its own right, but to see it only as a poor predictor of other religious dimensions. Similar debates have occurred in other countries such as New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 1998).

The religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation has been demonstrated by a number of recent analyses of the data generated by the British Social Attitudes Survey, conducted every year since 1983 apart from 1988 and 1992. Significant contributions to this debate have been made by chapters published in annual reviews employing these data, including Stratford and Christie (2000), Barlow, Duncan, James, and Park (2001), Stratford, Marteau, and Bobrow (2001), Gould and Stratford (2002), Park and Surridge (2003), Sturgis, Cooper, Fife-Schaw, and Shepherd (2004), Heath, Martin, and Elgenius (2007), and Clery, McLean, and Phillips (2007). Findings from the British Social Attitudes Survey on the religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation have also been published in a number of independent papers, including Hayes (1995), Hayes and Marangudakis (2001), Francis (2003), and Barlow, Duncan, James, and Park (2005). The majority of these studies drawing on the British Social Attitudes Survey data to explore the significance of self-assigned religious affiliation have focused on differences between different Christian denominations rather than on differences between different faith traditions. As Francis, Williams, and Village (2011) discovered, generally the major faith traditions are insufficiently represented within the data to provide meaningful analyses.

A more successful attempt to explore the religious and social significance of self-assigned religious affiliation across the faith traditions has been demonstrated by recent analyses of the data generated by the Teenage Religion and Values Survey, conducted in the 1990s and launched by Francis (2001a). For example, Francis (2001b, 2001c) compared the responses of the young people who self-identified as Christians (13,676), Muslims (349), Sikhs (125), Hindus (125) and Jews (71), alongside those who owned no religious affiliation (13,360).

In the first of these two papers, Francis (2001b) profiled the association between faith-group affiliation and aspects of religious belief, personal values, family values and social values. In terms of religious belief, the data demonstrated a closer association between affiliation and belief among non-Christian faith groups than among Christians. Thus, belief in God was reported by 92% of Muslims, 79% of Hindus, 74% of Sikhs, and 65% of Jews, compared with 55% of Christians. At the same time, belief in God was not restricted to those who owned religious affiliation: 24% of the non-affiliates also believed in God.

In terms of personal values, a clear association was found between faith-group affiliation and purpose in life, although levels of purpose in life varied from one faith group to another. While 50% of the young people who belonged to no faith group reported that their life had a sense of purpose, the proportions rose to 51% among Sikhs, 61% among Christians, 62% among Hindus, 64% among Jews, and 68% among Muslims.

In terms of family value, a clear association was found between faith-group affiliation and support received in the home from the mother. The differences, however, were not always in favour of the faith groups. While 47% of the young people who belonged to no faith group found it helpful to talk about their problems with their mother, the proportions fell to 45% among Sikhs and to 40% among Hindus, but rose to 52% among Muslims, 53% among Christians, and 71% among Jews.

In terms of social values, a clear association was found between faith group affiliation and attitudes toward the police. While 51% of the young people who belonged to no faith group considered that the police do a good job, the proportions fell to 49% among Muslims, 40% among Hindus, and 35% among Sikhs, but rose to 55% among Jews, and 59% among Christians.

In the second paper pursuing this theme, Francis (2001c) provided analyses on the association between faith-group affiliation and attitudes toward school, sex, alcohol, environment and leisure. In terms of attitude toward school, there was a clear association between faith-group affiliation and bullying. While 25% of the young people who belonged to no faith group were worried about being bullied at school, the proportions rose to 30% among Christians, 31% among Muslims, 32% among Jews, 34% among Sikhs, and 39% among Hindus.

In terms of attitude toward sex, a clear link remained between faith-group affiliation and more traditional views. While 10% of the young people who belonged to no faith group took the view that it is wrong to have sexual intercourse outside marriage, the proportions rose to 15% among Christians, 23% among Jews, 23% among Sikhs, 27% among Hindus, and 48% among Muslims.

In terms of attitude toward alcohol, a clear link between faith-group affiliation and more traditional views also persisted. While 17% of the young people who belonged to no faith group took the view that it is wrong to become drunk, the proportions rose to 21% among Christians, 21% among Jews, 33% among Sikhs, 33% among Hindus, and 68% among Muslims.

In terms of attitude toward environment issues, some very interesting differences emerged between faith groups. While 63% of the young people who belonged to no faith group expressed concern about the risk of pollution to the environment, the proportions

dropped slightly to 61% among both Muslims and Sikhs, but rose to 68% among Hindus, 72% among Christians, and 76% among Jews.

In terms of attitude toward leisure, some very interesting differences emerged in terms of issues concerning parental supervision. While 19% of the young people who belonged to no faith group and 20% of Christians said that their parents prefer them to stay at home as much as possible, the proportions dropped to 11% among Jews, but rose to 39% among Hindus, 51% among Muslims, and 57% among Sikhs.

Research question

Against this background the aim of the present study is to build on and to extend the findings presented by Francis (2001b, 2001c) by drawing on a more recent survey conducted as part of a project conducted in a number of European countries concerned with the connection between religion, values and human rights among 16- to 18-year-old adolescents. The data collected in England and Wales as part of this survey allow clear comparisons to be made between three groups of young people: Christians, Muslims, and religiously unaffiliated students, both in terms of religious beliefs and in terms of publicly significant values.

Because sex differences are often highly significant within the field of social and personal correlates of religion (see Francis, 1997), the present analysis will be conducted only among the male participants in the survey. A subsequent study will examine the responses of the female participants, since there is insufficient space in one paper to do justice to the sex differences across so many variables.

Method

Procedure

The survey was conducted within selected schools in England and Wales where there was a good mix of Christian, Muslim and religiously-unaffiliated students. Within

participating schools complete classes of year 12 and year 13 students (16- to 18-year-olds) were invited to take part in the survey. Students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Although all pupils were given the choice not to participate, very few decided not to take part in the survey.

Instrument

In addition to a number of demographic and background questions, the questionnaire contained 152 well-focused statements, to which students responded on a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932): *agree strongly*, *agree*, *not certain*, *disagree*, and *disagree strongly*. For the purposes of the present analysis 14 themes were selected from the issues available in the survey, eight themes concerning religious beliefs and six themes concerning the connection between religion and matters of public concern. The eight religious themes concerned the Bible, the Qur'an, Jesus, Muhammad, Jesus and justice, Muhammad and justice, theology of religions, and experiencing God. The other six themes concerned religion and personal life, religion and public life, religion and the state, social rights, the rights of women and children, and sex and morality.

Within the questionnaire, self-assigned religious affiliation was established by responses to the following question: 'My personal religion/worldview is', followed by a range of options, including 'non-religious', 'Christian' and 'Muslim'.

Analysis

The analysis is based on the 547 male students who identified themselves as Christian (N = 224), as Muslim (N = 111), or as religiously-unaffiliated (N = 212). Tables 1 to 14 present the proportions of those three groups of students who either agreed strongly or agreed with the statements, collapsed into one category. The chi-square test of statistical significance was calculated by comparing the combined agree strongly and agree responses with the combined disagree strongly, disagree and uncertain responses.

Results

Table 1 demonstrates that the Christian students show considerable respect for the Bible: 61% regard the Bible as the word of God and 56% regard the Bible as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life. A third of them think of the Bible as a divine book to be taken literally (35%). The religiously-unaffiliated students show little respect for the Bible: 58% regard the Bible as just a collection of human cultural texts and only 11% see the Bible as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life. The Muslim students show more respect for the Bible than the religiously-unaffiliated students, but less respect than the Christian students: 23% of the Muslim students regard the Bible as the word of God, and 30% regard the Bible as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life.

Table 2 demonstrates that Muslim students regard the Qur'an more highly than the Christian students regard the Bible: 96% regard the Qur'an as the word of Allah, and 83% regard the Qur'an as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life. Four fifths of them regard the Qur'an as a divine book to be taken literally (83%). The religiously-unaffiliated students show similar levels of respect for the Qur'an as they show for the Bible: 51% regard the Qur'an as just a collection of human cultural texts, and only 11% see the Qur'an as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life. The Christian students show more respect for the Qur'an than the religiously-unaffiliated students, but less respect than the Muslim students: 18% of the Christian students regard the Qur'an as the word of Allah, and 21% regard the Qur'an as a source of inspiration and wisdom for life.

Table 3 demonstrates that the Christian students hold a range of ideas about Jesus, some more orthodox than others: 54% believe that God sent his son Jesus to earth, but the proportion falls to 33% who agree with the belief that before Jesus came to earth he lived with the Father from the beginning. A quarter of the Christian students take the unorthodox view that Jesus was a special person, no more. The religiously-unaffiliated students hold

Jesus in low regard: just 3% agree even with the view that Jesus was a unique teacher as God's spirit of love was in him, and only 28% would go as far as to say that Jesus was a special person. The Muslim students show more respect for Jesus than the religiously-unaffiliated students, but less respect than the Christian students: 37% of the Muslim students believe that Jesus was a unique teacher as God's spirit of love was in him, and 24% believe that God sent his son Jesus to earth.

Table 4 demonstrates that Muslim students are more orthodox in their beliefs about Muhammad than Christian students are in their beliefs about Jesus: 89% believe that Muhammad was sent by Allah as his prophet in order to proclaim his message; 89% believe that Muhammad received special revelations which led him to announce Allah's message; and 84% believe that Muhammad's journey to and union with Allah is absolutely unique. The religiously-unaffiliated students hold Muhammad in low regard, with just 1% believing that Muhammad was sent by Allah as his prophet in order to proclaim his message. Between 10% and 15% of the Christian students agree with the Islamic teaching that Muhammad's journey to and union with Allah is absolutely unique or that Muhammad was sent by Allah as his prophet in order to proclaim his message.

Table 5 demonstrates that four or five out of every ten of the Christian students see Jesus serving as a force for social justice. Thus, 41% see Jesus as working among the marginalised in their struggle for liberation, 43% see Jesus as supporting the poor by liberating them from injustice, and 52% see Jesus as guiding the oppressed to the land of justice and peace. The views of the Muslim students concerning Jesus and social justice are quite close to those of the Christian students. Thus, 42% see Jesus as working among the marginalised in their struggle for liberation, 44% see Jesus guiding the oppressed to the land of justice and peace, and 51% see Jesus supporting the poor by liberating them from injustice. Only a small minority of the religiously-unaffiliated students see Jesus as a source for social

justice.

Table 6 demonstrates that Muslim students have a high regard for Muhammad as a force for social justice. Thus, 90% agree that through Muhammad we learn to strive for the common good of society as a whole, 91% agree that Muhammad motivates us to maintain and strengthen our bond with fellow human beings, and 93% agree that Muhammad teaches us to care for everybody in need and distress. The views of the Christian students are less positive on the connection between Mohammad and social justice than were the views of the Muslim students on the connection between Jesus and social justice. Around one in six of the Christian students believe that Muhammad motivates us to maintain and strengthen our bond with fellow human beings (16%), that Muhammad teaches us to care for everybody in need (17%), or that through Muhammad we learn to strive for the common good of society as a whole (15%). About one in ten of the religiously unaffiliated students affirm the connection between Mohammad and social justice.

Table 7 explores how students who identify themselves with one religion or worldview regard the other religions and worldviews. The exclusivist view that people can only receive the truth in *my* religion or worldview is espoused by 46% of Muslim students, 23% of Christian students, and 15% of religiously-unaffiliated students. The inclusivist view that, compared with *my* religion or worldview, other religions or worldviews do have some aspect of truth, but not the whole of it, is espoused by 57% of Muslim students, 32% of Christian students, and 17% of religiously-unaffiliated students. The pluralist view that all religions or worldviews are equally valuable, and they represent different ways to the truth is espoused by 39% of Muslim students, 37% of Christian students, and 22% of religiously-unaffiliated students. The dialogical view that the way to faith is only found when religions or worldviews have dialogue with one another is espoused by 34% of Muslim students, 22% of Christian students, and 17% of religiously-unaffiliated students. These percentages show how

students have not fully clarified their present position on the theology of religions and may be holding more than one view at the same time.

Table 8 demonstrates that a high proportion of the Muslim students are aware of the presence and experience of God in their everyday lives. Thus, 67% experience God's presence in the beauty of nature, and 67% experience God's goodness in the peace of nature; 78% trust God never to abandon them, and 81% believe God knows and understands them. Awareness of the presence and experience of God is less strong among Christian students than among Muslim students. Thus, 42% experience God's presence in the beauty of nature and 45% experience God's goodness in the peace of nature, 53% believe God knows and understands them, and 59% trust God never to abandon them. Only a very small proportion of the religiously-unaffiliated students speak of an awareness of the presence and experience of God.

Table 9 demonstrates that around four out of every five of the Muslim students affirm the close connection between their religion and their personal life. Thus, 82% say that their life would be quite different without their religion or worldview, 79% say that their religion or worldview has a great influence over their daily life, and 74% say that, if they have to take important decisions, their religion or worldview plays a major part in it. Religion plays a less central role in the personal lives of the Christian students. Thus, 42% say that their life would be quite different without their religion or worldview, 37% say that, if they have to take impartial decisions, their religion or worldview plays a major part in it. and 32% say that their religion or worldview has a great influence over their daily life. Such matters are much less important for the religiously-unaffiliated students.

Table 10 demonstrates that over half of the Muslim students affirm the connection between religion and public life. Thus, 69% say that religious people should publicly stand up for the disadvantaged, 62% say that religious people should try to influence public opinion on

social problems, 55% say that religious people should strive to influence people's attitudes toward social issues, and 51% say that religious people should publicly denounce social abuses people suffer. Religion plays a less central role in the public lives of Christian students, with between a third and a half endorsing these views. Thus, 48% say that religious people should publicly stand up for the disadvantage, 41% say that religious people should try to influence public opinion on social problems, 37% say that religious people should publicly denounce social abuses people suffer, and 34% say that religious people should strive to influence people's attitudes toward social issues. A significant minority of the religiously-unaffiliated students look to religious people for taking a stance on matters of public life. Thus, 33% of the religiously-unaffiliated students agree that religious people should publicly stand up for the disadvantaged.

Table 11 demonstrates that up to half of the religiously-unaffiliated students take the view that the state should legislate on issues concerning life and death without deferring to religious views, arguing that politicians should take decisions independently of religious leaders in respect of euthanasia (43%) and abortion (49%). Although less tolerant of this position, neither Christians nor Muslims are united against allowing the state the right to decide on such issues. Thus, 30% of Christians and 31% of Muslims agree that politicians should decide about euthanasia independently of religious leaders, and 37% of Christians and 32% of Muslims agree that politicians should decide about abortion independently of religious leaders. Examining the relation between church and state from a different perspective, 40% of Muslim students argue that politicians should not be allowed to interfere with religious communities, and so do 29% of Christian students, and 18% of religiously-unaffiliated students.

Table 12 demonstrates that there is quite a high level of agreement among Muslim, Christian and religiously-unaffiliated students on issues of social rights. Thus, 83% of

Christians, 83% of religiously-unaffiliated students, and 78% of Muslims agree that the government should provide health care for the sick, and 75% of Christians, 75% of religiously-unaffiliated students, and 75% of Muslims agree that the government should provide a decent standard of living for the old. At the same time, a somewhat higher level of concern is expressed by Muslim students on the issue of unemployment. Thus, 54% of Muslims agree that the government should provide a job for everyone who wants one, compared with 50% of Christians, and 45% of religiously-unaffiliated students; 58% of Muslims argue that the government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed, compared with 39% of Christians, and 38% of religiously-unaffiliated students.

Table 13 demonstrates that there is quite a high level of agreement among Muslim, Christian and religiously-unaffiliated students on issues concerning the rights of women and children. In terms of women, 68% of Muslims, 65% of Christians, and 73% of religiously-unaffiliated students agree that the state should protect women's rights to adequate job opportunities; 71% of Muslims, 63% of Christians, and 68% of religiously-unaffiliated students agree that the state should protect women's rights to acquire and administer property. In terms of the rights of children, 78% of Muslims, 79% of Christians, and 84% of religiously-unaffiliated students agree that the state should protect children from neglect or from negligent treatment; 69% of Muslims, 71% of Christians, and 80% of religiously-unaffiliated students agree that the state should protect children's right to engage in play and recreational activities.

Table 14 demonstrates that there are similar levels of agreement among Muslim, Christian, and religiously-unaffiliated students regarding the state's responsibility to protect an individual's right to live according to his or her own moral code. Thus, 51% of Muslims, 48% of Christians, and 50% of religiously-unaffiliated students agree that our laws should protect a citizen's right to live by any moral standard they choose. Similar levels of

agreement are given by Muslims (39%) and religiously-unaffiliated students (40%) to the view that the community's moral standards should be critically debated in schools, although Christians gave lower support to this view (32%). On the other hand, Muslims are less inclined than the other two groups to support some aspects of moral relativism. While 76% of religiously unaffiliated students agree that any form of sexual relations between adults should be their individual choice, the proportion falls to 68% among Christians, and falls further to 56% among Muslims. While 70% of religiously unaffiliated students agree that children should be free to discuss all moral ideas and values in school, the proportion falls to 58% among Christians, and falls further to 40% among Muslims.

Conclusion

While religion is properly recognised as a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional construct, it is self-assigned religious affiliation that emerges both as the most easily observed and as the most readily available indicator of religious plurality and religious diversity within contemporary England and Wales. Religious affiliation may be observed on the streets by the ways in which some people dress and by the ways in which they behave. Religious affiliation may be taken into account in matters of public policy in England and Wales because this is the information accessed in the decadal public census conducted in 2001 or in 2011. The matter of theoretical interest and of practical import concerns the extent to which self-assigned religious affiliation actually serves as an authentic indicator (or predictor) of matters of religious and social concern.

Building on previous analyses undertaken in the context of the British Social Attitudes Survey and the Teenage Religions and Values Survey, the present study set out to ascertain whether and to what extent adolescent males (between 16 and 18 years of age) who identified with a faith tradition differed from their colleagues who identified as religiously-unaffiliated. Specifically two faith traditions were isolated for analysis, namely Christian and

Muslim. Specifically, two main areas were defined against which to map difference, namely religious beliefs and publicly significant values. Eight main conclusions emerged from these data.

First, self-assigned affiliation as Muslim carried with it a high level of commitment to Muslim religious beliefs: 96% regarded the Qur'an as the word of Allah; 89% accepted that Muhammad was sent by Allah as his prophet in order to proclaim his message; and 90% took the view that through Muhammad we learn to strive for the common good of society as a whole.

Second, self-assigned affiliation as Christian carried with it significant commitment to Christian religious beliefs, but less so than among Muslims: 61% regarded the Bible as the word of God; 54% accepted the belief that God sent his son Jesus to earth; and 41% took the view that Jesus works among the marginalised in their struggle for liberation.

Third, the religiously-unaffiliated students were relatively dismissive of both Christian religious beliefs and Islamic religious beliefs. In terms of Christian religious beliefs, 58% took the view that the Bible is just a collection of human cultural texts; just 3% agreed that Jesus was a unique teacher as God's spirit of love was in him; and just 15% were prepared to go even as far as saying that through his life Jesus showed us what it is like to be a loving human being. In terms of Muslim religious beliefs, 51% took the view that the Qur'an is just a collection of human cultural texts; just 4% agreed that Muhammad received special revelations which led him to announce Allah's message; and just 16% were prepared to go even as far as saying that Muhammad teaches us to care for everybody in need or distress.

Fourth, significant differences emerged between the three groups (religiously-unaffiliated, Christian, and Muslim) regarding the way in which they remained open to valuing other worldviews. Nearly half of the Muslims (46%) took the view that only in their

religious or worldview can people receive the truth, compared with a quarter of the Christians (23%), and a sixth of the religiously unaffiliated (15%).

Fifth, the Muslims were much more likely than the Christians to affirm the experience of God in their lives and to affirm the relevance of their religion for their personal lives. Thus, 67% of Muslims experience God's presence in the beauty of nature, compared with 42% of Christians, and 5% of religiously-unaffiliated students. Similarly, 79% of Muslims say that their religion or worldview has a great influence over their daily life, compared with 32% of Christians, and 13% of religiously-unaffiliated students.

Sixth, the Muslims were much more likely than the Christians to affirm the role of religion in public life and to affirm the autonomy of faith communities in the political arena. Two thirds of the Muslims maintained that religious people should publicly stand up for the disadvantaged (69%), compared with half of the Christians (48%) and one third of the religiously-unaffiliated students (33%). The view that politicians should not be allowed to interfere with religious communities was taken by 40% of Muslims, compared with 29% of Christians and 18% of religiously-unaffiliated students.

Seventh, Muslims, Christians, and religiously-unaffiliated students showed similar levels of concern for many issues related to human rights. Thus, 75% of Muslims, 75% of Christians, and 75% of religiously-unaffiliated students took the view that the government should provide a decent standard of living for the old; 68% of Muslims, 65% of Christians, and 73% of religiously-unaffiliated students took the view that the state should protect women's rights for adequate job opportunities; and 78% of Muslims, 79% of Christians and 84% of religiously-unaffiliated students took the view that the state should protect children from neglect or negligent treatment.

Eighth, compared with religiously-unaffiliated students, both Muslims and Christians held more traditional views on aspects of sexual morality. While 76% of religiously-

unaffiliated students took the view that any form of sexual relations between adults should be their individual choice, the proportions fell to 68% among Christians, and 56% among Muslims.

Cumulatively, these eight conclusions demonstrate that self-assigned religious affiliation serves as a powerful and important predictor of matters of religious and social concern. The kind of information now collected about religious affiliation in England and Wales in the national census in 2001 and again in 2011 provides a level of information that is sufficiently robust to be of practical and applied significance.

The present study is limited by the relatively small sample ($N = 547$), by restriction to two faith traditions (Christian and Muslim), and by concentrating on just one sex (males). The findings are, however, sufficiently intriguing to justify further replication and extension of this study among a larger sample, among a wider range of faith traditions, and among females as well as males.

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Table 1

The Bible

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
The Bible is the word of God	5	61	23	163.1	.001
The Bible is a divine book to be taken literally	4	35	21	65.9	.001
The Bible is a source of inspiration and wisdom for life	11	56	30	97.9	.001
The Bible is just a collection of human cultural texts	58	27	30	48.9	.001

Table 2

The Qur'an

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
The Qur'an is the word of Allah/God	5	18	96	312.1	.001
The Qur'an is a divine book to be taken literally	3	13	83	283.3	.001
The Qur'an is a source of inspiration and wisdom for life	11	21	96	267.9	.001
The Qur'an is just a collection of human cultural texts	51	24	34	35.3	.001

Table 3

Jesus

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
God sent his son Jesus to earth	3	54	24	137.1	.001
Before Jesus came to earth he lived with the father from the beginning	2	33	18	71.9	.001
Jesus was a unique teacher as God's spirit of love was in him	3	52	37	126.8	.001
Jesus was a special person, no more	28	26	37	4.5	NS

Table 4

Muhammad

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Muhammad was sent by Allah/God as his prophet in order to proclaim his message	1	15	89	322.1	.001
Muhammad's journey to and union with, Allah/ God is absolutely unique	2	10	84	315.5	.001
Muhammad received special revelations which led him to announce Allah's/God's message	4	14	89	367.9	.001
Muhammad was a special person, no more	27	20	45	23.2	.001

Table 5

Jesus and justice

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Jesus guides the oppressed to the land of justice and peace	5	52	44	117.5	.001
Jesus works among the marginalised in their struggle for liberation	7	41	42	75.1	.001
Jesus supports the poor by liberating them from injustice	13	43	51	65.5	.001
Through his life Jesus showed us what it is like to be a loving human being	15	63	59	112.8	.001

Table 6

Muhammad and justice

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Muhammad motivates us to maintain and strengthen our bond with fellow human beings	9	16	91	274.6	.001
Through Muhammad we learn to strive for the common good of society as a whole	10	15	90	260.2	.001
Muhammad teaches us to care for everybody in need and distress	16	17	93	234.6	.001
Muhammad was called to preach Allah's/God's teachings about faith and ethical demands	2	12	87	319.0	.001

Table 7

Theology of religions

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Only in my religion or worldview can people receive the truth	15	23	46	37.7	.001
Compared with my religion or worldview, other religions or worldviews do have some aspect of truth, but not the whole of it	17	32	57	53.9	.001
All religions or worldviews are equally valuable, they represent different ways, to the truth	22	37	39	14.4	.001
The way to the truth is only found when religions or worldviews have dialogue with one another	17	22	34	12.4	.01

Table 8

Experiencing God

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
I experience God's presence in the beauty of nature	5	42	67	140.2	.001
I experience God's goodness in the peace of nature	4	45	67	149.5	.001
God knows and understands me	5	53	81	203.3	.001
I trust God never to abandon me	6	59	78	220.0	.001

Table 9

Religion and personal life

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
My religion or worldview has a great influence over my daily life	13	32	79	142.4	.001
If I have to take important decisions, my religion or worldview plays a major part in it	12	37	74	124.9	.001
My life would be quite different had I not my religion or worldview	15	42	82	137.0	.001

Table 10

Religion and public life

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Religious people should publicly stand up for the disadvantaged	33	48	69	39.1	.001
Religious people should try to influence public opinion on social problems	20	41	62	58.3	.001
Religious people should publicly denounce social abuses people suffer	30	37	51	14.6	.001
Religious people should strive to influence people's attitudes toward social issues	10	34	55	74.4	.001

Table 11

Religion and state

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
In regard to euthanasia, politicians should decide irrespective of any religious' leader's will	43	30	31	9.8	.01
In regard to abortion, politicians should take decisions independently of religious leaders	49	37	32	11.2	.01
Politicians should not be allowed to interfere with religious communities	18	29	40	17.4	.001
Prayers in school should be forbidden	30	13	23	18.1	.001

Table 12

Social rights

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
<i>The government should provide ...</i>					
a job for everyone who wants one	45	50	54	2.6	NS
a decent standard of living for the unemployed	38	39	58	13.6	.001
a decent standard of living for the old	75	75	75	0.0	NS
health care for the sick	83	83	78	1.5	NS

Table 13

Rights of women and children

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
<i>The state should protect ...</i>					
women's right to adequate job opportunities	73	65	68	2.9	NS
women's right to acquire and administer property	68	63	71	2.6	NS
children from neglect or negligent treatment	84	79	78	2.5	NS
children's right to engage in play and recreational activities	80	71	69	6.8	.05

Table 14

Sex and morality

	None %	Christian %	Muslim %	χ^2	$p <$
Our laws should protect a citizen's right to live by any moral standard they choose	50	48	51	0.2	NS
Any form of sexual relations between adults should be their individual choice	76	68	56	14.4	.001
Children should be free to discuss all moral ideas and values in school, no matter what	70	58	48	16.6	.001
The community's moral standards should be critically debated in schools	40	32	39	3.0	NS