Navigating Racialisation and Whiteness: British Turks' Struggles for Belonging in Multiscale Public Spaces within the UK

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Abstract: This paper explores the complex dynamics of racialization and whiteness within the context of British Turks' pursuit of belonging in multiscale public spaces in the UK. It examines how these dynamics ultimately lead them to perceive themselves as "non-British" and affirm their place as "Other" within mainstream British society. Based on their experiences in multiscale spatialities, ranging from urban and provincial cities to university campuses and pubs, this study delves into subtle forms of exclusions and stigmatizations tied to differentiated ways British Turks are racialized, revealing how racial identities are constantly reconstructed and contested in these spaces. Based on the discourses of racialization and whiteness emanating from the social and political context in which xenophobia and Islamophobia emerge, the findings highlight the need to consider the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and religion in understanding how British Turks constantly question their place and belonging in the UK and confront racial boundaries and different forms of racisms including Islamophobia within various settings in Britain.
Keywords: Whiteness, Racialization, British Turks, British Politics, Belonging, Intersectionality.

The genesis of racialization and how whiteness functions in the mundane routine of British Turks are often overlooked in the post-9/11 and post-Brexit era. The discourses around the racialization of British Turks embodied in skin color, ethnicity, religion, and cultural traits, have been rarely examined in the literature on Turks living in Britain. This paper draws on experiences of British Turks inhabiting a white British world with their visible and invisible differences, including the Turkish language, professions attributed to "Turks", Turkish name, visible Muslimness, "failing" whiteness, and perceived foreignness. It explores the different modes of racialization of British Turks in their discussions of belonging to multiscale spaces of Britain. The paper dismantles and renegotiates the meaning of whiteness in the lives of British Turks through its encounter with British Turks' Muslimness and Turkishness. In a way, it is not so much that British Turks become white or fail to do so, but how certain spaces they inhabit in the UK are shaped by the proximity of some bodies as ideal bodies (*white British majority*) more than others (Ahmed, 2007, p.157, emphasis mine). The argument here builds upon the claim that whiteness is a category of experience, but rather than a fixed category of experience projecting marks of "privilege," I am interested in its disappearance when confronted with Muslimness or imagined "otherness" of British Turks. In other words, this paper empirically speaks about whiteness as an extraordinary claim only available to certain European heritage peoples (Bonnett, 1998), and the white "race" comes to be seen as having a "shared ancestry." Once cultural traits based on one's Turkishness and Muslimness are involved, or as Ahmed (2007) argues, when unfamiliar/ non-white bodies do inhabit white spaces, the corporeal

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whiteness of some British Turks is decentred. As we shall see, British Turks are marginalized by standing out and standing apart.

Building upon this understanding, my main argument is therefore dedicated to exploring the racialization processes experienced by British Turks in various spatial contexts on different scales in England and Wales. I argue that racialization is a situational and contextual process contingent upon ideologies of racial, religious, and cultural differences. Nonetheless, considering the widespread existence of Islamophobia in present-day Britain, as emphasized by Allen (2020), British Turks often find themselves feeling "out of place" in certain public settings. This sentiment is notably pronounced in venues such as pubs, universities, towns, and restaurants, where interactions with white British individuals are disproportionately common.

The racialization of British Turks is depicted through various markers such as the Islamic veil, foreign accents, and cultural traits rather than phenotypical differences *per se*. The discussion delves into how multi-scale spatialities, from urban cities to provincial areas, contribute to the racialization of social relations. The narratives of respondents highlight the challenges faced by British Turks in claiming spaces not traditionally reserved for them but for white British mainstream, leading to feelings of discomfort, exclusion, and unbelonging. Not surprisingly, the article consequentially sheds light on the lingering effects of xenophobia and Islamophobia experienced by British Turks in public spaces.

Discourses on Racialization and Whiteness

No biologist has ever been able to provide a satisfactory definition of "race"— a definition providing a biological foundation of a given "race," leading to the exclusion of "all others" (Ignatiev, 1994). In a similar context, existing literature indicates that racialization, a political strategy for organizing around an identity, is not primarily rooted in biological factors. Instead, a significant body of research by social scientists indicates that the process of racialization within a group is intricately linked to perceptions of that group's cultural and racial distinctiveness (Garner & Selod, 2012; Meer & Modood, 2012). The questions of race and racialization in the UK are by no means static and immutable but are contingent and shaped by the changing balance of political forces of the period. Racialization occurs by suppressing differences among the majority and minority groups, and in the UK context, it is embedded in the idea of fixing what is "Britishness" against which the cultures of others are measured (Garner & Selod, 2012). As raised by Garner (2017), whilst phenotype has been frequently utilized in race-making discourses, in which groups are racialized, it is not necessarily the crucial feature of a population. The process of racialization is ongoing and multifaceted: take Eastern European Jews in early 20th-century England (Garner & Selod, 2012, p.21). Garner explains that Jews who were born outside the British Isles were seen as "whiter than others on the basis of capital accumulation, educational level, attire, and proficiency of language" (Garner, 2007, pp. 108–109).

Moving from the 20th century through to the 21st- century, as literature demonstrates, despite their myriad of distinctive legacies, British Muslim communities have been similarly racialized based on a set of affiliations to turn an ethnoreligious group into a race (Abbas, 2004; Allen, 2007; Allen, 2016b; Birt, 2008; Sian, 2009). In this context, Muslim communities in Britain have been viewed as an undifferentiated mass of indiscriminately "non-white" security threats, degraded by Islamophobic discourses in social interactions or through social media and politicians. Racialization of Muslims operates in myriad different ways within the routine of everyday life, through markers of Islam as in the Islamic veil, beard for Muslim males, or a Muslim name. Considering the high-profile events (such as 9/11 in the States and 7/7 in London, amongst others) that lay the foundations on which the Muslim communities of Britain have been increasingly accentuated, and the large scale of scholarship on Muslim racialization in the UK context has been carried out about the South Asian Muslims, who constitute the

majority of Muslims in Britain (Abbas, 2004,2005; Ali & Sayyid, 2006; Meer & Modood, 2012).

The literature, however, lacks the specific and differentiated ways British Turks, as putatively white Muslims, have been racialized in multi-scale spaces in Britain. The only work carried out particularly focused on Turkish citizens and their racialization explores the role of media and policymakers in sustaining Islamophobia from the perspectives of its victims (Babacan, 2021). This study equally deepens understanding of the racialization of Muslims and highlights covert forms of everyday Islamophobia. It also offers an original contribution by examining identity strategies developed by victims to cope with Islamophobia. In today's conjuncture, as critical scholars of "race" and racism argue, "religion is raced, and Muslims are racialized" in the UK context (Garner & Selod, 2015; Sayyid & Vakil, 2010). Embracing this means dissociating the fixation that religious affiliations are never to do with the body and that "race" is *only* to do with the body (Garner & Selod, 2015). Indeed, rather than seeking closure through fixation, because forms of racism are dynamic by their nature, I argue that British Turkish Muslims' racialization is not limited to skin color but draws primarily on a historical account of the formation of non-European white identity. This is further discussed in the following sections and includes a myriad of attributes, including cultural traits such as Turkish names, accents, and the reification of Islam as a conflict of values with white Europeanness (Sayyid, 2018), which intersects class distinctive hierarchies in the UK context. My argument is therefore dedicated to exploring the various ways in which individuals of British Turkish descent are subjected to racialization, stemming from attributes related to culture, ethnicity, class, religion, profession, physical appearance, or the complex intersections of these factors (Babacan, 2021). Before I further delve into the narratives and context where complex and nuanced manifestations of the racialization of British Turks as Muslim, Turkish, "non-British," and "Other" in what follows, I will shed light on the historical context that has shaped the experiences of British Turks in this multicultural landscape.

Turkish Immigration to the UK

Turkish migration to the UK has been characterized by distinct waves since the early 20th century. The initial phase saw the arrival of Ottoman subjects, including traders, seafarers, and political exiles, drawn by economic opportunities and political upheaval (Gardener, 2003). However, it was the post-World War II period that marked a significant surge, owing to a bilateral labor agreement established in 1950 between the UK and Turkey. This accord aimed to fill labor shortages in Britain, prompting the migration of thousands of Turkish nationals from Cyprus and mainland Turkey, primarily to work in industries like manufacturing and textiles (Inal et al., 2009). In subsequent decades, they witnessed further influxes, driven by political instability following the 1980 coup in Turkey and economic disparities between the two nations (Öktem, 2011). This evolving migratory pattern has resulted in a diverse Turkish diaspora in the UK, encompassing various ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities (Vertovec, 1997).

Much like their counterparts in other European nations, Turkish migrants in the UK assumed different occupational roles, contributing substantially to the diverse labor force of their host country. While Turkish migration to the UK did not reach the same scale as in some other European countries, it left a palpable impact on the nation's multicultural landscape. Turkish migrants in the UK predominantly settled in London, particularly in neighborhoods like Hackney, Edmonton, Tottenham, and Haringey, where vibrant Turkish communities emerged (Vertovec, 2007). Although the magnitude of migration flows to the UK was less extensive than those to continental Europe, Turkish migration enriched the nation's cultural diversity and contributed to the evolving social fabric. However, it ought to be noted that

Turkish immigrants from mainland Turkey did not only settle in the multicultural neighborhoods of the most cosmopolitan cities in England.

Belonging in Multiscale Spaces

The lack of diversity within the settings British Turks refer to in their accounts, as their home or localities where they spend the majority of their time, accentuates a steady gaze directed at either the Islamic veil they wear or their physical appearance, including clothing and skin color. In other words, gaze operates through Islamophobic[2] or xenophobic "othering" for British Turks living across England and Wales, more specifically, in spatialities where they are immediately associated with and imagined along the lines of non-British Other, or Muslim "Other." This point is especially aligned with the ways in which Lefebvre (2012) defines space not as a passive backdrop to human activity but as a dynamic social product.

Added to that, following Foucault (1977), Butcher (2010) argued, "the gaze is one of the several disciplining codes that reinforce boundaries, structural and affective, directing mobility and limiting interaction" (p. 517). Here is power in the form of "gazing," so much so that gaze establishes a sort of surveillance through which one is made to perceive themselves as "discomfiting" to their surroundings, to the normative homogeneity of the *native White British* for the case of British Turks (Rabinow, 1984). This power in the form of "gaze" can racialize populations and groups by "creating a sense of the absolute difference between self and other" (Hage, 2005, p. 202). It is within the context of this account that this paper is primarily aimed to unfold the concealed ways British Muslims, who have remarkable differences in "race", ethnicity, culture, physical appearance, and religiosity, can be dislocated and disorientated by the close proximity to the native White British as "foreign" bodies (Puwar, 2004), bolstering prejudice and Islamophobia.

In the context of British Turks, both racialization and Islamophobia appear in diverse forms, recognizing that the latter is not a monolithic experience as, indeed, it can vary depending on the contextual settings British Muslims accommodate (Allen, 2016). The subsequent sections of this paper delve into the varied manifestations of Islamophobia, marginalization, and xenophobia, contingent upon the specific circumstances of the moment. As will be read through the following sections, the multi-ethnic diversity and plurality of cities such as London conceals anxieties arising from the racist and Islamophobic gaze.

Methodology

This article presents a qualitative study grounded in a social constructionist epistemology, chosen to comprehend a less deterministic and more conjunctural understanding of key concepts such as "*Islamophobia*", "*racialisation*", and "*belonging*" (Hall & Du Gay, 1996a, emphasis mine). The adoption of a social constructionist epistemology aligns with the intention of understanding "the world of human experience," asserting that "reality is socially constructed" (Cohen &Manion, 2013; Martens, 2005). The study aims to explore the complex experiences of British Turks, the offsprings of Turkish citizens who migrated to Britain after the 1960s, through the lens of this epistemological perspective. The chosen social constructionist epistemology influences the preference for qualitative data collection methods and semi-structured interviews for this research, as it is recognized that constructionist

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[2] Sayyid defines Islamophobia as a form of racism "in response to problematization of Muslim identity" (Sayyid, 2014). Whether contextualized socially, politically, or economically, Islamophobia informs meaning about Muslims and Islam, but according to Allen (2013), more so in the thinking and meaning that are inherent within the less explicit and everyday relationships of power contemporarily encountered: in the classroom, office, factory and so on (p.196).

researchers are likely to rely on such methods for a nuanced understanding of human experiences (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Over a period of 12 months, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with British Turks living in England and Wales, aged between 18 and 55. The participant pool comprised eighteen women and twelve men, and all participants, except one who expressed a preference otherwise, held British citizenship. Conducting semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection helped me reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as British Turks' subjective experiences of racialization, potential vulnerabilities, and attitudes toward a sense of belonging (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Snowball sampling is used to collect data for this qualitative research and was initially based on two criteria: residency period and self-identified "Turks" whose parents originate from mainland Turkey (Parker et al., 2019). Respondents of this research are all children of Turkish Muslim immigrants and have since retained Muslimness as their religious identity, independent of their levels of belief, sects, or practice of Islam. Semi-structured interviews helped explore participants' responses and nuanced perspectives on positionalities such as British, Turkish, and Muslim identities (Husband, 2020). The aim was to understand how racialization and Islamophobia impact the composition of these identities and influence individuals' sense of belonging to the UK. To explore the above and beyond, my core research questions were the following:

- What factors mediate the difference and belonging strategies of British Turks? And to what extent can these factors be associated with Islamophobia?

Furthermore, to find answers to my research questions given above, I started with the following interview questions:

- How British do you feel on a scale? What does "belonging to Britain" mean to you? How would you define British culture? Is it close to "Turkish" culture? What are the things that make you feel more or less British?
- How do you think the native British community views you?

The term "British Turks" in this research refers to those who identify themselves as both Turkish and British, regardless of which identity outweighs the other. The idea of Turkishness has no reference to a hegemonic racial group (descent), dominant ethnicity (Turks or Kurds from Turkey), or religion (Islam) (Onay&Millington, 2024). However, all participants defined Islam as a part of their identity. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and each interviewee was given a pseudonym. The transcripts of the interviews were then submitted to inductive thematic analysis, which, by its nature, does not require predefined codes and anticipations of answers from the respondents (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Ganji, 2018). In terms of topics explored in the interviews, I covered Islamophobic rhetoric or actions from the perception of British Turks and how British Turks negotiate Islamophobia to navigate and conform to a sense of belonging to the UK by looking at the aspects of their everyday life and the development of identities at the intersection of Westernness/Britishness and both Islamic and secular versions of Turkishness.

Initially, I believed that being a Turkish Alevi scholar would grant me access to the Alevi[3] Turkish and Alevi Kurdish diaspora. However, I was ultimately ostracised[4] by the Alevi community due to my intention to confront Islamophobia in the UK[5]. It, therefore, seemed inevitable that the article's empirical data had to be collected through snowballing sampling to be able to access diverse experiences of belonging while contributing to new empirical data on the modus operandi by which contextualization of racialization and whiteness are documented through mainstream Turks from Turkey, hence involving predominantly Sunni Muslim[6] Turks and only a few identifying with the Alevism[7]. Despite the attempts to reach communities from the Kurdish diaspora who emigrated from Turkey, it ought to be noted that minorities are hard-to-reach populations (Bolland et al., 2017), and this is even more the case for accessing the Kurdish diaspora from Turkey. Marginalized communities from Turkey, including Islamic conservatives, Kurds, and Alevis, were, without a doubt, even more challenging to reach during the pandemic. Except for a few female participants with Islamic veils and even fewer Turkish Alevi participants, the majority of empirical data is collected by the children of those called "white Turks" from the West of the country, usually secular, westernized, and often able to "pass" as white (Ahmed, 2007; Onay & Millington, 2024). In the context of multiple spatialities, descendants of secular Turkish immigrants inhabiting the UK, as well as conservative female British Turks, discuss experiences of racism, Islamophobia, and racialization defined by how they consider themselves. Their accounts detail encounters with racism that extend beyond their Muslim identity, including instances related to factors such as possessing a non-anglicized name. Having said all of these, to maintain the study's focus, individuals from the Kurdish and Alevi Diaspora were not involved as separate communities in the data collection; however, it is worth noting that a few participants who identified as both Turkish and Alevi alongside their British identity had their narratives included in the data analysis.

Findings and Discussion

What Makes White Space so Scary?

This section documents subtle forms of displacement as inextricably linked to the processes of racialization. According to my findings, the racialization of British Turks moves between different geographical scales from urban cities to *provincial cities, local pubs, and university campuses,* in which "racial identities are articulated, reproduced and contested"

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[3] Alevism is seen as a heterodox version of Islam for some echelons of Turkish society. That said, some Alevis fully reject Alevism's theological dimensions, draw antagonistic political borders against a Sunni-Hanafi-Islamic identity and adopt Kemalist modernist projects' positivist and secular institutions. Alevis are an oppressed community; they have been stoned, their houses burned down, and they have constantly and heavily been satirized by changing governments as well as in the public sphere. Tekdemir, O. (2018). Constructing a social space for Alevi political identity: Religion, antagonism and collective passion. National Identities 20(1) 31-51.

[4] See the following article for further discussions on Turkish political history and secular-conservative cleavage: Özge Onay & Gareth Millington (2024) Negotiations with whiteness in British Turkish Muslims' encounters with Islamophobia, Ethnic and Racial Studies, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2024.2317955

[5] Alevis were frequently attacked by radical nationalists and Islamists. One of these atrocities took place in Maraş province (officially Kahramanmaraş) in southern Turkey. That has radically shaped the formation and articulation of the extent of structural and institutional mistrust on the part of Alevis towards Islam, Mainstream Turkish Muslims, and the state, engendering a deep enmity between the Alevis and state-led institutions. See Ayhan Kaya, "AKP's Alevi Initiative," in Europeanization and Tolerance in Turkey. The Myth of Toleration, 132-56, Identities and Modernities in Europe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

[6] Sunni Islam is the largest branch of Islam, followed by 85–90% of the world's Muslims, and simultaneously the largest religious denomination in the world.

(Moore, 2013, p. 45 emphasis mine). Aside from the racialization of spatial boundaries, the racialization of social relations similarly circulates in the lives of British Turks based on their "foreign" accent, non-anglicized names, the color of their skin, the Islamic veil, and so forth.

Fox et al. (2012) argue that "racialization occurs when the category of "race" is invoked and evoked in discursive and institutional practices to interpret, order and indeed structure social relations" (p. 681). "Race" in this sense is not the essential trait but rather the socially constructed contingent outcome of processes and exclusion. With that in mind, in the specific case of British Turks, racialization uses cultural and religious traits rather than merely putative phenotypical differences. In Britain, the Islamic veil is arguably a sign of difference and non-conformity (Fox et al., 2012, p. 920), and "its spatial transgression makes it (over)visible and controversial" in today's temporal framing (Göle, 2015, p. 184). Indeed, wearing a veil situates my female respondents into the racialized imagery of Muslim communities (criminal tendencies, uncivilized behaviors, moral deficiencies) considering the prevailing debates on Islamophobia today (Carr, 2019; Fox et al., 2012). This assumption is verified mainly by one of my female respondents wearing the veil, who described how she felt amongst the white British majority:

> *I mean, there comes a moment when I do feel uncomfortable; there comes a moment when I do feel like, "Oh my gosh, there are too many white people." I only feel uncomfortable when I am out of London; if I were to go to Cornwall or I was to go to York, or anywhere out of the big city into a little village, I would feel uncomfortable because I felt it when we went to Wales and when we went to Portsmouth. During Ottoman times, the soldiers who came here to fight died and were buried in Gosport; there became a close relationship between Turkey and Gosport. I felt uncomfortable there, but maybe that is because I was out of my comfort zone.* (Hale, 40 years old, Identity Management Officer, London)

The above quote reflects the encounter when dissonant bodies take up space in positions that have not been "reserved" for them. Hale's presence defies privileged boundaries reserved for the white British majority. Hale's veil in relatively less multicultural countries, cities, and towns of Britain such as "Wales, Cornwall, York, and Gosport" enables her to see the undesirability of her religion; the constructed nature of her religious difference is invoked in those settings, instead of her "race" (Murji & Solomos, 2005). Hale's membership in those places is denied because her veil denotes racialized understandings of Muslims as unwanted "Other," a threat amongst many others. Consequently, when she is outside London's ethnically and racially plural context, Hale feels like inhabiting spaces whereby her veil becomes the stark reminder of the entire "Muslim community."

As I have suggested in the above sections, the process of racialization is not linear but situational and contextual. It is contingent upon ideologies of racial, religious, and cultural difference in politics, through which essentialized construction of difference as in "Muslim subject" is generated. This is evident in the anecdotal information provided by Hale about the position of Gosport in history, in which she alluded to WWI when the Ottoman battleship visited Portsmouth for training purposes. She referred to the formerly UK-Turkey (then Ottoman Empire) cooperation in military, suggesting that native British people who once subscribed to the sympathy and understanding of those unlike them seemed to take Hale's presence as a "threatening dangerous being" today, an abjection spoiling their "normative spatial provisions." Hale's account of how she felt in the relatively less multicultural zones reminds me of Julia Kristeva's concept of the "abject" developed in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, where she addresses "the horror and fear sovereign subjects experience in

response to those things that become unidentifiable as a result of transgressing borders" (as cited in Yegenoglu, 2012, p.36). This may be the case for British Turks; they may not be as identifiable as other Muslim ethnicities as they are deemed "white." In other words, contrary to "South Asian" communities who are seen as Muslim "Other" in a more absolute sense, in the UK context, British Turks have putative whiteness and Europeanness they can fall back on. This means that British Turks can undergo the process of racialization where the "otherness" or "groupness" that is appealed to is connected to cultural otherness, such as wearing religious symbols (Meer & Modood, 2019). Conceived in this way, Islamophobia, like other forms of racism, is not univocal but varied. It can operate in different ways and places and is even embedded in events for different Muslim communities.

Consequentially, due to the emblematic construction of "veiled women" as a symbol of the "Muslim Other," Hale *adopts the gaze of the other* (Foucault, 1977). The gaze Hale sees (2005) herself through is the gaze that holds power, the gaze of "too many white people." Those who hold power can racialize populations and groups by "creating a sense of the absolute difference between self and other" (p. 202). This power in the form of "gaze" in the above narrative establishes a sort of surveillance through which one is made to perceive themselves as "discomfiting" within normative homogeneity (Rabinow, 1984). This being the case, Hale unwittingly deflects her sense of unbelonging because of "being out of her comfort zone" rather than blaming the exclusionary undertones of homogenized and hierarchical spaces.

As Lefebvre (2012) argues, "space is never a pure, neutral being" (p.292). Mandel's (2008) research on Turkish people's challenges of belonging in Germany, for example, explores the near-obsessive German objection to veiled women in public spaces, who are seen as trespassing in their moral and aesthetic sensibilities. I argue that this obsession with the veil lies in natives' bestowing a cohesiveness and totality upon space, with no duality or contradiction caused by "foreigners" ways of being. Similar to Hale's association of "Cornwall, York, Wales, and Gosport" with too many white people, Derin implied that women's veiling in the provincial city of Norwich is a major challenge for her veiled friends due to the relative absence of people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. She suggested that her sense of belonging is linked with how she imagines she would be treated if she wore a veil in Norwich:

> *It is so difficult for my friends with veils; they must be really strong. Sometimes, you go somewhere, everybody stares at you, and they feel put on the spot. They might feel excluded. If it were me wearing a headscarf, I would not feel belonging and comfortable; I would feel awkward, I imagine. I might not feel that way in London, though. However, the city where I study, Norwich, is full of white English; I assume it is only students who make it multicultural, nothing else.*
> (Derin, 21 years old, studying International Relations, Norwich/London)

One of the characterizing features of Norwich, as Derin puts it, is that it is "full of white English." This signals the real and imaginary arrangements underlying the difficulties that Derin's friends with the Islamic veil have to cope with when the social space is not constructed as "multicultural." Derin's emphasis on multiculturalism has come to mean the inclusion and acceptance of different bodies in urban centers that are not London. The lack of diversity, as Derin suggested, accentuates a steady gaze directed at the Islamic veil. Derin's sympathy for her veiled friends appears to culminate in a growing realization of conditional belonging. While Derin only notes how she "would feel awkward" and "would not feel comfortable" when she put herself in her veiled friends' shoes, Ali and Burak literally experienced all those feelings first-hand when they went to a pub for the first time:

> *Burak and I went to a pub for the first time yesterday; how many years, we wanted to blend in with the people there, and there were mostly British people, we felt like all the eyes were on us, all the time. We could not act comfortably, and when we wanted to do something, everyone was just looking at us, and it did not feel comfortable. I do not think I will go there again; we did not feel accepted in that environment. Probably because of how we look, the color of our skin, I am not entirely sure, but they did not accept us in that environment because they were not used to themselves, because it was their place.* (Ali, 19 years old, studying 6th Form in Biology, London)

Ali and Burak's visit to a pub full of white British men can be read as another spatial transgression, a rupture of the "superior place of whiteness" from the looks of white clientele at the obvious interlopers. This collective attitude of quasi-welcoming through the gaze of the pub regulars derives from the fear of losing this central and superior position of authority. Vividly described by Puwar (2004) in the book titled *Space Invaders,* the easy assumption that the coming together of bodies, depicted by the "*white British men*" above, is a potential act of aggression that intends to exclude "others" from its fraternal cathexis is a projection of insecurity of losing the central and superior place of whiteness, and also the "purity" of Englishness, in the structuring of organizations and positions of authority (emphasis mine). The apparent narrative behind Ali's remarks of "all the eyes on us, all the time… I do not think I will go there again" is the destabilizing effect of surveillance of the gaze of the native subject, who holds the power of the territory.

As a result of his confusion, Ali recounted "how many years we wanted to blend in…" but they felt like all the eyes on them all the time. Following Foucault, Butcher (2010) argued, "the gaze is one of the several disciplining codes that reinforce boundaries, structural and affective, directing mobility and limiting interaction" (p. 517). Subjected to the surveillance of the gaze of the white host, Hale, Derin, and Ali are now disenchanted from claiming an equal place where they are expected to be potentially recognized as a naturalized component of provincial cities and public spaces. In a sense, Ali and Burak were able to cross the threshold; they were physically "in" the pub, but still, the ownership and control of the space were a matter of impossibility "because it is their space," as Ali emphasized. In the pub Ali and his friends visited, the assumptions of culture are static and essentialized, and white British clientele implicitly designate bodies based on physical appearance, clothing, language, and behavior and prioritize who "deserves" to feel attached to that place. The converse would have meant unconditional hospitality as well as the "assertion of equality" (Garner, 2012, p. 457). Culture is constitutive of the racialization discourse in Ali's case. Aside from the factors such as the Islamic veil and skin color, which were drawn out to discuss displacement and racialization in different spatial scales, Derin also concentrated on "foreign accent," which she reckons was concomitantly effective in the construction of who deserves to "belong" and who does not:

> *They [Turks] just feel put off. My generation is integrated. Our parents want to, but it is hard for them as they could not attend school here. They can be put off a bit as well, considering that when they go somewhere, a native white English realizes straight away that they are not born here, hearing their accents, for instance. Some people are horrible… when they do not get the accent, they say they don't understand in a rude manner. Not everyone is as open-minded, so the first generation feels terrible about themselves. They just feel put off.* (Derin, 21 years old, Studying International Relations, Norwich/London)

This narrative of Derin, where she highlights immigrant Turks' social marginalization as in "when they go somewhere" and when "they hear their accents," shows Derin's awareness of the cultural modes of racialization rather than physical differences. She highlights how speaking with a Turkish accent is a distinctive feature to gauge who can and who cannot belong from the native majority's perspective. Instead of pointing out what she feels in certain places, Derin acknowledges how Turkish firstcomers were stigmatized on account of having a Turkish accent, which is reminiscent of Fanon's idea of the occupier's language. Fanon argued that language is a technology of governmentality that assists the domestication of native people/cultures (Fanon, 2007). A similar point can be made, albeit not in a colonial context, about the use of language as a symbol of Englishness and Britishness, with a tacit racial connotation making it synonymous with whiteness (Gilroy, 2004, p. vii). In the quote above, the lack of an English accent is suggestive of the mixture, in other words, fading imaginary certainty of Britain's *wholeness*. Consequently, the analysis in this section indicates the salience of racialization embedded in spatialities at different scales predominated by white British people. The following section will examine the distinctive challenges and limitations young British Turks have faced within and beyond university campuses in Britain.

"I Just Felt a Bit 'Out-of-Place'": University Space

The analysis in this section is grounded on an understanding that universities as institutional spaces are another spatial context in which British Turks define and negotiate a sense of belonging or displacement. In his research about "the contested experiences of Muslim students in British HE institutions," Hopkins (2010) concluded that "the sense amongst Muslim students is that university campuses as places of diversity are tolerant and liberal, where they felt comfortable and content" (p. 160). My interview data, however, far less accords with Hopkin's on the grounds that several of my respondents broadly described the university environment as the breeding ground for complex experiences of marginalization and exclusion (Possamai et al., 2016). These experiences range from a subtle sense of being "out of place" as a result of, for instance, the Oxbridge-like campus privileges as exclusive rather than inclusive, through to the self-censorship against the backdrop of in-campus cultural practices to protect themselves from Islamophobia.

Such experiences mirror the dynamics of racialized hierarchies and boundaries in university spaces, which ironically tend to promote diversity and inclusivity in the British context (Andersson, Sadgrove et al., 2012). Indeed, Kerem hinted at this lack of diversity during his visit to the University of Cambridge:

> *I could think of… we went to universities for open days; I went to the University of Cambridge on an open day. It was only my dad, me, all the other clean-shaven white English people, and one other black guy. But it was not directly feeling hatred; I felt a bit out of place.* (Kerem, 19 years old, studying Medicine, London)

Kerem's feeling of being "out of place" is expressly indicated; he described feeling excluded by the perceived lack of students from diverse backgrounds. As this respondent indicated, notably, the sense of exclusion reflects the positions of those who are particularly privileged as campus "insiders"–white British and middle-class students (Andersson, Sadgrove et al., 2012, p. 512). With that in mind, the sense of exclusion seems notably based on the disproportionate number of "clean-shaved white English people" dominating the space where minority ethnic groups are almost absent altogether. It might also speak of Kerem's internal tensions based on the location of "whiteness" at the University of Cambridge. Puwar (2004) argues that this is embedded in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where white men

have been seen as their "natural" occupants (cited in Nahai, 2013). It is not misleading, therefore, to assume that the university as an institution is not a value-free or neutral space and, thereby, is an important site for the preservation of structures and divisions in British society. This was evident in Buğra's response that the sense of "difference" first emerged when he studied at university:

> *When I was in university, I felt really not one of "us"—sort of British or part of that white-middle class. That was definitely the university because I did not have the Anglified [name], I did not look like them, and yes, that was a bit of a struggle.* (Buğra, 30 years old, Police Officer, London)

Buğra's narrative draws attention to the role of ethno-racial and class privilege as variables which impact people's perspectives of their inclusion and exclusion on university campuses (Andersson, Sadgrove et al., 2012). This understanding manifested itself as evidenced by "not having an anglified name" and "not looking like white middle-class British". Being non-white does not necessarily mean being Black, but being ethnically Turkish is being "putatively" white. Notably, the social and cultural aspects of British whiteness rather than phenotypical in the lived context, such as universities, is where many of my respondents separate themselves from whiteness. For Buğra, the university potentially represented being white and middle class, invoking a terrain of belonging to the cultural and physical superiority of "white, middle-class British," which he felt was discomfiting. The "struggle" came into existence at university sites, which are considered public spaces *but* often territorialized by particular groups (Amin, 2002). As Vikki Boliver (2017) states, the particular group dominating British universities is the "white-middle classes," clearly articulating that the disparities in rates of admission remain substantial for white British and BME applicants (cited in Arday & Mirza, 2018). Accordingly, the wider society is still replete with overwhelmingly white schools, restaurants, workplaces, and universities. A situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which non-white people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present (Anderson, 2015, p. 10).

Seen together, Buğra's feelings of not being "one of them" sort of British in a setting where cultural dialogues and diversity have been marketed demonstrate the superimposition of white culture in the constructions of university identities. As Read et al. (2003) suggest, "academic culture both reflects and reinforces the dominant discourse of student as white, middle class and male" (p. 271). Indeed, those who discussed the role of the university noticed that their bodies were situated outside that privileged discourse and excluded from the privilege of middle-class whiteness. This manifests itself in the narratives shared by my respondents:

> *I think when I went to university, then I realized, you know, that I had never thought about my name before and how much resistance I might have gotten having a name that was not English, I had never thought that before, and I thought that a lot of me was quite [English], this might be deterrence for some employers.* (Yasmin, 33 years old, Working in a Construction Company, Manchester)

The name, which is not "English," appears to mark the growing awareness of British Turks' position and representation in society, establishing who is normatively accepted and unaccepted stretched across the university as an institutional space. By having a name that does not invoke English/ British superiority, Buğra and Yasmin are concerned that they might be easily associated with stigmatized "Other" migrants, which can be easily confounded with the undeserving "Muslim" once their *Turkishness* is discovered (Varriale, 2021, emphasis mine).

In his Ph.D. thesis, Tyrer (2003) concluded that "questioning who you are and your place in society goes to the very heart of the institutional identity of *the nation-states,* especially the education system (emphasis mine). In an era supposedly marked by "new" or "cultural" racism, it is through the shared common-sense narratives and habituation revolving around imagined structures of Englishness/ Britishness that institutionalized racism manifests. Accordingly, the dawning realization of "not having an English name", which Yasmin made aware of after she started university, almost directly echoes the taken-for-granted supremacy of white, British, middle-class as the ideal studenthood in the British context (Tyrer, 2003, p. 296). Class and cultural distinctions thus reveal British Turks' willingness to position themselves on the side of British superiority (Varriale, 2021). Indeed, classifications such as not having a British-sounding name are conducive to mobilizing unequal forms of social positions in the context of the university, reproducing racialized hierarchies between those who belong and those who do not. In this regard, Yasmin's previous tendency to think of herself as "fitting" into English superiority might be read as a way to bypass the disadvantages, stereotypes, and vulnerabilities stemming from different aspects of her identity, including, perhaps, her name and appearance. Self-definitional tensions led by Yasmin's Turkish name in university settings gave rise to an awareness in her. As a result, she argued that those of different ethnicities with a non-English name, including herself, might suffer a potential deficit of employment. Apart from the issues around the name, one of my respondents highlighted "low racial attacks" in her university:

> *I have been called a sweaty Kurd. Low-racial attacks I have faced. I had lots of racism at my university, which is quite strange. It is actually a melting pot in the university. Nothing specifically on my Turkish identity aside from one who called me sweaty Kurd in university. It was a guy from Manchester. My granddad is Kurdish. Surely, he knew.* (Selma, 27 years old, Working in a Construction Company in Manchester)

Selma described her university as a melting pot, reinforcing the public perception of universities being founded on diversity and difference before she mentioned how much racism she had experienced at university. She then veered away from the generality and diffuseness of racism in the university as an institution. She narrated her own experience of the racist attack on account of her skin color within the boundaries of a university site. The visibility of the body operates as a site for racial abuse, but *universities,* in fact, provide optimum conditions for identification as an alien and threatening presence (Westwood & Williams, 1997, p. 9). To put it another way, as in Selma's quote, the racialization of subjectivities in institutional spaces, including universities, involves the allocation of people to certain races (Murji & Solomos, 2005). Rather than a genuinely inclusive institutional culture, as a handful of my respondents noted, the university space has become more polarized along hierarchical race, class, and culture lines. In the narratives shared by British Turks, certain attributes, including a foreign name, lay the "boundaries" of who is an acceptable or unacceptable body, mediating the racialization process in the university space.

As a result, one can arguably suggest that university spaces can be riddled with racism and inter-ethnic tension. Therefore, universities as public spaces are not necessarily natural servants of *idealistic* "multicultural engagements" (Allen, 2023; Amin, 2002; Gow, 2005; Wise, 2009, as cited in Possamai et al., 2016). The racism caused "by a guy from Manchester" in a "university" deconstructed Selma's own mental image of viewing university as the symbol of multiculturalism or the melting pot. The quotes above reinforce the understanding that universities as institutional public spaces can potentially mediate the production of the daily racialized struggle of certain groups, which helps maintain the reputation of British universities

as bastions of racial (white), cultural (British/Western), and class (upper-middle) privileges. The following extract from Ferzan is an example of this:

> *I like Arabs a lot; there is an Arab society on campus, and I love halay[8].*
> *I love it. I have an Iraqi friend, Sema; she once asked me if I could*
> *please help the Arab girls as they don't want to dance. In Gloglobal,*
> *[9]all the cultural societies have a chance to sing, dance and present their*
> *culture, so I helped the Arab society basically, we were groups of 10*
> *people dressed in black, and the boys had their beards. They tried to*
> *make it look more Arab for the sake of presenting culture. So, you know*
> *you have a black and White scarf. They have it wrapped around their*
> *neck, and girls should have it wrapped around their waist. The other*
> *guy said, "No, you should have it covered around your face", and then*
> *this guy was like "Are you crazy? The second you step onto the stage,*
> *they are going to think you will bomb the place".* (Ferzan, 22 years old,
> Studying Pharmacy, Norwich/London)

As Ferzan's narrative suggests, truly demonstrating Iraqi culture, namely wrapping the scarf around Iraqi students' faces as a constitutive part of halay, might contribute to suspicion and fear during its demonstration. The issue arose in the discussions with Ferzan's Iraqi friend, where he suggested, "The second you step onto the stage, they are going to think you will bomb the place." This reflects concerns about the geopolitical issues around Muslims and the ways in which these have fed through to national policies in relation to counter-terrorism and into the university spaces (Hopkins, 2011, p. 161). The above quote is a reminder that contrary to non-Muslim societies in universities, everyday movements of Muslim student societies might be monitored, thereby causing psychological strains. I also argue that the efforts of the Arab society to delimit their perceived markers of "Muslimness" are bound by the workings of Prevent Duty[10], which has placed a specific legal responsibility on schools and colleges to prevent students from being drawn into terrorism (HM Government, 2011). Ferzan's quote further echoes the question of "Islamophobia" as "the unfinished business of empire" (Kundnani, 2007, p. 20) "because it is tied into maintaining a Western racial order" (Nabi, 2011, p. 34). The stifling environment of the university space for Arab society is obstructive, operating as the watchful eye of the preeminent Eurocentric order. Frantz Fanon (2007) reminds us in *Wretched of the Earth* that the Western gaze is construed as the ultimate arbiter about "ourselves" and our folkloric cultural practices, which is an exemplar of a former colonial tool used to rehabilitate the colonized.

Today, British Muslim youth, under the influence of the Western gaze, feel obliged to ebb away from the aspects of their religion and culture inherited from their parents and turn towards anything that will afford them secure anchorage (Fanon, 2007). This goes against the conception that universities are the beacon of interfaith tolerance, encapsulating multicultural equality, diversity, and harmony (Nabi, 2011). Throughout this section, all the respondents expressed feelings of exclusion and unbelonging in their universities. Their accounts uncovered the racialized experiences as a result of the cultural and physical markers of "otherness" assigned to them. They spoke of the complex ways through which they might feel stigmatized

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[8] Anatolian folk dance
[9] A Student union in the university of Norwich.
[10] One of the four strands of the UK's broader Counter and Terrorism Act, tightly focused on a definition of "Extremism" as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance" (Government, 2011, p. 107)

and excluded (Hopkins, 2011, p. 167). What follows is the summary of the main findings and objectives of this paper.

Conclusion

This article investigates the intricate dynamics of racialization and whiteness within the context of British Turks seeking a sense of belonging in diverse public spaces across the UK. It explores how these dynamics contribute to their self-perception as "non-British" and their positioning as the "Other" within mainstream British society. Examining their encounters in various public spaces, including urban areas, provincial cities, university campuses, and pubs, the study unveils subtle forms of exclusion and stigmatization associated with the distinct ways in which British Turks are racially categorized. The research highlights the constant reconstruction and contestation of racial identities in these spaces. By analyzing the discourses of racialization and whiteness shaped by the social and political context, particularly in the context of xenophobia and Islamophobia, the findings emphasize the significance of considering the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and religion (Ahmed, 2007; Amin, 2002; Garner, 2012). If a "certain group of people" have always occupied and enjoyed the benefits of the ownership of the public space, then the demand by others to be a part of that space on equal terms will seem like a threat, a provocation, and making room will feel like a loss by the natives of that space (Bhambra & Holmwood, 2021, p.ix). This dynamic can be further exacerbated when racialization, as discussed by Garner (2017), is at play to the point where it represents an exercise of power, increasing the social and cultural distance between some British Turks and mainstream white British in multiscale spatialities.

This study highlights that there are innumerable ways in which a group of people, British Turks in this case, can be racialized as non-British, non-white, Muslim, and thereby nonbelonging. Despite waves of Turkish migration, I claim that the sense of belonging remains a nuanced and often fraught issue because belonging does not necessarily happen independently. It is bounded. In everyday spaces, from urban areas to university campuses, British Turks grapple with the complexities of racialization contingent on phenotype, Turkish language, Turkish accent, signs of Muslimness, and so forth. Their experiences of being perceived as "Other" intersect with narratives of Islamophobia, leading to feelings of exclusion and displacement. Based on the excerpt from Derin above, we can argue that although she does not wear an Islamic veil, she still demonstrates a certain amount of awareness of what could have happened and how she would have felt if she had put on a hijab. Similar to their negative experiences in provincial places and smaller-scale spatialities, the university environment, often seen as a bastion of diversity and inclusivity, equally and ironically proves to be a complex terrain for British Turks. The prevalence of whiteness and middle-class norms within these spaces often leave British Turks feeling "out of place," contesting the dominant views about universities as racism-proof and shedding light on hidden struggles ethnic students might be facing in those spaces. The narratives shared by British Turks demonstrate that the university space, while purportedly committed to multicultural engagement, can also be riddled with racial and Islamophobic tension. As indicated earlier, instances of racialized hierarchies and boundaries challenge the idealistic notion of inclusivity. Turkish name, accent, Islam, and other social and cultural practices become markers of "otherness," influencing the perception of who belongs and who does not. In conclusion, as Bhambra and Holmwood (2021) suggest, in the circumstances, what needs to be done is not simply adding a matter of new voices but transforming the public space so that it works for all (p. ix). By understanding that public spaces, when limited and boundaried, become a privilege. The consequences of this perpetuate entanglements of power to racialize and then hover between the options of homogenizing particular groups, most evidently Muslims (Bhambra & Holmwood, 2021) in today's conjuncture.

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